

# The Washington Post

## New York Times is hit with discrimination lawsuit

By [Erik Wemple](#) April 28 at 7:10 PM



(Richard Drew/Associated Press)

Just weeks ago, New York Times CEO Mark Thompson issued a warning to his charges: Diversity or else! Managers who fall short of the company's expectations on the recruitment and hiring of minorities will be asked to leave or dismissed, [as this blog reported](#).

Now he's getting sued for discrimination. In a [story broken by the Guardian](#), Thompson, who previously served as director-general of the BBC, is facing a

lawsuit from two advertising employees — 62-year-old Ernestine Grant and 61-year-old Marjorie Walker, who are black — alleging discrimination based on age, race and gender. The suit, according to the Guardian, alleges that Thompson's 2012 accession to the New York Times kicked off a trend toward a younger and whiter advertising staff. A co-defendant is Meredith Levien, the company's chief revenue officer, whom Thompson entrusted to "carry out his vision of the ideal workforce," according to the complaint, which was lodged in federal court in Manhattan. From the Guardian:

In speeches to staff, Levien is said to have made it clear that she wanted a workforce with "fresh faces" populated by "people who look like the people we are selling to". She is alleged to have told staff that "this isn't what our sales team should look like". The advertising staff, many of whom are older, black and female, said Levien's comments were "shockingly rife with racially charged innuendos".

A number of other charges are advanced in the suit, including that "older advertising directors of color" were shown the door via buyouts or dismissals and replaced with younger and whiter employees; that the more experienced plaintiffs were paid less than young white colleagues; and that the latter group was allowed to frolic on summer Friday afternoons, while they were not.

The New York Times sounds furious about the complaint:

This lawsuit contains a series of recycled, scurrilous and unjustified attacks on both Mark Thompson and Meredith Levien. It also completely distorts the realities of the work environment at The New York Times. We strongly disagree with any claim that The Times, Mr. Thompson or Ms. Levien have

discriminated against any individual or group of employees. The suit is entirely without merit and we intend to fight it vigorously in court.

That allegation about recycling may refer to a 2015 discrimination lawsuit filed against the New York Times and Levien by Tracy Quitasol, an Asian American former employee who charged that a downsizing in September 2013 cleared out “mostly older and minority employees,” [according to the New York Post](#), and replaced them with younger white people. That action [ended in a confidential settlement in March](#).

More to come on the New York Times and diversity.