

Fox News Also Racist Off The Air, Lawsuit By Black Office Workers Alleges

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(Drew Angerer/Getty)

Two African-American Fox News payroll workers are suing the company and their former boss in state court over what they say was a constant stream of racist abuse by the boss, Judith Slater, who was senior vice president of accounting and controller of Fox until her recent firing.

"We are confident that the good men and women of the Bronx"—where the lawsuit is filed and where one of the plaintiffs lives—"will hold Fox accountable for what we believe to be its abhorrent racist conduct,

reminiscent of the Jim Crow era," the workers' lawyers, Douglas Wigdor and Jeanne Christensen, told reporters in a statement.

Slater, an 18-year veteran of Fox, had run the cable network's finances since 2006. The plaintiffs, Tichaona Brown and Tabrese Wright, worked in payroll, and live in Suffolk County and the Bronx, respectively. In their suit, they describe a litany of racist remarks by Slater and others that their lawyers say only scratch the surface. "The severity and pervasiveness of the racism at Fox are such that, within the confines of this complaint, it is not possible to list each instance of bias that employees experienced," the complaint states.

The allegations against Slater include:

- She allegedly asked Brown, "Why are all black men women-beaters?" citing OJ Simpson, Mike Tyson, Chris Brown, and the ex-husband of another employee.
- She allegedly told the office she would not travel north of 90th Street without being accompanied by a black person for fear that otherwise she would be "jumped" by the black denizens of uptown. Similarly, she told Brown she was afraid when driving in Brooklyn because of her belief that black people there would think, "They will see me and say, 'Look at this whitey...She probably has some money. Let's rob her.'"
- She allegedly complained to Brown, with Wright and other employees nearby, that Brown's "people" mispronounce the words "mother," "father," "month," and "ask." She allegedly said further that the purported mispronunciations make her "cringe" because they are inexcusable given that African Americans have English as a first language.
- During a meeting, Slater allegedly wrote down the same words, plus the word "fifth," on a Post-It note and demanded that Brown say them aloud.
- She allegedly called Wright "monf girl," a reference to her pronunciation, and forced her to scan and photocopy documents, which was not part of her job.
- She allegedly described Black Lives Matter, Black History Month, and BET as racist, saying that black people would be "up in arms" if there were equivalents for white people.
- During the protests over the police shooting of Michael Brown, she would allegedly bid farewell to Brown in the evening by raising both hands to emulate the "Hands up! Don't shoot!" gesture popularized by the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement.
- She allegedly told Brown that her town, Central Islip, is "the hood," and asked if she wanted to

come to a friend's house in Smithtown to see what a "lily-white town" looks like. Before Brown could answer, she allegedly said actually she wouldn't invite her because her friend would "probably lock the door and call security, because she would be scared that a black person is at the door."

- She allegedly asked Brown if people from Central Islip bury bodies in their backyards.
- She allegedly told Brown she must make more money than her friends because they are black, and that her friends are probably receiving federal benefits on her dime.
- She allegedly called the payroll department, which was largely staffed by black people, the "Southern payroll department" and the "urban payroll department."
- She allegedly called her train to New Jersey the "Bombay Express" because of the number of people of Indian descent riding it, and said that Chinese men have small penises.
- She allegedly asked Wright if her three children were "fathered by the same man."
- She allegedly called Wright and Brown to her office and asked them if they know how to beatbox.

The lawsuit also includes allegations of not overtly racist degradation, such as discussing Wright's "horrible" credit score in front of other employees and making her take an unannounced accounting test with questions about things she had no experience in, and denying Brown a raise even though she had taken over as interim director of payroll.

News of Slater's purported firing in late February broke [on Friday](#). Lawyers for Brown and Wright accuse Fox of leaking the discrimination allegations in an effort to bury the news at the end of the week while avoiding legal culpability. The lawsuit says that the pair rejected Fox's settlement offer, and that in retaliation, Fox fired Brown and demoted Wright.

In a statement to reporters, Fox reps wrote, "We take complaints of this nature very seriously and took prompt and effective remedial action before Ms. Brown and Ms. Wright sued in court and even before Ms. Wright complained through her lawyer. There is no place for inappropriate verbal remarks like this at Fox News. We are disappointed that this needless litigation has been filed."

Slater couldn't be reached, but one need not look far to find racism at Fox News. Indeed, it is a main feature of the daily programming. For those who have not taken a look into the vortex in a while, here is a short super-cut of one of the president's favorite shows.

Longtime Fox News chief Roger Ailes was ousted last summer after more than two dozen female employees came forward with [horrific accounts of sexual harassment](#). The company paid Ailes \$40 million to go quietly, and kept him on as an adviser. In the following weeks, the network secretly settled with a longtime on-air personality over alleged over-the-phone masturbation and other inappropriate sexual behavior by host and [fabulist](#) Bill O'Reilly, according to the [New York Times](#). O'Reilly settled a similar lawsuit by a producer for an undisclosed amount in 2004.

New York magazine's Gabriel Sherman, who has done much of the best reporting on Fox, [notes](#) that the election of Donald Trump and his firing of New York U.S. Attorney [Preet Bharara](#) is likely good news for the embattled network. The company is reportedly under federal investigation for allegedly obtaining critical journalists' phone records and hiding financial settlements to Ailes's victims from shareholders. The firing of Bharara, after Trump had told him he could keep his job, means that it's up to the president to choose his replacement. The [Times reports](#) that Trump's short list includes Marc Mukasey, a former federal prosecutor, who also happens to be Ailes's personal lawyer.