

These Lawsuits Explain Exactly Why Employees of Color Are Over Fox News

The class-action suit alleges that: “On at least two occasions, Slater actually kicked Ms. Douglas in the buttocks as she walked down the hall at Fox’s offices.”

Kenrya Rankin (/writers/kenrya-rankin) | APR 26, 2017 1:26PM EDT



Plaintiffs and attorneys in the class action suit at a press conference on April 26, 2017, in New York City. Colorlines screenshot of CBS News video, taken April 26, 2017

Last month, two Black women—Tichaona Brown and Tabrese Wright—filed a lawsuit (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/28/business/media/fox-news-racial-discrimination-lawsuit-slater.html?_r=0) against their employer, Fox News Channel, alleging racial discrimination. Another plaintiff, Monica Douglas, joined the suit (<https://www.wigdorlaw.com/third-fox-employee-joins-race-discrimination-lawsuit-fox-news/>) earlier this month. And yesterday (April 25), eight more current and former employees of color joined, amending and expanding the class-action lawsuit.

The New York Times

(https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/25/business/media/fox-news-racial-discrimination-lawsuit.html?_r=0) reports that the complaint (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/04/25/business/media/document-Fox-News-Racial-Discrimination-Lawsuit.html>) was a filed with the New York State Supreme Court. It names 21st Century Fox, Fox News Network, Fox executive vice president of business and legal affairs Dianne Brandi (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/dianne-brandi-92a07852>) and now-fired network comptroller Judith Slater (<http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/fox-news-comptroller-judy-slater-1202016012/>). It comes just days after the network fired popular host Bill O'Reilly (<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/these-folks-tweeting-about-bill-oreillys-ouster-are-all-us>) following heavy pressure from advertisers who wanted to distance themselves from the accused sexual predator.

From the complaint:

The only consistency at Fox is the abhorrent, intolerable, unlawful and hostile racial discrimination that was inflicted on minority employees that appears more akin to plantation-style management than a modern-day work environment.

In an effort to cover up the many years of harassment by O'Reilly and others, Fox News's General counsel, Brandi, and head of human resources ("HR"), Collins, permitted Slater and others to engage in abhorrent and blatant acts of race discrimination. When met with complaints about the racist behavior, incredibly, Black employees were told by Brandi and Collins that nothing could be done because Slater knew too much about senior executives, including former chief executive officer Roger Ailes ("Ailes"), former chief financial officer Mark Kranz ("Kranz") and O'Reilly.

This class action seeks to expose Fox for this cover-up, create institutional change at Fox once and for all, and compensate the victims of race discrimination for the harm they were forced to endure and continue to endure.

Two additional racial discrimination complaints were filed against the network yesterday. Former employee Adasa Blanco filed a federal suit with the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, saying that she informed leadership about the problem in 2008. And USA Today (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2017/04/25/fox-news-hit-more-racial-discrimination-suits/100848942/>) reports that former employee Wasim Rafik registered a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. All 14 plaintiffs of color are represented by the same law firm, Wigdor LLC (<https://www.wigdorlaw.com/>).

The class action suit details the allegations of Brown, Wright, Douglas, Griselda Benson, Mark Legrier, Mariela Linday, Musfiq Rahman, Vielka Rojas, Mauretta Thomas and Senami Tolode and Kelly Wright. Alleging that Slater, O'Reilly and

others created a culture that marginalized and ridiculed employees, stunting their career development and berating them for not being White. Just a few alleged incidents highlighted in the suit:

- Mr. [Kelly] Wright requested to appear on The O'Reilly Factor to discuss the racial divide in Ferguson, Missouri, and suggested showing the viewers "Beyond the Dream," which is a series of positive stories about the African-American community and its contributions to the world. O'Reilly refused to run the "Beyond the Dream" piece because it showed Blacks in "too positive" a light. O'Reilly incredulously declared on his show: "I know Black America better than anyone."
- Slater called day laborers "cheap Mexicans."
- Following 9/11, certain executives, including [former chairman and CEO (<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/09/how-fox-news-women-took-down-roger-ailles.html>) Roger] Ailes, expressed concerns about subsequent terror attacks on New York City. Sometime in or about late 2014, Mr. Rahman was on the second floor of Fox's New York City office, looking for a group of other co-workers. Mr. Rahman mistakenly walked into Ailes' office, which up to that point was open to the floor when his door was not closed. The fallout for Mr. Rahman's "mistake" was swift and severe. Ailes was furious and his paranoia about being attacked came to the forefront. That same day, Ailes ordered that a wall be constructed immediately in his personal office to act as a barrier to entry. This wall was an obvious attempt at preventing Black or dark-skinned employees from walking in unannounced and frightening Ailes. The following day, Mr. Rahman, along with a number of Black employees in the accounts receivable and accounts payable departments, had their security passes to the second floor revoked. Thereafter, these humiliated employees were forced to get "escorts" when they needed to speak to other employees on the second floor.
- Slater ridiculed Black employees by mocking stereotyped speech and complained, for example, that Black employees mispronounce the words

“mother,” “father,” “month” and “ask,” by pronouncing the words as “muva,” “fava,” “monf,” and “axe,” and incredulously forced Black employees to practice saying the words correctly in front of White employees.

- Slater openly talked about her belief that all Chinese men have “small penises.”
- Slater’s disdain for Ms. Douglas manifested itself physically, as well. On at least two occasions, Slater actually kicked Ms. Douglas in the buttocks as she walked down the hall at Fox’s offices at 1211 Avenue of the Americas. Slater also regularly and mockingly rubbed Ms. Douglas’s hair in order to feel its “texture.”

A Fox News Channel spokesperson told Deadline (<http://deadline.com/2017/04/fox-news-racial-discrimination-lawsuit-kelly-wright-1202077543/>) that, “Fox News and Dianne Brandi vehemently deny the race discrimination claims in both lawsuits. They are copycat complaints of the original one filed last month. We will vigorously defend these cases.”

Read the full complaint here

(<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/04/25/business/media/document-Fox-News-Racial-Discrimination-Lawsuit.html>).