

Fox News Executives Accused Of 'Indefensible, Systemic Race Discrimination' In New Lawsuits

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Allegations of a toxic workplace culture at Fox News continue to mount this month with the filing of a new racial discrimination lawsuit. Brought by eleven current and former employees of the cable news network, the lawsuit follows numerous sexual harassment charges and the ouster of superstar host/airport bookstore novelist Bill O'Reilly.

Eleven plaintiffs, who include former "Fox and Friends" co-host Kelly Wright, allege that employees' complaints of racial discrimination were met with indifference and inaction from executives, and that harmful behavior continued even after supervisors were notified. The class action lawsuit was filed in Bronx Supreme Court by law firm Wigdor LLP last night.

Two other former Fox News employees also came forward—one in a separate racial discrimination suit, the other with an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission suit—in the Southern District of New York court Tuesday, bringing the total number of plaintiffs to thirteen.

In the lawsuits, Fox News executives are accused of "indefensible, systemic race discrimination" and "egregious discriminatory acts."

Tuesday's lawsuit builds upon two racial discrimination suits filed against Fox News by Tichaona Brown and Tabrese Wright, two former payroll workers who alleged their boss, Judith Slater, subjected them to racist abuse on a regular basis (a detailed account of Slater's alleged racist remarks and behavior can be found here). Slater was fired from her comptroller position in February.

In a statement to the New York Times, an attorney for Slater called the suits "meritless and frivolous," and refuted all allegations of racial discrimination against the former Fox News comptroller as "completely false." A spokesperson for Fox News also told the paper the network "vehemently" denied the racial discrimination claims.

The new class action lawsuit names Slater, Fox News attorney Dianne Brandi, Fox News, and 21st Century Fox as defendants, and alleges that numerous complaints about Slater's behavior, some dating back to 2008, were brought to Brandi and Fox News human resources executive Denise Collins, but were routinely ignored. Slater is accused of mocking the speech of black Fox News employees and openly asking "Who is going to Africa?" after the announcement of President Trump's travel ban. Slater also allegedly asked the network's minority employees to arm-wrestle their white woman superiors for the sake of "entertainment and amusement."

Following Brown and Wright's allegations earlier this year, a spokesperson for Fox News 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."

However, Slater's firing and the network's words of contrition have not been able to stem the mounting tide of lawsuits. In a statement Wednesday morning, attorneys Douglas Wigdor and Jeanne Christensen slammed 21st Century Fox for its allegedly outdated workplace culture, referring to the company as "18th Century Fox." Wigdor and Christensen said they hoped the

lawsuit "wakes 21st Century Fox from its slumbers and inspires the Company to take a conciliatory and appropriate approach to remedy its wrongs."

Last week, O'Reilly was dismissed from Fox after the network buckled to pressure from advertisers who fled his program amidst mounting public outcry over the sexual harassment allegations. O'Reilly will be given roughly \$25 million in severance.

Last summer, Fox News head Roger Ailes was dismissed after over 20 female employees shared allegations of repeated horrific sexual harassment. Ailes was given roughly \$40 million in severance.