

News

Kelly Wright: 5 Fast Facts You Need to Know

Published 11:25 am EDT, April 26, 2017 | Updated 3:56 pm EDT, April 26, 2017 | Comment | By [Daniel S. Levine](#) 676



Kelly Wright in 2015. (Photo by Jemal Countess/Getty Images)

[Fox News](#) weekend anchor Kelly Wright has joined the racial-discrimination lawsuit filed last month, claiming that he was “asked to perform the role of a ‘Jim Crow’ — the racist caricature of a Black entertainer” in the complaint.

The lawsuit was filed last month against Fox News, 21st Century Fox, general counsel Dianne Brandi and former comptroller [Judith Slater](#). Wright joined the case on April 25 and is now one of 11 plaintiffs.

“When it comes to racial discrimination, 21st Century Fox has been operating as if it should be called 18th Century Fox,” Douglas H. Wigdor and Jeanne Christensen, the attorneys representing the plaintiffs, said in a statement on April 25. “We sincerely hope the filing of this race class action wakes 21st Century Fox from its slumbers and inspires the Company to take a conciliatory and appropriate approach to remedy its wrongs. If 21st Century Fox chooses to defend the indefensible—systemic race discrimination—we will utilize our collective efforts and resources to hold those responsible for these egregious discriminatory acts before a Bronx jury.”

As for Fox News, it has vehemently denied the allegations in the lawsuit. “FOX News and Dianne Brandi vehemently deny the race discrimination claims in both lawsuits,” a Fox News spokesperson said. “They are copycat complaints of the original one filed last month. We will vigorously defend these cases.”

“The incendiary language by Attorney Wigdor raising the shameful period of Jim Crow and plantations is outrageous and draws a comparison that demeans the atrocities committed during those times. These frivolous charges are solely aimed at generating headlines, inflaming racial tensions and poisoning potential jury pools and judges,” Catherine M. Foti, attorney for Judith Slater, said in a statement.

You can read the original complaint against [Fox News here](#). The new complaint, with Kelly’s allegations, is below.

[Filed Second Amended Complaint](#) by [Daniel S Levine](#) on Scribd

FILED: BRONX COUNTY CLERK 04/25/2017 05:43
NYSCEF DOC. NO. 8

INDEX NO. 22446/2017E
RECEIVED NYSCEF: 04/25/2017

**NEW YORK STATE SUPREME COURT
BRONX COUNTY**

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KELLY WRIGHT, MUSFIQ RAHMAN, :
TICHAONA BROWN, TABRESE WRIGHT, :
MONICA DOUGLAS, MARK LEGRIER, : Index No.: 22446/2017E
MARIELA LINDSAY, VIELKA ROJAS, :
GRISELDA BENSON, MAURETTA THOMAS :
AND SENAMI TOLODE, : **SECOND AMENDED CLASS**
Plaintiffs, : **ACTION COMPLAINT**
:
v. :
:
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOX, INC., FOX : **Jury Trial Demanded**
NEWS NETWORK LLC, DIANNE BRANDI, in :
her individual and professional capacities, and :
JUDITH SLATER, in her individual and :
professional capacities, :
Defendants. :
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Plaintiffs, as and for their Second Amended Class Action Complaint against Defendants
Twenty-First Century Fox, Inc. (“21st Century Fox”), Fox News Network LLC (“Fox News”)
(21st Century Fox and Fox News, together, “Fox” or the “Company”), Dianne Brandi (“Brandi”)
and Judith Slater (“Slater”) (collectively with Fox, “Defendants”), hereby allege as follows

SUMMARY OF CLAIMS

Here’s what you need to know about Wright and his complaint.

1. Wright Claims He Was Asked to ‘Perform the Role of Jim Crow’ on Fox News

Tearful Fox News Anchor Kelly Wright on Racism at Fox News - press Conference



Wright joined the proposed class action lawsuit against Fox News on April 25. He was among eight new plaintiffs to join the case this week, [reports the New York Daily News](#). The civil complaint was filed by [Wigdor LLP](#) in Bronx Supreme Court.

In the complaint, Wright alleges that he was passed over for promotions at Fox News “because he is black,” even though he has been at the network since 2003.

“Despite his outstanding performance, and because he is Black, Mr. Wright has been effectively sidelined and asked to perform the role of a ‘Jim Crow’ — the racist caricature of a Black entertainer,” the suit claims.

5. ***Plaintiff Kelly Wright*** – a United States Army Veteran, ordained minister, gospel recording artist and songwriter, honored member of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Board of Sponsors at Morehouse College, and two-time Emmy Award recipient – has worked for Fox News in various anchoring reporting capacities since January 2003. Despite his outstanding performance, and because he is Black, Mr. Wright has been effectively sidelined and asked to perform the role of a “Jim Crow” – the racist caricature of a Black entertainer.

Wright also claims that he suggest Fox News air a morning show about “positive stories about the African-American community and its contributions to the world” to air before *Fox & Friends*. However, the slot was given to another white anchor instead. When asked why he didn’t get the slot, the lawsuit alleges that he was told Fox wanted a *Fox & Friends* host at that time. But Wright worked on *Fox & Friends Weekend* from 2006 to 2008.

“There is systemic and institutional racial bias,” Wright [said during a press conference](#) on April 26. “And so when my colleagues from other departments began to reveal their encounters with blatant acts of discrimination in their departments, I watched it. I prayed about it. I cried over it, and I said I could no longer sit in silence, collect my paycheck, and act like I didn’t experience racial bias on my own level as an on-air personality.”

During the press conference, Wigdor added that Wright is the only black male anchor for the network and there are only two black female anchors.

Although Wright didn’t succeed in getting his own show, Wright has routinely done [Beyond The Dream](#) feature stories, including one about Chicago students in March.

2. Wright Claims Bill O’Reilly Wouldn’t Air His Story on Ferguson Protests Because it Showed African Americans in ‘Too Positive’ a Light

FOX News Anchor Kelly Wright features the National Quartet Convention



Although Wright’s complaints are not targeted specifically at Slater, he does complain about treatment from Bill O’Reilly and Fox News Co-President Bill Shine. As [Forbes notes](#), he claims that he prepared a segment on the racial protests in Ferguson, Missouri, but O’Reilly refused to air it, allegedly because O’Reilly thought it showed African Americans in “too positive” a light.

7. On another occasion, Mr. 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."

Fox News [fired O'Reilly](#) on April 19 after advertisers began dropping his show when it was reported that Fox News settled five sexual harassment complaints against him. O'Reilly has also been [accused](#) of making racist comments in the past.

Wright also claims that "it is a running 'joke' among the cast and crew at Fox that [he] would get significantly more air time if he dyed his hair blonde." Currently, Wright only anchors the Saturday show *America's News Headquarters* and claims he's been "marginalized" and "sidelined" because he is black.

3. Wright Has Been at Fox News Since 2003

Kelly Wright Performs America the Beautiful



Wright, a graduate of Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma, first joined Fox News in 2003. Before that, he anchored at stations in New York; Norfolk, Virginia; and Raleigh, North Carolina. [According to his Fox News profile](#), Wright served in the U.S. Army and started his journalism career in 1977. He also has two local Emmy Awards for his work on a documentary and news stories about the transatlantic slave trade. In 1996, he scored an exclusive interview with O.J. Simpson shortly after Simpson was acquitted of murder.

Wright's highest-profile job at Fox News was a co-host of the *Fox & Friends* weekend edition between 2006 and 2009. He's also reported on the Virginia Tech shooting, New Orleans' recovery from Hurricane Katrina, the Terri Schiavo case, and the 2004 presidential election. In 2004, he reported from the Iraq War for three months, reporting on the Abu Ghraib Prison scandal. He also joined the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Sponsors at Morehouse College after his successful *Beyond the Dream* series.

Today, Wright is the co-anchor for *America's News Headquarters* on Saturdays at 4 p.m. ET. He's also an overnight breaking news anchor.

4. Wright Was Raised by a Single Mother, Who Was a Sexual Assault Victim

Fox News Beyond the Dream Noble-Gary Comer- CHAMPS Mentoring Program



Wright was born Kelvin Overton and was born in Hagerstown, Maryland. He [told Jersey Man Magazine](#) that he was raised by a single mother who was the victim of a sexual assault. He was born when his mother, June Lorraine Overton Wright, was just 17 years old.

"At 16, my mother (June Lorraine Overton Wright) — unfortunately — was sexually assaulted by a pillar of the community who happened to be not her pastor, but a pastor of another church. She, facing all those incredible odds, said 'I'm keeping this child,'" Wright told Jersey Man Magazine. "Five days after her 17th birthday, I came into the world. She sacrificed so much as a single parent to help me become who I am today. She accepted it graciously; she was a courageous person, a wonderful woman."

He said he was bullied as a child because he didn't know who his father was. But when he was eight years old, his stepfather adopted him and he took the last name Wright. When he was 13, his mother and stepfather adopted a baby girl named Kim.

Wright credited his late mother with his success. "She said, 'pursue a goal of communications in television and radio; let music and acting be your avocation.'" Wright told Jersey Man Magazine.

5. Wright Is Married to Loretta Wright & Has 3 Children

Kelly Wright sings "I Believe"



Wright is married to his second wife, Loretta. They've been married for over 30 years, notes [Jersey Man Magazine](#). They have two children, Mychael and Morgan. He also has another daughter, Sarah, from his previous marriage.

[According to a 2009 Herald Mail article](#), Loretta Wright is a teacher in the Washington County Public Schools in Maryland. In 2009, she also became the executive director of the Memorial Recreation Center, overseeing renovations.

Wright is also a singer, recording the 2011 Gospel album *Goodness & Mercy* and 2007's *Believe*. He also published the book *America's Hope In Troubled Times* and is represented by [Ambassador Speakers](#) as a Christian speaker.