

Three lawsuits allege foot-dragging by Fox on harassment

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NEW YORK (AP) — Three new lawsuits filed Monday allege racial discrimination or sexual harassment at Fox News, deepening the network's legal woes.

The cases increase to 23 the number of past or present Fox employees represented by attorney Doug Wigdor, the majority having cases alleging racial hostility by a since-fired financial executive. Fox said Monday that the lawsuits have no legal basis.

A former Fox employee, Adasa Blanco, said she alerted Fox executives about racially hostile behavior on the part of former Fox controller Judith Slater more than eight years before the executive was let go. Slater has denied charges of racially hostile conduct. Blanco, who is Hispanic, said that Slater made fun of her accent.

In the lawsuit, Wigdor said Fox "knowingly harbored and protected" a racist employee for more than eight years and misrepresented to the public that it fired Slater quickly upon learning of her behavior.

Naima Farrow, another former Fox employee who worked for Slater, said that she was fired without warning or explanation in 2015 less than three days after telling superiors she was pregnant. Farrow, who is black, said Slater mockingly referred to her as "girlfriend."

Kathleen Lee, a Fox News Radio employee who also sued Monday, said she was sexually harassed by a since-departed co-worker whose behavior was allowed to continue despite many complaints. The lawsuit said Lee "suffered blatant retaliation for speaking out."

Only after the co-worker physically threatened her and repeatedly referred to Hillary Clinton by a lewd name throughout the newsroom did he leave his job, the lawsuit said. After he left, Lee alleged her boss asked her, "will you stop causing problems now?"

Fox News said in a statement that it is committed to a diverse workplace free from discrimination and takes any complaint seriously. In these cases, Fox "took prompt, effective and, when necessary, strong remedial action," the network said. "We believe these latest claims are without legal basis and look forward to proving that the company at all times has acted appropriately, and lawfully, in connection with these matters."

Although no lawsuit has been filed, Wigdor also represents a black computer technician whose complaint about a racially hostile remark from Fox analyst Bob Beckel last week led to Beckel's firing.

Roger Ailes, the late former Fox chief executive, was ousted last summer after being the subject of sexual harassment complaints. Fox personality Bill O'Reilly was fired last month in the midst of an advertiser boycott launched after public reports of settlements paid to women with harassment complaints.

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