

5 New York City anchorwomen allege age discrimination

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NEW YORK (AP) — Five anchorwomen at a New York City news channel sued their company Wednesday, saying they were marginalized and cast aside to make room for younger women and men.

The Manhattan federal court lawsuit blamed Charter Communications and its 2016 takeover of the local news channel NY1, known as New York One, for altering the career trajectories of Roma Torre, Kristen Shaughnessy, Jeanine Ramirez, Vivian Lee and Amanda Farinacci.

Maureen Huff, a Charter spokeswoman, said the Stamford, Connecticut-based company takes the allegations seriously but “as we complete our thorough review, we have not found any merit to them.”

She said in emailed comments that all of the women are “still gainfully employed and on air.”

“NY1 is a respectful and fair workplace and we’re committed to providing a work environment in which all our employees are valued and empowered,” Huff said.

The gender and age bias lawsuit seeks unspecified damages and a return to the positions the women occupied before Charter took control.

According to the lawsuit, the women found their on-air time dramatically reduced, anchoring opportunities decreased, prime reporting opportunities taken away and promotional efforts eliminated.

“Despite these tremendous efforts and their indisputable skill, NY1 has blatantly marginalized them and cast them aside in favor of younger women and men, in a transparent effort to reshape the appearance of the on-air talent,” the lawsuit said.

“Sadly, it is hardly a novel occurrence that the media fails to showcase professional older women in on-air positions, instead favoring younger women and men,” it added.

Huff objected to the claim that the employees have been marginalized, noting, for instance, that Torre still anchors “Live at Noon.” The lawsuit said Torre, 61, of Montclair, New Jersey, was the first on-air “talent” hired by NY1 when it launched in September 1992.

“The show was built around Roma as the anchor, underscoring her importance and prominence at NY1,” she said.

Huff also objected to claims NY1 was grooming replacements who match the plaintiffs' appearances and ethnic backgrounds.

"It's simply not true," Huff said. "We find it offensive that these five women and their lawyer tried to match women of similar ethnicities for shock value. It devalues the hard work of all of the women, demeans them, and implies that all that should matter is their appearance."

In a release, the five anchors said women on television "should accurately reflect women in society and be celebrated at every age, not treated like decoration that can be disposed and replaced with a newer version."

They said they are "fighting for ourselves and all other women who face this same struggle on a daily basis, and we hope to send a clear message to all news media across the country that this must change."

Shaughnessy, 50, of Scotch Plains, New Jersey, has been at NY1 for 24 years; Ramirez, 49, of Brooklyn, for 23 years; Lee, 44, for 11 years and Farinacci, 40, of Staten Island, for 19 years.