

Five NY1 Anchors Accuse Network Of Age Discrimination

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NEW YORK — Five anchorwomen who have spent decades on NY1 — including its first on-air personality — have accused the beloved local news network of age and gender discrimination in a new lawsuit.

The anchors — Roma Torre, Kristen Shaughnessy, Jeanine Ramirez, Vivian Lee and Amanda Farinacci — have been pushed aside in favor of younger talent since Charter Communications took over NY1 in 2016, according to the complaint filed Wednesday in Manhattan federal court.

The lawsuit pulls back the curtain on an allegedly ugly side of a staple of New York City's local news ecosystem.

"We have poured our hearts and souls into our work at NY1, but in the end we have been left excluded, marginalized and vulnerable," the anchors said in a joint statement. "We 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."

The women, who range in age from 40 to 61, have had their airtime cut and lost anchoring opportunities despite collectively working at the 24-hour cable network for more than a century, the suit alleges.

Meanwhile, a group of younger personalities aged 26 to 49 have been given "expansive opportunities to showcase their talent and advance their careers" — some of whom are apparently being primed as "replacements" for the older anchors, the complaint says.

And Torre, who has been with NY1 since its launch in 1992, is paid "less than half" the salary of Pat Kiernan, the highly visible morning anchor who was hired five years after her, according to the complaint.

The trouble allegedly started when Time Warner Cable, NY1's former parent company, merged in 2016 with Charter Communications, which does business as Spectrum. About 40 NY1 employees who were older than 40 were forced out after the merger, the complaint says.

The women have complained about their problems to management and human resources, but their concerns were dismissed or ignored and led to more mistreatment, the complaint says.

The lawsuit accuses Charter of violating human-rights and equal-pay laws and seeks damages for the newswomen. They are represented by the high-profile lawyer Douglas H. Wigdor, who has brought discrimination cases against Goldman Sachs, Macy's and Fox News.

"Sadly, after dedicating over 100 years of award-winning journalism to NY1, our five clients have clearly been told that their careers are over, as NY1 seems to believe that younger faces, when it comes to women, are a 'better look' for the bottom line," Wigdor said in a statement.

A spokesperson for Charter, Marueen Huff, said the company views the allegations as meritless and will "vigorously" defend itself in court. Women account for more than half of NY1's on-air talent, as do people older than 40, Huff told The New York Times.

"We take these allegations seriously and as we complete our thorough review, we have not found any merit to them," Huff said in a statement. "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."