

NY1 shoved them aside for younger faces, five female anchors allege in suit

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — Five anchorwomen and reporters at NY1 made some news themselves Wednesday, alleging in a lawsuit the local news channel has shunted them aside in favor of younger and less experienced colleagues.

The plaintiffs – Staten Island reporter and resident Amanda Farinacci, Vivian Lee, Jeanine Ramirez, Kristen Shaughnessy and Roma Torre – range in age from 40 to 61 and collectively have worked at the 24-hour news network for more than 100 years, their civil complaint said.

They sued Charter Communications, doing business as Spectrum, in Manhattan federal court, alleging age and gender discrimination, along with retaliation for complaining about their treatment. The plaintiffs seek unspecified monetary damages.

“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 women’s civil complaint alleges.

“Ever since NY1 was taken over by Charter in 2016, plaintiffs’ then-blossoming careers have wilted – namely, their on-air time has been dramatically reduced, anchoring opportunities have disappeared, prime reporting roles have been taken away and promotional efforts have vanished,” contends the complaint. “All of these opportunities which have been snatched away from plaintiffs have been distributed to numerous younger women and men with substantially less experience.”

In fact, the women allege Charter has gone so far as to push them into the corner in favor of younger “replacements” who nearly mirror them in appearance and ethnic backgrounds.

“The intent is clear: NY1 wants younger women and men in front of the camera at the expense of its older female talent,” the complaint alleges. “That conclusion is only reinforced by the numerous other ways NY1 has marginalized its older women and supported its younger women and men.”

In a statement, a Charter spokeswoman said the company takes the allegations “seriously” and is thoroughly reviewing them; however, thus far has “not found any merit to them.”

“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,” said Maureen Huff, the spokeswoman.

The plaintiffs have garnered numerous awards over the years.

They allege plum anchoring slots and reporting assignments which they've earned have instead been given to younger colleagues.

Meanwhile, the plaintiffs contend their own on-air time has been slashed.

Concerns and complaints to management have "only led to retaliation and further mistreatment," alleges the civil complaint.

"The widespread acts of discrimination ... have marginalized" the plaintiffs and are "the predictable results and manifestation of a company completely dominated by men," the complaint contends.

Farinacci, for instance, has not been provided opportunities to anchor despite requests to do so, alleges the complaint.

Torre, NY1's first on-air "talent" hire in 1992, believes her salary is less than half that of popular morning anchor Pat Kiernan's and is "substantially less than other male anchors with similar skill and with similar, or even less, experience," alleges the complaint.

Torre has also reviewed the theater for the network for 26 years, yet receives no additional compensation, the complaint contends.

While management rolled out a "massive celebration," including on-air and web site tributes, in late 2017 honoring Kiernan's 20 years as morning anchor, Torre, who has 25 years on-air with her own daily live show, got no promotion at all, the complaint said.

"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," said Douglas H. Wigdor, the women's lawyer in a statement.

In another statement released by Wigdor, the plaintiffs said: "Women on TV 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."

"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," they said.