

# Warner Bros Entertainment Hit With Lawsuit by Former TMZ Employee

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August 25, 2020

## Former TMZ Employee Says She Was Wrongfully Fired After Complaining About 'Bro Fest' Work Culture

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A former TMZ employee on Tuesday filed complaints with federal and California agencies saying that she was wrongfully fired after complaining about a toxic work environment.

In complaints filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, Bernadette Zilio said she “was belittled and abused, held to different and more stringent standards, excluded from business and social interactions in which only male employees participated, denied advancement opportunities, and retaliated against when she resisted the sexist and misogynistic ways.”

Zilio, who worked for TMZ and sister site TooFab from 2015 to 2020, said in the complaint against TMZ parent WarnerMedia that she and her female colleagues described TMZ and sister site TooFab as a “boys’ club,” “100% a bro fest” and a “freaking frat house.”

According to the complaint, Zilio said she faced retaliation and was fired after she complained to the company’s human resources department about the work environment. When she further complained about her firing at that time, the complaint said, TMZ founder Harvey Levin, TooFab managing editor Shyam Dodge and TooFab senior producer Ross McDonagh threatened her with legal action.

A rep for TMZ and TooFab responded: “As Ms. Zilio and her attorney are well aware, TooFab.com parted ways with Ms. Zilio because of multiple and documented incidents of plagiarism and inaccurate reporting. These incidents were addressed at the time and Ms. Zilio acknowledged her errors. This is a blatant attempt to use negative publicity and inaccurate claims to force TooFab and TMZ to pay a monetary settlement. We will vigorously defend against any attempt to mischaracterize what is a legal and justified employment decision.”

In a statement, Zilio’s attorneys, Wigdor LLP’s David Gottlieb and Bryan Arbeit, said, “The only way to fix a toxic work environment is to truly encourage employees to speak up and provide a genuinely effective avenue to raise concerns. Ms. Zilio’s experience demonstrates

the exact opposite approach at Warner Bros. and EHM Productions where Ms. Zilio was shunned after she first complained, fired after she complained a second time, and then threatened if she dared to speak publicly about her experiences.”

