

Amazon sued by Black senior manager alleging sexual assault, discrimination

 [cnet.com/google-amp/news/amazon-sued-by-black-senior-manager-alleging-sexual-assault-discrimination](https://www.cnet.com/google-amp/news/amazon-sued-by-black-senior-manager-alleging-sexual-assault-discrimination)

Charlotte Newman alleges that a senior Amazon employee sexually harassed and groped her. The company says it's investigating the claims.

A Black senior manager at [Amazon](#) filed a lawsuit Monday against the company and some of its employees for alleged race and gender discrimination, harassment and pay equity violations. She also said it was part of a broader pattern of discrimination against Black employees at the tech giant. The lawsuit, filed in a federal court in Washington, DC, also details an allegation of sexual assault by one former Amazon senior employee.

Charlotte Newman, who works at [Amazon Web Services](#), alleges that she was assigned work consistent with employees in roles above the one she was hired and paid for. She also alleges that her direct manager Steven Block told her she was "too direct" and "scary" and that senior employee Andres Maz pulled her hair and groped her.

Maz "felt free to sexually harass Ms. Newman and at times in plain view of others," the lawsuit alleges.

In a statement, an Amazon spokesperson said the company is looking into the complaint.

"Amazon works hard to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture, and these allegations do not reflect those efforts or our values," the spokesperson said. "We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any kind and thoroughly investigate all claims and take appropriate action. We are currently investigating the new allegations included in this lawsuit."

Amazon declined to make Block available for comment. Block didn't immediately respond to a message on LinkedIn and couldn't be reached through other channels. Maz, who couldn't be reached for comment, no longer works for Amazon, the company confirmed. His apparent Twitter account is marked "private" and his apparent LinkedIn page is no longer online. A phone number listed for Andres Maz in Washington, D.C., was disconnected.

Amazon also declined to answer a followup question about which of the claims Amazon had already investigated and whether the statement was meant to indicate that it wouldn't re-investigate those claims. Newman alleged in her lawsuit that the company previously investigated her claims about Block and Maz after she filed an internal complaint. Block was required to undergo training, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit details Newman's own experience of getting hired as a "level 7" employee when she applied for -- and felt she was qualified for -- a "level 8" role of senior manager. She alleges that she was doing "level 8" tasks within months of her hiring but fought for more than two and a half years to receive a promotion. Newman alleges that this practice, which she calls "de-leveling," is applied to Black and Latino employees throughout Amazon, preventing them from receiving appropriate pay for their work and making their path to advancement take much longer than it does for their white counterparts.

Newman also detailed how she spoke up with concerns about the risks of selling Amazon's Rekognition facial recognition software to law enforcement, given that it had higher error rates for Black people. Her concerns were rebuffed, she said. She also noted that Black Amazon employees sent an internal letter to Amazon executives expressing dismay that the company's General Counsel David Zapolsky had used "racially offensive" language to describe a Black warehouse worker who was trying to unionize an Amazon fulfillment center in Staten Island.

Newman, who has an MBA from Harvard University and was previously an economic adviser to Sen. Cory Booker, had earlier filed a complaint to the Washington, DC, Office of Human Rights, according to the lawsuit. In the lawsuit, Newman alleges that several other Black female co-workers were subjected to hurtful, stereotyping comments about their race that held them back professionally.