

Black Amazon senior manager sues tech giant and two executives for race and gender discrimination

 [dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9314053/Black-Amazon-senior-manager-sues-tech-giant-two-executives-race-gender-discrimination.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9314053/Black-Amazon-senior-manager-sues-tech-giant-two-executives-race-gender-discrimination.html)

March 1, 2021

Black senior manager at Amazon sues the tech giant and two executives for race and gender discrimination and claims she was sexually harassed by her manager

- **Charlotte Newman filed her lawsuit Monday in district court in Washington, DC**
- **Newman joined the Amazon Web Services division in January 2017 after she spent three years as an economic policy adviser to Sen Cory Booker**
- **The suit accuses Amazon and two current executives, Steve Block and Shannon Kellogg, of discriminating against Newman**
- **It also accuses a former executive, Andres Maz, of sexually harassing and assaulting Newman on multiple occasions**

By [Megan Sheets For Dailymail.com](#)

A black senior manager at Amazon is suing the company for alleged race and gender discrimination by two current executives and sexual harassment by a third former executive.

Charlotte Newman, who has worked in the Amazon Web Services division since January 2017, filed her lawsuit on Monday in district court in Washington, DC.

The company and two current executives, Steve Block and Shannon Kellogg, are listed as defendants.

In addition to the discrimination claims, the suit accuses a former executive, Andres Maz, of sexually harassing and assaulting Newman on multiple occasions.

Newman, a former economic policy adviser to Sen Cory Booker, explained the legal action in an interview with [Recode](#), saying that the discrimination began when she joined Amazon and has only worsened over the past four years.

Newman, a Harvard Business School graduate who worked for Booker for three years after advising three other members of Congress, said she applied for a public policy manager role at Amazon but was hired at a lower level than she believed was fair given her qualifications.

She was then denied a promotion for over a year, she said, even though she was already taking on the duties of a more senior role.

Newman said her first boss, Block, an AWS director, employed racial stereotypes when criticizing her work.

She claimed that he called her 'intimidating' and said her communication style was 'too direct' and 'just scary'.

Newman said that Block and Kellogg, an AWS vice president who became her manager after him, 'frequently complained about the personalities of other female employees, which is not their common practice regarding men under their supervision'.

Newman's lawsuit also laid out startling sexual harassment allegations against Maz, another AWS director who has since left the company.

The complaint alleged that Maz sexually assaulted Newman by groping her thigh under a table at a work dinner and pulling her hair when she tried to leave another work event.

Newman said she was afraid to report Maz's alleged misconduct because Kellogg relied on the director's feedback in his reviews of Newman's performance.

'There's been deep emotional pain,' Newman told Recode. 'All of the hard work, all of the sacrifices I made, my education - none of that saved me from someone who's a predator and living in fear of what else he might do.'

She finally filed internal complaints over the summer after getting some distance from Maz while working from home, she said.

Maz was ultimately fired after an investigation, but Newman said she still had to attend meetings with him while the probe was underway.

'At the very least, Amazon could have better safeguards in place to protect employees,' she said. 'A company of Amazon's size should have clear guidelines about what happens if you report, hear what your rights are ... [and] ensure that once you report you don't have to be contacted by the person who harassed you.'

Newman said she was motivated to speak out about her experience after Recode published an investigation last week based on allegations from other black corporate workers who said they faced similar discrimination at Amazon.

'I strongly believe that Amazon should be harnessing the light of diverse leadership rather than dimming the light of Black employees and other employees of color,' Newman said.

'For years I had been sort of suffering in silence, [but] I'm sure there are a lot of people who now feel more empowered to add their voices to the story, and hopefully there's some real change that occurs.'

Recode spoke to 10 black employees who each said either they or someone they knew at Amazon had been hired at a lower level than their qualifications justified - a practice known as 'down-leveling'.

'It is not uncommon for women, and especially black women, to have a role advertised at one level but extended an offer at a position that is lower,' former Amazon diversity manager Chanin Kelly-Rae told the outlet.

Newman claimed that the down-leveling cost her millions of dollars, due to the stock options she would have been given if she was hired at the right tier in the first place.

Amazon has acknowledged that down-leveling is common at the company, but said it happens with people from all backgrounds, not just minorities and women.

Newman said she has approached company representatives and informed them that she won't stay at the company long term unless significant changes are made to its hiring and diversity programs.

Newman is being represented by high-profile employment lawyer Douglas Wigdor, who represented six Harvey Weinstein accusers and more than 20 former Fox News employees in sexual harassment and discrimination suits.

'As one of the largest and most powerful companies in the world, Amazon has a moral obligation to lead by example and promote a level playing field for all workers,' Wigdor told Recode.

'Sadly, though Amazon treats its Black employees like second-class citizens ... Because of Ms Newman's bravery, we expect other current and former Black employees at Amazon will now have a voice to stand up to this discrimination and no longer suffer in silence.'