

# Amazon worker sues company, claiming race and gender bias in corporate hires

 [latimes.com/business/story/2021-03-01/amazon-sued-for-alleged-race-gender-bias-in-corporate-hires](https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-03-01/amazon-sued-for-alleged-race-gender-bias-in-corporate-hires)

By Erik Larson/Bloomberg March 1, 2021 4:05 PM PT

Amazon.com Inc. is being sued for allegedly discriminating against Black and female workers in hiring employees for its corporate offices.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in federal court in Washington, claims that Amazon hires people of color “at lower levels” and promotes them less than white co-workers with similar qualifications. The claims include discrimination and harassment as well as violations of the Equal Pay Act.

“These practices have an especially severe effect on Black women at the company,” according to a statement from Wigdor LLP, the law firm that filed the suit on behalf of Charlotte Newman. Newman is head of underrepresented founder start-up business development at Amazon Web Services.

In a statement, Amazon said it works to foster a diverse and inclusive culture.

“We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any kind and thoroughly investigate all claims and take appropriate action,” the company said. “We are currently investigating the new allegations included in this lawsuit.”

Amazon’s lack of racial and gender diversity in its corporate ranks is common throughout the technology industry. Most of the Seattle e-commerce company’s workforce diversity is in its blue-collar warehouses, where products are packed and shipped to customers.

Newman, a Black woman, makes a number of allegations of racism in the suit, including that a senior employee pulled her hair and that a manager told her she was “scary.”

Hired four years ago as a public policy manager, Newman claims she had applied for a higher-level job for which she was better qualified.

“Within months of starting at the company, she in fact was assigned and doing the work of a senior manager-level employee while still being paid at and having the title of the manager level,” the lawsuit said. “To make matters worse, and in defiance of the antidiscrimination laws, Ms. Newman was paid significantly less than her white coworkers, particularly in valuable Amazon stock.”

Newman says many of her colleagues observed a “consistent practice of paying Black employees less than similarly situated white employees.” They also witnessed “a near-total lack of Black representation in and very few women in the upper echelons of the group’s

leadership,” according to the suit.

“Ms. Newman had to wait more than two and a half years for a promotion to the level at which she should have been hired in the first place, and at which level she had already been performing work,” the suit stated.

Amazon’s workforce, which is mostly made up of warehouse workers, includes twice the percentage of Black people as in the U.S. population and is majority people of color, according to [data](#) on the company’s website. White workers make up about a third of the overall employee base.

But Black and Latino managers are underrepresented at Amazon, based on the country’s general population, and Asian workers are overrepresented. White managers, at about 56%, are about equal to their share in the non-Hispanic U.S. population.

In June, Newman filed a written complaint about a “vile and aggressive sexual assault and harassment” incident that was also racist, allegedly committed against her by a senior male employee. The complaint included details of allegedly discriminatory attitudes by her managers.

In September, Newman filed an administrative complaint with the Office of Human Rights in Washington, D.C., claiming racial and sexual harassment and discrimination.

Once, when she tried on a black jacket during a shopping stint on a business trip, a co-worker said she looked like a gorilla, Newman alleges.

“It is astounding that even highly specific instances of harassment that Ms. Newman has experienced as a Black woman at Amazon, such as a senior employee yanking on her hair or being told by a manager she is ‘too direct’ and ‘scary,’ are echoed in incidents involving other Black female employees,” according to the suit.

The [case](#) is Newman v. Amazon.com Inc., 21-cv-00531, U.S. District Court, District of Columbia (Washington).