

# Amazon manager sues company over racial discrimination, harassment allegations

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A Black Amazon manager is suing the company over allegations of racial discrimination and sexual harassment at the e-commerce giant's corporate offices, according to a complaint filed Monday.

The lawsuit filed by Amazon manager Charlotte Newman, who is represented by the high-profile employment lawyer Douglas H. Wigdor, alleges the company routinely engages in "de-leveling" Black and Latino employees when they are hired, meaning they are hired at a level below the job they applied for or will be performing.

The alleged "de-leveling" leads to lower compensation and longer paths for advancement for the employees.

Additionally, the complaint alleges Newman faced racial and sexual harassment by coworkers and supervisors.

"Racial and sexual discrimination exists in Amazon's corporate corridors, not just its warehouses — it simply takes a different form. Amazon has failed to seriously grapple with these issues among its management," the complaint states.

Newman is the head of Underrepresented Founder Startup Business development at Amazon Web Services (AWS), and was previously the head of Financial Services Public Policy, America at AWS.

"Amazon should harness the power of diverse leadership, instead of dimming the light of Black employees," Newman said in a statement.

A spokesperson for Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Newman was hired four years ago as a public policy manager, a "level 6" position at Amazon, despite having applied for a senior manager position, designated "level 7," according to the complaint.

Within months of starting, the complaint says she was assigned to do the work over a senior manager level employee while still being paid at and having the title of manager level. It says she waited more than two and a half years to receive the promotion to the "the level at which she should have been hired in the first place."

Newman was also paid "significantly less than her white coworkers, particularly in valuable Amazon stock," according to the suit.

The suit also alleges that Newman was sexually harassed and assaulted by a senior coworker, Andres Maz.

The complaint alleges Maz reached under a restaurant table without Newman's consent and pressed his hand down on her lap. On another occasion during a work trip to Seattle, Maz allegedly "yanked" on Newman's hair which was in braids when she said she was leaving a bar where coworkers had gathered and told her to "stay or leave her hair behind."

The suit also alleges that Newman's supervisor Steven Block used "stereotypical racial tropes" when criticizing how Newman speaks in meetings, including calling her "aggressive," "too direct," and "scary."

Both Maz and Block are named as defendants along with Amazon and Amazon Web Services. Shannon Kellogg, another Amazon Web Services executive, is also named.

Kellogg relied upon Maz "almost entirely" for his feedback on Newman, according to the complaint. It also alleges Kellogg "frequently complained about the personalities of other female employees, which is not their common practice regarding men under their supervision."

Newman filed a written complaint in June 2020 about the alleged sexual harassment committed by Maz during the first three years of her employment. Nearly four months later, Newman was told Maz had been terminated.

Maz's termination did not "solve or wipe away the effects of his harassment" and Amazon has not taken steps to "remedy the professional or financial effects" of the processes that kept Newman and other Black employees at lower levels, the complaint alleges.

The complaint also states that Newman "certainly is not alone among Amazon's corporate workforce in facing discriminatory treatment."

"Based upon numerous conversations with other Amazon employees who are persons of color and/or women, the 'de-leveling' of Black employees when they are hired ... is common, as is a longer wait for promotions for Black employees and women," the complaint states.

The lawsuit was filed on the heels of a [Recode report](#) published last based on interviews with more than a dozen current and former Amazon corporate employees detailing bias they faced at the company.

Amazon is facing other challenges over its workplace conditions, largely in its warehouses.

Amazon workers at a fulfillment center in Alabama are voting on whether or not to unionize. The warehouse opened last March and quickly drew criticism over inefficient wage, exhausting work quotas and a failure to protect workers from the coronavirus pandemic.

Amazon has defended its practices at the warehouse.

Ballots went out to almost 6,000 workers at the facility last month. President Biden on Sunday offered his support to the union organizing efforts.