

Amazon Targeted With Five Lawsuits From Employees Claiming Discrimination And Retaliation

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Five current and former Amazon employees have filed discrimination and retaliation lawsuits against the company, including one case in which an employee alleges that her supervisor referred to her using a racial epithet.

The complaints, filed in various jurisdictions throughout the country, claim that the employees faced discrimination that was racial, sexual or gender-based from white managers and encountered retaliation when they complained.

“The pattern that you see in these lawsuits is that Amazon’s management, even when they run amok, are protected by the organization,” says Lawrence Pearson, the attorney representing the plaintiffs. “The employee who raises the concern is more often than not treated as the problem.”

In response, Amazon said it is conducting investigations into each case. “We have found no evidence to support the allegations,” a company spokesperson said in a statement to *Forbes*. “Amazon works hard to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture. We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any form, and employees are encouraged to raise concerns to any member of management or through an anonymous ethics hotline with no risk of retaliation.”

The litigation comes a week before Amazon shareholders are set to vote on a list of proposals at the company’s annual meeting, including a measure calling for the company to conduct a racial equity audit — something Amazon has resisted with an unsuccessful appeal to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Facebook previously conducted such an audit, and made changes after it determined that it had allowed hate speech to proliferate on its platform.

Three of the plaintiffs currently work for Amazon, and two are former employees. All of them are women; two are Black, one is Asian-American, one is Latinx and one is White. One of the plaintiffs, Pearl Thomas, a Black 64-year-old human resources manager in Washington State, claims that she was called the “n-word” by her direct supervisor, who uttered the word on a call after thinking she had hung up. After complaining about this supervisor and another manager, she was placed on a performance improvement plan, her lawsuit alleges.

Another Black plaintiff, Tiffany Gordwin, claims she was rejected from a human resources manager role, and instead hired into a lower role, despite being qualified for the initial role. Currently employed at Amazon’s offices in Avondale, Arizona, she claims that she has been

passed over for promotions that were instead given to White male counterparts.

Diana Cuervo, a 40-year-old Latinx woman who was an area manager at an Amazon warehouse in Everett, Washington, claims she was fired after complaining about racial abuse from her supervisor. In the complaint, she alleges her supervisor made comments including “Latinos suck,” and “How is a Latin like you working here?”

Two other plaintiffs, Emily Sousa and Cindy Warner, allege in separate claims that they were subject to gender, racial and sexual harassment.

The lawsuits follow another complaint filed in March by Charlotte Newman, an employee at Amazon’s Washington D.C. office, who alleged sexual harassment and racial discrimination. Newman is also represented by Pearson, a partner at Wigdor LLP in New York.