

Amazon sued for alleged employment law violations

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Five women filed separate lawsuits against Amazon on Wednesday, alleging a range of employment law violations, including harassment, discrimination, equal pay infractions and retaliation. The women, all represented by the same legal team, worked in different parts of Amazon's operations. The suits were filed in federal courts in four states.

The allegations follow a discrimination and harassment suit filed in March by Charlotte Newman, a current Amazon senior manager who alleges the company hired her for a role below her qualifications. She also alleges the company later asked her to take on work with more responsibility without promoting her. Newman, who is Black, also alleges that a manager used racial stereotypes in negative feedback and that a co-worker harassed and groped her.

The new lawsuits come as Amazon faces scrutiny for its labor practices and accusations of a wider pattern of failing to promote women and people of color at the same rate as their white male counterparts. Amazon is participating in a National Labor Relations Board hearing this week to review a complaint that it improperly interfered with a union election at its warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. An employee has claimed to have seen Amazon security workers accessing a USPS mailbox that contained ballots for the election. A Vox report in February described a pattern of adverse conditions for women and Black corporate employees at Amazon. Amazon says it had no access to the mailbox, and separately has said the Vox report doesn't reflect reality for its employees.

In a statement Thursday, an Amazon spokesperson said the company is investigating the lawsuits filed this week and has so far found no evidence to support the claims.

"Amazon works hard to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture," the spokesperson said. "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 new allegations include suits from two women who worked in human resources, two women who worked in delivery operations and one woman who worked for Amazon Web Services, the company's cloud hosting arm.

- HR specialist Tiffany Gordwin, who's Black, alleges she was passed over for a promotion and moved to a lesser role, in addition to receiving feedback from managers that included racial stereotypes.

- HR employee Pearl Thomas, who's Black, alleges she experienced racial abuse and harassment, including an incident in which a manager allegedly used the N-word after he thought she'd hung up the phone. She says she was put on an improvement plan after complaining.
- Delivery operations manager Diana Cuervo alleges she was subjected to harassment from a manager who made disparaging comments against Latinos, and that she was fired after complaining.
- Warehouse shift manager Emily Sousa alleges a co-worker compared her to a porn star and another repeatedly harassed her. She says she was fired after complaining.
- Cindy Warner, a global lead at Amazon Web Services, alleges she earned less than male counterparts, in part because she was hired at a lower level position after being prohibited from applying for a higher level role. She says she was fired in retaliation for complaining.

Lawrence M. Pearson and Jeanne M. Christensen, lawyers representing the women, said in a statement that their clients' experiences are part of a larger pattern.

"These are systemic problems, entrenched deep within the company and perpetuated by a human resources organization that treats employees who raise concerns as the problem," the lawyers wrote. "This must be addressed immediately."