

Amazon Hit With 5 New Suits Alleging Racism, Sexism

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By **Anne Cullen** · May 19, 2021, 8:27 PM EDT

Amazon was smacked with five federal lawsuits Wednesday by current and former female employees who say they were discriminated against by primarily white male managers based on their gender, the color of their skin and their sexual orientation.

The women, all of whom are represented by Wigdor LLP as well as various local firms, sued in federal courts in Arizona, Washington, Delaware and California, alleging violations of federal and state anti-discrimination, anti-retaliation and equal pay laws.

Four of the employees say they faced racism as well as sexism, while a fifth employee says she encountered pushback because she's a gay woman. Together, their complaints contain nearly 150 pages of allegations.

"Amazon can no longer dismiss abusive behavior and retaliation by white managers as mere anecdotes," said Wigdor partners Lawrence M. Pearson and Jeanne M. Christensen in a joint statement released Wednesday. "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."

One of the accusers, Tiffany Gordwin, a Black woman who works for Amazon as a senior human resources specialist in Arizona, says she was treated as a second-class citizen by her white superiors, skipped over for promotions and scolded for complaining about the bias she faced.

A second Black woman who also works in Amazon's human resources department, Pearl Thomas, says in her Washington federal court complaint that she was called the "n-word" by a supervisor after she complained to him about racial discrimination she encountered from another colleague.

Seattle-based Diana Cuervo, who hails from Colombia and is Latinx, alleges she faced blatantly racist remarks about her heritage while she worked as an area manager and was sacked shortly after she complained about these statements.

In the Delaware lawsuit, Asian American shift manager Emily Sousa alleges that she was sexually harassed by a male manager, who she says fixated on her Asian heritage. When she rejected his advances, she says, she was demoted several levels and transferred to another facility.

The fifth complaint was lodged by Cindy Warner, a gay woman who worked for Amazon Web Services in California, and says she was demeaned at work because she outperformed her male colleagues. Warner contends that she was let go because she complained.

Until these types of inequities are addressed, Wigdor partners Pearson and Christensen said, they "look forward to vigorously litigating our clients' discrimination and retaliation claims against Amazon."

A spokesperson for Amazon said they're looking into the allegations and have turned up no evidence to back them up.

"We are conducting thorough investigations for each of these unrelated cases, as we do with any reported incidents, and we have found no evidence to support the allegations," the spokesperson said in an email.

"Amazon works hard to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture," they added. "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."

These latest accusations come in the wake of **another sexism and racism lawsuit** filed in early March by Charlotte Newman, a Black business development head who says the retail giant discriminates against Black workers, especially women, in hiring, compensation, promotions and leadership appointments. Newman is also represented by Wigdor.

The five women behind the new lawsuits are represented by Jeanne M. Christensen, Lawrence J. Pearson, Alfredo J. Pelicci and Anthony G. Bizien of Wigdor LLP.

Gordwin is also represented by Ty D. Frankel of Bonnett Fairbourn Friedman & Balint PC. Cuervo and Thomas are also represented by Jamal N. Whitehead of Schroeter Goldmark & Bender. Sousa is also represented by Michael D. Allen and Emily A. Biffen of Allen & Associates. Warner is also represented by Omar H. Bengali of Girard Bengali APC.

Counsel information for Amazon was not yet available.

The cases are Gordwin v. Amazon.com Incorporated, case number 2:21-cv-00888, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona; Cuervo v. Amazon.com Inc. et al., case number 2:21-cv-00660, in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington; Thomas v. Amazon.com Inc. et al., case number 2:21-cv-00661, in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington; Warner v. Amazon.com Inc., case number 5:21-cv-00866, in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California; and Sousa v. Amazon.com, Inc. et al, case number 1:21-cv-00717, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware.

--Editing by Abbie Sarfo.

Update: This article has been updated to include case information about the Sousa lawsuit.