

Lawsuit: Fox News Executive Made Fun of Black Employees' Speech, Called Black Men "Women Beaters"



Summary: Conservative news behemoth, Fox News, is being sued for ignoring an allegedly hostile workplace towards African-Americans.

Two black female Fox News employees sued the network this week for workplace hostility. The conservative news outlet has a reputation amongst liberals for being racist because of their strong opinions regarding current events. Compounding to this controversial public perception, on Tuesday, the same day the lawsuit was filed, popular host Bill O'Reilly shocked the African-American community when he made an unsavory joke about black congresswoman Maxine Waters' hair.

In the lawsuit filed in New York, Tichona Brown and Tabrese Wright said they endured "yearslong relentless racial" hostility from their boss, Judith Slater, a top financial executive who has since been fired. They said that Slater made fun of the plaintiffs by making them say words that she believed African-Americans mispronounced such as "ask" and "mother" and mocked the "Black Lives Matter" political movement. Slater also allegedly referred to black men as "women beaters" and said she would never travel to certain parts of Manhattan that were predominately black for safety issues.

Wright said that Slater even had the nerve to joke about her hairstyle and credit rating, and even worse, Slater allegedly asked Wright if her three children were all from the same father.

Wright and Brown's lawsuit also detailed accounts of racial hostility from four other African-American Fox News employees who have since exited the company. The two also claim that Slater made crude remarks about people of Chinese, Mexican, and Indian descent.

The plaintiffs complained to higher-ups about the inappropriate environment and Fox News fired Slater, the senior vice president of accounting and the network's controller, on February 28. Fox News told CBS News that Slater was terminated for her remarks.

"There is no place for inappropriate verbal remarks like this at Fox News," the network said. "We are disappointed that this needless litigation has been filed."

While Fox News has worked to assuage the public opinion that it is a hostile place to work for women and people of color, the Rupert Murdoch-owned news giant continues to find itself in hot water when it comes to race. For instance, O'Reilly's hair statement about Representative Waters was viewed as a racist and sexist insult, and it sparked a Twitter discussion #BlackWomenAtWork, where African-Americans shared microaggressions they endured in the workplace. O'Reilly has since apologized.

Before O'Reilly's remark, the network's pundits made other controversial racial remarks. In 2009, Glenn Beck said that President Barack Obama hated white people. And in 2013, Megyn Kelly professed that fictional Santa Claus could only be white. Former *Clueless* actress and Fox News commentator Stacey Dash, who is black, said in 2016 that Black History Month should be abolished.

Despite Slater's firing, Brown and Wright sued Fox News because they believed the network "intentionally turned a blind eye" to their situation and retaliated against them. They said that Fox ignored the racial hostility in the work environment until it became clear that the matter could go public and damage the network's reputation, which had already seen a hit after host Gretchen Carlson sued Fox News for alleged sexual harassment from former CEO Roger Ailes.

Fox News said that they take racial discrimination seriously and were investigating the matter before the firing and lawsuit. They denied retaliation claims and they countered that Brown was still employed at Fox and Wright moved laterally where she received the same pay and benefits package.

The plaintiffs' attorneys Douglas Wigdor and Jeanne Christensen said that the lawsuit was about holding Fox News accountable.

"We are confident that the good men and women of the Bronx will hold Fox accountable for what we believe to be its abhorrent racist conduct, reminiscent of the Jim Crow era," Wigdor and Christensen said in a statement.

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