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Investigative Reporter Sues CBS for Gender and Age Discrimination



Vallery Jean/FilmMagic

Michele Gillen



Miami journalist Michele Gillen says she was told by HR that she couldn't claim discrimination because she had a female news director.

On the heels of sexual misconduct allegations involving ousted CBS chief Leslie Moonves, the network's broadcast news arm is being accused of age and gender discrimination and retaliation in a new lawsuit.



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in 2016, according to her suit, which was filed Friday in Florida federal court.

"The culture of toxic misogyny exposed of late in Hollywood and national media outlets is and has been thriving at CBS," begins the complaint. "From the corporate headquarters in New York to the CBS owned and operated station WFOR-TV in Miami, CBS management and human resources ("HR") is entrenched in what can generously be described as the 'good ole boy's club' culture, which fosters misogyny, places men on a pedestal, elevates and protects men despite bad behavior, emboldens and protects bullies; and, often with the help of bullies, pushes women out who are beyond the age of forty (40)."

Gillen began reporting discrimination and bullying in 2010. She filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2016 and was given the green light to sue this August. She's seeking lost wages and wants to be reinstated with full benefits.

She says younger and male reporters were routinely given projects she pitched, leaving her with less desirable assignments and little to no support in producing them. When she approached human resources about the issue she was told to let God handle it and that "bad karma" would catch up to the people doing it. After complaining, she claims her on-air time was cut back.

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When she reported the discrimination to the senior vice president of human resources in New York, Gillen says she was told "You can't claim discrimination, you have a female news director."

Gillen says her ex-Miami TV station is a "hostile den of intimidation and disrespect."

"Male reporters have felt at liberty to degrade women in the news room by kicking over and stamping on work documents, pulling papers from their hands, and instructing female staff not to speak," writes attorney Louise Caro in the complaint.

Gillen claims one of her colleagues humiliated her in front of superiors with no consequences and disparaged female CBS



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in hopes that CBS would take action against the reporter and the superiors who did nothing. She claims the only other female in the room was never interviewed and the male reporter continues to gain more exposure at the station.

When she returned, she found out she had been removed as anchor from her public affairs show and replaced with a younger woman. A subsequent conversation with another New York HR rep who was visiting the station was met with comments like "Favoritism is not illegal."

In September 2016, Gillen was called into the station to cover breaking news and was told by the general manager that her position was being eliminated. When she pushed him for a reason, she claims he said "We don't want you working here anymore."

She's suing CBS and her local station for gender and age discrimination and retaliation. (Read her full complaint below.)

CBS has not yet responded to a request for comment.

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