

The Forward Eagle

Compiled Weekly

“Let us endeavor mutually to enlighten one another.”

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Page 1 of 1

Current Events

1.

On December 17, 2025, Andrea R. Lucas, Donald Trump’s pick for chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a federal agency formed in 1964 to enforce civil rights law in the workplace, posted a video of herself on X. “Are you a white male who has experienced discrimination at work based on your race or sex?” Lucas, wearing a red blazer and sitting at a wooden desk, asked. “You may have a claim to recover money under federal civil rights laws.” Her agency, she continued, is “committed to identifying, attacking, and eliminating all race and sex discrimination—including against white male applicants and employees.” Lucas, a Republican, urged white men with claims to “contact the EEOC as soon as possible.”

The video caused “shock and consternation inside the agency,” Rebecca Davis O’Brien, a labor reporter at the New York Times (NYT), later wrote. It was also a pretty good crystallization of how, since Trump retook office, the EEOC has distorted the intent of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and weaponized the agency to enforce Trump’s MAGA agenda. The EEOC has voted to rescind guidance for employers on workplace harassment; dismissed cases that sought to defend transgender employees and job applicants with criminal records; and focused its ire on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) measures, which the White House has claimed are “racially discriminatory” and JD Vance, the vice president, has called “evil.”

Last Tuesday, in the clearest expression yet of this trend, the EEOC filed a federal civil rights suit against the The New York Times, alleging that the newspaper engaged in “unlawful employment practices” when it did not hire a white man for the role of deputy real estate editor. The suit unites two of the Trump administration’s pet grievances: DEI initiatives and critical news organizations, which it has attempted to bully into line, or at least tangle up in onerous litigation. A spokesperson for the NYT, Danielle Rhoades Ha, was quick to denounce the suit as “politically motivated,” saying it deviated from standard agency practice. “The allegation centers on a single personnel decision for one of over 100 deputy positions across the newsroom, yet the EEOC’s filing makes sweeping claims that ignore the facts to fit a predetermined narrative,” Rhoades Ha said.

The lawsuit is based on a complaint from a NYT employee filed to the agency in July of last year. But when the suit was filed, on May 5, in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, it was brought in the name of the federal agency, not the complainant. The EEOC’s case relies heavily on a NYT statement published in February of 2021, under the headline, “A Call to Action.” The statement highlighted the underrepresentation of people of color in leadership positions at the company and outlined a “bold plan for building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive” organization, such as by increasing the number of Black and Latino employees in leadership positions by 50 percent by 2025. A more diverse NYT, the note said, would lead to stronger reporting and “more coverage that captures the lives of people and communities of color with deeper understanding and nuance.” The EEOC suit alleges that two NYT employees involved in hiring a deputy real estate editor were motivated by “desired demographic goals” when the white male claimant was not included among four finalists for the role. (These four, the suit says, were a white female, a Black male, an Asian female, and a multiracial female.) This is the basis for the EEOC’s claim that the NYT acted “with malice or with reckless indifference” to the claimant’s federally protected rights as a white male.

One of the strange things about this episode is that the claimant apparently still works at the NYT. Based on details in the suit, the paper’s Charlotte



Time Magazine Cover from Nov. 5, 1965

Klein identified him last week as Bryant Rousseau, a senior editor and producer on the international desk. (Rousseau also describes himself online as a “conceptual artist, working across all media.”) Journalists at the NYT were reportedly baffled that someone would “sell out the paper to the administration” like this, Klein wrote. “You’re giving the Trump administration a weapon while they’re trying to persecute journalists,” a NYT reporter told her.

Anyone wanting to sue a private employer under civil rights law must file a complaint with the EEOC. The agency currently has three commissioners—two Republicans and one Democrat. (Trump fired two of its Democratic commissioners in January of 2025; they sued, claiming the president does not have that power over an independent agency, but the lawsuit is on hold while the Supreme Court considers a similar case, relating to the Federal Trade Commission’s independence from executive power.) Commissioners must vote on whether to authorize litigation. Kalpana Kotagal, the commission’s only Democrat, who voted against suing the NYT, wrote on LinkedIn last week, “Regrettably, I fear this litigation is driven not by the merits, but by a desire to advance the administration’s political agenda.”

Kotagal also pointed out that the lawsuit came “on the heels of NYT’s reporting on the weaponization of the agency.” This seemed to refer to recent articles by O’Brien. On January 27, the NYT published O’Brien’s profile of Lucas, who claimed that her mission was to implement “a really ambitious civil rights agenda” that would “restore a focus on equality as opposed to equity,” and said that, during Joe Biden’s presidency, “everyone collectively lost their minds” in support of DEI initiatives. O’Brien followed with a story, published April 27, on how employees at the EEOC felt they were “under intense pressure from leadership to bring in cases that fit the Trump administration’s priorities.” Kotagal’s comments suggested the EEOC could be targeting a news organization in retribution for critical reporting, an allegation that would be nothing new for this administration.

Speaking to the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR), Chai Feldblum, a former EEOC commissioner, and Karla Gilbride, who was until recently the agency’s general counsel, both said that the NYT’s efforts to increase diversity in the newsroom were not inherently illegal or discriminatory. “This lawsuit is completely consistent with everything Chair Lucas has been saying, every ideological position of this administration, that somehow expanding diversity is

inconsistent with merit-based hiring,” Feldblum said. “And that is simply false.” Gilbride said that it is uncommon for the agency to take on individual cases based on a “failure to promote” someone, and “the fact that the agency chose to do that here does indicate to me that this is a priority area, that the chair is putting a lot of resources in to try to find a case that fits this narrative about DEI.” (The EEOC did not respond to a request for comment from CJR.) The litigation seeks a jury trial and compensation.

What has been missing from this conversation so far are the basic demographic facts of US journalism. Racial and ethnic minorities make up about 42 percent of the US population, according to the most recent census, in 2020, but remain grossly underrepresented in the media industry. About 76 percent of “reporting journalists” identified as white in a Pew Research Center survey from 2023. Last year, people of color represented about 28 percent of TV news employees, and 16.6 percent of the radio news workforce. And the percentage of top editors of color is in decline, according to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, falling from 29 percent in 2024 to 15 percent in 2025.

In the past year, CRJ has covered the marked shift away from DEI efforts in newsrooms, in terms of both hiring and coverage. In February, half of the Washington Post’s unionized members who identify as Hispanic or Latino were let go, according to the Washington Post Newspaper Guild, along with 45 percent of Black members and 43 percent of Asian members. Black former staffers at the Post told CJR that the commitment to diverse coverage in the newsroom ended long before that. And last year, CBS News gutted its race and culture team, and NBC disbanded all its verticals dedicated to reporting on underrepresented groups. The Trump administration’s complaints about “reverse discrimination” seem disconnected from reality; being a white man is no barrier to success in journalism.

In one of O’Brien’s recent NYT stories, she reported on how employees at Lucas’s EEOC have faced pressure to bring, or keep alive, cases against white men, even when the evidence seems weak. In one case, “employees had to justify abandoning the case of a white man who said he was the victim of discrimination because he didn’t get a job,” O’Brien wrote. “The job, the office’s review found, went to another white man, and all the other applicants were also white men.”

Word of the Week

equal

/ˈiːkwəl/

adjective

1 a : the same in number, amount, degree, rank, or quality

- an *equal* number of apples and oranges
- issues of *equal* importance = issues that are *equal* in importance

1 b : having the same mathematical value

- The fractions $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$ are *equal*.

2 : not changing : the same for each person

- *equal* rights
- an equal opportunity employer: an employer who does not discriminate against people because of their race, religion, etc.

3 : formal : able to do what is needed

- He says that he's *equal* to the task.

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