

# San Diego's ABC station sued for gender harassment and race discrimination by African-American anchor

**Chasing Filner case hard, San Diego big media outlet and current assistant news director faced court charges of verbal and racial abuse**

By Matt Potter  
April 22, 2007

It probably won't make the news on CNN, owned by Time Warner, or be featured on ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos, owned by the Walt Disney Company, or joked about on-air in the Manhattan studios of Stephen Colbert, owned by MTV Networks Entertainment Group, a unit of the Viacom Media Networks division of Viacom.

It likely won't be kicked around by expelled mayor Rodger Hedgecock on the afternoon video feed of GOP real estate and hotel mogul Doug Manchester's U-T San Diego, or covered by San Diego State University's public broadcasting arm, heavily subsidized by Irwin Jacobs, billionaire founder of Qualcomm, currently pushing a mobile TV "platform."

And it almost certainly won't be turned into a movie starring Will Ferrell using the catch phrase "You stay classy, San Diego."

It's not much of a secret that, like other giant American corporate institutions, big media protects its own, and many of the few employees who speak out against it, or even deign to discuss its shortcomings, never work there again.

The complaint of Lisa Lake-Campbell against San Diego television station KGTV, then owned by McGraw-Hill, Inc., has been the proverbial tree falling in a forest of happy news.

Though they are on top of the Bob Filner feeding frenzy, New York's gatekeepers of San Diego news haven't raced to report the allegations of the African-American anchorwoman, who charged her employer and supervisors with gender harassment, racial discrimination, and pandering to a specific ethnic demographic.

It began with a complaint filed in Superior court here four years ago this spring, and a June 2009 denial featured in a brief mention of the case by KGTV's fellow San Diego broadcaster KNSD, owned by NBC, then a subsidiary of General Electric.

KGTV's director of multiplatform marketing, Jason Maloney, stated, "as a company recognized for treating employees fairly and valuing the contributions of its workforce, we believe this suit to be without merit and will defend against it vigorously."

And that was virtually the last San Diego was to hear about Lake-Campbell's case, at least from KGTV and other broadcasting operations, which have failed to make mention of it or the broadcast industry's widely alleged culpability in sexual and gender harassment and racism, even while offering wide coverage of accused San Diego mayor Filner.

In addition to her harassment allegations, Lake-Campbell's complaint against KGTV charged that the station shunned its few African-American workers: "During Plaintiff's employment with Defendants, Defendants had a custom and practice of discriminating against African Americans."

In or around the summer of 2007, Plaintiff and [then-KGTV executive Gary] Brown attended the National Association of Black Journalist (NABJ) convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. While there, Plaintiff noticed that Mr. Brown avoided her and other African American employees from MCGRAW-HILL's Indianapolis station.

Also, Mr. Brown stated to the human resources representative from MCGRAW-HILL's Indianapolis station that he "doubted he could find any real talent at the convention."

In or around March 2, 2008, Plaintiff attended one of Defendants' staff meetings. At this meeting, Plaintiff once again complained of Defendants' continual failure to employ African American employees.

Thereafter, on or about May 9, 2008, Defendants retaliated against Plaintiff by demoting her from her position as anchor on the morning newscast, to the position of co-anchor on the 11:00 a.m. newscast, and reporter for the 7:00 p.in. newscast.

Lake-Campbell's complaint went on to allege that station news executive Sean Kennedy regularly mistreated her and other women workers.

KENNEDY regularly called Plaintiff, and other female employees, "bitches."

KENNEDY regularly commented to Plaintiff, and other female employees, on their physical appearance.

For example, KENNEDY regularly commented to Plaintiff, and other female employees, that they "looked hot," or that they "looked sexy."

The anchorwoman further detailed her charges against Kennedy in an [April 2010 declaration filed with the court.](#)

During my employment Sean Kennedy, my supervisor, used inappropriate and highly offensive language toward me. Mr. Kennedy, on numerous occasions, referred to me as "bitch."

Mr. Kennedy would say, "You look hot, bitch," "That's hot, bitch," and "You look sexy, bitch."

I was not flattered by Mr. Kennedy's statements. In fact, I found his statements to be highly offensive and inappropriate for the workplace.

When Mr. Kennedy called me "bitch", I felt demeaned and humiliated, and it created a work environment where I felt the need to avoid him, and constantly worried I would face more harassment.

The last instance of Mr. Kennedy calling me "bitch" happened in the first two weeks of May 2008, which I remember because it was within my final two weeks of employment with 10News.

On this occasion, Mr. Kennedy told me, "Come on bitch, sign your contract and let's go shopping."

Kennedy wasn't the only alleged offender.

In or around August 2007, I attended the National Association of Black Journalists (NAB J) convention with Gary Brown, the station manager at that time.

While at that conference, Mr. Brown made what I considered to be very degrading and racially discriminatory remarks. Mr. Brown stated, "You can't find a star in a place like this," and "You're not going to find a star here."

I was highly offended by both of these comments, and believed that Mr. Brown's statements projected a dislike and negative feelings for African Americans.

I understood his statements to mean that 10News would not even consider hiring a qualified candidate that was African American, simply on the basis of their race.

I was disgusted and offended by Mr. Brown's comments.

In addition to the comments made by Mr. Brown at the NABJ convention, I noticed that 10News did not seem to hire African American employees, despite the fact that I had referred several well-qualified candidates.

Therefore, in order to let 10News know that I believed they were discriminating against African Americans, including myself, in hiring and promoting, I made several complaints.

I complained to 10News that they did not hire any African American writers, producers or assignment editors. I also brought it to 10News' attention that they had not hired any African Americans in the newsroom between 2000 and 2008.

I never suggested to 10News that they had to hire a quota of African American employees; I simply told them that I had a good faith belief that they were discriminating against qualified African American employees and candidates, on the basis of their race, in their hiring and promoting practices.

Racially based news ratings, Lake-Campbell alleged, were also a part of the station's long pattern of discrimination against blacks.

On or about May 9, 2008, less than two months after I lodged my complaints with 10News, Mr. Kennedy removed me from my position on the morning show and demoted me to a reporter.

At the time he removed and demoted me Mr. Kennedy stated to me that my demotion was based on the fact 10News' "audience was changing."

I took this statement to reiterate a previous conversation I had with Ed Quinn, wherein Mr. Quinn informed me that 10News did not hire African American employees because they wanted to target the "Hispanic audience," and that the "African American population was declining."

Like the charges against Filner, the allegations against KGTV and its white male employees remain unproven. No heads reportedly rolled.

An out-of-court settlement was reached and Lake-Campbell's attorneys filed a dismissal of the case in May 2010.

Kennedy is still employed by the station, currently owned by E.W. Scripps, as assistant news director. Brown works as Vice President Talent Development and Agent at Napoli Management Group in Los Angeles, according to the men's profiles on LinkedIn.

We have a call into Kennedy regarding the allegations against him and the station.

A Filner settlement deal, which KGTV's Team 10's J.W. August reports would require the mayor's resignation, is said to be heading for the city council tomorrow.

Big media is expected to cover.

Original article: <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/weblogs/news-ticker/2013/aug/22/san-diegos-abc-station-sued-for-gender-harassment-/#/>