

Jeff Bezos Former Housekeeper Sues For Racial Discrimination, Bad Working Conditions

Amazon's founder and current executive chairman, Jeff Bezos, is being sued by a former housekeeper who says she was forced to work up to 14 hours a day in poor conditions and faced racial discrimination, per Bloomberg.

Axelle/Bauer-Griffin / Contributor I Getty Images

Jeff Bezos and girlfriend Lauren Sanchez at the Baby2Baby 10-

Year Gala.

The complaint, which was filed in Seattle's King County Superior Court this week, says that former housekeeper, Mercedes Wedaa, worked long hours and was not informed she was allowed to take rest breaks – and says there was no room to do so, anyway.

During meals, she and her co-workers would eat in the laundry room, the complaint added. Wedaa also alleges that an employee in Bezos's home "became aggressive and abusive" with her, and treated did not treat her the same as white staff.

Harry Korrell, an attorney for Bezos and the other defendants – the suit was also filed against two companies that manage the Amazon founder's residences – pushed back on the claims in an emailed statement to Entrepreneur.

"We have investigated the claims, and they lack merit," Korrell said.

Wedaa started working with the Bezos family in September 2019, per the Associated Press, first as a solo housekeeper and then as a "house coordinator."

The suit claims, per the AP, that she and her co-workers had to jump through a window in the laundry room to get to a bathroom when the family was home – as they were not allowed to be around them, except while cleaning.

"Because there was no readily accessible bathroom, Plaintiff and other housekeepers spend large parts of their day unable to use the toilet even though they needed to," the complaint wrote and giving them urinary tract infections (UTIs). (A connection between holding urine and UTIs has not been completely confirmed.)

Wedaa's suit claimed she was fired because she was told she looked "unhappy."

Korrell said that Wedaa was “responsible for her own break and meal times, and there were several bathrooms and breakrooms available to her and other staff.”

He also claimed that Wedaa only decided to file the suit after the company said it would not give her \$9 million.

“Given their backgrounds, the suggestion that Mr. Bezos, Ms. Sanchez, or Northwestern LLC discriminated against Ms. Wedaa based on her race or national origin is absurd,” the statement finished.

One of Wedaa’s lawyers, Patrick Leo McGuigan of HKM Employment Attorneys, did not immediately respond to a request for comment but told the AP that she “has worked hard all her life, she is a very credible person and compelling evidence supports her claims.”

Bezos has dealt with workplace complaints before, from enormous Amazon employee turnover to what former and current employees claimed was a “toxic” culture at his space company, Blue Origin.

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