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News Anchor Files Discrimination Lawsuit After Losing Her Job because of Comments Made on Social Media

A white news anchor has filed a race discrimination lawsuit against her former employer, a Pittsburgh television station. Wendy Bell made headlines earlier this year when she was let go from her anchor position after posting controversial comments on a Facebook page sponsored by the television station. Now, Bell is making headlines again for her unusual race discrimination claims.

Earlier this spring, the Washington Post [reported](#) that Bell was fired after she posted comments on Facebook about a mass shooting that Bell had recently covered on air.

In her comments, Bell stated You needn't be a criminal profiler to draw a mental sketch of the killers They are young black men, likely in their teens or in their early 20s. They have multiple siblings from multiple fathers and their mothers work multiple jobs. These boys have been in the system before. They've grown up there. They know the police. Theyve been arrested. Bell posted these Facebook comments before any arrests had been made and before any names or descriptions of the suspects had been released. Shortly thereafter, the television station issued a statement that they had "ended the relationship" with Bell because her comments were "inconsistent with the company's ethics and journalistic standards."

In her federal lawsuit filed this week, *Bell OToole v. Hearst Stations, Inc.*, Bell claims that she was fired because of her race in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. In her lawsuit complaint, Bell asserts that, had she written the same comments about white suspects or had she herself been black, she would not have been fired. The complaint states that the television station "interpreted" the Facebook posting to be "racially pejorative" when that is not how it would have been interpreted if she were not white.

To prevail on her discrimination claim, Bell will need to show that she is a member of a protected racial class, that she was qualified for her news anchor position, that she suffered an adverse employment action, and that members outside of her protected class were treated more favorably. The complaint alleges that Bell's performance consistently exceeded expectations. The complaint also identifies alleged misconduct by similarly situated reporters and anchors at the television station, claiming that the television station "consistently downplays" the misconduct of these reporters and anchors "because of their race or gender."

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The high-profile nature of this discrimination case and the unique arguments being asserted make it one to watch. Additionally, this case serves as a reminder to employers to have and maintain carefully drafted social media policies in their workplaces.