

A Nielsen executive in charge of diversity outreach claims racial discrimination.

A high-ranking Black executive at Nielsen, the data company that tracks television viewership, says the company discriminated against her based on her race, according to a lawsuit she filed on Monday.

Cheryl Grace, a senior vice president in charge of consumer engagement for the company's U.S. operations, said in the lawsuit that even though she was the top executive in charge of liaising with minority communities throughout the country, Nielsen's leaders excluded her from conversations about diversity and equality in the wake of George Floyd's death. At the same time, Ms. Grace said in the lawsuit, white executives excelled even after making insensitive and even racist comments, while Black executives in the company struggled for recognition.

Distraught, Ms. Grace wrote to the company's chief executive, David Kenny, who is also its chief diversity officer, with a list of concerns.

"Within the last year, I have watched a white senior executive be placated for her egregious lapse in judgment and 'slip of the tongue' when she referred to her African-American assistant as a slave; while a very junior African-American associate was terminated just last month for her lapse in judgment in how she disseminated an email about microaggressions," she wrote in the June 16 letter, which was entered into court records as part of the lawsuit.

"This is the reason African-American associates who rely on their paychecks for survival don't speak up at Nielsen!" Ms. Grace wrote.

According to the lawsuit, after Ms. Grace complained to Mr. Kenny, officials from Nielsen's legal and human resources departments combed through her employee record and accused her of "expense fraud" for previously approved expenses like a makeup artist and a limousine service that she billed to the company years earlier.

"Nielsen received notification of this filing minutes ago and so does not have a fulsome response to the allegations at this time," said Fernanda Paredes, a company spokeswoman. "The company stands for celebrating and counting every voice. We are committed to ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace long into the future."

Ms. Paredes said Mr. Kenny, who is described in the lawsuit but is not a named party, did not have a comment.

— *Emily Flitter*