

Ump files racial discrimination suit against MLB

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A Major League Baseball umpire Monday sued baseball commissioner Rob Manfred and the league alleging racial discrimination in baseball's promotion and post-season assignment policies.

Cuban-born Angel Hernandez, 55, states in his suit that he has been passed over several times for a chance to work the World Series despite high marks on evaluations. The suit also charges that even though Hernandez was made a temporary crew chief, it has never been made permanent.

The suit accuses MLB of promoting only one minority umpire to permanent crew chief in the history of the game (a Hispanic) and that only one non-white umpire has worked a World Series since 2011.

There are just under 100 umpires currently on [the MLB roster](#); an Enquirer review of the roster and the photos and biographies attached to it indicates about 10 are African-American or Hispanic.

"The selection of these less qualified, white individuals over Hernandez was motivated by racial, national origin and/or ethnic considerations," the lawsuit says.

The suit comes after Hernandez filed two discrimination charges in June with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Hernandez, who has been an umpire since 1993, worked a weekend series in Cincinnati between the Chicago Cubs and the Reds. Efforts to reach him were unsuccessful late Monday afternoon.

The suit seeks back pay and unspecified compensatory damages. It was filed in U.S. District Court in Cincinnati, although the reasons for the choice of venue were not clear. U.S. District Court judge Michael Barrett will oversee the case.

His lawyer, Kevin Murphy of Fort Mitchell, did not return calls seeking comment.

MLB spokesman John Blundell said the league is aware of the suit, but declined further comment.

Officials with the World Umpires Association, the union for MLB umpires, did not return messages seeking comment.

In the suit, Hernandez states his performance ratings were solid but declined after 2011. That's when former New York Yankees manager Joe Torre was named as MLB's chief baseball officer.

Hernandez and Torre had history, with Torre calling out Hernandez publicly for some calls in 2001.

"Torre took to the media to insult him and call into question his skill as a Major League umpire," the suit states. "Though it may seem as if Major League Baseball's problems with Hernandez begin and end with some personal animus Torre and some other individuals in the Office of the Commissioner may have towards Hernandez, an overview of how Major League Baseball has treated minorities such as Hernandez shows a much deeper and more troubling trend."

Hernandez worked the 2002 and 2005 World Series, but none since (although he did earn assignments for baseball's post-season). He was also a temporary crew chief in 2005 and 2012 but was passed over for a permanent slot even though he applied four times.

An umpire crew chief is the supervisor on the field for the other three umpires on a crew and earns more money, and has specific responsibilities during a game. The position also acts as administrative supervisor and fills out reports on the rest of the crew.

The chief also is also the main liaison between the crew and baseball's headquarters in New York, especially during instant replay challenges.

Umpires who are selected for the World Series earn more pay.

The suit is the latest in a series of occasional legal disputes between umpires and MLB.

In 2000, umpire Ron Barnes sued the league for \$20 million for age discrimination. The case was eventually settled for an undisclosed sum and Barnes eventually was put in charge of umpiring in the Golden Baseball League, a now defunct independent.

The league settled with other umpires in 2004 who sued over being demoted or fired because of a newly installed computer evaluation system. And in 2002, MLB sued the umpires' union over not being able to discipline a top-level umpire.