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Megyn Kelly prepares for aggressive NBC legal fight amid blackface controversy



Megyn Kelly poses on the set of her show, "Megyn Kelly Today" at NBC Studios on Thursday, Sept. 21, 2017, in New York. (Charles Sykes/Invision/AP)

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Megyn Kelly has beefed up her team by hiring a top Hollywood litigator amidst her blackface controversy, signaling that the anchor is ready to put up an aggressive fight as she sorts out her likely exit plan with NBC.

Kelly is now represented by Bryan Freedman, one of the founding partners of the Los Angeles-based law firm Freedman & Taitelman, *Variety* has confirmed. Kelly's new attorney is set to meet with NBC executives as early as Friday to "determine next steps," insiders say.

Neither Kelly's personal representative nor attorney were immediately available for comment on the anchor's current status at NBC.

The appointment of Kelly's attorney comes as the anchor has parted ways with her agency, CAA. A person familiar with the matter tells *Variety* that Kelly departed CAA because the agency also represents NBC News president Noah Oppenheim.

In recent months, prior to the recent controversy, tensions have been growing between Kelly and NBC News management. Sources with knowledge of the situation say that NBC News chairman Andy Lack disapproved of Kelly aggressively covering stories about sexual harassment on her show, particularly related to NBC and disgraced anchor Matt Lauer, who was fired last November.

"After Andy Lack turned on her yesterday, she decided she needed a non-conflicting agency because of Noah," says an insider with knowledge of Kelly's thinking, referring to NBC News dispatching their anchors to extensively cover Kelly's blackface remarks across their broadcasts.

NBC News declined to comment.

Following Kelly's controversial comments about dressing up in blackface on Halloween, the broadcaster apologized to her staff and on-air the next day, but her apology did not settle down the intense backlash online. NBC covered the controversy at length on "Today" and "NBC Nightly News."

Kelly hired Freedman late Wednesday night. However, the change in her team was in effect before her blackface comments on Tuesday's "Megyn Kelly Today," signaling that Kelly was eyeing a change in her role at NBC News before the scandal erupted. After she made the decision not to be represented by CAA, an insider explained that Kelly had been in talks with UTA prior to the blackface controversy. After the backlash, UTA decided not to represent her. Another insider says UTA suggested Kelly should be represented by Freedman, as a lawyer would better fit her needs rather than an agent.

Freedman is a talent-side litigator, who previously represented UTA in the dispute over the controversial move of 13 CAA agents to the firm. While she was at Fox News, Kelly was repped by the UTA-owned N.S. Bienstock agency before signing with CAA ahead of her multi-million dollar NBC News deal in 2017.

At press time, NBC News declined to comment on the status of Kelly's employment at the company.

