

JUST IN: Sage Steele Settles Lawsuit With ESPN, Announces She's Leaving So She Can Exercise Her 'First Amendment Rights More Freely'

By **Ahmad Austin** | Aug 15th, 2023, 10:51 am

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Chris Pizzello/AP

ESPN anchor **Sage Steele** announced Tuesday that she has reached a settlement in her lawsuit against ESPN and Disney.

In the same statement, Steele revealed that will also be leaving the company.

“Having successfully settled my case with ESPN/Disney, I have decided to leave so I can exercise my first amendment rights more freely,” Steele said on Twitter. “I am grateful for so many wonderful experiences over the past 16 years and am excited for my next chapter!”



In April 2022, Steele filed the suit against ESPN and The Walt Disney Company — which owns ESPN — after she felt she was retaliated against for comments made on former NFL quarterback Jay Cutler’s podcast in 2021. On that episode, she criticized Disney’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate. She also notably questioned former President **Barack Obama** — who is biracial — for choosing to identify as black in the U.S. census.

Steele claimed she was suspended for two days after making the comments and was forced to issue an apology. ESPN denied suspending her as she was supposedly recovering from COVID-19.

In late June, ESPN offered Steele a \$501,000 settlement “to cover ‘reasonable’ attorney fees,” according to Front Office Sports. **Bryan Freedman** — Steele’s attorney — interpreted the offer at the time as an admission of guilt.

“Disney and ESPN clearly admit their liability by offering to pay Sage Steele more than half a million dollars for taking away her right to free speech,” Freedman said. “The offer misses the point. Disney cannot purchase their employee’s constitutional rights no matter how powerful they think they are.

“How about apologizing and treating people fairly? Let me put it this way, would Disney be willing to accept money from the state of Florida and Governor **(Ron) DeSantis** in exchange for being silenced? Why the double standard?”

It’s unknown if the settlement offered in June is the same one that’s been agreed upon.

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