

# Political commentator sues Fox News, claiming she was blacklisted after alleging anchor raped her

**BI** [businessinsider.com/scottie-nell-hughes-lawsuit-fox-news-charles-payne-rape-2017-9](https://www.businessinsider.com/scottie-nell-hughes-lawsuit-fox-news-charles-payne-rape-2017-9)

Political commentator Scottie Nell Hughes sued Fox News on Monday, claiming she was raped by anchor Charles Payne and then blacklisted by the network after she came forward, The New York Times [reported](#).

Hughes, a contributor to Fox News and CNN, alleged in her lawsuit that Payne, the host of "Making Money" on Fox Business, had "pressured" his way into her hotel room in July 2013 and coerced her into having sexual intercourse, despite her protestations.

Over the next two years, Hughes claimed, she was forced to engage in a sexual relationship with Payne in exchange for career opportunities, such as increased appearances on Fox channels and the promise that Payne would help get her a valuable contributor contract. Hughes never became a paid Fox contributor.

Hughes claimed in the lawsuit that after she ended the relationship with Payne, the network blacklisted her and leaked a story to the National Enquirer that suggested Hughes was a "participant in an affair with Payne." According to the lawsuit, Hughes said booking agents told her the reason for her decline in TV appearances was that "she had an affair with someone at Fox," The Times reported.

"In July of 2013, I was raped by Charles Payne," Hughes told The Times. "In July of 2017, I was raped again by Fox News. Since then, I have been living an absolute hell."

The lawsuit alleges gender motivated violence, gender discrimination, retaliation, and defamation, according to The Times. It named 21st Century Fox, Fox News, and Payne.

It also named Dianne Brandi, the executive vice president of legal and business affairs at Fox News, and Irena Briganti, the network's executive vice president of corporate communications. Hughes claimed Brandi and Briganti were behind the leak to the National Enquirer.

Hughes is represented by Doug Wigdor, who has represented other women in harassment allegations against Fox News.

"The latest publicity stunt of a lawsuit filed by Doug Wigdor has absolutely no merit and is downright shameful," a Fox News spokesperson said in a statement. "We will vigorously defend this. It's worth noting that Doug is Ms. Hughes' third representative in the last six months to raise some variation of these claims which concern events from four years ago, since it apparently took some time to find someone willing to file this bogus case."

Payne was suspended for two months this summer while the network investigated his conduct. He returned to the air earlier this month, although details from the investigation remain unclear. A Fox News spokesperson said Hughes declined several requests to participate in the internal investigation.

Representatives of Payne could not be reached for comment on the Times report, although Payne has maintained his innocence in previous statements.

"Charles Payne vehemently denies the allegations," his lawyer Jonathan Halpern said in July, after Payne was suspended. "He will defend himself vigorously against these claims and will hold those responsible to account."

Monday's lawsuit is a troubling development for Fox News, which is reeling from sexual harassment [scandals](#) that led to the ouster of chairman Roger Ailes last year and popular host Bill O'Reilly in April. It also comes less than two weeks after Fox News [fired](#) host Eric Bolling amid allegations he sent lewd, unsolicited text messages to network

employees.