

Fox News Guest Alleges She Was Raped By Host And Later Blacklisted

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Political commentator Scottie Nell Hughes filed a lawsuit against Fox News on Monday alleging she was raped by anchor Charles Payne and then blacklisted by the network after she reported her allegation.

In the lawsuit filed in federal court, Hughes alleges Payne raped her in a New York hotel room in 2013 and forced her into a sexual relationship in exchange for on-air opportunities.

After she ended the relationship and brought her allegations to Fox in June 2017, the 37-year-old political commentator alleges the network blocked her from being booked and leaked a story about her and Payne to the National Enquirer, making it appear as if the two were having a romantic affair.

Payne's attorney, Jonathan Halpern, said his client "vehemently denies any wrongdoing" and plans to defend himself "vigorously against this baseless complaint.

"We are confident that when the evidence is presented in this case, Mr. Payne will be fully vindicated and these outrageous accusations against him will be confirmed as completely false," Halpern said in a statement.

A Fox News spokesperson on Monday also called the lawsuit a publicity stunt on behalf of Hughes and her attorney, Douglas Wigdor, who is representing other current and former Fox News employees in their own harassment and discrimination cases.

"The latest publicity stunt of a lawsuit filed by Doug Wigdor has absolutely no merit and is downright shameful," the spokesperson said. "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."

Hughes' lawsuit comes nearly two weeks after Fox reinstated Payne as host of *Making Money* following an internal sexual harassment investigation. While vehemently denying the assault and abuse allegations, Payne apologized last month to having an affair with a married woman who appeared on the network.

He did not cite Hughes by name.

In her lawsuit, Hughes alleges that while she and Payne were in New York to appear on a Fox program together in July 2013, Payne "pressured his way into her hotel room for a private discussion." Despite clearly telling him "no" and to "stop," Hughes claims that Payne raped her, leaving her "shocked and ashamed." He then allegedly pressured her into a sexual relationship "in exchange for career opportunities and benefits," the lawsuit states.

Hughes, who regularly appeared on various Fox programs from 2013 to 2016, said she tried several times to end the relationship, but each time, Payne allegedly became enraged and physically violent. When she did finally cut off contact with Payne, Hughes alleges the network blacklisted her and she went from four to five guest appearances a week to just five over a 10-month period.

Hughes is just the latest woman to file allegations of harassment and assault against top Fox News talent, with several current and former female employees and contributors echoing similar accusations of abuse, intimidation, and retaliation.

A vocal Trump supporter and cable news personality, Hughes alleges she is a victim of gender-motivated violence and career-harming discrimination and defamation.

"What is most important to me is that justice will prevent other women from going through the nightmare I'm now living," Hughes said in a statement, adding that her lawsuit "will expose Fox's unconscionable conduct."

Last year, Chairman Roger Ailes was forced to resign after former *Fox and Friends* host Gretchen Carlson filed a lawsuit against him alleging sexual harassment.

Bill O'Reilly, the news network's top star, left in April after it was reported he and Fox News paid millions of dollars to settle sexual harassment claims dating back to 2004.

And just last month, Jamie Horowitz, a top executive at Fox Sports, was [fired](#), with his attorney [telling](#) USA Today that the departure was "probably" related to a sexual harassment investigation.