

Charles Payne Accused of Rape in New LawsUIT Against Fox News

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[Charles Payne](#), the [Fox Business Network](#) host who was recently reinstated after facing allegations of sexual harassment, now faces even stronger accusations, as the woman who made the claims filed suit against him as well as Fox News now alleges she was raped and subsequently defamed.

[Scottie Nell Hughes](#) may be best known as a Trump surrogate who regularly appeared on Time Warner's CNN during the run-up to the 2016 presidential election. But she has also been a familiar face on [Fox News Channel](#). In a complaint filed Monday in United States District Court in the Southern District of New York, Hughes claims Payne raped her in 2013 and alleges she was retaliated against after she came forward with charges a few years after the initial incident is said to have occurred.

An attorney for Payne, Jonathan Halpern, said his client would prevail against "outrageous" charges. Payne "vehemently denies any wrongdoing and will 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."

Payne, who was suspended from his program "Making Money" in July after it was made known that harassment allegations had been levied against him by a former frequent Fox guest, was reinstated earlier this month. He denied the previous charges, in which Hughes, who has now admitted to being the accuser, alleged she was banned from Fox after ending an extramarital affair she had with the anchor in 2015. The analyst also alleged her Fox appearances were reduced after she terminated the relationship.

"On behalf of Scottie Nell Hughes, today we filed an action against Fox to hold it accountable for yet another case involving sexual harassment and retaliation inflicted by Fox executives in order to protect male, on-air talent," said attorneys Douglas H. Wigdor and Jeanne M. Christensen, in a prepared statement. "We intend to aggressively litigate Ms. Hughes's claims and hold Fox accountable to the fullest extent under the law." Wigdor has several clients involved with legal actions against Fox News Channel.

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

The suit alleges Hughes brought her allegations in confidence to Fox News in June of this year. In the filing, Hughes alleges Payne sexually assaulted and raped her in July of 2013, then increased invitations to her to appear on his Fox Business program. The suit suggested Fox News might cite emails that describe a consensual relationship, but then alleged any link between the two was the result of Payne using "his position of power to pressure Ms. Hughes into submission."

A bevy of allegations suggesting harassment and/or discrimination have been levied at Fox News Channel since its former leader, Roger Ailes, was ousted last year. Ailes had been accused of harassment by former anchor Gretchen Carlson. He denied the allegations and died earlier this year. In the interim, the various allegations, some of them sordid, have forced Fox News to part ways with Bill O'Reilly, Eric Bolling, and Bill Shine, among others.

The network's parent company, 21st Century Fox, has been under scrutiny as it strives to acquire the remaining shares in European broadcaster Sky PLC that it does not own and its bid is examined by British government

regulators. Critics have pointed to the allegations and lawsuits against Fox News as reason for not letting the transaction proceed. 21st Century Fox executives have said they expect the deal to close in 2018.