

Ex-Students File Lawsuit, Allege John Jay Professors Created 'Cesspool of Sexism' and 'Illegal Drug Use'

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What to Know

- Two former John Jay College of Criminal Justice students are suing the New York City school and four of its professors
- The suit alleges the school and professor created a “cesspool of sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment and illegal drug use”
- Claudia Cojocar, 40, an ex-student who became an adjunct professor at the college, and Naomi Haber, 25, filed a federal civil-rights suit

Two former John Jay College of Criminal Justice students are suing the school and four of its professors, alleging they created a “cesspool of sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment and illegal drug use” culminating in instances of rape.

Claudia Cojocar, 40, a former student who subsequently became an adjunct professor at the college, and Naomi Haber, 25, filed a federal civil-rights suit in Manhattan Monday seeking unspecified damages to be determined at trial, plus interest, for a myriad of alleged violations including discrimination and retaliation.

The lawsuit goes after John Jay, City University of New York, veteran anthropology professor Ric Curtis, professor Anthony Marcus, professor Barry Spunt and a former adjunct professor, Leonardo Dominguez.

The complaint says that many incidents of unacceptable behavior took place in an exclusive and clandestine environment known as “The Swamp” — a place where Curtis and other faculty members would allegedly act “openly hostile to the norms of law, ethics and morality.”

It was in “The Swamp” where Curtis and the other professors mentioned in the lawsuit allegedly “degraded and dehumanized female colleagues and students,” often referring to them using derogatory terms.

Additionally, according to the lawsuit, professors would openly drink alcohol and use drugs including marijuana, cocaine, heroin and LSD in “The Swamp” and push these substances upon students as well.

The federal complaint includes accusations that Curtis supplied Cojocar with booze, made sexual advances and sexually assaulted her.

The complaint also says that in the summer of 2015, Curtis “encouraged Ms. Cojocarú to drink alcoholic beverages” and when she began to feel “dizzy and nauseous” Curtis groped, touched and assaulted her in an office in “The Swamp” located at John Jay’s Annex.

The complaint also alleges that Curtis took Cojocarú’s and other students’ work and or ideas and passed them off as his own.

Furthermore, the complaint alleges that Marcus raped Haber in a Washington hotel room while they attended an academic conference in 2015. The lawsuit also claims that Marcus “was emboldened by Ms. Haber’s silence,” continued to sexually harass her and subsequently raped her at his office in the summer of 2016.

The explosive complaint also includes photos that apparently show drugs and drug paraphernalia openly displayed in Curtis’ office. In one photo, Curtis is shown with what appears to be a marijuana cigarette in between his lips. Inappropriate and sexually explicit text messages, including a photo that Curtis allegedly sent Haber of himself topless, were also included as evidence in the lawsuit.

In the complaint, both Haber and Cojocarú allege that John Jay’s policies and practices were inadequate to protect alleged victims when they reported complaints of sexual misconduct. The complaint goes on to say that despite a “biased and improper investigation, John Jay substantiates many of Ms. Cojocarú and Ms. Haber’s allegations of sexual misconduct.”

According to John Jay, after school officials learned of the allegations, the faculty members were placed on administrative leave, law enforcement authorities were notified and external investigators were hired to assist the school with a thorough and fair investigation.

“Based on the results of that investigation, we are initiating disciplinary action against the faculty members involved seeking to terminate them,” John Jay says.

In a statement to NBC 4 New York, John Jay spokesman Richard Relkin says: “John Jay will promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigate any allegations of misconduct and hold accountable anyone – without exception – who is found to violate our policies.”

Attorney information for the four men accused was not immediately clear.

John Jay School of Criminal Justice forms part of the City University of New York school system.