

Goldman Sachs sued over allegations of homophobia

FT [ft.com/content/f5345b7c-87ae-11e9-97ea-05ac2431f453](https://www.ft.com/content/f5345b7c-87ae-11e9-97ea-05ac2431f453)

Goldman Sachs is being sued by a former employee who alleges he was subjected to “numerous incidents” of homophobia and sexual discrimination, including being excluded from a client call because he “sounded too gay”.

William Littleton, a former vice-president in the bank’s consumer and investment management division who filed suit in New York on Wednesday, claims he lost his job after he complained to Goldman’s human resources division about his treatment. He is now suing for undisclosed damages.

The lawsuit describes Mr Littleton’s career at the bank in glowing terms, from his hiring in 2010 to reviews in 2014 that described him as a “highly productive and impactful member of the team . . . performing at a level well beyond his years” and a commendation as “outstanding” in 2017.

Despite his progress, the lawsuit said Mr Littleton was still “well aware that being openly gay at a financial institution could lead to discrimination and ridicule”, which he experienced directly in instances including allegedly being dropped for a client call in 2014 because the moderator said he “sounds too gay”.

The suit said Mr Littleton reached out to his boss at the time, Sirion Skulpone, who was on maternity leave. She allegedly told him “that sucks” but did not offer any further support.

Another boss, Rachel Schnoll, allegedly remarked at a meeting that Mr Littleton was not in the day after New York’s LGBT Pride parade because he “must be hung over from pride festivities”.

The two executives are named alongside Goldman Sachs as defendants.

Goldman Sachs said in a statement that the claims were baseless. “Goldman Sachs has a sustained and proven commitment to diversity, and we are proud of the vibrant and diverse LGBTQ community at the firm,” it said. The two individual defendants declined to comment through a spokesman.

Other comments listed in the suit include Mr Littleton being told he looks “so Miami today”, which Mr Littleton believes inferred he “looked like a gay Latino”.

Mr Littleton ultimately decided to complain to Goldman’s employee relations division about his treatment, a decision he claims led to his pay stagnating, and one of his bosses suggesting he should look for a role in another group within Goldman.

At his 2018 review, he was criticised for “inconsistent” performance, and his bosses noted that “over the past year and in years prior, his focus and commitment has noticeably waxed and waned”. At the end of the review, on January 31, 2019, he was fired for those performance issues, according to the suit.

He then claimed he went to speak with Marty Chavez, Goldman’s former chief financial officer and now co-head of its securities division, who was a mentor to Mr Littleton and is also gay.

The lawsuit said Mr Chavez allegedly sympathised with Mr Littleton, and shared a story of one of his own promotions where he got a call from another Goldman partner who told him: “I guess they needed a gay Latino on the management committee.” Mr Chavez did not respond to a request for comment.

“Goldman attempts to hold itself out — presumably for public relations purposes — as creating an environment friendly to LGBTQ employees; the reality is that the bank does little more than provide lip-service to LGBTQ diversity,” the lawsuit said.

“Although Goldman claims that the ‘crux of our efforts is a focus on cultivating and sustaining a diverse work environment and workforce, which is critical to meeting the unique needs of our diverse client base’, as can be seen through the experiences of Mr Littleton, the everyday reality does not measure up to this standard.”