

Former Goldman Sachs lawyer says she was fired after trying to speak up about sexual misconduct

A [abajournal.com/news/article/former-goldman-sachs-lawyer-says-she-was-fired-after-trying-to-speak-up-about-sexual-misconduct](https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/former-goldman-sachs-lawyer-says-she-was-fired-after-trying-to-speak-up-about-sexual-misconduct)

A former associate general counsel at Goldman Sachs has filed a lawsuit alleging that she was fired after trying to speak up about sexual misconduct by a company lawyer and then complaining when he retaliated against her.

Lawyer Marla Crawford says in an Oct. 26 lawsuit that Goldman Sachs and its senior lawyers permitted a workplace “where sexual harassment is covered up and the powerful are cloaked with immunity.” The suit was filed in New York state court by the Wigdor law firm.

Crawford’s suit alleges that Goldman Sachs’ global head of litigation, Darrell Cafasso, used his position “to romantically prey upon a much younger and vulnerable female colleague.”

The woman, referred to as Jane Doe in the lawsuit, was dealing with personal matters and knew that her performance needed improvement. Cafasso allegedly promised the subordinate job benefits if she would “return the favor.”

Cafasso allegedly told the woman that he thought he was falling in love with her. After Cafasso’s wife found out about the conduct, she called Doe and said she was “praying for her,” the suit says. Cafasso was forced to reveal his conduct to general counsel Karen Seymour, and he and his wife jointly called Doe to tell her that the relationship was over, the suit says.

Weil Gotshal & Manges was retained “to conduct a bogus investigation,” the suit says.

Crawford says she was a confidant of Doe, but she was never approached for information. Nor were others who were “obvious interview subjects.” When Crawford told human resources that she had relevant information, she was allegedly told to “keep her mouth shut.”

Cafasso returned to work after the investigation, but Doe did not. Doe, who was represented by women’s rights lawyer Gloria Allred, was likely paid money to leave, according to the suit.

“When Ms. Crawford complained about Mr. Cafasso’s conduct she was immediately subject to blatant retaliation,” the suit alleges. Before he was placed on leave, Cafasso lowered an internal metric measuring performance for Crawford and raised it for Doe. After Cafasso returned, he gave Crawford negative comments on a previously finalized review.

Crawford complained of retaliation, but her complaints were rejected in an internal investigation, the suit says. The next day, Crawford learned that her bonus would be lowered for the first time.

“Cafasso never looked at Ms. Crawford the same and refused to work with her substantively, speak to her or assign her the work she had been accustomed to doing,” the suit says. “Shortly thereafter, Ms. Crawford was fired.”

Crawford alleges violations of New York state and city human rights law.

Seymour was hired as Goldman Sachs’ general counsel in 2018 from Sullivan & Cromwell, and she hired Cafasso, a Sullivan & Cromwell colleague, as the head of litigation.

“Many felt Ms. Seymour’s choice was favoritism towards her Sullivan Cromwell colleague—and for Ms. Seymour, it was important that her selection worked out,” the suit says.

Crawford previously worked at Jones Day. She joined Goldman Sachs in 2010 and was its global e-discovery manager, she says in the suit. She transitioned to the litigation and regulatory practice group in 2012, but she continued to work as the bank’s e-discovery expert.

Crawford says when she was informed that she was being let go, she was told that the e-discovery function of her job was being moved to Dallas as a cost-cutting measure. She was offered the opportunity to move there with a salary cut.

“This was a false choice, as it is well known that Ms. Crawford’s whole family is in New York, that she is the primary caregiver for her 83-year-old immunocompromised mother, and that she had bought a new townhouse earlier in 2020,” the suit says. “Mr. Cafasso knew very well that Ms. Crawford would be forced out by this option.”

Goldman Sachs had said Crawford could remain working at the bank through November, but she was fired in October after she disclosed her plans to sue, according to her suit.

A Goldman Sachs spokesperson gave this statement to the ABA Journal: “We conducted a review of the allegations in this complaint and found that they were completely without merit. The general counsel took all appropriate actions, including ensuring there were thorough investigations by our HR function, after the incidents that form the basis of the plaintiff’s complaint. As part of a broader legal division restructuring, the plaintiff was offered her same job in a different location, an opportunity she declined. Given the lack of merit to plaintiff’s claim of retaliation, we have been unable to resolve the matter and thus have no choice but to contest it through the proper legal channels.”