

Former Forever 21 worker was called 'disgusting' and 'hot mess' by her bosses while transitioning to woman: lawsuit

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Alexia Daskalakis, 22, says her immediate supervisor began treating her with “increasing contempt” — yelling at her in front of co-workers and calling her “useless,” her lawsuit says.

Bosses at a Forever 21 in Brooklyn acted eternally juvenile — mercilessly mocking an employee who was transitioning to a woman as “disgusting” and a “hot mess,” court papers say.

“You used to be a hard worker when you were a guy, but not anymore,” Alexia Daskalakis, 22, quoted one of her managers as saying.

They then fired her without explanation.

“I was devastated. You put all your hard work into working for one company, and they respond by being ruthless,” she told the Daily News. “It hurt.”

Alexia was Anthony Daskalakis when she started working as a sales associate at the popular clothing chain in Kings Plaza four years ago. The Brooklyn native was then promoted to visual merchandiser, where her duties included putting up store displays.

Her problems began in January 2014, when she told her manager she was transitioning to a woman - which is what she'd felt like all her life.

She said her parents had joked that when she was a baby, she "wouldn't use the blue blanket - only pink."



"I always played with Barbie dolls, and wore my mom's high heels and clothes," Alexia said.

She said she knew transitioning at work was going to be difficult, but it was something she had to do.

"I wrestled with it," she said, but "I work hard. I figured my work ethic could trump any discrimination."

She told her supervisor what she was doing, and "began dressing in a more traditionally feminine manner, such as wearing more form-fitting clothing and applying more traditionally feminine makeup."

Co-workers and customers were supportive — "They'd say, 'You look great!' and were very nice," she said - but not her bosses.

Her immediate supervisor, Patrick Walmsley, began treating her with "increasing contempt" - yelling at her in front of co-workers and calling her "useless," the suit says.

It got worse after she told her bosses she was beginning hormone treatments - and Forever 21 "decided it knew her gender better than she did," the suit says.

Walmsley criticized her for dressing too racy during an overnight shift when the store was closed - even though he had no problem with other female employees who were dressed exactly the same.

"You're still a male, so you need to abide by the male dress code," Walmsley allegedly told Daskalakis, calling her "disgusting" and ordering her to put on more clothes on the 90-degree night.

He also passed on complaints from another boss, who'd said she was a "hot mess," and accused Daskalakis of slacking off, a charge she denied.



Patrick Walmsley has been indentified as one of the bosses at Forever 21 that mocked Alexia Daskalakis who was transitioning to a woman as 'disgusting' and a 'hot mess'.

"I said, 'I haven't changed anything. Your perspective has changed.'"

She tried complaining to HR about the cruel comments, but said her calls were never returned.

She says she was fired in January, and when she demanded an explanation why, she was told to call HR - which has yet to call her back.

The suit, which was filed Wednesday in Brooklyn federal court, seeks unspecified money damages.

Daskalakis' lawyer, David Gottlieb of Wigdor LLP, said, "The transgender community faces a variety of challenges, and it is disgraceful for employers to create additional hardship by discriminating against employees simply because of how they express and identify their gender."

His client said, "I just hope I get justice for how I was treated."

“People in my position need to find their voice, and customers should know who they're shopping from,” Daskalakis said.

A manager at the store who only gave his name as Jonathan said, “I cannot say anything about Anthony, or Alexia, or whatever.”