

'60 Minutes' Producer Alleges Gender Discrimination By CBS

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Law360 (December 17, 2019, 6:04 PM EST) -- An associate producer with "60 Minutes" filed a lawsuit against CBS Broadcasting Inc. in New York state court Tuesday, claiming her complaint about her boss drinking excessively on the job and once texting her an old photo of himself urinating led to gender discrimination and retaliation by the network.

Cassandra Vinograd's lawsuit says that within months of her starting work at the news magazine earlier this year, it became apparent that her boss, senior producer Michael Gavshon, had a drinking problem, which even led to him passing out in her office.

The lawsuit also asserts that despite several high-profile incidents of sexual harassment at the network, it remains a place that will protect powerful men at the expense of its female employees.

"Despite paying lip service about purging men that behave badly and assuring female employees that their voices will be heard, respected and protected, this case shows that nothing has changed and legitimate progress towards eliminating sexual harassment at CBS remains elusive," Vinograd said in the suit.

According to the suit, Vinograd was hired in June and assigned to work under Gavshon, 63, who is one of the network's "preeminent producers" after having produced 150 segments and received nine Emmy awards.

Vinograd, who is decades younger than Gavshon, says he would drink to excess on the job, often starting before noon and turning belligerent.

"As a new employee, and cognizant of the reverence Gavshon received at CBS, she was afraid to say anything about it at CBS," the lawsuit said.

In September, Vinograd says, she received a photo in a text from Gavshon that left her "disgusted, uncomfortable and scared."

The alleged photo is included in the lawsuit, and appears to be a decades-old image of Gavshon and another young man urinating on a wheelbarrow of smoldering wood or coal while several other men look on and laugh. The men's genitals can be partially seen in the photo.

Vinograd says she did not respond to the text, but about an hour later Gavshon sent another message apologizing and saying the message was meant for his sister.

"Regardless if he was drunk and sent it to Cassie by 'mistake' when really it was meant for his own sister, or if he sent it to her hoping that Cassie would ratify the inappropriateness by saying it was 'funny' or some such comment that would open the door to Gavshon's ability to send her more photos in the future, it was not ok," Vinograd said in the lawsuit.

Vinograd says that when she complained about the photo and Gavshon's drinking, he was cleared of any wrongdoing by CBS less than two weeks later. She also says she was quickly stripped of all of her work duties and reduced to sitting at her desk in London.

"Gavshon was angry," Vinograd said. "Unconstrained by CBS, he lashed out at his accuser."

The lawsuit goes into great detail about other incidents of alleged sexual misconduct by male leaders at CBS, including former anchor Charlie Rose, former CEO Les Moonves and former "60 Minutes" executive producer Jeff Fager.

All of the allegations against the men led to their eventual ousters from the network for various reasons, but the lawsuit proclaims that as of December 2019, "CBS remains committed to insulating and protecting powerful men — the 'talent' — at the expense of its female employees."

Gavshon could not be reached, and CBS did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"We look forward to holding CBS accountable for its unlawful conduct as alleged in the complaint by our client Cassandra Vinograd," Vinograd's attorney, Jeanne M. Christensen of [Wigdor LLP](#), said in an email to Law360. "Contrary to CBS's claims that it is doing the right thing when female employees report gender-related misconduct, as alleged, it appears that no meaningful changes to the culture at CBS have been made."

Vinograd is represented by Jeanne M. Christensen and Taylor J. Crabill of Wigdor.

Counsel for CBS was not immediately available.

The case is Cassandra Vinograd v. CBS Broadcasting Inc., case number unassigned, in the Supreme Court of the State of New York County.