

A Female '60 Minutes' Producer Sues CBS, Claiming Discrimination

 [nytimes.com/2019/12/17/business/media/60-minutes-producer-cbs-lawsuit.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/17/business/media/60-minutes-producer-cbs-lawsuit.html)

Rachel Abrams

December 17,
2019

An associate producer at CBS's signature newsmagazine program "60 Minutes" claimed she was sidelined after making a formal complaint about her boss, according to a lawsuit filed against the network Tuesday.

The producer, Cassandra Vinograd, said that Michael Gavshon, a senior producer, sent her an inappropriate photo of himself and another man urinating on a pile of smoldering coal. The lawsuit also accused Mr. Gavshon of drinking excessively at work.

Ms. Vinograd, who joined the London office of "60 Minutes" in June after working at NBC News, The Wall Street Journal and The Associated Press, is still a producer on the show. In the lawsuit, filed in New York State Supreme Court, she claimed that she had been stripped of assignments after complaining about Mr. Gavshon, who worked with her in the London office. She is seeking a jury trial to determine damages.

The lawsuit is the latest example of women making accusations against men in positions of power at CBS. The network has made efforts in recent months to repair its public image, with mixed results.

A little more than a year ago, the former CBS Corporation chief executive Leslie Moonves was ousted after more than a dozen women made allegations of sexual misconduct against him. At the network's news division, the anchor Charlie Rose was fired in 2017 after he was accused of sexual misconduct, and the longtime "60 Minutes" executive producer Jeff Fager was dismissed last year after sending a threatening text message to a CBS journalist who had asked him for comment while reporting on allegations of inappropriate behavior against him.

Since those firings, CBS has instituted new policies and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment complaints. Two writers recently quit the Patricia Heaton sitcom "Carol's Second Act" after they claimed they were made to feel uncomfortable in the workplace after reporting that Ms. Heaton's husband, David Hunt, an executive producer on the show, touched one of them inappropriately. (Mr. Hunt said he had no recollection of touching anyone inappropriately and disputed his accuser's account.)

In her lawsuit, Ms. Vinograd, 35, claimed that Mr. Gavshon, a "60 Minutes" veteran who has won multiple Emmy Awards, texted the inappropriate photo in September, after they had been on assignment in Hungary. (Mr. Gavshon's texts to Ms. Vinograd, including the photo,

are included in the legal complaint.) In the photograph, which appears to have been taken decades ago, Mr. Gavshon and another man appear to be urinating on a wheelbarrow filled with coal while two other men look on.

The lawsuit said that Ms. Vinograd thought “it was creepy and gross to receive a picture of her boss’s penis and urine stream.”

According to the suit, Mr. Gavshon apologized to Ms. Vinograd with a second text message that said, “So so sorry.” In a third text, he added that he had sent her the photo by mistake, having intended to text it to his sister.

Days later, Ms. Vinograd sent an email to CBS executives, including Susan Zirinsky, the head of CBS News, and the network’s human resources division, saying that she wanted to make a complaint about “highly inappropriate, unprofessional and upsetting events,” but wanted their assurance that she would not be retaliated against for doing so. In a phone conversation later that day with two people from human resources, she went into detail, according to the suit.

She was told the network would investigate the matter, and that if she was uncomfortable working with Mr. Gavshon, she should be the one to stay home and avoid the office, the lawsuit said.

After completing an investigation, CBS said it had not corroborated Ms. Vinograd’s claims about Mr. Gavshon’s drinking. It also concluded that he had texted the photo by mistake, describing it as an isolated incident with “no malicious intent.”

After the investigation, Ms. Vinograd claimed that she was excluded from emails, calls and meetings, and that stories she had been involved with were taken away from her. As a result, according to the suit, co-workers have avoided her “as if she committed wrongdoing.”

CBS and Mr. Gavshon did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Ms. Vinograd is represented by Wigdor L.L.P., the law firm that supplied counsel to women who made sexual harassment accusations against the Fox News host Bill O’Reilly, who was forced out of the network in 2017.