

# Are The Grammys Corrupt? New Complaint Alleges Major Issues With The Recording Academy

---

 [refinery29.com/en-us/2020/01/9261475/deborah-dugan-grammys-recording-academy-discrimination-](https://refinery29.com/en-us/2020/01/9261475/deborah-dugan-grammys-recording-academy-discrimination-)

In response, Dugan filed a formal discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Dugan claims that the process of Grammy nominations is “corrupted” in favor of artists for whom board members have relationships with.

Dugan details the alleged flaws in the Grammys nomination selection process. The first round of nominations are voted upon by the Academy’s 12,000 members, and the top 20 selections which received the most votes are then reviewed by the nominating committee. Dugan alleges that the committee does not always stick to the top 20 lists when choosing which artists, songs, and records to grant nominations to, and that they can select the nominations regardless of the number of votes they received in their categories.

Dugan also cites general counsel Joel Katz and Chuck Ortner’s alleged conflict of interests that allow them to potentially sway the Recording Academy’s nominations. Per Dugan’s complaint, Katz and Ortner represent artists, board members, and “other entities and individuals in the music industry with personal interests in decision making at the Academy.” Katz and Ortner have the ability to pull favors to get the people they wish to unjust Grammy nominations, Dugan alleges.

Songs that producer Ken Erlich wants performed at the Grammy ceremony, Dugan claims, are specifically pushed to receive award nominations no matter where they fall in the top 20.

Dugan also alleged that during a board meeting in May of 2019, she was informed of a rape accusation against Portnow by an unnamed artist. The full board was allegedly not informed of the accusation before they were set to vote on whether or not to give him a bonus following his time at the Academy. Dugan claims she refused to hire Portnow on as a consultant — to the price tag of \$750,000 — following his exit.

"The baseless complaint about my conduct referenced in the EEOC filing was immediately brought to the attention of the Board of Directors Executive Committee," Portnow's statement continues. "An in-depth independent investigation by experienced and highly regarded lawyers was conducted and I was completely exonerated. There was no basis for the allegations and once again I deny them unequivocally."

Other allegations include those of racial and gender discrimination. Dugan states that she was paid less than Portnow for the same position, despite asking for equal compensation. She also shared stories of other female employees who spoke up about issues within the

Recording Academy, only to be pressured to leave their position lest they be terminated.

In one situation, Dugan writes of a Black, gay temporary worker who suffered mental health issues after a racist drawing of them was displayed for “months” at work. The person who put up the drawing was fired, Dugan writes, but no one else involved in the situation was terminated or reprimanded for their behavior.

Refinery29 reached out to Katz, Ortner, and the Recording Academy for comment.