

Former New York Post digital chief alleges wrongful firing after privately reporting longtime Murdoch lieutenant propositioned her for sex

[cnn.com/2022/01/18/media/new-york-post-michelle-gothelf-lawsuit/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/18/media/new-york-post-michelle-gothelf-lawsuit/index.html)

By [Oliver Darcy](#) · Jan 18, 2022, UPDATED 1:32 PM EST

New York (CNN Business)Michelle Gotthelf, the former editor in chief of the New York Post's digital operation, filed a lawsuit on Tuesday against the tabloid, alleging she was wrongfully fired earlier this month after she reported to her boss that a longtime lieutenant of Rupert Murdoch sexually harassed her.

Gotthelf alleged that the [Murdoch-lieutenant Col Allan](#), who once was the longtime editor in chief of The Post and who returned to the paper as an adviser in 2019, fostered an abusive workplace environment, harassed her personally over several years, and propositioned her for sex.

Gotthelf also alleged that Allan made degrading comments about women while in the newsroom, referring to some as "skanks" and once describing a female employee as a "sneaky lesbian."

A former New York Post staffer told CNN on Tuesday that they had witnessed Allan both berate Gotthelf and make sexually inappropriate comments in the workspace.

Gotthelf said in her lawsuit that she reported Allan's abusive behavior to Human Resources in 2015.

Allan ultimately retired in 2016, but then returned to The Post in 2019 as an adviser. Gotthelf said she was stunned that The Post would rehire Allan, given she had reported his prior harassment to the company in 2015.

Gotthelf said in her lawsuit that it also became "increasingly apparent" that Allan was "acting in a supervisory role" over her. She said that Allan's inappropriate behavior soon resumed.

In her lawsuit, Gotthelf confirmed a 2019 [CNN report](#) that said Allan had ordered the removal of a story about writer E. Jean Carroll's sexual assault allegations against former President Donald Trump, which Trump denied.

A spokesperson for The Post had previously declined to comment about the directive to CNN. Gotthelf lawsuit, however, described the incident in greater detail.

"Get [the story] f***ing down," Allan told Gotthelf, according to the lawsuit.

Allan ultimately departed The Post again in 2021. Keith Poole, who was deputy editor in chief of The Sun, another Murdoch property, was hired as the editor in chief of New York Post Group that same year.

Gotthelf said in her lawsuit that she reported to Poole during a lunch meeting in November 2021 that she had been sexually propositioned by Allan. She alleged that she was fired "without cause" just two months after that meeting.

Gotthelf's lawsuit, which was filed in US District Court in the Southern District of New York, names the Post, Allan, and Poole as defendants. It also names News Corporation, The Post's parent company, as a defendant.

A spokesperson for The Post and News Corporation said Tuesday in a one-sentence statement: "Any suggestion of wrongdoing related to the management changes announced today is meritless."

The statement referenced a morning memo Poole sent out to staff announcing Gotthelf's departure and two separate managerial promotions.

In his memo, Poole did not mention the lawsuit, but said of Gotthelf that he wanted to "take this opportunity to thank her for all she has done during her 20-plus-year tenure here." He said that he hoped everyone would join him in "wishing her the best for her future."

CNN asked the spokesperson for The Post and News Corporation if Poole, Allan, or Murdoch had any comment, but did not receive one in return. Allan could not be reached independently by CNN and Poole did not respond to an email seeking further comment.

Gotthelf said in a statement through her attorneys that she "took great pride" in her work at The Post.

"While I never intended to become the news, the truth of what happened to me deserves to be heard," Gotthelf said. "I will miss my colleagues dearly and hope that by speaking out there can be positive change for other women at the Post."