

Ex-Editor Michelle Gottself Sues New York Post for ‘Years of Sex-Based Harassment and Abuse’

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January 18, 2022

Ex-Editor Scorches NY Post in Shocking Sexual Harassment Lawsuit

Less than a week after exiting her role as digital editor-in-chief of the *New York Post*, Michelle Gottself has filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against the paper alleging her boss editor-in-chief pushed her out after she revealed she was sexually harassed by Col Allan, the paper’s previous longtime boss.

In the complaint, filed Tuesday by law firm Wigdor LLP, Gottself claimed that in the fall of 2015, Allan, then the *Post*’s editor-in-chief, sexually propositioned her during one dinner meeting and then retaliated against her for rejecting his advances.

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“When the two were alone,” the complaint alleged, “Mr. Allan steered the conversation towards sex. He peppered Ms. Gottself with questions about her long-term boyfriend, how long they had been together (15 years) and whether they still slept together.” The lawsuit continued: “Mr. Allan then propositioned Ms. Gottself for sex, asking, ‘What about you?’ Ms. Gottself was stunned. But Mr. Allan persisted. ‘We should sleep together.’ Ms. Gottself rejected Mr. Allan’s unwelcome advances, stating, ‘That’s not going to happen.’ Mr. Allan nevertheless continued to pursue Ms. Gottself, stating that he slept with another female NY Post employee.”

Gottself recalled in the lawsuit how Allan allegedly “became even more abusive” after she rejected his come-on. “He refused to make eye contact” with Gottself, the suit claimed, “and often killed stories that she supported for no apparent reason.” In one incident, Gottself recalled how Allan “ripped up a list of stories that [she] had prepared and screamed at her to ‘get the fuck out.’”

The former digital editor also claimed that Allan more broadly “created a hostile work environment” for her and other women, often allegedly making degrading comments in front of male colleagues. “Mr. Allan would refer to women in news stories as ‘skanks’ or ‘stupid women,’” the complaint stated.

In a “culmination of years of sex-based harassment and abuse,” Gottself said, Allan was later forced to resign in disgrace.

At the same time, she alleged, the *Post* and its owner Rupert Murdoch protected Allan's reputation, portraying his April 2016 departure as a retirement and giving him a "rousing send-off." Gotthelf added that due to her complaints about Allan, her authority and job responsibilities eventually lessened, all while her allegations were met with indifference.

Allan was rehired by the *Post* in 2019. Though she was told he was only to come aboard as a "consultant" and she would not need to report to him, Gotthelf claimed that Allan became her "de facto supervisor" and would often give her directions.

One such order from Allan, according to Gotthelf, was to "get rid of" a story on the rape allegations made against then-President Donald Trump made by writer E. Jean Carroll. (CNN previously reported in 2019 on Allan's alleged orders to scrub the claims from the *Post's* website.)

The former *Post* digital editor went on to allege that the paper demoted her when it hired Keith Poole in early 2021 as the new top editor. After Poole was "briefed" by Allan over a period of weeks, Gotthelf claimed, the new editor-in-chief asked her about the allegations she had made.

According to Gotthelf, she finally revealed to Poole in November of last year that Allan had sexually propositioned her for sex. Two months later, the complaint noted, she was then fired by Poole. (The lawsuit stated that Gotthelf was fired by Poole on Wednesday, Jan. 12. Her termination was first reported last Thursday.)

The Daily Beast reviewed a memo sent from Poole to *Post* staff on Tuesday morning—the same day Gotthelf's lawsuit was filed.

In the internal email, Poole matter-of-factly noted that Gotthelf "departed" the paper on Friday and that he wants to "take this opportunity to thank her for all she has done during her 20-plus-year tenure here." He added: "I hope you will join me in wishing her the best for the future."

There was no mention of Gotthelf's news-making lawsuit in the memo.

"The New York Post's unlawful treatment of its top female editor after twenty-plus years of service is nothing short of appalling. Moreover, the Post's decision to rehire Col Allan after he sexually propositioned Ms. Gotthelf speaks volumes about exactly the type of newsroom News Corp is running," Wigdor LLP partner Douglas Wigdor said in a statement about the lawsuit. "We intend to aggressively move forward with holding the Post accountable and protecting Ms. Gotthelf's rights."

In an additional statement, Gotthelf said that while she "never intended to become the news, the truth of what happened to me deserves to be heard." She added that she hopes "that by speaking out there can be positive change for other women at the *Post*."

A spokesperson for News Corp, the *Post*'s parent company, responded to the lawsuit in a statement: "Any suggestion of wrongdoing related to the management changes announced today is meritless."