

# Must Read Stories

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A former top editor of the New York Post has filed a lawsuit against the New York Post, alleging that she endured years of sexual harassment by former longtime editor Col Allan, but was demoted and dismissed following her complaints about it.

Michelle Gotthelf was fired last week, according to her lawsuit, after a 21-year career at the publication, most recently as editor in chief of NewYorkPost.com. Allan also was named in the lawsuit along with current editor in chief Keith Poole, as well as NYP Holdings and parent company News Corp.

A spokesperson for the Post and News Corp. said in a statement, “Any suggestion of wrongdoing related to the management changes announced today is meritless.”

In her lawsuit, filed in federal court on Tuesday, Gotthelf alleges that she was subject to Allan’s harassment starting in 2013. Two years later, her lawsuit claims, he propositioned her for sex and told her, “We should sleep together.” The next day, according to the lawsuit, she reported what happened to two New York Post editors, who urged her to report it to HR.

“Ms. Gotthelf, however, was afraid,” according to her lawsuit. “She told her two colleagues that Mr. Allan was likely to retaliate against her if she reported his behavior. She hoped to “ride it out” and that things would get better.”

“They did not. Mr. Allan became even more abusive after Ms. Gotthelf rejected his advances. He refused to make eye contact with Ms. Gotthelf and often killed stories that she supported for no apparent reason.”

She finally did complain to the head of HR and to the in-house counsel. The lawsuit claims that her complaint was disclosed to Allan and that he was forced to retire in 2016. Still, Rupert Murdoch came to the newsroom to give Allan a laudatory sendoff, according to the suit.

Gotthelf was then offered the title of managing editor in an effort to keep her quiet, the lawsuit claims, but her role began to diminish.

“As a result, 25-year-old reporters (mostly men) had more say on web news than Ms. Gotthelf, the newspaper’s female Managing Editor. Ms. Gotthelf was, once again, humiliated,” the lawsuit stated.

In 2019, Allan returned to the Post as a consultant. Although she raised concerns of retaliation to management, including News Corp. CEO Robert Thomson and the head of News Corp. HR, they stated that she would not report to him. In fact, Allan served in a

supervisory role, essentially running the newsroom. In one instance, Gotthelf claims that Allan ordered to remove a story about E. Jean Carroll, who accused then-President Donald Trump of rape.

According to the lawsuit, “Ms. Gotthelf went to Mr. Allan’s office to discuss his directive. Mr. Allan became abusive, telling Ms. Gotthelf to ‘get it [the story] fucking down.’”

The lawsuit claims that Gotthelf was “effectively demoted” last year, when Poole was named editor in chief and she would no longer report to the Post’s publisher. In a November meeting to discuss her contract, Poole asked her about Allan, and she informed him of what happened, the lawsuit states. She contends that Poole fired her last week without cause.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages, and claims discrimination and retaliation under the New York State Human Rights Law. She also is filing a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Her attorney, Douglas Wigdor, said in a statement, “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.”

In a note to staff on Tuesday, Poole announced Gotthelf’s departure. “I want to take this opportunity to thank her for all she has done during her 20-plus year tenure here, and I hope you will join me in wishing her the best for the future,” he wrote.