

# Ex-NY Post Editor-In-Chief Accused Of Sexually Harassing Staffer

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## Col Allan kept power at the Post despite years of abusing, sexually harassing and propositioning a woman editor, a bombshell lawsuit states.

**Matt Troutman**, Patch Staff 

NEW YORK CITY — The New York Post's notorious former editor-in-chief called women "skanks," made drunken prank calls and sexually propositioned a high-ranking female journalist who was fired after she complained, a new lawsuit contends.

Col Allan — the former newsroom chief — abused former digital editor-in-chief Michelle Gotthelf for years before she was first sidelined then fired earlier this month, the lawsuit states.

Gotthelf accused Allan and News Corp, the media corporation that owns the paper, of discrimination and retaliation.

"The New York Post's unlawful treatment of its top female editor after twenty-plus years of service is nothing short of appalling," Douglas H. Wigdor, the attorney representing Gotthelf, said in a statement.

"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."

A New York Post and News Corp spokesperson denied the charges, saying in a statement, "Any suggestion of wrongdoing related to the management changes announced today is meritless."

The complaint — filed Tuesday by Wigdor LLP — outlines a climate of misogyny cultivated by Allan for more than a decade.

In 2007, Allan passed over Gotthelf for promotion because he wanted a "strong man" to serve as the tabloid's metro editor, the lawsuit states.

The slight turned into full-bore harassment starting in 2013, according to the complaint.

"Mr. Allan, delighted in degrading Ms. Gotthelf, and women generally, in front of her mostly male peers," the complaint states. "For example, Mr. Allan would refer to women in news stories as 'skanks' or 'stupid women.' He described a female NY Post editor as a 'sneaky

lesbian.' He likewise told Ms. Gotthelf that Mr. Murdoch 'doesn't like many women.'"

Allan's bigotry didn't stop with women, according to the lawsuit.

"For instance, he refused to put New York's historic legalization of same-sex marriage on the front page, asking, 'What will these people be marrying next, animals?'" the lawsuit states.

The abuse progressed into sexual harassment in 2015, when Allan peppered Gotthelf with sexual questions in a private meeting, according to the lawsuit.

"We should sleep together," Allan told Gotthelf, the lawsuit states.

Gotthelf, despite worries of retaliation, complained about Allan's behavior, according to the lawsuit.

The accusation led to Allan's nominal "retirement," which billionaire media mogul Rupert Murdoch announced to the newsroom in a praise-filled speech, the complaint states.

But Allan didn't stay out of Gotthelf's personal and professional life long, according to the lawsuit. After Gotthelf's father died, he called her and subjected her to a tirade about a story before declaring, "I love you," the complaint states.

Gotthelf was later told Allan had been "boozing" and the call was a "prank," according to the lawsuit.

"It was just Col being Col. He hasn't changed," an unnamed company representative told Gotthelf, the lawsuit states.

Allan eventually was rehired in 2019 as a "consultant" — a move that shocked Gotthelf, who sought reassurances she wouldn't have to report to him, the lawsuit states.

"In fact, Mr. Allan became a de facto supervisor, often giving Ms. Gotthelf directions, such as to 'get rid of' a story reporting rape allegations against then President, Donald Trump," the complaint states.

Gotthelf saw her own power slip in January, as she was effectively demoted, the lawsuit states. She was fired last week, according to the complaint.

The former digital editor-in-chief filed the lawsuit days later.

"For more than two decades, I took great pride in my work shaping coverage at one of the most widely read news organizations in the country," she said in a statement. "While I never intended to become the news, the truth of what happened to me deserves to be heard. I will miss my colleagues dearly and hope that by speaking out there can be positive change for other women at the Post."