

# Former New York Post digital editor in chief says she went forward with sexual harassment lawsuit to inspire a younger generation to not stay silent

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- A former New York Post digital editor-in-chief accused a former editor-in-chief of sexual harassment.
- Michelle Gotthelf said in a lawsuit Col Allan propositioned her for sex and harassed her for years.
- In an interview with Insider, Gotthelf said she's since experiencing an inundation of support from current and former Post staffers.

Michelle Gotthelf, former digital editor-in-chief of the New York Post, said she's been "inundated" with support from both current and former Post staffers since filing a lawsuit against Col Allan.

She's heard "from former colleagues and people who still work at the Post, sending me love and understanding and knowing what the New York Post is like, they are just very supportive right now," Gotthelf said in an interview with Insider.

Gotthelf, in a [lawsuit filed Tuesday](#), accused Allan, her ex-boss and the former editor-in-chief of the New York Post, of propositioning her for sex.

She said he had harassed her repeatedly for years and became "more abusive" as she declined his advances. She also said in the lawsuit that she faced retaliation for coming forward about the sexual harassment she says she's exhibited under Allan.

Gotthelf in the lawsuit said Allan in 2015 asked her inappropriate questions about her sex life. "We should sleep together," she said he told her while grabbing drinks after work, according to the lawsuit.

Allan was forced to retire from his position in 2016, the lawsuit says, after Gotthelf complained about the harassment.

"While Mr. Allan 'retired' and was given a rousing send off, Ms. Gotthelf's responsibilities and authority were steadily eroded, often in favor of substantially less qualified men," the complaint says. "Ms. Gotthelf's complaints about retaliation and discrimination were largely met with indifference and, in one instance, she was told to 'stop complaining.'

He returned to the Post later as a consultant, the lawsuit says. In preparation for Allan's new role, Gotthelf renegotiated her employment contract to say she would not report to him.

Gotthelf declined to provide more information beyond the contents of the lawsuit. But she suggested that it's inappropriate for News Corp to have rehired Allan.

"You can't just remove a person because they did something wrong and then just bring them back because you feel like it," she told Insider.

Gotthelf, who said she "had an exemplary record at the Post," "departed" from the newspaper on January 12, the Post announced in January. But the lawsuit says Gotthelf was fired, just two months after she revealed to current New York Post editor-in-chief Keith Poole that Allan had sexually propositioned her.

Gotthelf is represented by New York-based firm Wigdor, which has in the past waged a legal war against Fox News, also led by Rupert Murdoch.

High-level Post and News Corp executives like Murdoch "did all they could to protect Mr. Allan's reputation," the lawsuit says.

"Any suggestion of wrongdoing related to the management change announced today is meritless," a New York Post and News Corp spokesperson told Insider and declined to comment on Gotthelf's statements.

Gotthelf hopes that her lawsuit will put News Corp "on notice" and will inspire younger reporters and editors who might be dealing with similar issues to not stay silent.

"I feel like I have a responsibility to the younger generation that this kind of behavior should never be tolerated and I was hoping that with me taking the stand, it would show them that they could do better," she said.

News Corp declined to comment on Gotthelf's statements.

## **Gotthelf isn't the first woman to accuse Allan of sexual harassment**

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Gotthelf's lawsuit marks at least the second time that a former employee has publicly spoken out against Allan.

In 2009, journalist Sandra Guzman accused male editors, including Allan, of fostering a boys' environment and subjecting women to sexual harassment.

The 36-page complaint, filed in the Southern District of New York, claims that Allan "approached a female employee during a party at the Post, rubbed his penis up against her and made sexually suggestive comments about her body, including her breasts, causing that employee to feel extremely uncomfortable and fearing to be alone with him."

Guzman's complaint also says Allan took two Australian political leaders to Scores, the Manhattan strip club, while serving as the paper's top editor.

In another instance, Allan pulled out his phone and showed Guzman and three other female Post employees a picture of a naked man, according to the lawsuit. "What do you think of this?" he asked them while they were sharing drinks at an after-work function.

"Other male employees at the Post openly disparaged and harassed women" the same way Allan did, the complaint says. Les Goodstein, then the senior vice president of News Corp, for example, told Guzman repeatedly that she looked "sexy" and "beautiful," according to the lawsuit.

"Mr. Goodstein also routinely stared at the breasts and butts of other female employees in Ms. Guzman's presence and would often lick his lips while doing so," the lawsuit says.

The complaint also alleges an unidentified white male senior editor had sexually propositioned a "young female Copy Assistant," telling her, "If you give me a blowjob, I will give you a permanent reporter job."

At the time of the suit, a spokesperson for the paper denied all the allegations, saying the lawsuit "has no merit and is based on charges that are groundless." Guzman's suit was settled in 2013.