

News

## **WHAT A BUNCH OF BOOBS! - NY1 REPORTER'S 'SEX-HARASS HELL'**

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An award-winning former NY1 reporter - who says she was sexually assaulted by a male anchor and was the subject of a doctored photo depicting her with cartoonishly large breasts - claims she was fired after complaining about the harassment, according to court documents.

Adele Sammarco, 39, said she was "attacked" by Gary Anthony Ramsay, a NY1 weekend anchor and reporter, after he drove her home from a party.

She also said another reporter at the time, Jeff Simmons, who is now the press secretary for the city comptroller, manipulated a picture of her by adding giant breasts, and the photo was then plastered all over the newsroom.

Sammarco, who expects to make her case in Brooklyn federal court in the spring, claims that she was taken off the anchor desk, where she often filled in, after she complained about the photo. She said she was fired three weeks after she reported the incident with Ramsay.

The suit, filed in 2002, also claims news assistants regularly referred to her by the acronym "BBB" and later told her the nickname stood for "Big Butt Booty."

She said they peppered her with inappropriate questions, too, such as: "Would you do a black man?"

She also alleged that a crew once secretly taped her and a technician struggling with her stuck skirt zipper moments before she went on the air - making the innocent incident appear lurid and sexual. The tape was later edited into a bloopers reel that was to be shown to the entire company, she said.

Ramsay, News Director Peter Landis, and Vice President of Programming Steve Paulus, who were all named in the suit, were deposed last month in preparation for trial.

In the alleged incident with Ramsay, Sammarco said the anchor drove her home from a party at Cafe Iguana in Manhattan in July 2000.

As they said goodnight in the car, Ramsay "held me down with one hand around my neck, crisscrossed my wrists with one of his hands and put his tongue down my throat," Sammarco said during a recent interview.

In his deposition, Ramsay denied the allegation. He described the kiss as a "peck on the cheek."

"I may have leaned over and kissed her goodnight," he said.

Sammarco claims that Paulus and Landis encouraged a "meat market" atmosphere in the newsroom by harassing female employees.

At a Christmas dinner, she said, Paulus had a dozen news assistants rate who had "bigger boobs" - Sammarco or another reporter. Sammarco won.

Landis once asked her to turn around in a dress she had on so he could "get a good look at it," she claimed.

"It's the definition of hostile work environment," said her lawyer, Andrew Laufer.

Sammarco has also recently hired pit-bull litigator Joseph Tacopina to take on her case.

Sammarco began working for NY1 as a general assignment reporter in 1992. She was given an environmental beat and then made criminal justice reporter.

In a company memo, she was praised as "one of NY1's most aggressive reporters, someone who gets material no one else gets" the complaint states.

Those named in the suit refused to discuss the allegations.

"It is not appropriate to comment on pending litigation. We believe that the lawsuit is totally without merit," said NY1 rep Ed Pachetti.

But in his deposition, Landis said Sammarco's duties as a substitute anchor were taken away because "she was focusing on anchoring and not on her primary [reporting] responsibility."

He said she was fired because "her work was not good" and she did not "develop the sources that we expected she would over the course of her time [as criminal justice reporter]."

Sammarco said she's been "black-balled" since filing the suit. "This has made such a black mark for her," Tacopina said. "It's been a ball and chain with her for years."

Additional reporting by Larry Celona

Adele Sammarco, in a lawsuit, claims NY1 anchor Gary Anthony Ramsay (top left) attacked her and reporter Jeff Simmons (bottom left) put up fake pix of her bust. [Dan Brinzac]

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