

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Former COO of Pinterest Francoise Brougher Alleges Gender Discrimination and Retaliation at the Company

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA (August 12, 2020) – Former Chief Operating Officer of Pinterest, Ms. Francoise Brougher, filed a lawsuit [CGC-20-585888](#) against Pinterest, alleging gender discrimination, wrongful termination and retaliation. While 70% of Pinterest users are women, the company is run by [three men](#), and gender bias is prevalent in the C-Suite. Even as the highest-ranking woman in the company and head of operations, Ms. Brougher was expected to be compliant and conform to gender stereotypes. When she refused to take a back seat to her male peers, she was marginalized and excluded from important meetings and decisions. And when she objected to the CFO treating her in a demeaning and sexist way, she was fired. The termination of Ms. Brougher’s employment demonstrates that gender bias still girds a glass ceiling at Pinterest and that calling out discrimination comes with a heavy price, even for the most senior female executives.

Ms. Brougher served as Pinterest’s Chief Operating Officer for two years, accelerating revenue growth and helping to take the company public during its IPO. She oversaw a large staff with dozens of people reporting to her. Yet when she started at the company, she was offered a less favorable compensation (vesting) structure than the other C-level male executives. Additionally, whereas men were rewarded for strong leadership, as a woman Ms. Brougher was held to a different standard. She was criticized for demonstrating the same traits and criticized for not being collaborative. Even though she was the Chief Operating Officer, she was not invited to the IPO Road Show or to subsequent board meetings, which is unusual for the COO of a public company.

When Pinterest Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Todd Morgenfeld, made a demeaning and sexist comment to her, Ms. Brougher complained to the head of Human Resources and to the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Ben Silbermann. She hoped the company would help to remedy the hostile work environment she experienced, but instead the CEO fired her over a video call. Pinterest then attempted to cover up Ms. Brougher’s complaints, telling staff that her firing was a voluntary departure.

“Pinterest broke the law by firing Ms. Brougher after she complained about gender discrimination and a hostile work environment,” said Ms. Brougher’s attorney, David A. Lowe, Partner at Rudy Exelrod Zieff & Lowe. “Ms. Brougher’s story reveals an often unspoken experience for women who reach the top of their fields. Even after they achieve a high position and earn a seat at the table, they are still held to different standards of behavior and expected to defer to male peers. Ms. Brougher is bringing this case to shine a light on gender bias and retaliation in the C-Suite.”

In her recent op-ed, [The Pinterest Paradox: Cupcakes and Toxicity](#), Ms. Brougher details her experience at Pinterest.

“Gender discrimination at the executive level may be more subtle, but it is insidious and very real,” said Ms. Brougher. “I believed Pinterest would judge me based on my job performance. But instead I was treated unfairly because of my gender. I’m speaking out because I want to be part of the hard work of dismantling systems of gender bias that punish women for the type of strong leadership rewarded in men and that impedes female leaders’ ability to be successful.”

Ms. Brougher has been a technology executive for the past twenty years after arriving in the United States on a student visa. She was previously an executive at Charles Schwab, Google, and Square. Ms. Brougher is also an engaged member of Sodexo’s Board, a French multinational operating in over 70 countries.

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