

Transgender teacher claims discrimination at NYC's Speier Legacy School

By Kathianne Boniello

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Educator Alaina Daniels is suing the Speyer Legacy School after "living nightmare" of discrimination at the private school.

She was hired to diversify a "progressive" private school, but a transgender teacher claims she faced months of rampant discrimination — culminating in a witchhunt by parents who claimed she was endangering kids in school bathrooms.

Educator Alaina Daniels says in a lawsuit her time at Speyer Legacy School, which was co-founded by Harry Belafonte's daughter-in-law and costs \$54,000 a year, was a "living nightmare" of discrimination.

Bosses repeatedly claimed they were committed to diversity but then Daniels was allegedly barred from joining LGBTQ groups, repeatedly referred to as the wrong gender; fielded numerous insults from colleagues and was once told, "genitals and gender are inseparable," she said in a Manhattan Supreme Court filing.

The harassment took a frightening turn at a holiday party when a male coworker allegedly choked her on the dance floor — and bosses later blamed her for sparking the incident by dancing "provocatively," Daniels alleges in the legal filing.

By January 2020, the parents of a fifth-grader who had been in lunch detention overseen by Daniels claimed she'd followed the child into a bathroom and sexually harassed him.

When Daniels pointed out her interactions with the boy were witnessed by dozens of students and staff and captured on security cameras, proving the allegations false, administrators still conducted a "lengthy sham investigation," making her out to be a pedophile, she claims in the lawsuit.

She's suing for unspecified damages, alleging the work environment was so hostile she was forced to resign.

"Her goal is to ensure that no other transgender teachers at that school, or any school, will have to endure the emotional distress of giving their all for the children while being subjected to harassment for being true to themselves," said Daniels' attorney, Jillian Weiss.

Larry Donovan, head of Speyer Legacy School, said Daniels' complaint "contains many factual inaccuracies, and we will vigorously defend our school during this lawsuit."