


Google will rape you if you sue them, workers say



 Google's new logo near the Googleplex on Charleston Road in Mountain View, Calif, on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2015. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)

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PUBLISHED: January 6, 2018 at 12:00 pm | UPDATED: January 6, 2018 at 12:43 pm

One of the women suing Google for allegedly paying women less than men has come under attack from a former Google contractor who tweeted, among other things, that she deserved to be raped.

Saying she felt threatened, Kelly Ellis, a former Google software engineer locked in a high-profile legal battle with the Mountain View technology giant over its salary practices, received a temporary restraining order Wednesday in Superior Court in San Francisco against Alex Gulakov, 26.

Ellis, 33, alleged in her court filing that Gulakov targeted her for speaking out about gender issues and said he had included links about her Google lawsuit in online diatribes against her.

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“What scared me the most was that this was a total stranger who I’d never interacted with before this started, and how quickly this escalated,” Ellis said in a phone interview Friday.

Gulakov, in emails to this news organization, disputed many of Ellis’ claims but admitted writing a social media post “implying she deserves rape.” He suggested he was just trying to get her attention and did not intend to harm her. Ellis and other “misguided” feminists are making life worse for “reasonable women,” he wrote.

Both Gulakov and Ellis have been posting online about their dispute, which did not occur while either of them worked with Google.

Civil-harassment orders such as the one Ellis sought are obtained on the basis of a victim's declaration and do not indicate the accused party is guilty. A hearing in Ellis' case has been set for Jan. 24.

Ellis' new legal action highlights a growing cultural conflict in the male-dominated technology industry, which has been at the center of a public debate over gender and diversity — from 2014's "Gamergate" death threats against developer Zoe Quinn, to the sexual-harassment allegations in a public blog post by former Uber engineer Susan Fowler that helped oust former CEO Travis Kalanick, to the memo by subsequently fired Googler James Damore, who argued there was a biological basis for the lack of women in tech.

Harassment of women in tech is exacerbating the gender imbalance in the industry, said Adriana Gascoigne, CEO of Girls in Tech, a nonprofit dedicated to bringing more women into the industry. "It is deterring women from entering into the tech workforce because they hear stories, they talk to friends, family members, colleagues — and who would want to work in an industry where you have to watch your back all the time and you have to deal with misogynistic behavior?" Gascoigne said.

Ellis' alleged harassment by Gulakov — a software-development contractor for three months at Google in 2014 — started around 11 a.m. Tuesday, she claimed in an application for a restraining order submitted the next day.

"He sent me a rape threat on Twitter, writing: 'you deserve to be raped fat worthless (profanity),'” Ellis' court filing stated. On Twitter, Ellis — who has since made her own tweets private — shared a screen shot of Gulakov's purported rape threat.

After posting on Twitter, Gulakov called Ellis on her personal phone, she said in court documents. "He began screaming at me," she wrote, and called her a "feminazi," demanding she stop advocating for gender equality in tech.

Ellis wrote that she told him to stop contacting her, but he called several more times and sent more than 30 texts over the next several hours.

She phoned police, and while awaiting their arrival, Gulakov sent a text saying he was in her neighborhood, her court application said. “He wanted me to meet him at a restaurant that was on the same city block as my residence,” Ellis wrote. “I am very frightened that he knows where I live and that he came to my address trying to harass me in person.”

She said in a phone interview that Gulakov also posted her address and photo on a number of online platforms, including 4chan. Gulakov said he’d found her personal information on 4chan and other message boards.

In emails to this news organization, he said he had contacted Ellis — who is outspoken on Twitter about gender and political issues — “to talk to her to get her to stop this cycle of hate where she seizes every thing to criticize (sic),” he said.

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He tweeted about rape to get her attention, he said. “I said it as a provocative starter that she deserves it from her many haters online. She invites this hatred on herself by creating these types of fake news spectacles,” Gulakov said by email. “The deserves rape was a troll comment to gauge how reactionary she is to trolls, I used that to tell her that she should not feed trollbait because that only encourages it.”

Gulakov said he phoned Ellis to apologize for his “obvious troll Twitter comment” and that he only texted her “to ASSURE her of her safety and that I dont intent (sic) her harm.”

He said he wanted to help warn Ellis that “her other haters might wish her harm.”

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narrative of
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and said that
the "era of
PC culture is

over." The real bullies, he said, are Ellis and other "misguided SJW (social justice warrior) activists" who manufacture "fake outrage" over online trolls.

Ellis is not the first female tech worker to accuse Gulakov of harassment. Software engineer Ingrid Avendaño, one of three Latina women who jointly sued Uber in October alleging discrimination against women and people of color, tweeted out a screen shot from an online platform in which someone she identified as Gulakov wrote, "She's ruining it for non feminazi women," and "I will be a hero for men's freedom once she gets raped and killed." The writer also said, "Got her address from my prior rape attempt."

In his email to this news organization, Gulakov admitted calling Avendaño "fat and a tech-suing man-hating misguided feminazi," but said he "did not make any prior rape attempts on Ingrid and left her alone." He would never make such a statement as a "serious threat," he said.