



# Ashley Gjøvik

**Ashley Gjøvik** is an American program manager and activist who is known for her labor complaints against Apple Inc. Gjøvik was terminated in 2021 by Apple for allegedly leaking confidential intellectual property, which she denied. Gjøvik alleged her firing was retaliation for speaking out against the company.

Gjøvik filed several National Labor Relations Board complaints against Apple, including two regarding employee rules that were found to have merit in January 2023.

## Education and career

Gjøvik studied literature, with an intent to get a Master of Fine Arts, before joining Apple in 2015.<sup>[2]</sup> In 2016, she became an engineering program manager for Apple working out of their Sunnyvale office.<sup>[1][3]</sup> She spent several months on paid leave between 2020–2021.<sup>[4][5][a]</sup> While employed at Apple, Gjøvik studied public international law and human rights at Santa Clara University.<sup>[8][2]</sup> After being terminated from Apple in September 2021,<sup>[9]</sup> she worked as an intern at an immigration clinic that helps asylum seekers.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Ashley Gjøvik**



<b>Born</b>	1985 or 1986 (age 37–38) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Occupation</b>	<u>Program manager</u>
<b>Known for</b>	Legal complaints against <u>Apple Inc.</u>

## Labor issues and concerns at Apple

In July 2021, Apple investigated Gjøvik's allegations of sex discrimination from a male manager. On August 2, following the closure of the investigation finding no wrongdoing, she wrote on Twitter about the experience, alleging she was tone policed and received critical feedback for upspeak which gained national attention. In an interview with The Verge, Gjøvik said she asked to be placed on the second of two paid administrative leaves to "mitigate the hostile work environment" while the company re-investigated her claims.<sup>[a][5]</sup>

## Termination and labor complaints

On August 26, 2021, Gjøvik filed a charge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), alleging retaliation, harassment, and forced administrative leave.<sup>[6]</sup> A few days later, The Verge published an article in which she and other Apple employees told the publication they were discouraged from keeping separate phones for personal and professional use and were expected to help test software with informed consent.<sup>[8][10]</sup> Program manager Janneke Parrish also said this in an interview.<sup>[11]</sup>

Apple instructs its employees not to upload sensitive, confidential, or private data to work tools.<sup>[8]</sup> In the article, and on social media, Gjøvik raised employee privacy concerns about legal holds and the data Apple collects through its internal tools. She spoke of data privacy concerns of internal tools such as a bug tracking tool called "Radar" and an app for testing Face ID, "Glimmer,"<sup>[b]</sup> which took photos and brief videos when it sensed a face. A screen recording taken by Gjøvik was included in the article and in a tweet.<sup>[10][8]</sup>

The following week, on September 9, Gjøvik was contacted by Apple's human resources team about an investigation into "a sensitive Intellectual Property matter". After Gjøvik offered to participate in the investigation only by email, she was suspended and subsequently terminated. Apple said she had "disclosed confidential product-related information in violation of Apple policies" and that she had "failed to cooperate and to provide accurate and complete information during the Apple investigatory process".<sup>[8][3]</sup> She received a letter from O'Melveny & Myers on behalf of Apple stating that the tweet with the video of Glimmer was "a violation ... of a confidentiality agreement she'd signed". She deleted it, though she objected to the legal grounds.<sup>[8]</sup> Gjøvik alleged her termination was retaliatory for speaking out about environmental concerns, harassment, and sexism. She filed a complaint with the NLRB, asking for reinstatement.<sup>[13][2]</sup>

Gjøvik filed two additional charges with the NLRB against Apple the following month, after a company-wide memo from Tim Cook was leaked to the press on September 21, 2021.<sup>[14]</sup> The memo was criticized for conflating product leaks with employee activism around workplace conditions, and for including the line, "people who leak confidential information do not belong here," which some interpreted as threatening.<sup>[15]</sup> Gjøvik alleged that the memo and several other policies in the employee handbook illegally inhibit staff from exercising their federally-protected rights to talk to the press, discuss wages, and post on social media.<sup>[16][17]</sup>

On January 30, 2023, the NLRB found merit to five charges, two of which were brought by Gjøvik,<sup>[18]</sup> that "various work rules, handbook rules, and confidentiality rules" imposed by Apple and its executives "tend to interfere with, restrain or coerce employees" from exercising their legal rights to collective action and to speak with the media.<sup>[19][20][21]</sup> The NLRB has not yet ruled in response to Gjøvik's individual charges.<sup>[20]</sup>

## See also

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- Sexism in the technology industry
- History of Apple Inc.
- Litigation involving Apple Inc.
- Criticism of Apple Inc.

## Notes

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- a. An August leave was described as "indefinite" by *The Verge*, but they and Gjøvik both say it was for the duration of the investigation. Gjøvik later describes this leave as a forced suspension.<sup>[3][6][7]</sup>

b. Gjøvik refers to Glimmer by its former code name "Gobbler."<sup>[12]</sup>

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