

# Fox News Host Sean Hannity And Ex-Anchor Ed Henry Sued For Sexual Harassment, Assault

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Deer Park-native ex-Fox News Channel anchor Ed Henry, who was recently fired after being accused of sexual assault, was named Monday in a federal lawsuit along with Franklin Square-raised Sean Hannity, who is being sued for sexual harassment.

Attorney Douglas Wigdor filed suit on behalf of his clients Jennifer Eckhart and Cathy Areu in Manhattan federal court. The suit names Fox News, Henry, and Hannity, as well as hosts Tucker Carlson and Howard Kurtz, who deny the allegations.

“What this lawsuit reveals is that today’s Fox News is the same old Fox News,” Wigdor said. “Some of the names in leadership may have changed since Roger Ailes’ regime, but Fox News’ institutional apathy towards sexual misconduct has not. How many more women will have to be victimized before Fox News finally takes sexual harassment and workplace sexual assault seriously?”

Former Fox News chairman Roger Ailes resigned in 2016 after being accused by former employees of sexual harassment. Those claims formed the basis of the 2019 Oscar-winning feature film *Bombshell* starring Nicole Kidman, Charlize Theron, and Margot Robbie. Former Fox News host Bill O’Reilly, who’s also from Long Island, was ousted in 2017 following prior sexual harassment claims.

The cable news network owned by Rupert Murdoch’s Fox Corp said on July 2 it had dismissed Henry, the co-presenter of weekday news program “America’s Newsroom,” after receiving a complaint on June 25 from the lawyer of a former employee, which prompted the network to retain an outside law firm to investigate.

Henry was suspended on the day of the complaint and was fired based on “investigative findings,” according to an internal memo that Fox News provided Reuters.

“Ed Henry denies the allegations referenced in the Fox announcement and is confident that he will be vindicated after a full hearing in an appropriate forum,” Henry tweeted, quoting his lawyer Catherine Foti.

On Monday, Fox News issued a statement saying an independent investigation also determined Areu’s allegations against Carlson, Hannity, and Kurtz are untrue.

“Based on the findings of a comprehensive independent investigation conducted by an outside law firm, including interviews with numerous eyewitnesses, we have determined that all of Cathy Areu’s claims against FOX News, including its management as well as its hosts Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity and Howard Kurtz and its contributor Gianni Caldwell, are false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit,” a Fox News spokesperson said.

“We take all claims of harassment, misconduct and retaliation seriously, promptly investigating them and taking immediate action as needed — in this case, the appropriate action based on our investigation is to defend vigorously against these baseless allegations,” the statement continued. “Ms. Areu and Jennifer Eckhart can pursue their claims against Ed Henry directly with him, as Fox News already took swift action as soon as it learned of Ms. Eckhart’s claims on June 25 and Mr. Henry is no longer employed by the network.”

Michael J. Willemin, a partner at Manhattan-based Wigdor LLP scoffed a Fox’s statement.

“The complaint asserts that Fox News did nothing,” he said. “Even putting that aside, the complaint notes that Mr. Henry engaged in this unlawful and egregious conduct while employed by Fox News. It is outrageous and contrary to common sense that Fox News purports not to take responsibility for his actions.”

Eckhart alleged that Henry subjected her to not only sexual harassment, but also sexual assault and rape.

“My decision to speak out was not an easy one, but I refuse to let fear of retaliation, victim shaming and further attacks intimidate me into remaining silent,” Eckhart said. “I am hopeful that my decision to file this action will result in positive change for women at Fox, and for all victims in the workplace, and I am honored that other women have come forward since my decision to do so.”

Areu alleged that Henry sent her myriad wildly inappropriate, disturbing and sadistic sexual images and videos and repeatedly suggested that he would help her obtain an anchor position with Fox News if she engaged in sexual acts with him, according to her attorneys.

“Like Ms. Eckhart, I too was fearful to come forward,” Areu said. “However, I simply could not stay silent given the tremendous harm that Mr. Henry and others at Fox News have caused for women affiliated with the company. I chose to file this complaint because no woman should have to suffer the conduct to which I was subjected, much less the egregious conduct suffered by Ms. Eckhart.”

The court documents include a photograph that captures the image of a stack of cash on set that Hannity allegedly offered to his male staff, auctioning off Areu to anyone in the studio

was “man enough” to take her on a date after work, said Wigdor, who suggested the investigation that Fox News had performed was a sham.

“A significant part of this investigators’ time is spent defending companies like Fox News against allegations such as the ones brought herein,” Wigdor said. “Moreover, the investigator did not even speak with either of our clients, even though both Ms. Eckhart and Ms. Areu offered to meet with him under reasonable conditions. We call on Fox News to work with our clients to retain a truly independent investigator who is transparent. The results of any such investigation should be made public for the world to see.”

*-With Reuters*