

Lawsuit vs. Fox News accuses Ed Henry of rape, Hannity and Carlson of sexual misconduct

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A lawsuit filed by two women on Monday accuses former Fox News chief national correspondent Ed Henry of rape, and alleges sexual misconduct by some of the network's top on-air personalities, including Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson.

Jennifer Eckhart, a former associate producer for Fox Business, is a co-plaintiff in the suit. She claims that Henry raped her in addition to committing other forms of sexual misconduct against her.

Henry was fired by Fox News earlier this month after the network investigated a complaint about “willful sexual misconduct in the workplace.”

But the lawsuit claims Fox News had been aware of Henry's wrongdoing for several years.

“On July 1, 2020, Fox News disclosed to the public that it had terminated Mr. Henry based on the findings of an internal investigation, and purported to take credit for acting appropriately,” the complaint states. “However, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, Fox News knew that Mr. Henry had engaged in sexual misconduct as far back as early 2017. At that time, when Fox News was conducting a company-wide investigation into issues of sexual harassment, multiple women came forward to complain that Mr. Henry had engaged in sexually inappropriate conduct towards them.”

The suit, filed in New York federal court, claims that in addition to Henry, co-plaintiff Cathy Areu was sexually harassed by several other men at Fox News, including Hannity, Carlson, journalist Howard Kurtz and contributing political analyst Gianni Caldwell.

Fox News responded to the suit with the following statement:

“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 & Howard Kurtz and its contributor Gianni Caldwell, are false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit. 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. 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."

In addition, Henry's lawyer, Catherine M. Foti, issued a separate statement on his behalf:

"The Me Too movement has helped to bring to light a number of injustices in our society, and everyone that has suffered deserves to be heard. This is not one of those cases. The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship. Ed Henry looks forward to presenting actual facts and evidence, which will contradict the fictional accounts contained in the complaint. That evidence includes graphic photos and other aggressively sexual communications that Ms. Eckhart sent to Mr. Henry."

Once an on-air regular guest on Fox News, Areu says she was victimized by Henry through a "slew of wildly inappropriate sexual images and messages." The complaint details the contents of these messages.

Additionally, Areu targets several of Fox News' other stars. She alleges that Hannity once threw \$100 on the desk of his set and called for the men around to take her on a date for drinks.

"He repeatedly yelled, 'Who wants to take her on a date?' 'Take her on a date to Del Frisco's.' Ms. Areu was completely mortified and made clear that she was incredibly uncomfortable with Mr. Hannity's misogynistic behavior by quietly pleading with one of her friends in the room to accept the money so that the humiliation would end," the suit claims.

Areu also says that Carlson once probed to see whether she would be interested in a sexual relationship. She accuses Kurtz of inviting her to a hotel room. After allegedly spurning advances or enduring comments, Areu says she stopped being invited to appear on each of their respective programs.

The three Fox News hosts are co-defendants in the suit and face claims of retaliation.

Henry was fired on July 1 after reports of "willful sexual misconduct in the workplace years ago" were reportedly brought to the network's attention on June 25 by "a former employee's attorney." That former employee was Eckhart.

The lawsuit, filed by lawyers Douglas Wigdor and Michael J. Willemin, calls the move to dump Henry and take credit for an independent investigation amounted to Fox News "trying to avoid taking accountability for what actually happened; namely, that one of its most prominent on-air personalities — with a history of multiple sexual harassment complaints — sexually assaulted and raped Ms. Eckhart."

The suit also states, “It is widely documented in the public record that Fox News has not only cultivated and fostered sexual harassment and misconduct, but has consistently accepted and rewarded it. Nevertheless, Fox News would have the public believe that it is a different place from the Fox News that was run by former disgraced Chairman and CEO Roger Ailes,” the suit says.

“Unfortunately, it is actually worse.”