

Former Fox News anchor Ed Henry accused of rape

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Two prominent female Fox News personalities have filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against the network and some of its best-known anchors — including Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson — while one of them alleged in the lawsuit that former Fox News anchor Ed Henry raped her in 2017, and forced her to perform oral sex on him in 2015.

Henry, 48, was fired by the network July 1 for "willful sexual misconduct," although Fox News Channel at the time declined to name the employee who had made the complaint against him.

The lawsuit, filed Monday by Fox Business anchor Jennifer Eckhart, who said that Henry had repeatedly assaulted her, and on-air contributor Cathy Areu in U.S. District Court in Manhattan, contends that "Fox News continues to protect and reward perpetrators of sexual harassment and refuses to take accountability for putting such persons in positions of power from which they can subject women to sexual misconduct, sexual assault and, in the case of Ms. Eckhart, rape."

Along with Hannity and Carlson, Fox News anchor Howard Kurtz was also named.

In the lawsuit, Eckhart, who came to Fox News in 2013 from ESPN and later became an anchor and producer with Fox Business, said Henry had "preyed upon, manipulated and groomed her" shortly after joining the network when she was 24. It was unclear Monday whether Eckhart was still with the network.

The lawsuit contends that in late June, Eckhart and her lawyer, Douglas Wigdor, "described to Fox News, in graphic and specific detail, how Mr. Henry groomed, psychologically manipulated and coerced Ms. Eckhart into having a sexual relationship with him, and that, when she would not comply voluntarily, he sexually assaulted her on office property, and raped her at a hotel where Fox News frequently lodged its visiting employees."

The lawsuit also states that Henry "sent Ms. Areu a slew of wildly inappropriate sexual images and messages — which are in her possession — throughout the first half of this year."

In a statement, Fox News Channel called Areu's and Eckhart's claims against the network and its anchors "false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit," and that it would "defend vigorously against these baseless allegations," while adding that "Ms. Areu and Jennifer Eckhart can pursue their claims against Ed Henry directly with him, as [he] is no longer employed by the network."

On July 1, the network said that "on Thursday, June 25, we received a complaint about [Henry] from a former employee's attorney." Henry, who was raised in Deer Park, joined Fox News Channel in 2011 after seven years at CNN. In 2016, InTouch magazine reported that he had had an extramarital affair with a Las Vegas stripper over a period of 10 months.

"The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship," said Henry's lawyer, Catherine Foti. "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 suggestive communications that Ms. Eckhart sent to Mr. Henry."

In a Twitter post on Monday, Gretchen Carlson — who sued former Fox News Channel chief Roger Ailes and 21st Century Fox in July 2016 for a variety of sexual harassment claims that the company later settled — said Areu and Eckhart are "immensely brave women who now have their voices heard. I know how hard it is to come forward w/ allegations. We won't cower in a corner anymore. We are standing up."