

Lawsuit accuses ex-Fox host Ed Henry of rape

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A federal lawsuit filed Monday alleges ex-Fox News host [Ed Henry](#) raped a woman he had “groomed” and “coerced” into having a sexual relationship when she did not comply voluntarily.

The lawsuit, filed by Douglas Wigdor and Michael Willemin on behalf of Jennifer Eckhart and [Cathy Areu](#), also alleges Fox News supported and promoted Henry after receiving complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior and only [fired him earlier this month](#) because they were aware of an impending lawsuit.

The lawsuit alleges Henry sexually harassed both women and raped Eckhart.

Fox News was notified on June 25 that Eckhart retained legal counsel in connection with allegations of assault and rape against Henry, according to the lawsuit. The network released a memo on July 1 stating that Henry had been fired after an investigation into a complaint about “willful sexual misconduct in the workplace.”

The lawsuit alleges that Henry, approximately twice Eckhart’s age, had “preyed upon, manipulated and groomed” Eckhart since she was 24. The suit also alleges he asked her to be his “sex slave” and his “little whore” and threatened punishment and retaliation if she did not comply with his sexual demands.

In a statement Fox News said Areu and Eckhart can pursue claims against 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.

Henry’s attorney Catherine Foti denied the allegations against Henry.

“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,” Foti said in a statement. “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 suggestive communications that Ms. Eckhart sent to Mr. Henry.”

The suit also alleges other Fox News personalities, including Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, Howard Kurtz and Gianni Caldwell, subjected Areu to inappropriate sexual harassment and retaliation.

Fox News said Areu's allegations against others at Fox News are false.

"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," Fox News said in a statement.

"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 lawsuit alleges that Henry raped Eckhart at a Manhattan hotel in 2017 while she was restrained in metal handcuffs. He also allegedly took naked photos of Eckhart without her consent before the alleged assault.

"Ms. Eckhart's counsel 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, thereby facilitating, whether knowingly or unknowingly, Mr. Henry's conduct," the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit also includes text messages from Henry to Eckhart, which the suit states were shared with Fox News. In a series of messages, Henry states "Whatever When u r owned U don't get a 'Choice,'" to which Eckhart responded "You don't own me."

The lawsuit also accused Fox News's announcement of Henry's firing of being "completely disingenuous" and of downplaying the severity of the allegations by characterizing Henry's actions as "merely 'sexual misconduct.'"

"Fox News was 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 states.

The lawsuit also alleges that Henry sent Areu a series of "wildly inappropriate sexual images and messages" throughout the first half of 2020.

In one video, titled “Fastest Interview,” someone interviewing for a position exposed her vagina and afterwards the interviewer indicates that she got the job.

Immediately after Henry sent Areu the video he texted her, “Are you avail for anchor interview,” the lawsuit alleges. When he sent the video and the text, Henry was aware Areu was looking for full time work at Fox News, according to the lawsuit.

The suit also alleges Henry sent other inappropriate texts, including messages suggesting Areu have sex with him.

The lawsuit claims that the network knew Henry “engaged in sexual misconduct as far back as early 2017,” when the network conducted a company-wide investigation into issues of sexual harassment and multiple women came forward to complain Henry engaged in sexually inappropriate behavior toward them.

The lawsuit alleges Hannity threw \$100 on the desk during a taping of his show on March 8, 2018 and called out to the room demanding someone take Areu on a date and for drinks. He made the comments as Areu was “stuck” and hooked into studio equipment, according to the lawsuit. She had been a “relatively regular face” on Hannity’s show, but was “hardly ever” invited back to appear after that date, according to the lawsuit.

It also alleges that Carlson in December 2018 told Areu he would be alone in New York City that night in a hotel room without his wife or kids. Areu “awkwardly sidestepped” the advances and declined to spend the night at Carlson’s hotel. She had appeared on Carlson’s show 17 times in 2017 and eight times in 2018, but just three times in 2019 and not once in 2020, according to the lawsuit.

Kurtz allegedly invited Areu to his hotel room on July 9, 2019 while he was in New York City. She declined but invited him to dinner with her and a friend in town which he declined. The morning after, Kurtz “refused to meet with her at a studio” and shortly after told her “you’re the only woman who won’t come to my hotel room,” according to the lawsuit.

The suit alleges Caldwell, a Fox News political analyst based in Miami, texted a video of him with Ann Coulter and said “Ann is my friend.” The suit alleges Caldwell used that to attempt to coerce Areu into dating him.

The lawsuit and new allegations come nearly four years after then-Fox news Chairman and CEO Roger Ailes was ousted from the network after an external investigation due to sexual harassment claims in July 2016.