

Producer Jennifer Eckhart Says She Was "Paralyzed by Fear" Working at Fox News

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Eckhart, a former Fox Business employee who accused former Fox News anchor and White House correspondent Ed Henry of rape, talked about her experience in an interview that aired on Tuesday's 'CBS This Morning.'

Former Fox Business producer Jennifer Eckhart and co-plaintiff Cathy Areu filed a lawsuit on Monday, alleging sexual misconduct against Fox News talent years after similar accusations led to the demise of the late CEO Roger Ailes' leadership.

Eckhart has accused former White House correspondent and anchor Ed Henry of rape. "After we met, and we had our photo taken together, he messaged me, 'Wow, you are way more beautiful in person,'" Eckhart said during a Tuesday interview with *CBS This Morning's* Jericka Duncan.

Eckhart said her interactions began in 2014 when she was working at Fox News as a production assistant. "As a 24-year-old girl, when the chief White House correspondent follows you on Twitter, you, you know, you get stars in your eyes," she said.

But later, Eckhart said she saw a different side of Henry. In her lawsuit, she accuses Henry of "violently" raping her while she was "helpless and restrained in metal handcuffs." Eckhart also alleged that Henry performed "sadistic acts on her...that left her injured, bruised and battered with bloody wrists."

Asked how she would characterize her relationship with Henry, Eckhart told Duncan that it was abusive "without question."

"I felt that he had the power to derail me, to destroy me, to ruin my career. And, I just, I didn't have a voice until now," said Eckhart, who also alleged in her lawsuit that Henry asked her to be his "sex slave."

Henry was fired from his post at Fox News three weeks ago due to Eckhart's allegations. However, an attorney for Henry said in a statement, "The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship."

During her interview with *CBS This Morning*, Eckhart — who says she was terminated from her job at Fox News in June — went on to say that she never felt safe at the network after her experience with Henry. "I think it's safe to say that I was paralyzed by fear when I was working there," she said. "I don't know how you could continue to cultivate and foster an environment that rewards sexual predators consistently year after year."

For her part, Areu — who also appeared on Tuesday's broadcast of *CBS This Morning* — alleges she was sexually harassed by at least four men at Fox News. By speaking out, she hopes to create substantial change at the network.

"I kind of got numb to it. I thought it was perfectly fine to receive pornographic images and GIFs," she said. "I thought that was normal for a male anchor to do."

Areu also alleges that Sean Hannity "completely unsolicited — threw \$100" on his anchor desk, "demanding that someone take [her] out on a date for drinks."

Fox News found Areu's allegations to be "baseless" after conducting an independent investigation. The network also said that no allegations were made against Henry prior to Eckhart's.

"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," the network 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. 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."

