

# Column: A Fox News anchor is sued for sexual harassment and assault. Where have I heard this before?

 [latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-07-21/fox-news-anchor-sued-sexual-harassment-assault](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-07-21/fox-news-anchor-sued-sexual-harassment-assault)

July 21, 2020

I have read a lot of federal lawsuits in my time, but I've never seen one that starts with a trigger warning.

And yet there it is, in big red letters at the top of [the lawsuit](#) two women just filed against Fox News, veteran anchor Ed Henry and some of his illustrious Fox colleagues:

“Trigger warning: This document contains highly graphic information of a sexual nature, including sexual assault.”

What follows is a sordid set of allegations against Henry, [who was fired July 1](#) after the network became aware of the claims.

The lawsuit alleges that Henry coerced Jennifer Eckhart, a young Fox staffer, into a sexual relationship, culminating in a violent rape in a Manhattan hotel room in 2017 that left her bruised and bloody. The complaint is replete with images of graphic texts from Henry to the young woman. “Good long session last time,” said one. “Left you bruised batter dazed sated begging for more.” Henry’s lawyer has promised to prove [the relationship was consensual](#).

The complaint also alleges that Henry harassed Cathy Areu, a regular guest on Fox News shows who sought full-time employment with the network, sending her sexually explicit text messages and vulgar photos.

Areu also says that in 2018, on the night of a company Christmas party, Tucker Carlson told her he was staying overnight in a hotel by himself, which she interpreted as a sexual come-on. She alleges that, in July 2019, Howard Kurtz invited her to meet him in the lobby of his hotel to talk about her career and was rude to her after she declined. And, she claims, on March 8, 2018, when she was Sean Hannity’s guest, he threw a hundred dollar bill on his desk and yelled, “Who wants to take her on a date?” The network said it investigated Areu’s claims and [found them](#) “false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit.”

Out of context, those three incidents might seem to be thin grounds for a lawsuit. But given the network’s extraordinary history of sexual harassment, they seem part of a pattern where powerful male hosts feel free to behave boorishly or to harass female colleagues, particularly those who are seeking career advancement.

I mean, we *have* seen this movie before.

It's called "Bombshell." It came out in 2019 and was nominated for three Oscars. It's about how a culture of sexual harassment and misogyny at Fox News led to the downfall of Fox chief Roger Ailes, who was forced out of his job in 2016 after former anchor Gretchen Carlson filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against him.

Two months before Ailes was fired, he'd put Ed Henry on a four-month leave of absence after revelations that Henry, at the time a White House correspondent, had had an extramarital affair with a Las Vegas stripper. Normally, you might argue that consensual affairs are no one's business, but unfortunately for Henry, the woman in question told her story to In Touch magazine. At the time, Ailes said the episode raised "serious questions about Ed's lack of judgment."

You really can't make this stuff up.

Starting in 2017, when the New York Times and the New Yorker broke stories about Harvey Weinstein's decades-long history of sexual abuse, many of us watched in amazement as men who were titans in their professions were outed and toppled by women (and a handful of men) brave enough to risk their careers to come forward with stories of misconduct.

Apparently, it was too much to hope that the #MeToo movement would result in immediate, wholesale changes in the workplace dynamic between powerful (mostly) men and their subordinates.

Just last week, the Washington Post reported that 15 women who worked for the Washington Redskins claimed to have been relentlessly harassed and verbally abused by team executives between 2006 and 2019. Three of those executives, the Post reported, "abruptly departed" when team executives were presented with the Post's findings.

On July 1, Los Angeles Times Food Editor Peter Meehan resigned after being publicly accused of abusive behavior, especially toward women. In his resignation tweet, Meehan said that while the accusations "alleged a number of things I don't think are true," he also wished he "had seen myself how others did and changed my ways...." The Times is investigating.

It's unfathomable to me, in this moment of accountability, that anyone thinks that abuse and misconduct will not eventually be found out and punished.

How, after watching the career implosions of men like Harvey Weinstein, Bill O'Reilly, Matt Lauer, Charlie Rose, Les Moonves, can bosses think it's acceptable to invite or demand sex from subordinates, to talk about how they look or dress, to treat them like objects?

And yet, there seems to be an unwavering mindset that the rules governing workplace conduct are written for other people.

As so many newly unemployed men have learned, they apply to everyone.