

# Lawsuit accuses ex-Fox News reporter Ed Henry of rape, says Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson harassed other woman

[cnbc.com/2020/07/20/lawsuit-accuses-former-fox-news-reporter-ed-henry-of-rape.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/20/lawsuit-accuses-former-fox-news-reporter-ed-henry-of-rape.html)

July 20, 2020

- A bombshell lawsuit accuses former Fox News chief national correspondent Ed Henry of raping one woman, and says that the network's star anchor Sean Hannity once offered \$100 to staffers to "date" a second woman who also accuses Henry of sexual harassment.
- The suit says that in addition to Henry, plaintiff Cathy Areu was sexually harassed by multiple other men at Fox News, including Hannity, the host Tucker Carlson, journalist Howard Kurtz and network political analyst Gianni Caldwell.
- The other plaintiff, Areu's fellow former Fox News employee Jennifer Eckhart, claims that Henry raped her, in addition to committing other sexual misconduct against her.

A bombshell lawsuit filed by two women Monday accused former Fox News chief national correspondent Ed Henry of raping one of them and says that the network's star anchor Sean Hannity once offered \$100 to staffers to "date" another woman who also accuses Henry of sexual harassment.

The federal suit says that one of the plaintiffs, Cathy Areu, also was sexually harassed by other high-profile men at Fox News, including Hannity, host Tucker Carlson, journalist Howard Kurtz and contributor Gianni Caldwell.

The other plaintiff, former Fox Business associate producer Jennifer Eckhart, claims that Henry raped her, in addition to committing other sexual misconduct against her.

Areu had been a frequent guest on Fox News, but the network says she was neither an employee nor a contributor. However, the lawsuit identifies her as meeting the definition of an employee, albeit not a full-time one.

The Manhattan federal court lawsuit comes three weeks after Fox News fired Henry for what the network said was sexual misconduct.

The suit names as defendants Fox News, Hannity, Carlson and Kurtz and was filed on behalf of Eckhart and Areu by lawyers Douglas Wigdor and Michael Willemin.

Fox News in a statement said that an investigation had found that all of Areu's claims against the men, other than Henry, were "false" and that it intended to fight her allegations.

The network added that Areu and Eckhart can pursue their legal 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.”

Henry’s lawyer Catherine Foti, in an emailed statement, said, “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,” Foti said.

“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 women’s lawsuit says that in late June, Eckhart’s lawyer put Fox News on notice of legal claims against the network and Henry, and informed Fox “in graphic and specific detail, how Mr. Henry groomed, psychologically manipulated and coerced Ms. Eckhart into having a sexual relationship with him.”

The suit says that, “Mr. Henry not only leveraged this imbalance of power for control over his victim, Ms. Eckhart, but asked her to be his ‘sex slave’ and his ‘little whore,’ and threatened punishment and retaliation if Ms. Eckhart did not comply with his sexual demands.”

And “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 suit alleges. It says that Eckhart was handcuffed when she was raped.

“Prior to violently assaulting Ms. Eckhart, Mr. Henry took photos of Ms. Eckhart on his iPhone while laughing, as Ms. Eckhart pleaded with Mr. Henry to stop, and to remove the handcuffs, and to delete the naked pictures he took of her without her consent,” the suit says.

It adds that Eckhart believes Henry used the photos “as an intimidation tactic to silence her, and to be filed away and retained for purposes of blackmail that could destroy her career.”

Eckhart’s lawyers said that when Fox News terminated Henry, the network “purported to take credit for acting appropriately.”

“However, nothing could be further from the truth,” the suit says.

It says Fox knew that Henry “had engaged in sexual misconduct as far back as early 2017,” when “multiple women came forward to complain that Mr. Henry had engaged in sexually inappropriate conduct towards them.”

But Henry was not fired or even disciplined after those earlier accusations, the suit says.

The network only fired Henry this month because “Fox News realized that it was on the precipice of a public relations nightmare and wanted to get out ahead of this suit and be able to claim that it had done the right thing. It had not,” the suit alleges.

Eckhart is suing Fox and Henry for violations of federal sex-trafficking laws, New York state and city human rights laws, and for gender-motivated violence under New York City’s administrative code.

Areu is suing on all of the same grounds as Eckhart other than the sex-trafficking violations.

The suit says Areu “was victimized” by Henry, who allegedly sent her “a slew of wildly inappropriate sexual images and messages — which are in her possession — throughout the first half of this year.”

But “Mr. Henry was far from the only Fox News anchor who subjected Ms. Areu to sexual harassment,” the suit says. “She was also subjected to inappropriate sexual harassment and retaliation by Mr. Hannity, Mr. Carlson, Mr. Kurtz and Gianno Caldwell.”

The filings said that Areu was a “relatively regular face on The Sean Hannity Show until March 8, 2018.”

“On that day, Mr. Hannity, on set and in front of the entire studio crew — and completely unsolicited — threw \$100 on the set desk. He then began calling out to the men in the room and demanding that someone take Ms. Areu out on a date for drinks at Del Friscos,” the suit said. Del Frisco’s is a steakhouse in midtown Manhattan that is a watering hole for Fox News staff, whose offices are just across the street from the eatery.

Hannity “repeatedly yelled, ‘who wants to take her on a date?’ ‘Take her on a date to Del Friscos,’” the suit claims. “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.”

After a December 2018 appearance by Areu on Carlson’s show, according to the suit, the host told her he was going to the network’s annual Christmas party, but would only be staying for “a quick appearance.”

“Following the show, Mr. Carlson, hardly making any effort to hide his intentions, began telling Ms. Areu that he would be alone in New York City that night, and specifically said that he would be staying alone in his hotel room without any wife or kids,” the suit said. “Without question, Mr. Carlson was probing to see whether Ms. Areu was interested in a sexual relationship. Ms. Areu awkwardly sidestepped Mr. Carlson’s advances and declined to spend the night at his hotel.”

“Mr. Carlson promptly retaliated against Ms. Areu, who was featured on his show only three times in 2019 and has not appeared once in 2020,” the court filing says.

The suit also claims that Areu’s appearances on Kurtz’s “Media Buzz” show dwindled after she declined to meet him in the lobby of a Manhattan hotel.

Later, “Mr. Kurtz stated to Ms. Areu, in sum and substance, ‘you’re the only woman here who won’t come to my hotel room,’” the suit says.

The suit also says, “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.”

“Unfortunately, it is actually worse,” the suit says.

Fox News said in its 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,” Fox News said.