

# Bombshell lawsuit accuses ex-Fox News anchor Ed Henry of raping employee

[dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8542417/Bombshell-lawsuit-accuses-ex-Fox-News-anchor-Ed-Henry-raping-employee.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8542417/Bombshell-lawsuit-accuses-ex-Fox-News-anchor-Ed-Henry-raping-employee.html)

July 20, 2020

- **The federal suit was filed Monday in New York by Jennifer Eckhart, a former associate producer at Fox Business, and Cathy Areu, a guest on the network**
- **Eckhart claims Henry raped her after trying to coerce her into a sexual relationship**
- **Areu claims she was sexually harassed by Henry and several other men at the network - including star anchors Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson**
- **Henry was fired by Fox News on July 1 after an unnamed employee - now revealed to be Eckhart - accused him of sexual misconduct**
- **The former anchor denied the allegations in the lawsuit in a statement Monday and claimed his relationship with Eckhart was consensual**
- **Fox News denied the suit's claims that it 'not only cultivated and fostered sexual harassment and misconduct, but has consistently accepted and rewarded it'**

Former Fox News anchor Ed Henry has been accused of 'violently raping' one woman and sexually harassing another in a bombshell new lawsuit.

The federal suit was filed on Monday in the US District Court for Southern New York by Jennifer Eckhart, a former associate producer at Fox Business, and Cathy Areu, a frequent guest on the network.

Eckhart claims that Henry - who was fired from the network on July 1 after an unnamed employee accused him of sexual misconduct - handcuffed her and raped her in a hotel room after trying to coerce her into a sexual relationship.

Areu claims she was sexually harassed by Henry, 49, and several other men at the network - including star anchors Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson and journalists Howard Kurtz and Gianno Caldwell.

The lawsuit describes how Hannity allegedly offered staff \$100 to take Areu on a date while she served as a regular face on his primetime show in 2018.

The lawsuit names Fox News, Henry, Hannity, Carlson and Kurtz as defendants.

'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,' Monday's complaint states.

'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.'

A spokesperson for the network issued a statement about the lawsuit to DailyMail.com which denies the plaintiffs' claims and vows to fight them 'vigorously'.

'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 spokesperson said.

'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.'

Henry's lawyer, Catherine Foti, also denied the allegations laid bare in the lawsuit.

'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.

'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.'

## Fox News responds to lawsuit allegations

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The lawsuit begins by describing how Henry 'preyed upon, manipulated and groomed Ms Eckhart starting at the young age of 24 by exerting his abuse of power over her and her career'.

'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 w\*\*\*e," and threatened punishment and retaliation if Ms. Eckhart did not comply with his sexual demands.

'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.'

It further alleges that Eckhart's lawyers described Henry's alleged assaults 'in graphic and specific detail' to Fox News and provided text messages in which he threatened further abuse.

Henry was subsequently fired by Fox News earlier this month based on findings of an internal investigation, both the lawsuit and the network said.

But the lawsuit contends that the network had been aware of Henry's alleged sexual misconduct at least since early 2017, when multiple other women came forward with complaints about him.

Instead of disciplining Henry after those complaints, Fox News promoted him to a higher position, the lawsuit says.

Eckhart alluded to the suit in an Instagram post on Monday that showed her face half obscured by a shadow.

'Stepping out of the darkness and into my truth,' she wrote. 'I stand for all victims who have been mistreated, harassed, assaulted, and even worse, at the hands of those in power, and the institutions that continue to support them.'

'My decision to speak out was not an easy one, but I refuse to let fear of retaliation, victim shaming and further attacks intimidate me into remaining silent. I am hopeful that my decision to file this action will result in positive change for women at Fox, and for all victims in the workplace.'

The second portion of the suit outlines allegations brought by Areu, who said Henry sent her 'a slew of wildly inappropriate messages throughout the first half of this year'.

Areu claims that in the messages Henry made it clear that he 'would assist her career if she had sex with him', the suit states.

'Mr. Henry was far from the only Fox News anchor who subjected Ms. Areu to sexual harassment,' it adds.

'She was also subjected to inappropriate sexual harassment and retaliation by Mr. Hannity, Mr. Carlson, Mr. Kurtz and Gianni Caldwell.'

The suit describes how Areu 'was a relatively regular face on The Sean Hannity Show until March 8, 2018' - the day Hannity allegedly harassed her in the studio.

'Mr. Hannity, on set and in front of the entire studio crew – and completely unsolicited – threw \$100 on the set desk,' it states.

'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.'

'He repeatedly yelled: "Who wants to take her on a date?" "Take her on a date to Del Friscos."

'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.'

Later that year Areu alleges that Tucker Carlson propositioned her on the set of his show by telling her that he was staying alone in a hotel room.

'Without question, Mr. Carlson was probing to see whether Ms. Areu was interested in a sexual relationship,' the suit states.

'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 suit goes on to describe how Howard Kurtz, host of Media Buzz, invited Areu to his hotel room in July 2019 after she'd appeared on his show numerous times since 2017.

Areu refused the invitation but offered to have Kurtz to join her and a friend at dinner, the suit states.

Kurtz declined, and the following day he allegedly told her: 'You're the only woman here who won't come to my hotel room.'

After that incident Areu was only invited to appear on Kurtz' show approximately three times, despite having been a 'relative regular' beforehand.

The final allegation in Areu's section of the suit describes how Gianni Caldwell, a Fox News political analyst, offered to introduce her to fellow media personality Ann Coulter if she agreed to go on a date with him.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages for emotional distress, loss of income and reputational harm, as well as punitive damages.

It also seeks a declaratory judgment that the defendants violated local and federal laws.

Former Fox News personality Gretchen Carlson, who filed a sexual harassment lawsuit claiming that she was fired for refusing advances from network founder Roger Ailes in July 2016, tweeted her support for Eckhart and Areu on Monday.

'I stand w/ @JenniferEckhart and #CathyAreu 2 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, we are fierce & being heard.'