

Fox News Hit With Lawsuit Alleging Sexual Misconduct by Top Talent

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Fox News has been hit with a kitchen sink suit, replete with trigger warning, as a complaint was filed on Monday in New York federal court alleging sexual misconduct by some of its top hosts including Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson.

Jennifer Eckhart, a former associate producer on Fox Business Network, is a co-plaintiff in the suit. The most serious claim pertains to Eckhart's allegation that she was raped by former White House chief correspondent Ed Henry, who earlier this month was fired by Fox News as a result of the charge.

"On July 1, 2020, Fox News disclosed to the public that it had terminated Mr. Henry based on the findings of an internal investigation, and purported to take credit for acting appropriately," states the complaint. "However, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, Fox News knew that Mr. Henry had engaged in sexual misconduct as far back as early 2017. At that time, when Fox News was conducting a company-wide investigation into issues of sexual harassment, multiple women came forward to complain that Mr. Henry had engaged in sexually inappropriate conduct towards them."

Fox News now faces a sex trafficking claim as a result of Eckhart's allegation. The rape allegedly happened in 2017 in a hotel room after the two had met for drinks. Two years earlier, according to the complaint, Henry had romantically pursued her, forced a kiss on her, convince her to have sex by holding her career over her head, and months later assaulted her in Fox News' New York offices.

Catherine Foti, Henry's lawyer, responds by saying, "The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship."

Cathy Areu is the other co-plaintiff in this case that also asserts Fox News subjected women to a hostile workplace.

Once an on-air regular on Fox News, Areu says she victimized by Henry through a "slew of wildly inappropriate sexual images and messages." The complaint details the contents of these messages.

Additionally, Areu targets several of Fox News' other stars. She alleges that Hannity once threw \$100 on the desk of his set and called for the men around to take her on a date for drinks. She says that Carlson once probed to see whether she'd be interested in a sexual relationship. She accuses Howard Kurtz of inviting her to a hotel room. After allegedly

spurning advances or enduring comments, Areu says she stopped being invited to appear on each of their respective programs. The three Fox News hosts are co-defendants in the suit and face claims of retaliation.

Notably, the plaintiffs are represented by Douglas Wigdor and Michael Willemin at Wigdor LLP. Two years ago, Wigdor settled claims by more than 20 individuals against Fox. Many of those suits targeted behavior by Fox News founder Roger Ailes.

In reaction to the suit, Fox News reacts strongly against Areu's claims against its working talent while suggesting that Eckhart and Areu pursue Henry directly.

"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," reads the network's 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."