

Ex-Fox News Host Ed Henry Accused Of Rape In Disturbing Lawsuit

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By Lydia O'Connor

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Two women are accusing ousted Fox News correspondent Ed Henry of rape and sexual harassment in a lawsuit filed Monday, claiming that he groomed one of them to be his “sex slave” and that the network overlooked his allegedly abusive behavior for years.

The federal lawsuit, which also accuses several other Fox News stars of sexual harassment and misconduct, was filed by two women who previously worked with the network: former associate producer Jennifer Eckhart and frequent guest Cathy Areu.

WARNING: This story includes excerpts from [the lawsuit](#) detailing graphic descriptions of rape and violence.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, includes a highly disturbing accusation that Henry, whom [the network fired](#) earlier this month for sexual misconduct, psychologically manipulated and raped Eckhart.

“Mr. Henry, approximately twice Ms. Eckhart’s age, 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,” the lawsuit reads. “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.”

The lawsuit recounts an alleged encounter in 2017 when Eckhart “was violently raped while helpless and restrained in metal handcuffs” as Henry performed “sadistic acts on her without her consent that left her injured, bruised and battered with bloody wrists,” and then allegedly took photos of her naked body in order to blackmail her if she spoke out.

The suit accuses defendants Fox News, Henry, Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson and Howard Kurtz of violations of federal sex trafficking laws, as well as a hostile work environment, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, gender-motivated violence and retaliation under New York state and city law.

Henry’s lawyer Catherine Foti released a statement denying the allegations. “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,” she said. “This is not one of those cases.”

Fox News released a statement Monday saying its hands were clean. The network said it “took swift action as soon as it learned of Ms. Eckhart’s claims on June 25” – which is when she informed Fox News that she had retained legal counsel in connection with her claims against Henry and the network – and it noted that as of July 1, “Mr. Henry is no longer employed by the network.”

But the lawsuit argues that the network should have taken action against Henry much earlier. Eckhart contends that she complained to human resources officers about a toxic work environment in February and that no one followed up with her. She received notice in June that she was being fired after seven years at the network, which she took to be retaliation for making those complaints, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit also alleges that Fox News had been aware of accusations of Henry’s sexual misconduct since 2017 and “never should have put him in a position to engage in this behavior to begin with.”

Areu, the other plaintiff who made regular guest commentator appearances on several of the network’s top-rated shows, said in the lawsuit that throughout the first half of 2020, Henry regularly sent her sexually explicit texts and images. When she reached out to him about full-time job openings at Fox News in May, he responded that she was too “boring” to help, which she interpreted as a punishment for refusing to engage in a sexual relationship with him.

In the lawsuit, Areu also accuses several other top Fox News personalities of sexual misconduct, saying they indicated she’d have to sleep with or date them in order to grow her career at the network. The accused include Carlson, Kurtz, Gianni Caldwell and Hannity, who she claims once put \$100 down on the table and demanded someone on set take her out on a date.

In response, Fox News said it had “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.”

Douglas Wigdor, the attorney representing Areu and Eckhart, said this new lawsuit should serve as a reminder that Fox News’ toxic workplace culture is alive and well.

“What this lawsuit reveals is that today’s Fox News is the same old Fox News,” Wigdor said in a statement. “Some of the names in leadership may have changed since Roger Ailes’ regime, but Fox News’ institutional apathy towards sexual misconduct has not.”