

Former Fox News employee accuses ex-anchor Ed Henry of rape

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Fox News is once again confronting allegations of sexual misconduct by its senior news staff.

A former Fox News employee and a guest allege in a federal lawsuit that they were subjected to a range of sexually inappropriate behavior by ex-anchor Ed Henry and two of the channel's biggest stars, Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity.

The suit filed Monday in United States District Court by Jennifer Eckhart — who worked at the network from 2014 to 2020, and Cathy Areu, an occasional unpaid guest on the network — alleges that Fox News protected and rewarded “perpetrators of sexual harassment and refuses to take accountability for putting such persons in positions of power from which they can subject women to sexual misconduct...”

The suit also said Eckhart, whose complaint led to the [firing of Henry](#), was raped by the former anchor in a New York hotel room in 2017.

The complaints come after Fox News had revamped its human resources department and stated a commitment to creating a safe workplace for employees after a prolonged sexual harassment scandal that ended the tenures of the channel's founding chief executive Roger Ailes and former prime time anchor Bill O'Reilly.

In 2016, [Fox News paid \\$20 million to former anchor Gretchen Carlson](#), whose lawsuit charging Ailes with harassment is considered ground zero in the #MeToo movement.

The suit on behalf of the women, represented by Douglas Wigdor, who has handled numerous harassment and racial discrimination cases against Fox News, said, “some of the names in leadership may have changed since Roger Ailes' regime, but Fox News' institutional apathy towards sexual misconduct has not.”

Fox News said in a statement that it fired Henry shortly after Eckhart filed a complaint. The company said the allegations against other employees named in the suit were investigated and found to be baseless. Eckhart left Fox News in mid-June.

The most explosive allegation in the suit is Eckhart's allegation that Henry “psychologically manipulated and coerced” her into having a sexual relationship with him. She said that 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.”

Eckhart, a former production associate for Fox Business Network detailed Henry's actions — including the alleged 2017 rape — when she filed a complaint with the company on June 25. Fox News disclosed on July 1 that Henry was fired for what the company described as “willful sexual misconduct.”

A Fox News representative said that Eckhart was told to pursue the rape claim directly with Henry as the incident did not happen on company premises.

A representative for Wigdor declined to say whether Eckhart filed a criminal complaint against Henry.

Henry's attorney, Catherine Foti could not be reached for comment. On July 1, she said Henry “denies the allegations referenced in the Fox announcement and is confident that he will be vindicated after a full hearing in an appropriate forum.”

The suit said Henry, 49, manipulated and groomed Eckhart when she was 24, by exerting his abuse of power over her and her career. It said he asked her to be his “sex slave” and his “little whore,” and threatened punishment and retaliation if Eckhart did not comply with his sexual demands.

Eckhart alleges that Fox News knew 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,” the complaint stated.

Henry was suspended for four months in 2016 for having an extramarital affair with a Las Vegas stripper. Henry was sent to a rehabilitation program by the company. Earlier this year, he was named co-anchor of the three-hour newscast “America's Newsroom.”

Areu alleges that Henry sent her an array of “wildly inappropriate sexual images and messages,” which are described in detail in the suit. She said that Henry sent her multiple messages saying that he would help her get a job at the network if she had sex with him.

The same suit also alleges that several Fox News personalities behaved inappropriately with Areu, who appeared as a guest on their programs.

Areu said on March 8, 2018 that Hannity, on set and in front of the entire studio crew, threw \$100 on the set desk and began calling out to the men in the room and demanding that someone take her out on a date for drinks at Del Friscos, a restaurant frequented by the network's employees.

The suit said none of the staff responded to Hannity, even after he “repeatedly chided one particular male employee for being ‘afraid to take out a beautiful woman.’”

Areu said she was asked to stay on Carlson’s set after an interview on his program in Dec. 2018. He allegedly told her “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.”

Areu said she believed Carlson was probing to see whether Ms. Areu was interested in a sexual relationship. Areu said she sidestepped Carlson’s alleged advances. She said she rarely was invited to appear on the program after that.

Areu said she asked Kurtz for advice on getting work at Fox News in March 2019. During a New York visit in May 2019, Kurtz requested that Areu meet her in the lobby of his hotel where he was staying. Areu said her appearances on Kurtz’s weekly show decreased after she refused to have the meeting.

An investigation conducted by an outside law firm found no basis for the allegations against Hannity, Carlson, Fox News “Media Buzz” host Howard Kurtz, and Gianni Caldwell, a political analyst for the network also named in the suit, the company said.

“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 and Howard Kurtz and its contributor Gianni Caldwell, are false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit,” the company said in a 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.”