

# Fox News' Ex-Host Ed Henry Accused of Rape, Hannity and Tucker Carlson of Sexual Harassment in Lawsuit

[W thewrap.com/fox-news-ex-host-ed-henry-accused-of-rape-hannity-and-tucker-carlson-of-sexual-harassment-in-new-lawsuit](https://www.thewrap.com/fox-news-ex-host-ed-henry-accused-of-rape-hannity-and-tucker-carlson-of-sexual-harassment-in-new-lawsuit)

Fox News and some of its top on-camera stars face new accusations of misconduct in a lawsuit filed Monday by two women. One woman accused Ed Henry, a host who was fired by Fox News earlier this month, of sexual assault as well as harassment — while a second woman who frequently appeared as an on-air contributor accused Henry, Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, Howard Kurtz and others of sexual harassment by dangling the prospect of a full-time job in exchange for suggested sexual favors.

The suit — filed on behalf of Jennifer Eckhart and Cathy Areu in U.S. District Court — also said that Fox News executives were aware of sexual misconduct accusations against Ed Henry in 2017, three years before firing him, and that the network tried to “take credit” for doing the right thing with its July 1 announcement of his termination.

“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. Upon information and belief, this was known to Fox News’ Executive Vice President of Human Resources, Kevin Lord (“Mr. Lord”), as well as Fox News President and Executive Editor, Jay Wallace (“Mr. Wallace”), and Fox Business Network President, Lauren Petterson (“Ms. Petterson”),” the suit said.

In a statement, Fox News responded, “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 disputed the accusations. “The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship,” the attorney said in a statement. “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.”

According to the suit, Eckhart was a 24-year-old production assistant at the network in 2014 when Henry reached out to her via Twitter and began flirtatious interactions. After agreeing to meet him for a drink at the New York Marriott Marquis, she said that Henry

“out of nowhere, began forcefully kissing Ms. Eckhart and ripped off her clothes. Ultimately, Ms. Eckhart, fearing that her career would be over if she refused Mr. Henry, relented and had sexual intercourse with him.”

In November 2015, Eckhart said that Henry sexually assaulted again her inside the Guest Office of Fox News’ Manhattan headquarters building. Finally, the suit said that Henry again raped in a Manhattan hotel room in 2017 after restraining her with handcuffs behind her back and taking naked photos of her without her consent.

Throughout this time, Eckhart said that she feared career retaliation from Henry, whom she said sent her threatening emails and text messages, including, “F— you and your safe word. You will know when I am done” and “#obey or #discipline.”

According to the suit, Fox News fired Henry on July 1 less than a week after learning of Eckhart and Areu’s accusations and realizing “that it was on the precipice of a public relations nightmare.”

Areu, a frequent Fox News guest who aspired to a full-time role, also accused Henry and other top Fox News personalities of sexual harassment. According to the suit, Henry texted Areu to ask if she was “avail for anchor interview” immediately after sending her a video titled “Fastest Interview ... candidate selected in 3 seconds” in which the interviewee exposes her vagina to get the job from a male interviewer.

In 2018, according to the suit, Hannity humiliated Areu in front of the crew by placing \$100 in cash on his set desk and asking any man present to take Areu out on a date at a nearby steakhouse. “Ms. Areu was completely mortified and made clear that she was incredibly uncomfortable with Mr. Hannity’s misogynistic behavior,” the lawsuit said, adding that the host seemed to retaliate against Areu because she did not “play along.” After this incident, the suit said, she was “hardly ever, if ever at all, invited back to appear on ‘Hannity.’”

Meanwhile, Areu — who said she appeared on Carlson’s primetime show “at least” 17 times in 2018 — said that after taping a segment with the Fox News host in late 2018, she was told that Carlson began “probing to see whether Ms. Areu was interested in a sexual relationship.”

“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 lawsuit said. “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.”

Areu also said that Kurtz, the host of “MediaBuzz,” invited her to his hotel room in July

2019, which she politely declined even though she was looking for full-time employment at the network. According to the suit, Kurtz later told her, “You’re the only woman here who won’t come to my hotel room” and booked her only three times on his show “following her rejection of Mr. Kurtz’s advances.”

A Fox News rep flatly disputed Areu’s accusations against the network and its current on-air talent. “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.”

In a statement, lawyers Douglas Wigdor and Michael Willemin, of Wigdor LLP, said, “What this lawsuit reveals is that today’s Fox News is the same old Fox News. Some of the names in leadership may have changed since Roger Ailes’ regime, but Fox News’ institutional apathy towards sexual misconduct has not. How many more women will have to be victimized before Fox News finally takes sexual harassment and workplace sexual assault seriously? We expect Fox News to claim — as it almost always does — that an ‘independent’ investigation found no evidence of wrongdoing.”

The statement went on, “Of course, Fox News will have paid the investigator, who also happens to be a management-side employment lawyer. In other words, a significant part of this ‘investigators’ time is spent defending companies like Fox News against allegations such as the ones brought herein. Moreover, the investigator did not even speak with either of our clients, even though both Ms. Eckhart and Ms. Areu offered to meet with him under reasonable conditions. We call on Fox News to work with our clients to retain a truly independent investigator who is transparent. The results of any such investigation should be made public for the world to see.”