

Fox News employee accusing anchor Ed Henry of raping her says she 'was paralyzed by fear' at network

[dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8546523/Fox-News-employee-accusing-anchor-Ed-Henry-raping-says-paralyzed-fear-network.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8546523/Fox-News-employee-accusing-anchor-Ed-Henry-raping-says-paralyzed-fear-network.html)

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- **Former Fox News production assistant Jennifer Eckhart said Tuesday: 'I think it's safe to say that I was paralyzed by fear when I was working there'**
- **Eckhart has accused fired anchor Ed Henry of violently raping her and claims the network did nothing about sexual harassment complaints while she was there**
- **Fox News told Eckhart to take up the issues directly with Henry because they fired him on July 1 and denied claims paid by Cathy Areu in the women's lawsuit**
- **Areu accuses men including Henry, Tucker Carlson and Howard Kurtz of misconduct in the lawsuit filed on Monday**
- **Areu said in a Tuesday interview with CBS: 'I kind of got numb to it. I thought it was perfectly fine to receive pornographic images and gifts,' from male anchors**
- **Eckhart and Areu's attorney Michael Willemin, said Tuesday: 'What's most troubling about this lawsuit ... is that it's occurring in 2020'**
- **He accused Henry's lawyer of victim blaming and criticized how Fox conducted its investigation into the allegations**

A former Fox News worker who has accused fired anchor Ed Henry of violently raping her and claims the network did nothing about sexual harassment complaints while she was working there, has said she felt 'paralyzed by fear' during her six years of employment.

Ex production assistant Jennifer Eckhart filed a lawsuit Monday with co-plaintiff Fox News contributor Cathy Areu.

Areu also claims misconduct by Henry, as well as several other men including Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson, and both spoke out Tuesday after the News Corporation network denied Areu's claims and told Eckhart to take up the issues directly with Henry because they fired him on July 1.

Asked if there was ever a time at Fox that she felt safe, Eckhart said: 'I think it's safe to say that I was paralyzed by fear when I was working there.'

The lawsuit includes photos of texts Henry allegedly sent to Eckhart: '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'

'I don't know how you could continue to cultivate and foster an environment that rewards sexual predators consistently year after year,' Eckhart told [CBS This Morning](#) national correspondent Jericka Duncan in a video call interview.

Areu too claims the network was compliant in the alleged treatment they received from male anchors.

In the lawsuit she alleges that Gianni Caldwell promised to introduce her to Ann Coulter only if she would go on a date with him and that Howard Kurtz tried to get her to go to his hotel room.

She claims Tucker Carlson also propositioned her to come to his hotel room and that Sean Hannity threw \$100 on a studio desk demanding that men take her out on a date.

Henry, Carlson, Kurtz and Fox News are named as the defendants in the lawsuit.

'I kind of got numb to it. I thought it was perfectly fine to receive pornographic images and gifts,' Areu said about working there. 'I thought that was normal for a male anchor to do.'

Fox News told Eckhart to take up the issues directly with Henry because they fired him on July 1 and denied claims paid by Cathy Areu in her joint lawsuit with Eckhart filed on Monday

Eckhart's complaints are dated from 2014 to 2017, during that time Henry took four months' leave after his extra-marital affair with a Las Vegas cocktail waitress was revealed.

Fox News responds to lawsuit allegations

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.'

Eckhart claims that after Henry returned to work in 2016 he sent her sexually explicit text messages which she claims were unwanted and which are pictured in the lawsuit.

Eckhart was let go from the network in June this year in retaliation for the harassment complaints. Fox News says it learned about her allegations at the end of June after she received her notice.

Henry's lawyer, Catherine Foti, claimed that 'the evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship and said it '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,' Foti said in a Monday statement.

But asked if she would characterize the relationship she was in as mainly abusive, Eckhart said Tuesday: 'Absolutely without question. I felt that he had the power to derail me to ruin my career and I didn't have a voice until now.'

Eckhart said in the lawsuit that she felt pressured to do what Henry wanted when she first started.

'After we met and we had our photo taken together, he messaged me, 'Wow, you are way more beautiful in person,' Eckhart told CBS This Morning. 'As a 24-year-old girl, when the chief White House correspondent follows you on Twitter, you, you know, you get stars in your eyes.'

Eckhart and Areu's attorney Michael Willemin, said Tuesday: 'What's most troubling about this lawsuit ... is that it's occurring in 2020.'

In response to the statement from Henry's lawyer, Willemin said: 'Although Ms. Foti notes that the #MeToo movement has helped to bring to light a number of injustices in our country, she proceeds to engage in just the type of injustice that the #MeToo movement has worked so hard to curb.

'Specifically, Ms. Foti invokes a rape myth; namely, that a victim of rape would never send her attacker friendly or even consensual-looking messages. As we know having watched the Weinstein trial (and represented many of his victims), that myth simply is not true.

'The statement also seeks to slut-shame Ms. Eckhart and suggests that she was asking to be violently raped. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it is precisely because of these types of attacks that many victims of sexual assault and rape suffer in silence.'

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.

But Areu claimed on Tuesday that despite Ailes eventually being forced out due to allegations from numerous women at Fox News, 'Some of the men complained that there were so many meetings that they had to go on ... how to speak to women and how not to sexually harass.'

In the lawsuit Areu, claims Henry sent her 'a slew of wildly inappropriate messages throughout the first half of this year'.

One of the messages featured a video of a mock job interview where the woman 'exposes her vagina' and the interviewer 'indicates that she got the job.'

Areu claims that in the messages Henry made it clear that he 'was telling her, in no uncertain terms, that he would assist her career if she had sex with him', the suit states.

'I kind of got numb to it. I thought it was perfectly fine to receive pornographic images and gifts,' Areu said in Tuesday's CBS interview. 'I thought that was normal for a male anchor to do.'

She claims she lost work opportunities after she rejected the advances of numerous men at Fox News.

Roger Ailes resigned in July 2016 amid sexual harassment suit

Willemin criticized Fox News for its response too.

'As alleged in the complaint Fox News was aware of complaints against Mr. Henry involving sexually inappropriate conduct before he raped Ms. Henry and sent graphic and sexually explicit photographs, videos and texts to Ms. Areu. The complaint asserts that Fox News did nothing,' Willemin said.

'Even putting that aside, the complaint notes that Mr. Henry engaged in this unlawful and egregious conduct while employed by Fox News. It is outrageous and contrary to common sense that Fox News purports not to take responsibility for his actions. Ultimately, we are confident that a jury will hold Fox News responsible for the acts of its employees, as well as its own conduct in responding to these allegations.'

'Fox News claims – as it almost always does – that an "independent" investigation found no evidence of wrongdoing. 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.'