

# The new details on Kimberly Guilfoyle's time at Fox News are horrific

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Those allegations bore out, and Ailes found himself out of a job. So we asked Guilfoyle if she'd apologized to Carlson. Her face dropped and she turned around faster than a nuclear centrifuge. No answer.

New reporting may help explain Guilfoyle's reticence.

In November 2018, a female colleague of Guilfoyle's sent a draft complaint to Fox News executives regarding the treatment she said she received from the cable news star, who bantered with her fellow roundtable chatterboxes on the popular Fox News program "The Five." The allegations are so bizarre as to defy categorization — sexual harassment, sexual abuse, psychological torture? Have a look:

among other things, she said that she was frequently required to work at Guilfoyle's New York apartment while the Fox host displayed herself naked, and was shown photographs of the genitalia of men with whom Guilfoyle had had sexual relations. The draft complaint also alleged that Guilfoyle spoke incessantly and luridly about her sex life, and on one occasion demanded a massage of her bare thighs; other times, she said, Guilfoyle told her to submit to a Fox employee's demands for sexual favors, encouraged her to sleep with wealthy and powerful men, asked her to critique her naked body, demanded that she share a room with her on business trips, required her to sleep over at her apartment, and exposed herself to her, making her feel deeply uncomfortable.

The complaint runs 42 pages. It was never filed in a court, and Fox News paid more than \$4 million to the employee, who left the network.

Those revelations come from a report by Jane Mayer of the New Yorker, a journalist who has documented the close ties between the No. 1 cable news network and Trump world. They build on the work of Yashar Ali, who in 2018 nailed down many of the particulars regarding Guilfoyle's exit, which was initially presented as a voluntary thing, though Mayer reports that she was forced out in July 2018. She moved on to work at a pro-Trump super PAC. In January, the Trump campaign announced she would head up joint fundraising between the campaign and the Republican National Committee. Guilfoyle is dating Donald Trump Jr., with whom she makes frequent appearances for the president.

The Trump campaign referred an inquiry to Guilfoyle's employment attorney, John Singer. He noted that he has no connection to the campaign and referred this blog to his 2018 statement, which read, in part, "Any accusations of Kimberly engaging in inappropriate

work-place conduct are unequivocally baseless and have been viciously made by disgruntled and self-interested employees.” Guilfoyle issued this statement to the New Yorker: “In my 30-year career working for the SF District Attorney’s Office, the LA District Attorney’s Office, in media and in politics, I have never engaged in any workplace misconduct of any kind. During my career, I have served as a mentor to countless women, with many of whom I remain exceptionally close to this day.”

What does all of this say about Fox News? Well, the same things that we’ve known about Fox News for some time. First is the cruelty. The allegations in the draft complaint recall workplace brutality of the sort that arose in the reporting on Ailes, a paranoid and abusive network head. Over 20 years, Ailes subjected a Fox News booker to a regime of psychological torture and sexual coercion, the details of which don’t belong in a family newspaper. At one point, Ailes allegedly took a videotape of the woman dancing for him in a black garter and stockings, and kept the videotape in a safe-deposit box, just in case the woman decided to blow the whistle.

Then there’s this tidbit about former Fox News host Bill O’Reilly, accused by several former colleagues of abuse and sexual harassment, including by former Fox News personality Juliet Huddy: “To shock and disgust, as Ms. Huddy was saying goodbye to Mr. O’Reilly, he quickly moved in and kissed her on the lips,” Huddy’s lawyers wrote in a letter obtained by the New York Times. “Ms. Huddy was so taken aback and repulsed that she instinctively recoiled and actually fell to the ground. Mr. O’Reilly, looking amused, did not even help Ms. Huddy up.” (O’Reilly has denied the allegations.)

Second is the bullying approach to stifling allegations. As Mayer reports, the colleague who alleged the harassment by Guilfoyle joined Fox News out of college in 2015. After the Ailes scandal broke in 2016, Fox News hired the New York law firm Paul, Weiss to investigate its workplace. By Mayer’s account, that investigation ground on into 2017 and eventually closed in on Guilfoyle and her colleague Eric Bolling, another regular on “The Five” who also worked with the colleague behind the draft complaint. Mayer reports: “Guilfoyle told her that she needed to know what the assistant would say if she were asked about sexual harassment, and warned her that she could cause great damage if she said the wrong thing. Guilfoyle, she said, told her that, in exchange for demonstrating what Guilfoyle called loyalty, she would work out a payment to take care of her — possibly, she said, with funds from Bolling.”

The employee declined the money, triggering another level of mistreatment, Mayer reported. If the employee was too revelatory with Paul, Weiss, Guilfoyle suggested that some aspects of her personal life could be outed. Associates of Guilfoyle contacted Mayer during her work on the story with details on the woman, “evidently in hopes of damaging her credibility and leading me not to publish this report.”

None of that worked. But Guilfoyle, a lawyer and former prosecutor in San Francisco, surely had some evidence that it could have been successful. Ailes, after all, used sweeteners, lawyers and carefully articulated threats to keep multiple instances of harassment under wraps over his two-decade career at Fox News.

Following the Ailes disaster, Fox News instituted a number of reforms. In early 2017, it doubled the staff of its HR department, which had been a wholly owned fiefdom of Ailes in the dark days. It also instituted mandatory HR training and reformed its HR reporting system. Yet a two-decade-old culture of entitled harassment and abuse doesn't just go away because there are some new cubbies in HR.

In July, Fox News fired host Ed Henry for “willful sexual misconduct”; he denies the allegations. A subsequent lawsuit by former Fox News employee Jennifer Eckhart claims that Henry raped her in 2017 and continued pursuing her after that. A lawyer for Henry claimed that Henry's relationship with Eckhart was “consensual.” Fox News claimed there “were not sexual harassment claims against Ed Henry at Fox News prior to Jennifer Eckhart's claim on June 25, 2020,” though NPR's David Folkenflik reported that according to a 2017 complaint to Fox News higher-ups, “the prospect of Henry's greater prominence on Fox was crushing for female colleagues after the network had promised sweeping changes.” In 2016, Henry was benched and demoted after a tabloid exposed an extramarital affair.

Fox News declined to comment for this piece.

There are a lot of moving pieces to the cultural backdrop here. One is that Ailes built Fox News to objectify the female “talent” on air, so it's no wonder that the mind-set has outlived him. Another is money — there's way too much of it sloshing around in the bank accounts of Fox News's alleged predators, a consideration that underlies all sorts of hush-hush schemes such as the one Guilfoyle reportedly deployed.

And a third is nostalgia. As CNN host Brian Stelter discovered in reporting his recent book “Hoax: Donald Trump, Fox News, and the Dangerous Distortion of Truth,” there's a lot of this sentiment for Ailes at Fox News — hardly a helpful dynamic for an organization trying to snuff out sexual harassment.