

Actor Kevin Spacey releases defiant video: “It’s never that simple, not in politics and not in life”

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Actor Kevin Spacey, one of the first victims of the #MeToo campaign, released a three-minute video Monday in which (while in character as politician Frank Underwood from the Netflix series *House of Cards*) he urged viewers not to “believe the worst without evidence” and not to “rush to judgment without facts.”

The same day, Massachusetts authorities charged Spacey with indecent assault and battery in relation to an incident at a Nantucket restaurant in July 2016. Spacey is accused of buying drinks for an 18-year-old young man (who told the actor, according to state police, that he was 23) and then groping him. The youth’s mother, former Boston television news anchor Heather Unruh, has made it plain she would like to see Spacey sent to prison.

Spacey’s three-minute video released Christmas Eve (his first Twitter post since allegations against him by Anthony Rapp were made public in late October 2017), entitled “Let Me Be Frank,” is a defiant effort, although the enormous strain of the past year is evident in Spacey’s appearance and demeanor.

The actor, wearing a Christmas apron and washing dishes at first, speaks directly to his audience. While the southern accent and aggressiveness belong to *House of Cards*’ Frank Underwood, the viewer quickly comprehends Spacey’s oblique message. Nonetheless, there are difficulties with his appearing as Underwood and treating his own situation as though it were the subject of a drama. The “real” Spacey is not like the fictional, monstrous Underwood.

In any event, in the video, Spacey-Underwood first decries attempts to “separate” him from his viewing public, adding, “but what we have is too strong, it’s too powerful.” The actor goes on, “I shocked you with my honesty, but mostly I challenged you and made you think.”

Alternating between his own situation and that of Underwood’s, Spacey continues, “You want me back. Of course, some believed everything and have just been waiting with bated breath to hear me confess it all. They’re just dying to have me declare that everything said is true and I got what I deserved.” Getting to the crux of the matter, he then asserts, “Wouldn’t that be easy, if it was all so simple? Only you and I both know it’s never that simple, not in politics and not in life.”

Later, after insisting that he was still “not afraid,” Spacey-Underwood fiercely promises his audience: “If I didn’t pay the

price for the things we both know I did do, I’m certainly not going to pay the price for the things I didn’t do.” That may or may not be a direct reference to the Nantucket, Massachusetts charges, which Spacey must have been aware of.

“Anyhow,” the actor says, “despite all the poppycock, the animosity, the headlines, the impeachment without a trial, despite everything, despite even my own death [in *House of Cards*], I feel surprisingly good.”

Whether the release of the video is a wise move from the strictly legal point of view is certainly an issue, but “Let Me Be Frank” is an angry, bravura performance and a deliberate slap in the face of #MeToo hypocrisy and intimidation.

The video has been viewed on YouTube nearly eight million times, with 178,000 “likes” and 53,000 “dislikes” as of this writing. YouTube has registered more than 43,000 comments. Some of those writing in, of course, wish Spacey all possible ill, and denounce him as either a sexual predator or a “pedophile,” or both.

However, a good number of the YouTube commentators suggest, as one put it, “that the [“Let Me Be Frank”] video was more intriguing than the sixth season of *House of Cards*.” Another repeats that “these 3 minutes were more thrilling and engaging than the whole season 6.” A third observes, “Kevin Spacey is brilliant at what he does and what he does makes millions of people happy. The truth is we all never heard his side of the story.” “Welcome back,” another commentator simply says. Other messages: “Media hysteria is pathetic. Come on back Mr Spacey” and “One of the greats of our time. Come back when ready!”

It seems fairly certain that Spacey would not have released the video if he were not convinced there was widespread sympathy with his situation. He also has one significant advantage over the witch-hunters—he is considerably smarter than they.

Spacey became a focus of the #MeToo campaign when, on October 29, 2017, actor Anthony Rapp accused Spacey in an interview of making inappropriate advances to him some thirty years previously, when he was 14 and Spacey was 26. Subsequently, numerous individuals have come forward and accused Spacey of various sexual improprieties and making “unwanted sexual advances.”

The episode with Rapp three decades ago should not have occurred. If Spacey has been guilty of other misconduct, he

deserves to be called to account—legally, if it rises to that level. Again, however, an unorthodox and even promiscuous lifestyle is not a crime, nor is it as unusual in the film and theater world as many are now pretending. The finger-pointing and exclamations of outrage coming from the thoroughly corrupt Hollywood and American media establishment give reinvigorated meaning to the advice that those living in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

All in all, the vindictive effort to drive the actor out of the film industry is shameful and repugnant. Hollywood, owned and operated by a handful of ruthless conglomerates, regularly and unquestioningly partners with the US military and the CIA, that is, with major war criminals. Nothing in Spacey's conduct justifies the attempt to "disappear" him.

There is an undeniably tragic element to this unfolding drama. Are we witnessing a modern-day equivalent of the "passion" of Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde? Wilde was brought to obliteration by reactionary forces in the British establishment in the 1890s. Private detectives hired by his nemesis, the Marquess of Queensberry, uncovered Wilde's association with male prostitutes, cross-dressers and homosexual brothels. He was eventually convicted of "gross indecency" and sentenced in an atmosphere of mob hysteria to two years' hard labor. He died only three years after his release.

While in prison, Wilde wrote a lengthy letter to his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, known as *De Profundis* (Latin for "from the depths"). Spacey's comment—as Underwood—that he hadn't paid "for the things we both know I did do" and had no intention of paying the price "for the things I didn't do" almost seems an echo of Wilde's observation in *De Profundis*: "Of course there are many things of which I was convicted that I had not done, but then there are many things of which I was convicted that I had done, and a still greater number of things in my life for which I was never indicted at all."

Over the past 14 months Spacey has seen a career and an artistic reputation that took him decades to build up reduced to ruins. He was removed from *House of Cards* for its final season and excised from *All the Money in the World* in an unprecedented manner. He has not been able to work and may not work for some time to come, if his tormentors have their way. He now faces criminal charges. If convicted, Spacey could face five years in prison and be required to register as a sex offender.

He finds himself in a very difficult, almost impossible situation. The reaction of the brutish American media to his Christmas Eve video was entirely predictable—sputtering outrage and incredulity. The headlines tell the tale: "Kevin Spacey Faces Felony Sexual Assault Charge, Posts Bizarre Video (*Variety*), "Why Kevin Spacey's Bizarre Video Could Be Dangerous to His Future" (*People*), "The Sad Truth Revealed by That Disturbing Kevin Spacey Video" (*Vanity Fair*), etc.

In regard to the Massachusetts allegation, *USA Today's* Maria Puente gloated, "Kevin Spacey has probably walked the last red carpet of his Oscar-winning career, but next month he'll be doing a 'perp walk' to a Massachusetts courthouse to face a sex-crime charge on Nantucket."

But the reaction of various Hollywood "celebrities" was even more shameful. Here betrayal and spite are the watchwords.

Alyssa Milano, one of the #MeToo initiators whose major claim to fame is having starred on a mindless situation comedy thirty years ago, retweeted a news story about Spacey facing assault charges and added, "And after you read this—then watch the creepy video Mr. Spacey posted after the news broke."

Actress Ellen Barkin, formerly married to multi-billionaire Ronald Perelman, one of the 100 richest men in America, replied directly and maliciously to "Let Me Be Frank" with "Unfortunately you cannot be frank anymore. You also might find it difficult to be a sexual predator and a pedophile. What you can be is a prisoner. We'd all tune in to see that." Patricia Arquette likewise tweeted, "I'm sure none of the men who were kids at the time of their sexual assaults appreciate @KevinSpacey's weird video. No. Just No." Rob Lowe, possessing the high moral stature of someone who pioneered the celebrity "sex tape" industry in 1988, also mocked Spacey in a tweet. These denunciations proceed from the worst, most selfish and cowardly possible motives.

Oscar Wilde understood what Spacey may not fully, that the complete absence of understanding and elementary sympathy on the part of such people is more of a comment on them and their character than on his. The foul position they adopt toward an individual who faces victimization and humiliation is more their problem than his. As Wilde wrote, "And if life be, as it surely is, a problem to me, I am no less a problem to life. People must adopt some attitude towards me, and so pass judgment, both on themselves and me."

Speaking of those who had laughed at him when he stood in "convict dress," handcuffed, on a railway platform on his way to prison, Wilde observed that he now had begun "to feel more regret for the people who laughed than for myself." He wrote that "to mock at a soul in pain is a dreadful thing. In the strangely simple economy of the world people only get what they give, and to those who have not enough imagination to penetrate the mere outward of things, and feel pity, what pity can be given save that of scorn?"

The release of the video indicates that Spacey intends to fight the allegations and the attempt to destroy him. He deserves support in that endeavor.



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