

# Replying to Woody Allen suit, Amazon acknowledges McCarthyite character of #MeToo campaign

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Lawyers for Amazon Studios filed a motion in federal court in New York City on Wednesday seeking to dismiss a lawsuit launched by Woody Allen and his production company. Their arguments were revealing and testify to the McCarthyite character of the #MeToo drive.

In February, Allen's lawyers filed suit against Amazon for failing to distribute the director's already completed film, *A Rainy Day in New York*, and brazenly breaking a four-film deal.

In 2016-17, Amazon entered into a relationship with Allen, distributing his *Café Society* and later, his subsequent film, *Wonder Wheel* (2017). Amazon also produced his television mini-series, *Crisis in Six Scenes* (2016).

However, the eruption of the #MeToo scandal in October 2017, accompanied by renewed attention paid to the unsubstantiated claims by Allen's daughter Dylan that he had molested her when she was a child, put a spoke in Amazon's plans to make a great deal of money out of its association with the writer-director.

In December 2017, Amazon studio executives met with Allen to discuss the negative publicity that had arisen from sexual misconduct allegations against Amazon's former president, Roy Price, as well as the company's past association with producer Harvey Weinstein. In early 2018, Amazon informed Allen that the company still planned to release *A Rainy Day in New York*, but requested that its release date be "pushed back" until 2019.

However, in June 2018, Amazon sent an email abruptly terminating the contract altogether, without providing any legal or factual basis. When pressed, Amazon's lawyers merely made vague statements about the past allegations against Allen, his own "controversial" comments about the #MeToo campaign and the refusal of certain performers to work with him.

In Wednesday's motion, Amazon's legal team were obliged to concretize the company's arguments, although they could not manage to make them any more convincing

in the process.

The motion notes that little over a month after Amazon entered into its agreement with Allen's production company, Gravier Productions, in August 2017, "Allen's son Ronan Farrow published an investigative article in the *New Yorker* detailing multiple reports of serious sexual misconduct by film producer Harvey Weinstein." This sensationalized, scandal-mongering piece, according to Amazon's lawyers, "became the catalyst for a broad public reckoning over the persistence of sexual harassment in entertainment and other industries."

Remarkably, the motion goes on to assert that, despite "immediate consensus on the importance of acknowledging and addressing this issue, Allen made a series of public comments suggesting that he failed to grasp the gravity of the issues or the implications for his own career." He dared to express sympathy for Weinstein as well as his alleged victims, "describing the situation as 'very sad for everybody involved.' Then Allen added: 'You don't want it to lead to a witch-hunt atmosphere, a Salem atmosphere, where every guy in an office who winks at a woman is suddenly having to call a lawyer to defend himself.'"

Of course, this "immediate consensus" was largely manufactured by the establishment media, led by the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and the *Washington Post*, the property of billionaire Jeff Bezos, who also happens to own Amazon. There is no indication that broad layers of the population, women or men, ever adopted this cause as their own. #MeToo has remained for the most part an affair of the outraged, affluent petty bourgeois, incited and manipulated by the *Times*, *Post* and company.

The lynch-mob atmosphere created in Hollywood and the entertainment industry, on university campuses and elsewhere has been driven by several related concerns: to distract attention from deteriorating and desperate socio-economic conditions, to help channel popular opposition to Donald Trump along right-wing lines, to further undermine

legal due process and to advance the careers of an already affluent layer of women.

Amazon's motion continues: "Several months later, in January 2018, Allen's daughter Dylan Farrow recounted her memories of Allen's sexual abuse. Allen publicly dismissed those statements as 'cynically using' #MeToo for attention." These "memories" have been looked into and dismissed by numerous bodies, including the New York Department of Social Services and a team from the Yale-New Haven Hospital Child Sexual Abuse Clinic.

Moses Farrow, Dylan's brother, argues that her allegations are the product of the concerted "brainwashing" efforts of Allen's severely vindictive former partner, Mia Farrow. "Coaching, influencing, and rehearsing are three words that sum up exactly how my mother tried to raise us." Moses Farrow accuses his mother of extensive physical and mental abuse.

As a result of Dylan Farrow's allegations, championed by the *New York Times*' op-ed columnist and "human rights imperialism" advocate Nicholas Kristof, among others, a vile mood has been whipped up against Allen in Hollywood. The Amazon lawyers claim that Allen's various comments, including his denial of Dylan Farrow's charges, "effectively" sabotaged Amazon's efforts to promote *Wonder Wheel*.

Moreover, the motion goes on, the "response from the film industry was swift and damning. Scores of actors and actresses expressed profound regret for having worked with Allen in the past, and many declared publicly that they would never work with him in the future."

Again, the Amazon lawyers modestly fail to identify one of the chief culprits in the creation of this poisonous atmosphere, Bezos's own *Washington Post*. On January 4, 2018, for instance, the *Post* published an especially foul, stupid piece authored by Richard Morgan, "I read decades of Woody Allen's private notes. He's obsessed with teenage girls." The article's sub-heading read "His [Allen's] 56-box archive is filled with misogynist and lecherous musings." The *Post* advertised the article as "Making Art out of Lechery."

The Amazon legal motion's introductory section concludes by arguing, "Understood in the broader context, Allen's actions and their cascading consequences ensured that Amazon could never possibly receive the benefit of its four-picture agreement (despite already having paid Allen a \$10 million advance upon signing). As a result, Amazon was justified in terminating its relationship with Allen."

So much for Constitutionally protected free speech! Allen expressed some sympathy for Weinstein and rejected allegations against himself—and thus Amazon is entirely within its rights to repudiate a legally binding contract.

For 18 months, the American and global public has been subjected to an endless stream of platitudes and outright lies about the uplifting character of the #MeToo movement, about its supposed defense of the weak against the "powerful," about its liberating effects. And a good many "left" figures, including some who should know better, have chosen to believe and have repeated this drivel. Only willful ignoramuses can make such claims now.

At what point have we reached? This "ennobling" campaign has been reduced to the squalid effort to destroy the reputation and career of an 83-year-old man because he refuses to be a part of the conformist "consensus" and toe the #MeToo line. Disgusting and shameful.

The Amazon motion spells it out: artists are to be driven out and blacklisted on the basis of their public comments. If this is not a new McCarthyism, what is? In some ways, the current blacklisting is even more fatal. The blackballed Communist Party members or supporters in the 1950s were generally seen as martyrs, even if their politics were considered to be misguided or "extreme." There were also limits to their banishment. A time came, after the height of the anti-communist hysteria passed, when most were allowed back in the fold. Today, however, individuals who find themselves on the Hollywood "sexual offenders" list are presumably pariahs forever. They are "monsters," "predators," there is no hope for them.

Moreover, the film industry blacklist in the 1940s and 1950s was almost never overt or verifiable. Historian Ellen Schrecker notes, "There was, of course, no official list and the [film] studios routinely denied that blacklisting occurred." The Amazon legal argument could hardly be more explicit.

In any case, it may well be that Allen is not a left-wing filmmaker and that his views are not threatening to the establishment, although in the present abysmal cultural context, he is considered an unorthodox and even disruptive figure. But the #MeToo campaign also has something of a pre-emptive character: it is intended to prepare the framework for the banning of genuinely radical artists or, if possible, to create an intellectually repressive climate in which it will be impossible for them to emerge.

The Amazon legal motion is a serious and telling warning.



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