

Veteran actor Frank Langella targeted for alleged “sexual misconduct”

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Veteran actor Frank Langella is the latest victim of the “sexual misconduct” hysteria that has gripped the entertainment world in recent years.

On April 13, *Deadline* reported that Langella was fired from the eight-part Netflix series *The Fall of the House of Usher*, based on the book by Edgar Allan Poe. Langella was playing the lead role of Roderick Usher in this television adaptation of Poe’s Gothic short story, the tale of a family’s growing madness and disintegration, published in 1839.

The series was “halfway through production,” according to *Deadline*, with shooting having begun on January 31 in British Columbia, and the “scenes already filmed by Langella will be reshot.”

The Netflix series was written and directed by Mike Flanagan and also features Carla Gugino, Mary McDonnell and Mark Hamill.

On April 12, TMZ reported that Langella was “under investigation for alleged sexual harassment on the set of a Netflix project.

“As for what exactly happened,” TMZ added, “a source close to production tells us the 84-year-old actor allegedly made an inappropriate joke that was sexual in nature. Our sources also say in the context of his performance, possibly during rehearsal, he touched the leg of a female costar, and further drew attention to the action when he jokingly said something like ‘Did you like that?’”

An alleged “inappropriate joke” and an alleged touch on the leg! In the long history of the acting profession, have such goings-on ever been heard of before? Will Langella’s career be threatened or ended as a result of these absurd allegations?

TMZ adds that “we reached out to the local police department who says nothing has been reported to them involving Frank.”

Born in Bayonne, New Jersey, and a graduate of Syracuse University, Langella began his acting career off-Broadway in 1963. He began working in films in 1970 in *Diary of a Mad Housewife* (Frank Perry) and *The Twelve Chairs* (Mel Brooks).

Over the years, Langella became prominent for a series of roles, including Don Diego Vega in *Zorro* (1974), Count Dracula, both on stage (1977-78) and in a 1979 film (John Badham), Clare Quilty in the remake of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (Adrian Lyne, 1997), Boris Balkan in Roman Polanski’s *The Ninth Gate* (1999), William S. Paley in George Clooney’s *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005), Richard Nixon in *Frost/Nixon* (Ron Howard, 2008) and more recently, Judge Julius Hoffman in *The Trial of the Chicago 7* (Aaron Sorkin, 2020).

Langella has won four Tony Awards—two for Best Leading Actor in a Play and two for Best Featured Actor in a Play. He was nominated for an Academy Award for *Frost/Nixon*. He has also been nominated for three other Tony Awards, two Golden Globe Awards, four Screen Actors Guild Awards (winning once), a British Academy Film Award and two Obie Awards (winning both times).

Langella has a reputation for speaking his mind. In an interview with *Indiewire* in February 2021, he commented forthrightly about Hoffman, the reactionary judge who presided over the trial of the Chicago 7. “He was a shit,” Langella told *Indiewire*. “He had no redeeming qualities at all. Usually when I play a villain I try to find one, but I couldn’t find one. He knew on the first day he was going to convict, no question. I dismissed any humanity... There are men like this, more than we like to know, who have grown up with all sorts of ideas about who to defend and protect. They

use their position to cover what is venal and dishonest and cruel behavior, and they do it in the name of whatever they think they stand for.”

In an amusing and insightful memoir *Dropped Names: Famous Men and Women As I Knew Them* (2012), Langella shared recollections about Richard Burton, Rita Hayworth, Anthony Perkins, George C. Scott, Alan Bates, Anne Bancroft, Gilbert Roland, Paul Newman, Tony Curtis, Ida Lupino, Robert Mitchum and many other performers. The actor displays genuine wit and humanity in his discussions of the various personalities, some of them damaged, some of them seriously tormented.

Ada Calhoun, reviewing the memoir for the *New York Times Book Review*, commented that “Langella’s book celebrated sluttiness as a worthy—even noble—way of life. There was so much happy sexuality in this book that reading it was like being flirted with for a whole party by the hottest person in the room. It was no wonder Langella was invited everywhere.” Calhoun exaggerates, but Langella is undoubtedly not someone likely to fit in to the current Victorian/Puritan atmosphere that officially prevails in America.

Langella joins the long list of important actors, musicians, comedians and others whom the middle class witch-hunters have targeted, including Kevin Spacey, Jeffrey Tambor, Geoffrey Rush, James Franco, Johnny Depp, James Levine, Charles Dutoit, Louis C.K. and more.

In a development related to the #MeToo campaign, Spacey’s lawyers have asked a judge to throw out actor Anthony Rapp’s sex abuse lawsuit, asserting that the allegations about Spacey’s conduct at a party in 1980 were false and that the incident never occurred.

Spacey has been persona non grata since Rapp’s allegations were made public in late October 2017. Netflix played a cowardly role in this case as well, firing the prominent performer from the popular series *House of Cards* (2013-17).

As the WSWS wrote at the time: “We live once again in an era of denunciations, which have the power to wreck lives overnight. And everyone is expected to chime in. Those who do not do so become suspect themselves and are liable to be denounced. Careers, status and wealth are on the line. The threat of being out of the limelight terrifies actors, directors and producers in the US perhaps more than anything.

“In the official narrative, there is an almost complete absence of understanding and elementary sympathy. The accused is a criminal, a monster, who must be destroyed.”

A criminal case brought against Spacey from an indecent assault and battery charge of allegedly groping an 18-year-old man at a Nantucket resort fell apart ignominiously in 2019.

Now Langella has fallen victim to the same foul process.



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