

New York jury dismisses sexual assault lawsuit against Kevin Spacey

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An 11-person jury deliberated for little more than an hour on Thursday before finding in favor of actor Kevin Spacey in a civil lawsuit filed against him by Anthony Rapp. Rapp accused Spacey, who was 26 at the time, of sexually assaulting him in 1986 when he was 14 years old.

The jury in the three-week trial in New York federal court dismissed Rapp's lawsuit, which sought \$40 million in damages, and accepted Spacey's defense that the alleged encounter never happened.

In dismissing the lawsuit, the jury rejected Rapp's accusation, first advanced in 2017 in the early days of the #MeToo witch-hunt, that he had been abused as a minor at a party in Spacey's apartment during a season when they both were actors on Broadway.

In doing so, the jury also rejected a central premise of the #MeToo movement: that facts, evidence and proof do not matter and that the allegations of accusers alone are sufficient to destroy the careers of the accused.

In October 2017, BuzzFeed News published in lurid detail Rapp's claims of Spacey's "sexual misconduct." This was followed by a campaign in the corporate media, led by the *New York Times*, that resulted in the end of Spacey's career as an actor.

When the accusations by Rapp were followed by numerous similar unsubstantiated claims made against him, Spacey was removed from his role as Frank Underwood in the acclaimed Netflix series "House of Cards" and the streaming movie service also cancelled plans to release a film biography with the actor playing Gore Vidal.

In a thoroughly reactionary move, director Ridley Scott erased Kevin Spacey from the film *All the Money in the World*, a movie about the billionaire oil tycoon J. Paul Getty that had been completed, and replaced him with actor Christopher Plummer at a cost of \$10

million.

After the trial verdict was read, Spacey reportedly dropped his head, then hugged his lawyers and exited the courtroom without making any statements. His lawyer, Jennifer Keller, said outside the courthouse, "We're just grateful that the jury saw the truth," adding, "What's next is that Kevin Spacey is going to be proven innocent of anything he's been accused of. That there was no truth to any of the allegations."

The #MeToo witch-hunt against Spacey started unraveling in July 2019 when district attorneys in Massachusetts dropped sexual assault charges against him after the accuser refused to testify about missing text messages on his cellphone.

In July of this year, Spacey pleaded not guilty to charges of sexual assault levelled by three individuals that the accusers allege took place between March 2005 and August 2008. In that hearing, the attorney for Spacey said the actor "strenuously denies" the allegations.

The outcome of the trial has vindicated the principled stand taken by the WSWs against the witch-hunt. In an article posted on November 1, 2017, "May a word be spoken on behalf of Kevin Spacey?," WSWs Arts Editor David Walsh wrote: "We live once again in an era of denunciations, which have the power to wreck lives overnight. And everyone is expected to chime in."

The article continued, "Once again it's 'scoundrel time.' The film world, it is clear now, has learned nothing from the McCarthyite period. The same essential modus operandi is at work: the naming of names, the guilt by association, witnesses who can't be questioned, the right-wing forces who weigh in, the studios that instantly blacklist those accused."

The WSWs has a spotless record of defending actors and Hollywood figures—such as Woody Allen, Geoffrey

Rush, Frank Langella, Johnny Depp and others—who have been the victims of public campaigns based on unsubstantiated claims of “sexual misconduct.”

We have consistently pointed to the undemocratic character of the #MeToo campaign as an extension of upper-middle-class Democratic Party identity politics and its hostility to the elementary constitutional rights such as the presumption of innocence.



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