

Musician Marilyn Manson accuser repudiates earlier #MeToo accusations

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Model Ashley Morgan Smithline filed a declaration in Los Angeles Superior Court February 23 repudiating allegations she made in 2021 against musician-performer Marilyn Manson (real name Brian Warner). At the time, Smithline's claims were posted on Instagram, she appeared on television and in other media to accuse Warner of rape and assault, and she launched a civil suit against the performer. The latter suit was dismissed last month, in part because of Smithline's unwillingness to proceed with it.

Smithline, in her recent sworn statement, asserts that she was pressured by actress Evan Rachel Wood, who has spearheaded a campaign against her former boyfriend Warner, and Wood's associates "to make accusations of rape and assault against Mr. Warner that were not true." The 38-year-old states that she "never intended to pursue criminal charges against Mr. Warner and have no intention now of ever pursuing criminal charges, as Mr. Warner did not ever assault or abuse me." In retrospect, Smithline comments that she feels she was "manipulated" by Wood and others "to spread publicly false accusations of abuse against Mr. Warner."

The Smithline declaration raises the question: If, as #MeToo advocates would have it, all women are to be believed, what are we to do when a woman maintains she made *false* accusations?

In any case, if Smithline's new statements are true—and she does not appear to have a motive for lying—it not only sheds light on the particular effort to destroy Warner-Manson, but the modus operandi of the #MeToo sexual campaign as a whole, which, since October 2017, has destroyed the lives and reputations of dozens of individuals largely on the basis of unsubstantiated claims. The media, as in the Warner-Manson case, has enthusiastically collaborated in the witch-hunt at every point.

When Smithline "went public" with her allegations two years ago, they were immediately seized upon and trumpeted by the media.

In May 2021, *People* magazine, for example, devoted a lurid cover story to Smithline's charges ("I Survived a

Monster"). In June, at the time of the filing of her suit against Warner, Smithline was given prominent, "exclusive" coverage by the magazine. "It has been important for me to come forward the way I have because I live in constant fear even to this day," Smithline told *People*. She went on, "I am seeking justice because I want to move forward and heal from the terrible abuse I faced. I want Brian Warner to be held accountable once and for all."

Her lawsuit, cited by *People*, described the alleged mistreatment, which she now contends was a pack of lies: "Warner ... grabbed a knife next to the bed and began cutting Ms. Smithline's shoulder, inner arm, and stomach. ... The cuts drew blood and caused Ms. Smithline to go into shock. To this day, Ms. Smithline bears the scars of Mr. Warner's cuts." The lawsuit, *People* went on, "cites multiple instances of rape, sexual abuse, cutting, whipping, a nose fracture and being 'branded' by the singer after he carved his initials into her leg. ('I was brainwashed, and it makes me feel disgusting,' she told PEOPLE about the marking.)"

In the face of such allegations, passed on to the public by the media without examination or criticism, a given performer or personality is instantly convicted in the court of public opinion and, if possible, made to vanish. There is generally no recourse.

In particular, we have been told repeatedly over the last five years and more that such *detailed accounts* of sexual abuse, which *could not possibly* be invented, should be credited without question.

Now, Smithline says she made it all up, with help and under pressure from Wood and her team.

In her February 23 declaration, Smithline writes that in November 2010, "I had a brief, consensual sexual relationship with Brian Warner, also known as Marilyn Manson, during a trip I took to Los Angeles from Thailand, where I was living. Ten years later, I succumbed to pressure from Evan Rachel Wood and her associates" to make false accusations.

The description of the process by which Smithline claims she was induced to make her allegations is instructive.

Smithline writes that she was invited in 2020 “to participate in a group meeting of women who ... had relationships or experiences with Mr. Warner.” In her various meetings and communications with Wood, the latter “described acts allegedly committed by Mr. Warner against Ms. Wood and other supposed victims and asked me whether the same things happened to me. I remember she asked me whether I had been, among other things, whipped, chained, tied up, branded/cut, assaulted while sleeping, beaten, or raped.”

When Smithline said, no, this had not happened to her and this was not her experience, she recalls “being told by Ms. Wood that just because I could not remember did not necessarily mean that it did not happen.” Wood and her associates insisted that Smithline was “misremembering what happened, repressing my memories of what happened,” or that her memories “had not yet surfaced.”

Smithline writes: “I was asked whether I was repressing memories to just get through day-to-day life, and whether it was easier just to not think about what actually happened than accept reality. They also said it was important for people to come forward so that no one else gets hurt. ... Eventually, I started to believe that what I was repeatedly told happened to Ms. Wood and Ms. [Esme] Bianco also happened to me.”

In early 2021, Smithline insists, she was told that on a certain day Wood “would post to her social media naming Mr. Warner as her abuser, and that we all should do the same on or around the same day.” Smithline claims that she discussed with Illma Gore, Wood’s romantic partner, making such a statement on Instagram. “Ms. Gore drafted the statement,” the sworn statement goes on, adding that the “narrative ultimately posted to my account on or around February 1, 2021 contained untrue statements about Mr. Warner.” Smithline further insists that there was “no branding or cutting experienced during the brief relationship and certainly no ‘Marilyn Manson’ initials carved on my body.”

In addition, Smithline charges that lawyer Jay Ellwanger, one of Wood’s associates, filed her lawsuit in June 2021 without Smithline’s being able to review the “contents of the complaint” and that Ellwanger “did not send me a draft of the complaint to approve before filing it.” The lawsuit also “contained untrue statements about Mr. Warner.” The model now claims she felt pressured by Ellwanger “to go on a press tour, which included an interview on *The View* and an interview and photoshoot with *People* magazine. I was very uncomfortable doing this press but felt pressured to do it.”

In a defamation suit filed March 2, 2022 against Wood and Gore, Manson-Warner’s attorneys alleged that in the 10

years after Wood and the musician parted company, following a four-year relationship (2006-2010), the actress “never once accused Warner of abuse—that is, until she met Gore, a grifter who understood that an organized attack on Warner—spearheaded by Wood’s own fabricated revelation of rape and abuse—could benefit them both.”

The lawsuit claimed that “for at least the last two years, Gore and Wood have secretly recruited, coordinated, and pressured prospective accusers to emerge simultaneously with allegations of rape and abuse against Warner, and brazenly claim that it took ten or more years to ‘realize’ their consensual relationships with Warner were supposedly abusive.”

Smithline’s current statements tend to corroborate these claims.

Warner’s defamation suit also alleged that Wood and Gore “impersonated an actual agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation by forging and distributing a fictitious letter from the agent, to create the false appearance that Warner’s alleged ‘victims’ and their families were in danger, and that there was a federal criminal investigation of Warner ongoing.”

It further charged that Wood and Gore “provided checklists and scripts to prospective accusers, listing the specific alleged acts of abuse that they should claim against Warner,” and that Gore hacked into Warner’s computer and social media.

A spokesperson for Wood told the media that it was “unfortunate that the harassment and threats Ashley [Smithline] received after filing her federal lawsuit appear to have pressured her to change her testimony.” This is the world turned upside down. In fact, predictably, Smithline’s repudiation of her previous claims has been treated with general hostility by the media, and many of the news reports have been given over to Wood to repeat her claims. *People* magazine has not offered an apology or a retraction.



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