

## Trial of actor Kevin Spacey opens in London

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On Friday, actor Kevin Spacey appeared in London's Southwark Crown Court at the start of his trial on sexual offence charges. He hopes to continue clearing his name after successfully contesting similar charges in Massachusetts in 2019 and New York in 2022.

Spacey has pleaded not guilty to three counts of indecent assault, three counts of sexual assault and one count of causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent between 2001 and 2013. During most of this time he was artistic director of London's Old Vic theatre.

Spacey is a two-time Oscar winner who helped rescue the Old Vic from bankruptcy and attract younger audiences. He struck a chord with television viewers for his portrayal, in the Netflix series *House of Cards*, of Frank Underwood, a corrupt South Carolina congressman who ruthlessly pursues the US presidency. The WSWS commented in 2014 that the series was "a damning and unanswerable indictment of the existing political and economic system, and as such, will help to undermine it."

Spacey's fall from grace was rapid after sexual offence allegations surfaced in 2017 at the height of the #MeToo campaign. Within days, Netflix officials dropped him from *House of Cards* and then later sued him for over \$30 million in damages arguing they had been forced to shorten the series because of his alleged sexual misconduct.

In the most cowardly manner, director Ridley Scott erased Spacey from the completed film *All the Money in the World*, reshooting his role as the billionaire oil tycoon J. Paul Getty. The Old Vic ditched him despite admitting "it has not been possible to verify any of these allegations."

On Friday, prosecutor Christine Agnew KC opened the trial, which is expected to last a month, by declaring that Spacey "is an extremely famous actor who has won a number of awards. He is also, the prosecution

allege, a man who sexually assaults other men."

Spacey is a "man who does not respect personal boundaries or space," Agnew continued, "a man who it would seem delights in making others feel powerless and uncomfortable, a sexual bully."

Agnew listed the 12 charges against Spacey and detailed the accompanying allegations made by four men. None of them reported their claims of abuse until 2017 or after, and although described as "stretching" from 2001 to 2013, the allegations made by three of the four relate to single events each—in 2005, 2008 and 2013.

The charges involve claims that Spacey was overly "touchy-feely" with one individual, and that he "intimately touched" another of the complainants and spoke to him in a lewd manner. A third accuser alleges that, after spending the night with Spacey, he woke to find him engaged in sexual activity. A fourth alleges that Spacey gave the complainant a "hug and two kisses on the neck" and then "grabbed" him.

Agnew concluded her opening remarks declaring Spacey had abused his power and influence to take "what and who he wanted, when he wanted."

Patrick Gibbs, defending Spacey, was given special permission due to the nature of the trial to give a short opening speech. He urged the jurors not to make up their minds "unless and until you've heard both sides of the story" after the defence presents its case, probably in two weeks. Spacey, he pointed out, thoroughly denies the accusations and would explain "in full in due course what actually happened, if anything."

Spacey has said he was "baffled and deeply hurt" by the allegations of one complainant, whom he considered "a clever and charming man" and friend. He remembers little or nothing about the other complainants, although it was possible he had made "a clumsy pass at some point in time at someone that he

could not recall.”

Gibbs argued the alleged events happened “a long time ago” and had been “reimagined with a sinister spin, made up or twisted.” He continued forcefully, “You will soon hear, I suggest, some truths, you will soon hear some half-truths, you will also hear I suggest ... some deliberate exaggerations and you will hear many damned lies.”

Gibbs said that “likely obstacles” would arise during the trial including “rumour, fame, responses to fame, secrecy, shame and sexual confusion.” He asked the jury to consider what some people might want from Spacey, “from his wealth and from his influence” and what his life was like especially after coming out as gay. Could his actions have been “reasonably consensual?”

The WSWS defends fundamental democratic rights because history proves that the erosion of civil liberties and legal protections always paves the way for more sweeping attacks against the working class, strengthening the repressive powers of the state.

Launched in the wake of the 2016 US presidential election, #MeToo was utilised by its Democratic Party and media instigators to whip up susceptible layers of mostly affluent middle class professionals. It sought to replace the presumption of innocence with the anti-democratic principle that “women must be believed” and rumour-fuelled trials by media, regardless of the evidence and the right of the accused to due process. In Spacey’s case, only the gender and sexual orientation are different.

Besides the mercenary motives of many involved, a major driving force behind the campaign was to divert opposition to then President Donald Trump into the dead end of identity politics, aggressively promoted over the last 40 years by the upper-middle class, the Democrats and the pseudo-left.

The #MeToo witch-hunt against Spacey started unravelling ignominiously in July 2019 when a district attorney in Massachusetts dropped sexual assault charges against him after the accuser refused to testify about missing text messages on his cell phone. The latter pleaded the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination, forcing the pretrial hearing and the entire case to be halted.

In October 2022 in New York, a jury deliberated for little more than an hour before finding in favour of

Spacey in a civil lawsuit filed against him by another actor, Anthony Rapp. Rapp accused Spacey of making a sexual advance toward him 30 years earlier at a party in 1986 when Rapp was 14 and Spacey 26. The jury dismissed the lawsuit, which sought \$40 million in damages, and accepted Spacey’s defence that the alleged encounter never happened.

The London trial continues next week.



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