

Kevin Spacey's acquittal in London: A guilty verdict delivered on the entire #MeToo witch-hunt

David Walsh
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The acquittal of actor Kevin Spacey in a London courtroom on all sexual offense charges is a significant and thoroughly deserved blow to the #MeToo witch-hunt, which has gone on now for almost six years.

It reveals that the antidemocratic claim that accusers “must be believed” is not accepted by wide layers of the population, who remain convinced that the accused too have rights, including the right to confront and question their accusers.

The acquittal on all charges strikingly demonstrates that the social layer convinced of Spacey's guilt and the perfidy of all the targets of the #MeToo crusade, often on the basis of wild and unsubstantiated allegations, is narrow, privileged, self-pitying and politically reactionary. Spacey's exoneration is undoubtedly a popular development.

The verdict of “not guilty” in Spacey's case is at the same time an *indictment* of a neo-McCarthyite system of guilt determined by the media, by gossip and innuendo, often by anonymous informants, which has destroyed countless lives and careers.

It is an indictment of the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, the *New Yorker* and *New York* magazine, the *Nation*, *Jacobin*, the Democratic Party and the Democratic Socialists of America, the pseudo-left in general, all the unprincipled, rotten media and political outfits who have kept the #MeToo pot boiling for their own selfish, right-wing reasons, no matter the human cost.

The 12-person jury in Southwark Crown Court clearly did not believe Spacey's accusers, whose claims the actor decried as “madness” and “lying for money.” The award-winning performer, one of the finest actors of his generation, has now faced several accusers in court. All the allegations have come to nothing. Spacey has insisted on defending himself, including in a foreign courtroom, and been vindicated at every point. He has conclusively cleared his name.

But at what cost? He is “bankrupt,” according to the actor himself, and faces huge legal costs. Moreover, it remains unclear if he has paid the \$31 million to the producers of his Netflix series *House of Cards*. After precipitously firing him in November 2017, the producers proceeded to sue Spacey on the grounds that his alleged sexual misconduct had caused the final season of *House of Cards* to be shortened from 13 episodes to eight and they were entitled to tens of millions of dollars in damages!

In court last week, Spacey explained, referring to the outbreak of the scandal in late 2017, that “My world exploded.” There “was a rush to judgment, and before the first question was asked or answered I lost my job, I lost my reputation, I lost everything in a matter of days.”

“With a few exceptions over the last five, six years, I have not been able to work,” Spacey said. “I’ve had no money coming in and I’ve had a lot of legal bills and things to fight against, and I haven’t paid it all off, so I still owe money.”

Indeed, “in a matter of days” in late 2017, Netflix ended its relationship with Spacey, the International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences publicly rescinded plans to honor him with its International Emmy Founders Award, and the Old Vic—where he served as artistic director from 2004 to 2015—threw him to the wolves. Soon afterward, adding insult to injury, Ridley Scott cut Spacey from his *completed* film, *All the Money in the World*, and reshot 22 scenes with Christopher Plummer taking Spacey's place.

The performer, inevitably described as “disgraced actor Kevin Spacey,” became a pariah. There is obvious and serious personal tragedy here.

Will Spacey once again find work in Hollywood, that ethical and intellectual cesspool that prides itself on its high moral values, which takes millions of dollars annually from the professional murderers at the CIA and the Pentagon, but blacklists Woody Allen, Roman Polanski and Spacey?

It is difficult to say. According to gossip website *Page Six*, Spacey “may have to stick to working in Europe—as Hollywood isn’t ready to forgive or forget[!],” according to “multiple Tinseltown sources.” The same website cited Spacey's comments to a German magazine earlier this month, “I know there are a lot of people right now who are ready to hire me the moment I am cleared of these charges in London ... The second that happens, they’re ready to move forward.” However, asked about Spacey's career future, “one well-placed Hollywood source told *Page Six*: ‘Look at all these men accused of sex crimes, from Woody Allen to Roman Polanski, they’re all working in Europe.’” What monstrous hypocrisy.

The #MeToo campaign is now almost six years old. In addition to Spacey, its promoters have done everything in their power to destroy the careers and lives of James Levine, Charles Dutoit, Geoffrey Rush, Jeffrey Tambor, Louis C.K., Plácido Domingo,

Garrison Keillor, Craig McLachlan, Frank Langella, Bill Murray, Blake Bailey, Ryan Adams, Aziz Ansari, Casey Affleck, James Franco, Johnny Depp and many others, none of whom has been convicted of a single crime.

Spacey's 40-year career in film and theater was ruined by one claim, about an incident alleged to have happened decades before. The WSWS argued at the time that Spacey "brings considerable intelligence and depth, combined often with irony and slyness, to both classical and popular genres," and asked, "Is there any question but that film, television and theater would have been tangibly poorer without his presence over the past quarter-century?"

"The current public flogging of Spacey is as shameful as it is disgusting," we asserted. "The universal piling on, sanctimonious commentary and hypocritical tweets ... are difficult to bear. In terms of the media, there is not much to choose from between fascistic *Breitbart News*, warming its hands over the allegations against gay or liberal and often Jewish Hollywood, and the *New York Times*, with its salacious and degenerate editors."

"Sex scandals have invariably been the province of the far right," the WSWS insisted. "Nothing remotely progressive will come out of this. ... 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."

We concluded: "We don't make any bones about our sympathy with Kevin Spacey and our contempt for those inciting denunciations and urging on the witch-hunting hysteria."

As the WSWS also argued in 2017, in "America's latest 'Scarlet Letter' moment": "The 'Me Too' campaign is reactionary to the core. It has no progressive content. There are many forms of sexual harassment, which extend from the annoying to the legally actionable to the outright criminal. But a vast range of activities, including many that reflect the ambiguities and complexities of human interactions, is being described as malevolent and even criminal."

The driving force behind this effort has been an affluent layer of the upper-middle class, vindictive, antidemocratic and authoritarian in its instincts and methods.

The recent case vindicating Johnny Depp and now the Spacey acquittal on all charges are welcome developments. As noted, there is widespread distrust of the #MeToo campaign and the self-involved Hollywood types primarily promoting it. The abject failure of *She Said* and *Women Talking* with the public is further evidence of this. But the sexual witch-hunt is driven by strong social currents. The various hostile responses to the outcome of the Spacey trial make clear that these forces are not going away.

The Cut, a section of *New York* magazine, responded by publishing, in lurid detail, all the allegations that have been made against Spacey, most of which have been disproven or thrown out of court. Kat Tenbarge, a tech and culture reporter for NBC News, tweeted: "Four men testified that Kevin Spacey sexually assaulted them. A majority-male jury didn't side with any of them, clearing Spacey of all charges. A reminder of how men treat other men,

too, when they make sexual assault allegations." Margo Lindauer, director of the Domestic Violence Institute at Northeastern University's School of Law, told the media that "there is a chilling effect when there are cases like this, when there are known abusers who are constantly not held accountable," etc.

In its analysis of the #MeToo phenomenon, the WSWS has identified these principal social and political motives behind the promotion of the sexual witch-hunt:

1. To divert attention from the growth of *social* inequality in particular. The aim is to reduce and blunt *class* hatred and feeling, divide men and women, and demobilize as far as possible and for as long as possible independent political and social action by the working class.

2. To corral social opposition within the framework of bourgeois politics. #MeToo originated as a means of consolidating the hold of the Democratic Party over sections of the affluent middle class obsessed with gender issues and channeling opposition to Donald Trump along right-wing lines.

3. To advance the social interests of layers of professionals, engaged in fierce internecine conflicts over positions and privileges in various fields, including the universities, media, entertainment, trade unions and elsewhere.

4. To weaken or destroy elementary democratic rights. We have seen sustained attacks on due process, the presumption of innocence coming from the "left," this antidemocratic upper-middle class. Lynch-mob, McCarthyite moods have been encouraged.

5. To incite the most backward social layers, on the basis of anti-gay bigotry and antisemitism. The choice of the most prominent victims has not been innocent or accidental.

6. To underpin and give added dimension and justification to the demands for military intervention around the globe in the name of "women's rights." This is the "Hillary Doctrine," one expression of "human rights imperialism."

The Spacey verdict is a welcome development, but the political forces at work, especially the pseudo-left in the media, the campuses and elsewhere, must be systematically exposed and discredited.



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