

Grooming False Accusers

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GROOMING FALSE ACCUSERS

The Freddie Starr libel fiasco has prompted thoughts about the grooming of witnesses.

This has been an essential art for some time. Created and invented by famous and successful publicist Max Clifford, it was initially used to back up stories such as footballers seducing fans. These frequently did not end up in court, where the evidence needed was, at the time, more crucial, but on the front pages of tabloid newspapers for large sums of money. However, the art was developing in the 1990s.

I fell victim to the scam when a false accuser went to Max Clifford in 2000 and was instructed how to proceed. Indeed his subsequent actions led to my wrongful imprisonment in 2001 for crimes, not only that had I never committed, but that had never even taken place. I had found it hard to prove my innocence of such non-existent episodes and had wrongly assumed that, since there could be no evidence of their happening, I would be acquitted.

In prison I was contacted by Neil and Christine Hamilton, who had also been victims of this scam. They, however, had escaped unscathed but deeply resented Clifford's behaviour and knew that I, too, had suffered from his wickedness.

They visited me at HMP Maidstone, Her Majesty's Luxury Estate establishment where I was serving my 7 year sentence. I warned them that this would inevitably provoke negative publicity for them. "Water off ducks backs" was their response, having experienced negative publicity in buckets. We immediately became friends and remain so to this day. They are two incredibly decent human beings.

That was where I learned specific details of Nadine Milroy-Sloan's grooming by Clifford - how she had been told what to say, when to go to the police (willing accomplices in such high profile cases involving celebrities, promotion and increased budgets), how to use the media and so on. Poor demented Nadine later ended up in prison for her lies and is, I believe, back inside today under another name, Emily Checksfield, for making further, similar false allegations. Clifford is also, at last, behind bars but for other crimes.

The art of grooming accusers had started with the best intentions. Honest and honourable police officers wanted to make sure genuine victims of crime presented their cases in the best possible way and therefore assisted them with phrasing and specifics in statements and court appearances.

I became convinced, reading the statements of my false accusers, that there was a police handbook of phrases and words that "victims" should use. There were constant repetitions of such things as "alcohol and tobacco smells on the breath" - all subsequently removed from the statements against me when a cop realised I neither drank nor smoked. The damage abuse had caused in later life were spelled out in exact replica. One after the other used precisely the same words and expressions.

This grooming had been perverted and perfected by Clifford and others in order to get the desired convictions. As we saw with The Hamiltons, it didn't always work, but it often did. The practitioners of the Dark Art were well aware of how strongly jurors and judges were influenced by the expression of correct emotions.

In the Freddie Starr libel case, Susan Bunce was a witness intended to show how little truth there had been in the

allegations against Starr. Unfortunately, not groomed in her dock appearance, she tried to be totally honest and ended up giving the Judge reason to assume that there had been some abuse. Humour, behaviour and the mores of the 70s were very different from those of today and can be easily misinterpreted. A harmless joke from then can be reflected and inflated to appear abusive in today's morality.

The grooming of false accusers is now a massive growth industry. Charities begun in order to help victims have started training volunteers in the art of expressing themselves believably and profitably. Essential in genuine cases but also very dangerous in the high stakes crime of false allegations. So easy to make, especially when the victims are famous, wealthy and preferably dead.

Not just Max Clifford but many others have now profited from successful false allegations. Police get promotion. MPs get praised beyond their worth. Charities find their treasure chests bulging. Lawyers are richer than banks. The media gets great stories. No wonder the Dark Art is thriving.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2767792/Fantasia-jailed-2003-falsely-claiming-raped-Neil-Christine-Hamilton-bars-lying-wrongly-telling-police-husband-attacked-samurai-sword.html>