

Barbara Kay: UBC had a #MeToo bloodletting. It was a disaster for everyone

[National Post](#) - Tuesday June 26th, 2018

The Lottery, Shirley Jackson's macabre 1948 tale illuminating the human tendency to conform with evil, ranks high amongst American short stories. The ending is unforgettably shocking: as the ritual climax to a harvest festival, a lottery "winner" is stoned to death by the victim's fellow townspeople. Jackson's cautionary tale sprang to mind with the cultural stoning of Steven Galloway by his fellow University of British Columbia "townspeople." Galloway is the author of the internationally lauded 2008 novel, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, as well as the formerly beloved, but — in 2015 — brusquely deposed chair of UBC's vaunted creative-writing program. Australia-based Quillette.com has published a long article on the Galloway affair, chronicling the scandalous dereliction of duty at the highest levels associated with Galloway's fall from grace. Its author, formidable researcher Brad Cran, captures academia's cultural moment in this disturbing exposé of a #MeToo movement run amok, and the collapsed ethical integrity of colleagues and administration in its thrall. (--image--)

Writer Brad Cran, seen in a file photo from 2009, researched his article about Steven Galloway and UBC for more than two years.

Jenelle Schneider/Vancouver Sun/Postmedia News

The story began when Chelsea Rooney, a former student in the creative-writing department Galloway had headed since 2013, came forward in November 2015 to claim that Galloway was guilty of raping a student in 2012 (later amended to 2011). Rooney claimed she could bolster this allegation with 19 similar accusations from current and former writing students of Galloway although, reinforcing later Rooney-linked credibility lacunae, these never materialized. The alleged victim is known as MC ("Main Complainant"), even though everyone following the case knows her identity. MC was technically Galloway's student in 2011, but he was not yet chair of the department, and she was older than him, therefore a social peer. That they were sexually involved is not in dispute. An ambiguous, apologetic voicemail left by Galloway on MC's phone served as the primary evidence for the allegation. It speaks to a guilty conscience — "I'm pretty ashamed of the way I used to be and act. I can assure you that I am no longer that way" — but not to a crime. UBC announced a disciplinary action against Galloway before any investigation was even considered (--image--)

(--image--)  
On the day following the charge, a hand-picked group of the creative-writing department staff met at a professor's home; assuming guilt, a decision was taken to ask that the dean suspend Galloway, removing him as department chair. UBC (unprecedentedly) announced a disciplinary action against him before any investigation was even considered. The fix was in. From here on, you have to read the story to believe it, and I urge you to do so. After reading it, I believe that like me, you will feel indebted to tenacious Brad Cran for the more than two years of self-initiated sleuthing he dedicated to producing this comprehensive report. After reading it, I believe that like me, you will feel indebted to tenacious Brad Cran ... (for) producing this comprehensive report (--image--)

(--image--)  
With no regard for the human life unravelling through their machinations, Rooney and other women involved in Galloway's persecution displayed a chilling, implacable demand for a #MeToo "harvest" scapegoat. They attacked Galloway then — and some continue to attack today — like pit bulls that, driven by genetically encoded impulses to latch to prey, literally can't let go. The only individual officially connected to UBC's investigation who comes off with dignity in this saga is retired B.C. Supreme Court Justice Mary Ellen Boyd. Boyd conducted a fact-finding mission with complete objectivity, concluding that Galloway's and MC's relations constituted what Galloway said they were — a bilaterally adulterous, but consensual affair. And what of Steven Galloway today? He's in a bad place. Cran writes: "For over two and a half years, Galloway has been vilified, threatened, and driven to the edge of both bankruptcy and suicide." For over two and a half years, Galloway has been vilified, threatened, and driven to the edge of both bankruptcy and suicide. Brad Cran (--image--)

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Invited to comment on the debacle, Cran's editor (and my son), Jonathan Kay, emailed: "We have an alphabet soup of well-funded organizations in this country that throw lavish fundraisers at Toronto hotels and recite self-congratulatory mantras about their supposedly holy mission to protect writers, and get at the truth. But when one of Canada's greatest authors came under vicious attack on the basis of allegations that, even from the beginning, looked to be made up, these literary and academic grandees mostly either stared at their shoes or got in line with the inquisition ... My hope now is that there will be a full investigation of both the creative-writing program at UBC, and the officials within the university administration who permitted this disgrace to occur." Why was there so little moral outrage amongst Galloway's peers while this trainwreck was in progress? We must return to *The Lottery* for at least a partial explanation. (--image--)

The University of British Columbia initiated disciplinary action against Steven Galloway before an investigation was even considered, writes Barbara Kay.

Darryl Dyck /CP

Kay Haugaard, a California teacher, wrote an instructive essay in the 1990s, "Revisiting *The Lottery*," about her students' changing reactions over time to Jackson's parable. Between my reading of *The Lottery* and that of Haugaard's students, multiculturalism entrenched itself as the culture's dominant ideology. My generation's horror at the story's end had accordingly, by the 1990s, subsided into morally relativistic detachment. Haugaard says she was told by one student, for example, that, if such a ritual was part of a cultural belief system and "worked for them," then it should not be judged. Another student even opined that occasional "bloodletting" could be good for a community. Really? Well, UBC has had its "bloodletting." And was it good for that community? For CanLit? For anyone? • Email: [kaybarb@gmail.com](mailto:kaybarb@gmail.com) | Twitter: [BarbaraRKay](#)  
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