

Witch Hunt at Oxford University

By Dr. Jeffrey Ketland

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I was witch-hunted at the University of Oxford in 2013-14 by a group of feminist vigilantes. Their misconduct was appeased and enabled by the University of Oxford in order to hide its own liability for welfare failings leading to a student death. This witch hunt destroyed my career and my reputation, and ruined my life. The saga itself was long and complicated, and occurred over roughly six years.

I was the victim of a violent stalker, Charlotte Coursier, whom I'd known for many years. She was a student, originally, when I was a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh. I met her in 2008. She made several suicide attempts and hundreds of telephone calls to me, including "countless suicide threats," as my wife later put it. I helped her and prevented the suicide attempts, as she acknowledged repeatedly: for example, writing in one of her love letters to me in June 2011, "You are still the person that saved my life and my degree." Her crisis occurred over a period of about six months, November 2008 - May 2009. It caused major problems in my marriage, and led eventually to that breaking down two years later.

Charlotte and I were close for a subsequent two years; a judge later described it as a "quasi-matrimonial relationship." In late 2010, after I had separated from my wife for a time, Charlotte and I had a short consensual relationship. However, she became violent and abusive. Those with medical expertise who looked at the evidence all agree that this was Borderline Personality Disorder. Charlotte had been detained by the police once, earlier in 2010, after she confronted my wife at our home. Later, she sexually assaulted me in November 2010, and the police were called. At this point, I distanced myself and broke off contact; she then sent me harassing, abusive, and threatening messages for months afterwards, and stalked me obsessively for a subsequent two and a half years up to June 2013.

She followed me to my new academic position in 2012 in Oxford. There, she stalked my

wife and son for months, until they left town in distress; she eventually began stalking me at my seminars in May 2013, turning up pretending not to know me. After I had told her to leave me alone, she was encouraged by feminist friends around her to make false accusations against me to the university and to the police, who "believed" her: they outrageously gave me a PIN ("police information notice", often called a "harassment warning": no evidence is required; the accused is not consulted, and my stalker refused to provide a statement). But their view changed when I told them about her history of abuse and violence against me, and her suicide attempts.

I notified others of Charlotte's mental instability, and the Faculty of Philosophy was notified, but all of these notifications were ignored. A few days later, Charlotte contacted the police and retracted her false accusations and I again explained to them her past behaviour and expressed my serious concerns about her mental state, something later confirmed by the Oxfordshire Coroner, Mr Darren Salter.

A month later, in June 2013, Charlotte's boyfriend broke up with her in London. She threatened suicide, but he ignored the threats; she returned to Oxford and committed suicide a few hours later. As I much later learned, their relationship was filled with turbulence and problems; her boyfriend had earlier persuaded her to have an abortion in March 2013, which apparently upset her a great deal, making her think that she had "murdered her child." The fact that their relationship was breaking up was precisely the reason she had begun contacting me again in May 2013. But I did not know this.

In May 2013, several people around Charlotte, including her flatmate, Brooke Berndtson, had cajoled her into making a series of false accusations against me, accusing me of "harassing" her even though I was the long-term victim of stalking and violence, and did nothing wrong: I merely told her to stop contacting me and I notified others of my serious concerns about her mental state.

The agitators were American feminists. The academic profession of philosophy has been convulsed in the last 5 years by feminist activists running campaigns against male academics whom they—usually falsely—accuse of "harassment." Many such campaigns have occurred and these have had devastating consequences for the victims of their false accusations. In Oxford, the cajoling of Charlotte by feminist activists prevented her from receiving psychiatric attention which might have saved her life. Her welfare crisis was ignored because feminist fanatics decided to "believe" a mentally unwell stalker and to persecute her (male) victim.

After Charlotte's suicide, I was subjected to a witch hunt set up by Berndtson, the flatmate, who recruited other feminist vigilantes, including Berndtson's supervisor, Dr Paula Boddington, an Oxford feminist academic. I was slandered, smeared, intimidated,

and cyber-harassed; I was driven out of my teaching; eventually my family was driven out of our home. The police advised us to leave after we reported cyber-harassment: I was anonymously sent messages calling me a "murderer."

The vigilantes distributed their false accusations on Twitter, Facebook, and blogs over a period of eight months up to Feb 2014, including "feminist philosophy" blogs, where I was accused of being a "sexual harasser," a "blackmailer," and even a "stalker" responsible for someone's death. They got their story into a Coroner's court at the inquest into Charlotte's death (I was not consulted about this or allowed to reply) and into the national press in February 2014 (I was not consulted or allowed to reply). They then authored an apoplectic "Open Letter" filled with smears and demands for my punishment.

Cowardly university administrators then fired me, giving the activist mob what they demanded; they also covered up the facts, including their negligence of Charlotte's welfare. They portrayed a stalker with a police record of violence as the "victim" (they held a conference in her honour and placed a memorial bench outside the Philosophy Faculty in Oxford) and they portrayed not just me but also my family who were actual victims of a long-term stalker as "guilty." In fact, we had suffered appalling harm, including PTSD.

After this, I then appealed through a legal process (without legal representation), which was emotionally gruelling, but I was vindicated and won. I was reinstated.

It was the most horrific experience of my life: a witch hunt driven by feminist vigilantes, and it destroyed everything in my life and career. I was left penniless and homeless in August 2014. Although I was reinstated, since then, I have been made a pariah in my academic profession, and quietly forced out of my job. I have been blacklisted and prevented from publishing and from attending academic events.