



On Michael Le Vell, and why arguing about rape is a waste of time

"Anyone making any sort of claim (need not be criminal) has the burden of proof. That's Philosophy 101." So went the crushing, irrefutable logic of some dude's argument on the internet, that legitimate arbiter of things judicial, with regard to the demonstrable guilt of Michael Le Vell's accuser. Her crime? Lying about rape. How do we know she lied? Because he's been "declared innocent".

There is a lot wrong with this so called logic, and a lot of very intelligent women have stepped into the breach and written eloquently on the various flaws in it.

[Laura at the F-Word](#) starts us off by pointing out the obvious fact that it's not the victim who's just been on trial - the veracity of her claims were not something the court interested itself in. What the jury decided on was the prosecution didn't make its case beyond reasonable doubt, nothing more, nothing less.

[Glosswitch](#) beautifully dismantles the ridiculous false equivalence that posits that accusing someone of rape is as bad as raping someone. I like to call it the "both sides" argument; it's very popular these days in all kinds of contexts, but especially in the news media. Tories entirely funded by millionaire tax evaders? Well, Labour takes some money from the unions! It's exactly the same! Climate change deniers distorting the evidence and using paid-for research? Well, that guy at UEA wrote that dodgy email one time, too! They're all at it! And so on. In the case of rape, the false equivalence serves to reconcile the cognitive dissonance of believing women are lying bitches while being faced with so much evidence of rape and abuse.

[Abstract Lucas](#) writes movingly about how hard it is to make a rape complaint, reminding us of the vanishingly small likelihood of anyone, but especially a child, taking that burden on just for shits and giggles. Only a profound ignorance of the system would make anyone bloviate at length about how easy it is to just "cry rape".

[Sian](#) ties together the concept of "rape myths" and the fact that there is no correct, appropriate or common way of responding to abuse. Constructing an idealised picture of how a "real" victim would react and then measuring women in that Procrustean bed is just one of the many cruel indignities inflicted on victims of sexual violence; its epistemic value is less than nil.

Lastly for this roundup, [Louise Pennington](#) provides some practical solutions to the problem of how to conduct fair trials in an atmosphere in which rape is considered the one crime where the burden of blame is automatically placed on the victim.

As I say, these are all really great pieces of writing. They seek to inform, educate, illuminate and clarify. I think that's really nice, I really do. And for the maybe three and a half people farting out opinions on the matter who aren't yet aware that the number of false accusations is [tiny](#), or that the vast majority of sexual assault goes completely unreported, they're useful and necessary.



However.

Personally, I haven't got the same faith in humanity that my sisters above do. I haven't seen these people carry on on Twitter about how, now that Stuart Hall has been convicted, every rape allegation ever must be correct - even the ones we've been pointedly ignoring for decades. Or that, given how Jimmy Saville was enabled to get away with his industrial scale rape for decades because of his celebrity status, all famous men should be seen as unreliable in principle. Or maybe even just that there's more at stake for the accused, and more reason for them to lie in the first place, so hey, mister "Philosophy 101" logic guy, maybe we should take that into account.

In particular, I haven't seen anyone jumping up and down over [Nigel Evans](#), who resigned from his Parliamentary role today following multiple allegations of serious sexual abuse against him. This is a senior fucking politician here - one of a handful of elected representatives we've entrusted with the running of our country (well, sort of, but you know what I mean). There is some heavy shit being alleged against him right now, by multiple complainants. So where are the "anonymity for rape suspects" brigade in his case? Where are the people bemoaning his ruined reputation? What's so different about his accusers from the run-of-the-mill lying bitches maliciously pulling rape fantasies out of their asses?

What's that you say? His accusers are men? Well fancy that.

I'm all for education and dispelling myths. I just think it's important to recognise that for a lot of people, the "women are lying fantasists" trope is not a belief in itself - it is a means to an end. And that end is to make sure that rape persists. That the key weapon of intimidation and suppression against women remains in excellent working condition. Rape apology and rape denial are absolutely pivotal to the perpetuation of the oppressive status quo, and we mustn't fool ourselves (like some well meaning climate change campaigners do) that if we simply put more info out there, tell the stories just one more time, "educate" a little bit more, we can change people's minds enough for rape to just go away.

This is not about hearts and minds. The hearts and minds of rape apologists are not worth winning. We need to continue working with the CPS, who under Keir Starmer have made some important, if still insufficient, advances. We need to put serious, credible pressure on the police and the Home Office (e.g., by [demanding they record the cases of male femicide](#)). We need to change the system such that gradually, making a rape complaint becomes less of a second rape than it is today.

We need political power, in other words; organised, coordinated and mature. Let's go.

This post was first published [here](#) - thanks to author for permission to cross post.