

Women on False Allegations and Wrongful Convictions

Empowering the Innocent (ETI) Conference, 2025

by [Sean Bw Parker](#) (June 2025)



Ava Vidal

'False allegations are around us everywhere, every day' said chair Felicity Stryjak from the front of a conference room inside Bristol University's Wills Building, *'Far from being oppressed, women have more control and influence than ever.'* The thought occurred: Is there, or could there be, a female version of Sadiq Khan's *'Maaaate'* campaign, to give some balance to this contemporary reality?

Outspoken online critic of false allegations culture Elizabeth Yeld made a rare public appearance to discuss false memories and their terrible consequences (watched from the audience by Dr Lawrence Patihis from the University of Portsmouth, a published expert on the subject). Yeld praised highly Richard Webster's [book](#) *The Secrets of Bryn Estyn*, known by many as the 'bible' on this subject, and recounted other reasons as to why she got involved with the falsely accused movement.

Force-of-nature comedienne and occasional television pundit—see Jeremy Vine, Good Morning Britain and others—Ava Vidal gave a super-confident presentation of her Very Modern Story of online stalking, cyber harassment and the confusion of what 'digital assault' might mean. More than six years deep, Ava refused to support what she considered to be a false allegation of rape; the consequence being a ramping up of harassment against her.

Dr Ellen Storm spoke, with entertaining live examples, on the justice system needing to have a 'Duty of Candour,' her concept of 'institutional bystanding.' and the need to protect whistleblowers throughout all institutions. I recently saw a post on X referring to Lucy Letby convictions as 'They'll do,' which echoes (attendant) private investigator and former policeman Mike Naughton's observations on the Andy Malkinson case. Once the police have their suspect, they are perilously loathe to let them go, and as we see through these stories will enter into 'constructive allegations' to make a conviction fit. *'When I heard about Lucy Letby, I didn't have any illusions left,'* said Dr Storm.



Ellen Storm

Talking about highly questionable police narratives, Nicky Rowley of the *Jeremy Bamber Innocence Campaign* spoke about how the *New Yorker* article, multiple applications to the CCRC, and the cumulative effect of wrongful convictions, have made Bamber now akin to a 'political prisoner,' coming up to 40 years into his sentence.

'You're left with a life sentence even after exoneration,' said wrongfully-convicted Postmaster Janet Skinner from the big screen, following a detailed presentation by Seema Mishra (watched by her husband Dave/Davinder from the audience). *'The same people that gave evidence against the Postmasters gave evidence against Robin Garbutt,'* said Jane Metcalfe, Garbutt's representative on Earth as Robin applies yet again from prison to the CCRC over deep inconsistencies over the 2010 murder of his wife Diana, and the uninvestigated armed robbery at his Melsonby Post Office. *'Robin has never been able to grieve Diana,'* said Jane.

Former Italian barrister and legal professional Anna Doherty from Spoken Injustice, on a mission to 'humanise the justice system,' spoke on sexual assault being under-reported, and the need for 'trauma-informed' staff. Having seen both sides of an area ripe for what we might term intersectional exploitation, Anna is committed to examining both sides before coming to

judgment.

Dr Michael Naughton, whose position at the University of Bristol Law School enabled this second ETI conference, has said of his twenty-five years experience in covering wrongful convictions, *'I know you think you're speaking truth to power, but power doesn't give a fuck,'* and many of the testimonies on 17th May bore out this unfortunate fact. Bureaucratic processes can hide whatever it likes, until public and media pressure becomes too much for it to bear—which is a hell of a nut to crack.



Nicky Rowling speaking

The sheer scope and depth of experience gathered at the Wills Building prove the fact of what I have termed the *Mothers of the Accused* effect: that the damage done to those friends, families, and even business contacts of accused people, men or women, is no less intense than to the wrongfully accused themselves. Social progress narratives have been pushed forward by an increasingly coordinated system of intersectionalised media and justice interests who have at their core the 'man bad' mantra. But as we saw in the Ava Vidal testimony, *'the man has been taken out of the story'* –so toxic had the online allegations become.

The real stories presented at ETI2, while often trauma-informed themselves, prove how deep and complex false (or even spurious) allegation culture can go—and as Felicity Stryjak once wrote elsewhere in *Empowering The Innocent* of the problems of affirming self-interested narratives: ‘*the lies just grow like topsy.*’

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Sean Bw Parker (MA) is an artist, writer and contributing editor to *Empowering The Innocent*, a justice reform organisation affiliated with the University of Bristol Law School.