

#MeToo censors French filmmaker Brigitte Sy for signing Le Monde appeal

By Francis Dubois
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The cancellation of a film showing and public discussion of Brigitte Sy's film *L'Astragale*, scheduled for the beginning of February, is a new attack of the pro-#MeToo establishment on democratic rights. It is censoring women who signed the *Le Monde* appeal criticizing #MeToo and opposing the creation of a climate of sexual witch hunting.

Last week, Ciné 2014, an art and public service cinema in the Paris suburb of Pantin, notified Sy that she could not show her film nor express her views in a debate after a local feminist association decided to cancel her event. The decision had not been discussed with Sy.

To justify its decision, the association wrote: "We believe that now is not a good time to debate serenely in this context with someone who was signed the appeal of the 100 women." Repeating #MeToo's reactionary amalgam between unwanted sexual advances and rape, the association denounced the positions "expressed in this appeal" for "trivializing violence committed against women."

Sy responded with an article in *Libération*. "I do not have the right to come and debate with women who oppose the content of this appeal. This is intellectual terrorism," she wrote. "I am not mainly worried about showing *L'Astragale* ... For me, the issue is the very principle of banning me from coming to debate," she added. "I did not think one day I would be deprived of the right to speak, or banned from debate or showing my film, censored only because of a signature."

The courageous appeal against #MeToo signed by Sy and other female filmmakers, artists, academics and actresses, including Catherine Deneuve, criticized #MeToo for its right-wing methods and its attempts to intimidate and destroy its male victims and their careers. They pointed to the deeply anti-democratic

character of this campaign and its repudiation of fundamental rights to due process.

The appeal also underscored that #MeToo, which has been massively promoted by the media and become a bedrock of official politics in France, faces opposition from a broad layer of the population.

The censorship directed against Sy confirms the *World Socialist Web Site's* characterization of #MeToo as a reactionary initiative of the ruling elites internationally, seeking to whip up a hysterical and repressive climate with unsubstantiated charges of sexual harassment that are then used to scrap any semblance of due process. French President Emmanuel Macron's government has not only encouraged such accusations, but has drafted a bill to create a special police force to prosecute cases brought on such charges.

The attack on Sy underscores that one of #MeToo's objectives, by attacking artists for supposed lapses in character, is to censor and ban artists whose views are considered undesirable or inconvenient by the ruling elite. Based on claims that the artist does not have the correct morality, his or her works are suppressed because their views raise issues the state and the ruling elites do not want discussed.

In France, #MeToo supporters had already attacked the *Cinémathèque française*, demanding that it cancel a retrospective of Roman Polanski's work and calling for his extradition to the United States. This campaign failed, but the *Cinémathèque* canceled the retrospective of filmmaker Jean-Claude Brisseau, scheduled for this month.

Several hundred film artists and writers have now signed a petition expressing their concern. It states: "We citizens are alarmed at this climate of censorship and at seeing an institution bow to external pressures in

a horrible climate that creates the worst types of confusion.”

Cinémathèque Director Frédéric Bonnaud insisted on the implications of the fact that “there had been calls for the authorities to become involved” to “ban a retrospective and the showing of [Polanski] films,” and “then there are calls for funding cuts and censorship.” He asked whether the supposed freedom to speak out promoted by #MeToo “did not go hand in hand at some point with a real totalitarian shock and a return to a moral order.”

Male-Female Equality Minister Marlène Schiappa has attacked the Polanski and Brisseau retrospectives, claiming that they “contribute to a rape culture.”

Wassim Béji, the producer of Polanski’s latest film, responded by asking: “Should works be condemned even though one really has to ask whether they excuse sexism, rape or pedophilia? Must we also burn the works of all those whose lives were not always models of virtue?”

Such intimidation and attacks against major artists are taking place internationally. In the United States, there have been mudslinging campaigns targeting filmmaker and comedian Woody Allen and Marvel Comics cartoonist Stan Lee, who is 95. If it was in the United States that #MeToo got started, driven by the *New York Times* and sections of the Democratic Party, it rapidly spread to become an international phenomenon.

The decision of the Pantin association to remove Sy’s film from the showings list and refuse public debate with her—based doubtless on pressure from forces closely tied to the state or even within the state machine—is deeply anti-democratic. The only thing that Sy is charged with is having publicly opposed the #MeToo campaign and its French variant, #BalanceTonPorc, (#DenounceYourPig).

The accusation thrown at Sy and the signatories of the *Le Monde* appeal, that their positions “depoliticize” the debate and “express a real class contempt” for working women, is particularly absurd. This would suggest that #MeToo—a vindictive campaign waged with open disregard for the resulting cultural and social damage, motivated essentially by the self-interest of a female layer of the propertied classes angling to take over lucrative posts currently held by men—aims to defend working women on the job. This fraudulent

claim has been advanced since the Weinstein affair by pseudo-left groups such as the French New Anti-capitalist Party and Workers Struggle (LO).

If debate has been “depoliticized,” it is because #MeToo, with aid from Macron, is trying to turn attention away from the government’s brutal attacks on wages, jobs and social programs and the growing militarization of Europe. Between filmmaker Roman Polanski and the banker Macron—who is moving to slash the jobs of thousands of working women, throw thousands more off of unemployment insurance and prepare for war—it is clear who is more of a threat to working women.

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