

From: Lawrence Krauss <[REDACTED]>
To: Lawrence Krauss <[REDACTED]>
Cc: nancy dahl <[REDACTED]>, "jeffrey E." <jeevacation@gmail.com>
Subject: proposed possible letter to solicitors in Australia
Date: Mon, 03 Sep 2018 18:37:32 +0000

Proposed letter.. thoughts?

Dear ..

In February of this year, the online tabloid BuzzFeed published a defaming story about me (as did one or two other news outlets in Australia that picked up the BuzzFeed story). The story had a significant information that was untrue. BuzzFeed had originally planned to run it last December but pulled the story after I provided them with sufficient counter-evidence for them to hold it. After that they revised some of the details, and added other equally untrue allegations.

Be that as it may, the story originated in the complaint of one Melanie Thomson, who claimed to observe me grabbing the breast of a woman during the taking of a selfie at a banquet associated with the Australian Skeptics Convention in November 2016. The individual involved in the alleged groping did not file a complaint, or talk to BuzzFeed, nor did she talk to either Australian National University, where Thomson filed a complaint that was dismissed, or Arizona State University, where it was also dismissed. (I had affiliations with both institutions at the time.).

After the dismissal, Ms. Thomson approached several news sources and the only one to bite was BuzzFeed, which began their investigation for the story. After the BuzzFeed story appeared in Feb 2018, ASU put me on leave with pay, and sent a press release out about this. Following that, and the BuzzFeed story itself, all external speaking engagements, including an upcoming lecture tour in Australia, were cancelled, book contracts were cancelled, and my positions on a variety of boards were removed.

Ms Thomson has been quite public about her claims, which contain a variety of provable falsehoods. Her central claim, which is not directly disprovable, was to see me grab someone's breast from a distance of 20 feet at a reception associated with the conference. The woman in question, who as I said above, did not report the event, nor discuss it with the media, eventually did discuss it (anonymously) with ASU after they reached out to her a second time following the BuzzFeed piece. She described it as a 'clumsy interpersonal interaction' in which she did not feel victimized, and which she had asked Ms. Thomson not to report or file a complaint about.

Associated with her claim however, there are many factual falsehoods presented by Ms. Thomson on websites, in the media, and to ASU are:

1. she provided the selfie in question, which shows my hand in motion in front of the anonymous woman. She claimed the breast grab occurred an instant after the photo was taken. However, the photograph shows my hand moving away from the woman, not toward her.
2. She claimed in print, and to ANU that another photograph exists showing me touching the woman's breast. She could not produce the photograph even after repeated requests from ANU to do so.
3. She claimed that the woman in question did not know me. The woman said the opposite in her testimony to ASU.
4. She claimed that the organization in question said they would not have me back. No complaint was made to the organization, and they helped host me for an event in 2017.
5. She claimed the meeting was a scientific meeting at which I was representing ASU. It was an atheist meeting and ASU did not provide any support for my travel to it or for the meeting itself.

These are manifestly false. There are other defamatory claims that are also false, but less obviously so, and which might be more difficult to demonstrate, and might also generate more negative publicity than positive:

6. She claims that she was warned about me and that I had a whisper network history of sexual harassment.. No complaints had ever been filed against me for sexual harassment at my current university, and no formal complaint of sexual harassment has ever been filed against me before.

7 She claims I threatened litigation against individuals in the past who have suggested claims against me. This is not true.

8. She claimed that a woman in Canada had made a claim similar to the complaint Ms Thomson filed, when she was a student at a University in the US at which I taught. This was not the case. She made an informal claim that I had said several things to her that made her uncomfortable. None was overtly sexual, and the complaint was never formally filed, but dealt with informally. No touching involved etc..

I am of course happy to give more information and documentation, but I was contacting you now to get your opinion as to whether, on the basis of items 1-5, whether a defamation suit in Australia would be likely to succeed, and at what cost, financially, and publicly. I believe that while items 6-8 also involve false claims I understand that the discovery process associated with them that might be initiated by Ms. Thomson could, from a publicity standard, appear damaging. I also understand that I could be made to retaliate against a poor defenseless woman who was merely doing her duty to report what she saw so that even a positive verdict against the woman could be a publicity problem. All these issues are ones I would want to take into account before actually launching a suit, and one about which I would like your advice.

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. Krauss

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