

GATE THEATRE

CONFIDENTIAL INDEPENDENT
REVIEW

Gaye Cunningham Independent Reviewer

1 March 2018

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Introduction

This Report was commissioned by the Board of the Gate Theatre in early November 2017 following a number of allegations made in various media concerning Michael Colgan's conduct when he was Director of the Gate Theatre between 1983 and 2017. The terms of reference are attached at Appendix I and are summarized as follows:

- To establish the process for complainants to register their complaints
- Proactively make contact with current and former staff members and other persons who have spoken out on the record and
- Proactively make contact with other relevant or involved parties as part of due process, including but not limited to Mr Colgan, former and current employees and any other person who may assist in the review.

The purpose of the review was to identify if there is a case to answer in respect of any dignity at work, abuse of power and related inappropriate behaviours and failings on the part of any person associated with the Gate and to make recommendations arising from the process. Full confidentiality was assured for participants to the greatest extent permitted by law. I can confirm that full editorial control of this Report rested with me.

The process established for complainants to register their complaints was as follows:

The setting up of a confidential email cunninghamconfidential@outlook.ie in early November 2017. The Gate issued a statement announcing that this email would be accessed only by the Independent Reviewer. Emails previously sent to the Gate confidential email were accessed only by the Reviewer and then closed.

A request to participate in the Review was issued to current and former staff and current and former Board members and some initial meetings were held with interested parties.

The originator of the blog which identified Michael Colgan was contacted and despite some conversations, she felt unable to participate in the process, for various reasons including a lack of faith in a Review which was commissioned and paid for by the Board. I respect her position and regret that she was unable to have an input.

A total of 65 individuals engaged initially in the process as follows:

- 25 individuals gave face to face interviews about their experiences working in the Gate. They included past and current Employees, Freelancers from the Design, Directing and Acting communities, all of whom had an individual involvement in the work at the Gate over years ranging from 30 plus years to the present day.
- I met with Michael Colgan on two occasions and he co-operated fully with the Review.
- 8 current and former Board members gave face to face interviews on an individual basis.
- 18 written statements were received including 6 statements which expressed support for Michael Colgan and made no complaint about him.
- 4 phone interviews were conducted.
- 10 individuals having made initial contact did not follow up the invitation to participate.

From an early stage, some of the women who put their statements on social media indicated their unwillingness to participate in the process and that remained the position for many of them and they did not take part in the process. The Reviewer respects their position. The Reviewer thanks those individuals who did take part which includes some women who went on record and off record during the early November media coverage. It is recognized that for most participants this coming forward was a difficult and painful process. By coming forward with their testimonies they have made a significant contribution to the wellbeing of those who will work in the Gate in the future. Many participants spoke of the cathartic and therapeutic element of the process. In fulfillment of the promise to protect anonymity to the greatest extent permitted by law, no names are given of those who gave testimonies.

The Report was first presented to the Board of the Gate and to the Arts Council on 8 February 2018. Following legal advice to the Gate, some amendments have been made by me to that Report and this document dated 1 March 2018 is submitted in the context of the protection of confidentiality and anonymity. None of the amendments change the import of the Report or the strength of its recommendations. I confirm that no other person has amended this report and I retained full editorial control.

Methodology

Face to face interviews were held over 20 days with 33 individuals and with Michael Colgan as part of the process. Statements were received from a further 18 individuals and 4 phone interviews were conducted.

Individuals who were interviewed can be described in the following categories:

- Former staff
- Current staff
- Current and former Board members
- Arts Community/Freelancers
- Others

In conducting the review, I have concentrated on first hand accounts, not second or third hand accounts, or rumours, innuendo or gossip.

No leading questions were asked in interviews, the purpose of which was to listen to and record the experiences of the individuals who had come forward. The process was not designed to establish the guilt or innocence of any individual or group, but to establish if there is a case to answer.

Each interview was recorded with the permission of the participant and transcribed, following which the recordings were deleted. Following the compilation of the Report all documents associated with it were destroyed.

In compiling the Report I have documented descriptions of behaviours rather than specific incidents which would identify individuals.

The following documents and publications inter alia were consulted:

Irish Equity Bullying and Harassment Survey Results 2016

Royal Court 30 point Plan to tackle harassment in theatre 2017

Old Vic conclusions and way forward following investigation into alleged conduct of former Artistic Director 2017

Arts Council document on Code of Governance

Amplify Women Toolkit for tackling Sexual Harassment

Waking the Feminists Gender Policy Workshop March 2017

Gate Theatre Employee Handbook 2017

Report of the National Expert Group on Workplace Bullying 2004

Findings

Despite the fact that the Theatre industry is broad in that it involves auditions, rehearsals, office work, late night working, bars, and socializing after shows, it is a workplace and this is the context of what is contained in this report.

Employers have a responsibility to take measures to ensure dignity at work for employees. The Employment Equality Acts enshrine this responsibility in the legislation. The Health and Safety Authority has a Code of Practice to prevent workplace bullying. The 2004 report from the National Expert Advisory Group on Workplace Bullying defines bullying as :

“Repeated inappropriate behavior, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work”.

Forms of behaviour which may constitute bullying and harassment are:

- Verbal harassment – jokes, comments, ridicule
- Physical harassment – jostling, shoving or any form of assault
- Intimidatory harassment – threatening poses
- Isolation or exclusion from social activities

Complaints of workplace bullying can be made to the Workplace Relations Commission under the 1990 Industrial Relations Act.

The Equality Act 2004 (Section 14A (7) (a) (ii)) clarifies that *“references to “sexual harassment” are to any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, being conduct which in either case has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person”.*

The definition of Sexual harassment is contained in Statutory Instrument No. 78 of 2002 :

“The definition of sexual harassment includes any :

- *act of physical intimacy*

- *request for sexual favours*
- *other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is **unwelcome and** could reasonably be regarded as **sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating**".*

A survey conducted by Irish Equity in January/February 2016 among 283 workers in the Arts Sector found:

1. more than 57% of respondents reported being bullied in the course of their work
2. Almost 74% said they did not report incidents of bullying and harassment
3. Over 62% said they did not report a bullying incident for fear it would jeopardise future work opportunities.

157 of those who took part were Actors

16 of those who took part were Directors

Point 3 above is noteworthy. The vast majority of individuals who I interviewed reported their fears about not getting further work if they reported inappropriate behaviours. Evidence of not getting work after any disagreement with Michael Colgan was reported by individuals among the Acting, Directing and Design professions. It was noted that such was his power and influence that many individuals believed their careers did suffer as a result of crossing Mr Colgan. He denied exercising his power and influence to adversely affect any individual's career.

ISSUES FROM TESTIMONIES

The following is a summary of the issues as they pertain to [Michael Colgan](#) arising from the testimonies of individuals:

Dignity at Work

- Managed by fury and threats and fear
- Bad temper, rages and put downs
- Profane language at times calling women c...s
- Making young female staff cry and telling them "I'm glad you cried, that shows you care"
- Belittling

- Chipping away at confidence especially directed at women, breaking them down and eroding their confidence
- Picking on individual's weak points
- Retaliated if confronted – person dropped from invitation lists, when challenged “vindictive and vengeful”

Abuse of Power

- Did not like to be challenged
- Regularly told people “you won't work in this industry again”
- Held absolute power and control
- Referred to the Board of the Gate as “my Board”
- The Board comprised many of his closest friends
- Micromanaged – objected to staff taking Fridays or Mondays off
- “Carrot and stick” approach – if an individual was in favour, carrot offered of e.g, attending a read through, if out of favour banished from rehearsals or read throughs
- “Michael Colgan's Gate – not anyone else's”
- Culture evolved over the years of “Omnipotent Ruler” who couldn't be crossed
- Freelancers, Actors, Choreographers, Directors and Designers ridiculed and when challenges made, they were “struck off the list” and some were never engaged in the Gate again

Inappropriate behaviours

- Placing himself in too close proximity to staff when dictating emails, making recipients of this behavior feel uncomfortable
- Personal questions and remarks about appearance
- Rubbing backs
- Hand on knee while typing
- Excuses for physical contact – placing himself at gap in bar counter
- Inappropriate personal stories of a sexual nature, making the recipient feel uncomfortable
- Pushing, headlocks physical contact making recipients feel uncomfortable

- Inappropriate comments of a sexual nature on Actresses

Other

- Two sides to Michael Colgan “kind and charming” and “vicious and vindictive”
- Michael Colgan’s behaviours were “normalized and accepted”
- Inappropriate interview questions re marital status and plans for having children
- Some male staff protected women in particular situations, e.g. at end of opening nights
- There were some good managers in the past who protected staff and directly dealt with their issues
- No one to go to with complaints in later years
- The Board “must have known”
- Direct Reports did not act on staff complaints except go directly to Michael Colgan with dire consequences
- The Board did not act to prevent the culture of bullying at the Gate
- The Gate was “not a normal place of work”

Positive attributes referred to in some interviews/statements:

1. Vision and enthusiasm turned the Gate from a “dead” theatre into a vibrant thriving one, especially in the early days.
2. “Charismatic and witty”
3. Unrelenting hard work, passion and determination to make it a success.
4. Unique and energetic approach turned the Gate into a nationally and internationally acclaimed theatre.
5. Kind and supportive when the situation required it.
6. Formidable negotiator for funding and resources and recognition.

MICHAEL COLGAN -REPLY

I met with Michael Colgan on 19 December 2017 and on 29 January 2018. On the latter occasion, alleged behaviours were put to him to afford him the right to reply.

He made a number of points summarized as follows:

He stated that as an Artistic Director you tell Directors how to direct, actors how to act, writers how to write. But not being any of these, and there being no degree in Artistic Direction, you need to have a big personality. He stated that he is a tactile person, he would be often seen throwing his arms around actors and writers. This was not confined to women. He denied shouting at staff or using profane language. He stated that he was a demanding boss, but thought that everyone liked him. He denied mood swings. The workplace in No. 8 was a small workplace with no hierarchies or structure and he considered that he and the six women there were a team. He believed they were like a family and sometimes if they had a row they had a row and solved it like a family. He stated that they were a family and that was the way it was for 33 years and yes, he blurred the lines. He stated that he now realizes that he should have had a code of ethics, proper hierarchies and rules of conduct in place. He stated that he had high standards and that he was exacting. He stated that there was an element of all powerfulness which was a result of one Artistic Director rather than having a separate General Manager. He stated that he was not politically correct. He stated that the type of work in theatre is personality driven. Actors are full of ego and when you don't give them a job, they take it personally. He agrees that some improvements should be made in the workplace particularly in relation to some one to go to in the event of bullying, e.g. Stage Manager, with the ability to have access to the Board. The Board should have played a stronger role in having processes and procedures of dealing with complaints and putting investigations in place. He denies being a bully but regrets not putting a process in place for dealing with any complaints. He rejected outright allegations of sexual harassment.

Michael Colgan strongly rejected these allegations particularly when made under cover of anonymity. He further stated that this is not a case of "tip of the iceberg" where further hidden allegations may be made.

My findings in relation to Michael Colgan are as follows:

Dignity at Work

From the credible and consistent testimonies presented to me I find that there is a case to answer that behaviours of Michael Colgan described by individuals could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. In the Sunday Independent article published on 12 November 2017, Michael Colgan himself acknowledged that he had "often sacrificed proper conduct for a punchline, and at times could be too exacting as a boss". He also stated in that article "But realizing that I have been responsible for causing distress to some of those with whom I worked so closely has shocked me, and I am truly sorry",

Abuse of Power

From the credible and consistent testimonies presented to me I find that there is a case to answer in relation to abuse of power. Michael Colgan himself acknowledged that he was an all powerful boss. I find that there is a case to answer that the absolute power and control exercised resulted in the creation of an autocratic and dictatorial style of management of the Gate theatre and had a negative affect on the careers and lives of many individuals including Freelancers.

Inappropriate behaviours

There were also credible and consistent testimonies presented to me in relation to inappropriate behaviours and I find that there is a case to answer in accordance with the definition of sexual harassment.

Arts Community/Freelancers

Freelance practitioners expressed the view that working with Directors/Artistic Directors, one has to develop a good rapport and one is depending to a large extent on good will and sound judgement for their livelihoods. In this case, many spoke of difficulties which arose with Michael Colgan following which they never got work in the Gate again. Michael Colgan denied taking any vindictive action against any individual and stated that he only prevented

individuals from working in the Gate if they had broken their contract. From the credible testimonies I find that there is a case to answer in relation to abuse of power in respect of the Freelancers.

The Board

It was suggested by many participants that the Board must have known of the alleged inappropriate behaviours and stood idly by. It was also suggested that as many of the Board were Michael Colgan's friends he had them under his complete influence and control. From the interviews held with former and current Board members I find:

1. Some members of the current Board have short service on it and no history of friendship with Michael Colgan. Some members did have friendships going back some years with him. The question is did friendships influence the Board members and was a 'blind eye' turned? Former and current Board members professed their profound shock at the allegations made in the public domain and each person stated that they would have had no hesitation in taking action had they known of the situation.
2. Many of the Board members described how there was a significant concentration in the business of Board meetings on finance, the survival of the theatre, interactions with the Arts Council, and latterly arranging Michael Colgan's retirement and recruitment of the new Artistic Director. The evidence shows Board members wanting to do the right thing rather than what Michael Colgan wanted.
3. The Board members are committed individuals with skills and experience in various areas of Business, Law, Marketing and PR. They have given their time for the survival and successful development of the Gate, and all members interviewed stated their commitment to the theatre, along with a firm commitment to get to the bottom of the serious complaints on a human level and so that the theatre and the workers who work and perform there can move to a more positive and safe environment for the future. There is an opportunity to strengthen the Board with further relevant skills and experience this year, and this is addressed in the Recommendations in this Report.

4. I find that while Michael Colgan may have often described the Board as “my Board” and the Chair of the Board as “my best friend”, while there were friendships during his tenure, by the end of the period, those friendships were ruptured. Further, I find that in the absence of formal complaints, (while realising the particularly sensitive nature of the type of complaints which were made following Michael Colgan’s departure) it would have been difficult if not impossible for a body such as the Board to take action in a hypothetical context.
5. I note that the make up of the current Board is very different today than it was during the period up to 2014. The average time served is currently 4 years. The Board adopted fixed terms of office for Board membership for appointment after January 2013. Two of the present membership are due to step down later this year as part of the agreed refreshment process. At that point the remaining members will have served an average of 2 years. I recommend that the resignations scheduled for 2018 be fast tracked to within 3 months of this report.
6. The phrase “there was nowhere to go” (with complaints) was often used by participants. That feeling appeared to prevent individuals from invoking grievance procedures which was their contractual right, or approaching the Board. The fact is that there were no formal complaints escalated to Board level. For whatever reason this was the case, I cannot base my findings on supposition. There is a robust procedure in the new employee handbook which includes the facility to escalate matters to Board level.
7. There is a strongly held view expressed in the various media by individuals, especially those who did not participate in the review, that ‘heads should roll’, that the Board ‘must have known’ and that the Board must accept responsibility. I find that in the main, the various Board members saw an ebullient side but not an abusive side to Michael Colgan.
8. A number of participants referred to the special lengths the Board went to in ensuring that Michael Colgan stayed on the Board, e.g. when the Charities Regulations Act came into operation, most CEOs/Directors of various Theatres stepped down from Boards. However, I do not find any sinister motives for the Board wanting to keep Michael Colgan on their Board. They simply had a lot of faith in him as Director and Artistic Director and did not have any reason to seek that he should step down. Many Board members who have experience in Commercial Companies, stated that most CEOs are on the Board of their Company.

9. I find while recognizing the good intentions, there was an onus and responsibility on the Board collectively and individually to proactively familiarize themselves with the culture of the organization and to take action where that culture caused damage, and this they failed to do.

Management

Many participants spoke of their anger and frustration at the perceived futility of making complaints to Management. Members of Management who participated in the Review stated that they were subject to sustained and systematic bullying and harassment.

Testimonies presented showed that whenever any complaint was made the result was a berating of the individual by Michael Colgan. This is a significant departure from procedures and natural justice. Management themselves stated that at no time did they condone any verbal harassment by Michael Colgan and that they were powerless to challenge him for fear of being verbally abused or losing their jobs.

Many individuals interviewed spoke of the need not just for proper procedures, but also of the need for clarity around roles and the need to trust the process will be fair and transparent. There is a new Executive Director who should take the opportunity to start that process, and should immediately put in place comprehensive training for all Managers to ensure they are appropriately and adequately equipped to deal with Dignity at Work issues.

“Nowhere to go”

It was pointed out by a number of Board members that grievance procedures were in place and were in the process of being updated and that much work has been completed on Code of Governance. I find that the fact that individuals did not utilize the grievance procedures is indicative of the lack of trust in the management of the theatre.

I note that there is a new management structure in place where there is now an Artistic Director and an Executive Director. Clarity for all current staff on the various roles of management is now urgently required to continue the work of engendering trust.

I note that there is a new Staff Handbook in which there is a comprehensive section on Dignity at Work. The introduction of peer support in the form of “Dignity at work contact person” for any future complaints is welcome. Many good Companies practice a zero tolerance of breaches of Health and Safety rules. I find that if the Gate enacts a policy of zero tolerance in respect of violation of Dignity at Work, the ideal situation will come about when no person stands silently by if that person witnesses bullying or harassment.

Recommendations

In making recommendations, I wish to note that fundamentally it is undesirable for any individual to serve in the position Michael Colgan served in for over thirty years. This extraordinary lengthy period gave rise to a closed culture where too much power and influence rested in one individual. While many people spoke of his undoubted abilities to make a success of the theatre in challenging circumstances, I find that he may have lost the ability to recognize that the Gate was not “his” theatre and he may have lost the ability to recognize that the Board was not “his” Board. He himself in the Sunday Independent article on 12 November 2017 stated “My life was my work, my work my life. My house became my office, my office became my home...The lines became blurred...” Combined with the affect this had on staff, is the affect this had on vulnerable Freelance practitioners who were depending on good will and sound judgement to practice their art.

The following recommendations are designed to ensure that the Gate Theatre and especially the practitioners who work there and all who have had dealings and continue to have dealings with the Gate can move to a more positive and safe place in future:

My recommendations are as follows:

1. The Board should acknowledge the difficult painful process for those who came forward with their testimonies and communicate appropriately.
2. Michael Colgan has a case to answer in respect to dignity at work issues, abuse of power and inappropriate behaviours, and the Board should consider what action, if any should be taken, acknowledging that he is no longer an employee.
3. A free confidential Employee Assistance Programme should be extended to any staff, former staff and any person affected.
4. A policy of zero tolerance of abuse of power and infringement of Dignity at Work issues should be enacted by the Board and responsibility for development and implementation of an action plan devolved to the Executive Director.
5. Comprehensive training should be provided to all Managers to ensure they are appropriately and adequately equipped to deal with Dignity at Work issues and complaints.

6. A process to engender trust between Gate Board, Management and Staff should commence. The new Staff Handbook can be a base on which to build good communications with staff. The roll out of the new staff handbook should be followed up with a special communications event regarding dignity and respect in the workplace.
7. All future staff and freelancers should be given the policy and procedure for Dignity at Work on their first day of work.
8. A Dignity at Work contact person should be assigned for the freelance community, e.g. nominated by Equity.
9. Appointments to the Board should be open and transparent and advertised in future. As well as the world of Business, Law, Marketing and PR the make up of the Board should include individuals from Freelance/Arts, Industrial Relations and other relevant disciplines.
10. HR issues should be a regular Agenda item on Board meetings
11. Some occasional staff presentations should be given at Board meetings to familiarize Board members with the work of the theatre and the workers.
12. The tenure of Artistic Director should be limited.
13. The Arts Council should assist the Gate in measuring progress on their Equality and Dignity at Work Strategy currently being developed .
14. The resignations from the Board scheduled for 2018 should be fast tracked to within 3 months of the date of this Report.

THE GATE THEATRE
INDEPENDENT REVIEW PROCESS

NOVEMBER 2017

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDEPENDENT REVIEW

1. **Name of Reviewer:** Gaye Cunningham
2. **Purpose/Role:**
 - 2.1 Ms Gaye Cunningham has been appointed by the Gate Theatre ("the Gate") to conduct an independent review of complaints made by past and current employees and other persons of inappropriate behaviour and abuse of power by the former Director of the Gate Theatre, Mr Michael Colgan, and related/consequential matters.
 - 2.2 The role of Ms Cunningham will be to:
 - (a) establish the process for complainants to register their complaints, in the first instance, via a confidential email set up and monitored exclusively by Ms Cunningham;
 - (b) proactively make contact with current and former staff members and other persons who have spoken out on the record; and
 - (c) proactively make contact with other relevant or involved parties as part of due process, including, but not limited to, Mr Colgan, former and current employees, and any other person whom she believes may assist in this review.
 - 2.3 The outcomes of the review will be to:
 - (a) identify if there is a case to answer in respect of any dignity at work, abuse of power and related inappropriate behaviours and failings on the part of any person associated with the Gate;
 - (b) make recommendations arising from the complaints process.
 - 2.4 The process will commence immediately and conclude by the end of January 2018.
3. **Accountability:**

Ms Cunningham will be responsible for reporting back her findings and recommendations to the Board of the Gate and The Arts Council in January 2018.
4. **Method of Working:**
 - 4.1 Any meetings with complainants or involved parties will be held in a neutral location.
 - 4.2 Ensure full confidentiality for participants throughout to the greatest extent permitted by law.
 - 4.3 Provide updates to the Chairman of the Board, as required, on progress and timings.

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5. **Sharing of Information and Resources (including confidential materials):**
- 5.1 Complainants are invited to make contact via the confidential email cunninghamconfidential@outlook.ie.
 - 5.2 Any emails already sent to the confidential@gate-theatre.ie will be accessed only by Ms Cunningham and subsequently closed.
 - 5.3 Only Ms Cunningham will have access to confidential complaints emails.
 - 5.4 Any correspondence, written or verbal, entered into between the complainant and Ms Cunningham will remain confidential to the greatest extent permitted by law.

Sunday Independent

Sunday Independent

November 12, 2017

Edition 1;

National Edition

**'I have been responsible for causing distress and I am truly sorry';
The storm over allegations about Michael Colgan's conduct has raged
for more than two weeks. The Sunday Independent asked him to write a
piece to respond to the controversy**

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 14

LENGTH: 579 words

LAST March, when I finally left the Gate, I was convinced that I had done a good job, believed that I had been a good boss, and that I was liked by all the staff. Recent revelations have made it clear that this cannot have always been the case, and that over the years there were moments where, through misjudged behaviour, I caused upset to some of my co-workers. This realisation has been deeply distressing and I sincerely apologise to anyone who was ever made to feel upset.

I already knew that I was not politically correct, that I often sacrificed proper conduct for a punchline, and that, at times, could be too exacting as a boss. But realising that I have been responsible for causing distress to some of those with whom I worked so closely has shocked me, and I am truly sorry.

These realisations have come with great force and I see things differently now. I belatedly realise that the seed of the problem lay in the obscuring of lines between my work and my life, the unseen problem of overlap between work and play.

My life was my work, my work my life. My house became my office, my office became my home. My Thursday was the same as a Sunday and my 9am the same as 9pm. I led myself to believe that my colleagues were my friends. The lines had become blurred and I failed to see that when I spoke to my co-workers that we weren't actually speaking as friends but that they remained employees and I should have respected the difference.

I spent 33 years constantly assessing my relationship with the Gate audience but failed to properly assess the relationship I had with my staff. When they laughed at my jokes I thought it was because I was funny. I think now it was because I was their boss. When I read in a recent newspaper report that a former employee 'The purpose of this statement is to apologise to any person whom I have hurt' said that she thought she liked me but now realises she doesn't, it shook me. I genuinely thought everyone at the Gate liked me.

The conversations we had in that office felt the very same as the conversations I had with friends. I am sorry to think that during what I thought were good times, working with that highly talented team, that I failed to notice that there were some who were feeling something else. There is no doubt that if I could re-live my time there, I would act differently. I would strictly observe the boundaries and set a stronger code of ethics.

'I have been responsible for causing distress and I am truly sorry'; The storm over allegations about Michael Colgan's conduct has raged for more than two weeks. The Sunday Independent asked him to write a piece to respond to the controversy Sunday Independent November 12, 2017

However, my behaviour should not be equated with sexual crimes. I take serious issue with much of the recent press and social media references to me. It is wrong that I have been the subject of gross insinuations and that my family have had to suffer totally false suggestions that I might be guilty of more than misjudged behaviour.

We are living in a climate where to be accused is now enough to be deemed guilty.

It is a worrying indictment of our times that one can be put through such a public online trial with the media as judge and Twitter as jury.

But for the moment, the main purpose of this statement is to apologise to any person, in or out of the office, whom I have hurt. I would also like to apologise to any of my friends who may have been inadvertently upset due to my ebullient behaviour. Finally, I would like to apologise for any stress caused to the current board and management of the Gate. There is a new team in place there and the last thing I would have wanted to do is to distract them from the excellent work they have begun.

Michael Colgan