

To: MWA Board of Directors:

Regrettably, I have only recently become aware of this disgusting turn of events. I was not in New York and had no cell phone service when you cowardly and reprehensibly snatched the Edgar Award from Ms. Fairstein, evidently cowed by racially charged and utterly misinformed letters from Attica Locke and Steph Cha.

Cha boasted of her ignorance, admitting that she did not know that Ms. Fairstein had been a long-serving and honored assistant district attorney who headed the Sex Crimes Prosecution Office, had never heard of the Central Park Five case and, furthermore, had no idea that Ms. Fairstein has written numerous books, most of which have been on national best-seller lists and whose work and reputation earned her a Grand Master Award—a situation that her employer, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, should consider as she is, incredibly the editor of its crime section and patently unqualified for the position.

Her stupefying ignorance did not, however, prevent her from having powerful opinions. Ms. Fairstein, she wrote, should not be honored but be “notorious,” claiming that she had, essentially, ordered or condoned police brutality that forced false confessions from the five thugs who brutally attacked the tragic Central Park jogger. She went on to make her racist claim that the community of crime writers, and by extension, MWA, has been “embarrassingly white” and “less than progressive.”

It appears that Cha was inspired to write her noxious article by a tweet sent by Locke, in which she claimed that Ms. Fairstein was “almost single-handedly responsible for the wrongful incarceration of the Central Park Five,” which is neither true nor credible to anyone with even a fundamental understanding of police procedure and the legal system. Locke’s claim that the confession of a serial rapist some years later exonerated the teenage criminals is specious and self-serving, as it did nothing of the sort. The trial came to a correct and just decision. The despicable cowards’ admissions of beating Trisha Meili, hitting her with a rock, pulling at her arms and legs, jumping on her and stomping her, had the ring of truth then and still resonates as an accurate picture of the event. The lack of their DNA at the crime scene is merely evidence that they did not complete a rape. They admitted to assaulting several men in the park on the same night as the attack on Ms. Meili, which appears to matter not in the least to Locke.

Many on the MWA Board admit they knew nothing about one of the most famous criminal cases in the history of New York, yet it gave “profound reflection” in making its disgraceful decision, besmirching the reputation of one of the finest, most decent and honorable women I have ever known. Its claim that the award lacks the support of such “a large percentage of our members” is a disingenuous, outright lie, as it is only the small coterie of frightened sheep caving to political correctness that made the decision. The membership was never polled. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

I have been a proud member of MWA for more years than many of you have been alive, but that pride no longer pertains. I am ashamed of you and of the organization for taking such a cowardly stance. For many years, I have welcomed the celebration of the incoming board with a party at the Mysterious Bookshop. The board does not deserve a celebration of any kind, and it would be hypocritical of me to host one. You are no longer welcome in my bookshop.

Otto Penzler