

“What “stood before me now was a wrecking infant in our own midst...” John Le Carre, *The Secret Pilgrim*, written in 1990 and serving as a reminder of the dangers of mob rule.

As a 29 year member of the Mystery Writers of America, an Edgar nominee and publisher of Edgar nominees, and a recipient of both the Raven Award and the Ellery Queen Award from MWA, I had never previously supposed that any honor awarded by the organization to me or to anyone gave a member a platform from which to police the MWA or any of its members.

If Attica Locke had begun her Twitter post with this, “As a screenwriter I am being paid to work on the Ava Duvernay documentary about the Central Park case [to air on Netflix], and I am begging the MWA, etc” it would have set forth her emotional and financial stake in her post. And it would have changed the narrative. Instead, deliberately choosing to leverage an award given to her into a bully pulpit, she raised a Twitterstorm. It’s cyberbullying.

And devastatingly, by caving to the mob rather than standing by its decision, and by citing a number of implausible rationales for its action, the MWA board has created a culture of fear where its member are reluctant to speak up for fear of retaliation. Not just retaliation by the mob but from MWA itself.

I immediately, with sorrow and fury, resigned from the Mystery Writers of America, an organization I had, until now, respected as supporting its members and standing by its decisions. And valued for its recognition of excellence and service. Did I mention that Linda Fairstein the target of this Twitterstorm, has served MWA on its board of directors and contributed to its publications? And that the untruths in a production by Ken Burns have falsely painted a picture of her that the unthinking, like Steph Cha and the instigator of this, Attica Locke, have accepted as truth while, shame on them as writers, failing to do even basic research before piling on.

I quote a November post by Nora Roberts:

"I don't spend much time on social media. I recognize its power, I appreciate its ability to connect writers with readers. And I also understand how easily it can be weaponized to incite flame wars."

Who adds, “I don’t believe, and have never believed in taking personal issues onto public forums. I don’t believe, and have never believed—will never believe—in a writer attacking another writing on a public forum. It’s unprofessional, it’s tacky and the results are, always, just always, ugly.”

I stand with Nora. And am speaking up in hopes that others will, not to take personal sides but to encourage MWA to look to its policies, its lack of due diligence or due process, and how it might address the broad spectrum of issues raised..