

Dear RWA Board Members and Ethics Committee,

My name is Suzan Tisdale and I am a member of the RWA. I write Scottish Historical Romance with more than 20 published titles. Additionally, I am launching my own publishing company in October under the name of Glenfinnan Publishing.

I would like to file a formal complaint against Courtney Milan for blatant ethics violations for repeatedly and intentionally engaging in conduct that is, at best, dishonest and disingenuous. The statements Ms. Milan is making on twitter are nothing short of vicious attacks and lies meant to injure several individuals, myself included.

The codes I believe she has violated are:

1. Repeatedly or intentionally engaging in conduct injurious to RWA or its purposes.
2. Repeatedly or intentionally engaging in any other acts of a violent, harassing (as defined in Section 16.10.2.1.) or intimidating conduct that objectively threaten a member's career, reputation, safety or wellbeing. Specifically excluded from this section are exchanges of business information, true statements, personal disagreements, honest discussions of books, non-RWA operated social media posts, and marketing materials.
3. 2.3.4. Board members shall not engage in or facilitate any discriminatory or harassing behavior toward RWA staff, members, Officers, Directors, meeting attendees, exhibitors, advertisers, sponsors, suppliers, contractors, or others in the context of activities relating to RWA.
4. Repeatedly or intentionally making a member's personal, private identifying information public with the intent of harming the other member's career, reputation, or wellbeing.

Recently, someone on twitter accused one of my acquisition editors – Sue Grimshaw -- of being a racist. This happened after they discovered Sue Grimshaw had liked a tweet on twitter. (See attached.) You can see the original tweet was from Diamond and Silk – two African American women who happen to be conservatives and supporters of President Trump. Additionally, Sue liked a tweet from President Trump regarding his visiting Ohio after the recent mass shootings.

All Sue did was 'like' the tweets. After that, all hell broke loose.

I took the stance that everyone is entitled to their own personal political opinions even if they don't line up with my own. I would no more fire someone for being a conservative than I would fire someone for being a liberal.

I could find no concrete evidence to prove the accusations of racism that were being made against Sue Grimshaw. The only 'evidence' anyone sent to me were the two screenshots she liked as well as multiple tweets from authors *accusing* her of racism. No one presented any definitive proof of racism. No one gave me rejection letters, email conversations, screenshots of conversations, or anything else to prove their accusations.

If anyone had provided definitive proof, I would have fired Ms. Grimshaw immediately. But that proof does not exist.

A few days ago, Courtney Milan decided to weigh in. After asking me how many authors of colors I have published – none, and as far as I know none have submitted and we haven't published any books yet – the accusations of racism were ramped up. Ms. Milan then went to our Glenfinnan Website (www.glenfinnanpublishing.com) and started tweeting about my company.

Later that evening, Ms. Milan started attacking one of my acquisition editors, Kathryn Lynn Davis. Ms. Milan began tweeting screenshots from a book that Kathryn Lynn Davis wrote in the 1990's titled *Somewhere Lies the Moon*.

This is one of Courtney Milan's tweets:



Kathryn Lynn Davis is not a racist. She's a very kind, generous, intelligent, 63-year-old woman, who happens to be a fine writer and editor. Ms. Davis was first published in 1983 by Pinnacle Books, which later became Kensington. Her legendary "Too Deep for Tears" rose to #5 on the NY Times bestseller list, and was also a USA Today, Washington Post, and Doubleday Book Club bestseller. She is a charter member of RWA and a Founding Member of the OCC Chapter.

People responded to Courtney's tweets with such lovely comments the following:

3 12



Violet Bilbao [On Semi-Hiatus] @violetheart08 · Aug 25

WTF.

1



Rhonda Deal @RJDeal · Aug 25

Replying to @courtneymilan

I guess blue American eyes must not be as genetically potent as blue English eyes because my half-Chinese nephews have brown eyes, too.

1



Maia the 99 @semirose · Aug 25

Replying to @courtneymilan

Like!!! The only mixed person I know with something other than brown eyes is my one cousin who is super white-passing and even she has hazel eyes

1



Nikki Prince @AuthorNPrince · Aug 25

Replying to @courtneymilan

I have a brother and two sisters that were adopted from the Philippines and their eyes are indeed brown and beautiful.

1



wtfknhell- @flutterfli007 · Aug 25

Replying to @courtneymilan

Yeahhhh. Anything with an 'exotic' lover is cringe worthy, especially in historical romance. Just keep it European please, thanks. Even then, the Spanish and Italian character tropes can be quite offensive.

1

 **Chrissy** @ChrissyAWriting · Aug 25
Replying to @courtneymilan
It's disgusting. Has she been described as exotic or exotically beautiful yet? My mixed race daughter gets that a lot from white people.

1 ↻ ♡ 4 ↗

 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🐾 @courtneymilan · Aug 25
Ding ding ding we have a winner.

softening her expression. Usually, her braid was pulled back and her features starkly revealed. They were striking; her high molded cheekbones and narrow chin, straight nose and well-shaped lips revealed the best of both her Chinese and her English heritage. But combined with her natural reserve, her face had seemed exotic and coldly lovely—unattainable. Now, curtained by hair shimmering in the morning sun, she looked warm, mysterious, and accessible.

3 ↻ ♡ 12 ↗

 **TJ Ryan** 🌙 @tj_ryan90 · Aug 25
Replying to @courtneymilan
This is all flaming hot trash, but the frequency of mixed Asian characters having light eyes makes me think all of these authors skipped middle school science.

2 ↻ ♡ 6 ↗

 **TJ Ryan** 🌙 @tj_ryan90 · Aug 25
(The book is flaming hot trash not your tweets ahhhhhhh)

3 ↻ ♡ 3 ↗

 **Celia Wolff** @CeliaWolff · Aug 25
Replying to @courtneymilan
Wow... and... I feel like what I learned about genetics in 7th grade makes the blue eyes thing not just racist but extremely unlikely.

4 ↻ ♡ 4 ↗

It gets worse, but I believe you get the idea. I've attached more screenshots.

In these tweets, Courtney alleges the book is racist, inaccurate, and that Kathryn Lynn Davis is a “fucking racist mess.”

Her allegations of racism are not based in any kind of fact or truth. Ms. Davis has a master’s degree in History and immersed herself into the Chinese culture for six years before she even began to write the aforementioned novel. Keep in mind, this book was written and published in the 1990’s.

It is my belief that Ms. Milan targeted Kathryn Lynn Davis simply because Ms. Davis is one of my acquisitions editors and Ms. Davis happens to be white. I can find no other reason for her to attack Ms. Davis in this manner; certainly nothing based on any factual evidence.

I find it very difficult to understand how Ms. Milan could be the chair of the RWA Ethics Committee when she continually and repeatedly behaves in this manner and launches disgusting attacks against other authors and other RWA members. This is akin to putting a neo-Nazi in charge of a UN human rights committee. And this is *not* the first time Ms. Milan has behaved in this manner.

Because of these outlandish, false, and vicious attacks, Ms. Davis lost a very lucrative contract with another publishing company. Please note that she didn’t lose the contract because the publishing house believes the lies Ms. Milan is spreading. Quite the contrary. Ms. Davis lost the contract because the publishing house is afraid of the backlash that could be thrown their way should Ms. Milan learn that Ms. Davis is now working for them. The other publishing house is afraid of getting into Ms. Milan’s crosshairs.

Additionally, I have lost three of my Glenfinnan authors—not because they agreed with Ms. Milan and those of her ilk, but because they are afraid of any backlash from Ms. Milan. These authors are afraid that if Ms. Milan starts attacking them, they will lose future contracts and sales. It boils down to them needing to make a living and these kinds of attacks have proven to be detrimental to those on the receiving end of this malicious behavior.

Ms. Milan has a history of similar vicious, false, and uncalled for confrontations. For reasons I cannot begin to comprehend, the RWA has ignored this unethical behavior for far too long. Is this *truly* what the RWA wants? Is your silence on these matters the board’s way of saying you agree with Ms. Milan?

Her blatant disregard for human decency is appalling. She is accusing me of being a racist simply because I am white. She is accusing my publishing company of holding racist attitudes simply because I am white. Ms. Milan does not know me. We’ve never met, have never had any kind of interaction other than on twitter during the whole #cypypastechris fiasco in which we were both plagiarized. I can only surmise she is making these accusations based on my skin color and not through any personal experience or knowledge.

My publishing house would never turn away an author simply because of the color of their skin. But due to Ms. Milan’s twitter attacks, people are accusing me of doing just

that. Nothing could be further from the truth. 99% of the submissions we have received have been from authors none of us knows. We have no idea the author's skin color, sexual orientation, or anything else. We focus solely on the quality of the writing submitted to us.

To attack me is one thing – I can handle it. But to attack my editors and my authors is more than just a low blow. These claims of racism are nothing short of libelous vitriol meant to subdue me and my employees and authors into silence. And these attacks are costing us potential income.

I have remained quiet on this matter and refuse to engage in what is the equivalency of a junior high bully on a tirade. And that is exactly what Ms. Milan is: A bully. She terrifies people into remaining quiet simply because of her reach on twitter. People are genuinely afraid of being 'on her list'. Even when inaccuracies in her accusations are brought to her attention, Ms. Milan refuses to correct, modify, or otherwise update her twitter followers with the correct information.

I would like to argue that Ms. Milan's twitter reach is not nearly as extensive as some people are led to believe. She has at a tad over 37,000 twitter followers on an account that isn't even 'blue check certified'. I simply cannot wrap my head around why everyone else is so afraid of her.

If the board does not demand that Ms. Milan immediately cease and desist with this online bullying, with the hateful tweets against me, my company, my authors, and acquisition editors, I will not remain quiet and I will move forward with legal action.

Additionally, I will accept nothing less than a full, public apology from Ms. Milan not only to myself, but to Ms. Grimshaw and Ms. Davis, as well as all the Glenfinnan authors. Authors Ms. Milan and her ilk are referring to as 'privileged white women'.

I have worked very hard to get where I am today. All I wish to do is to write and to help other authors reach their fullest potential.

How can the RWA turn a blind eye to this behavior? I realize that the code of ethics does not have a clear or well-defined rule on social media behavior. I do believe in free speech. This is, after all, America. However, what I have learned recently is this: if you don't agree with Ms. Milan, or worse yet, she disagrees with you, she can say or do anything she wishes without regard for the damage her words can cause. She can say whatever she wishes and there does not have to be even a gram of truth to it.

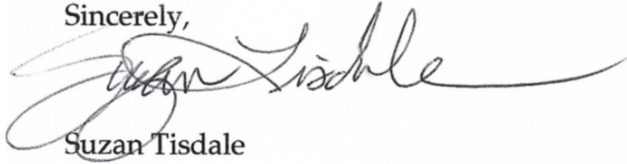
Because Ms. Milan helped put into the code of ethics rules 'what happens on twitter stays on twitter', she is allowed to bully innocent people unchecked and unrestrained.

Ms. Milan is not what the face of RWA needs to be. With leaders like her, there will be no one around to pay dues, go to conferences, or to listen to anything the RWA has to say. In short, she is one of the main reasons I, and so many others, are allowing their memberships to lapse.

Nothing about Ms. Milan's tweets does anything to build up or help other authors. Her behavior, I firmly believe, has *nothing* to do with inclusivity, diversity, or even racism and everything to do with the fact that Ms. Milan *can* behave in any way she wishes. No one stands up against her and no one ever argues against her, all because they are *afraid* of her. Her words are meant to do nothing other than to bully and destroy those individuals she does not like or doesn't agree with.

Please feel free to reach out to me to discuss this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon and hope that we can reach a peaceful and amicable solution to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzan Tisdale". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Suzan Tisdale