

Undercover, with Rob Evans and Paul Lewis

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Women start legal action against police chiefs over emotional trauma - their statement

Eight women have started to sue police chiefs saying they were duped by undercover officers into forming long-term relationships. Below is the statement they have issued. One line has been removed for legal reasons.

Rob Evans

Fri 16 Dec 2011 19.45 GMT

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Birnberg Peirce and partners have commenced legal action against the Metropolitan Police on behalf of eight women who were deceived into having long term intimate relationships with undercover police officers.

The five undercover officers* were all engaged in infiltrating environmental and social justice campaign groups between the mid 1980's and 2010 and had relationships with the women lasting from seven months and the longest spanning nine years.

The women assert that the actions of the undercover officers breached their rights as protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, including Article 3 (no one shall be subject to inhumane and degrading treatment) and Article 8 (respect for private and family life, including the right to form relationships without unjustified interference by the state).

The women are also bringing claims for deceit, assault, misfeasance in public office and negligence, and seek to highlight and prevent the continuation of psychological, emotional and sexual abuse of campaigners and others by undercover police officers.

After deceiving at least one woman into having a relationship with him, one of the officers, Bob Lambert, went on to supervise other undercover officers who had long term intimate relationships with campaigners. This, and the extended period in which these relationships were undertaken confirms that recently exposed police spies were not 'rogue officers', but were in fact part of an unacceptable pattern of engaging in long term intimate relationships (including embedding themselves in extended families) as part of the infiltration of environmental and other activist groups, which seems to have been condoned at high levels.

Through their collective experiences the women have identified a pattern that covers more than two decades of police operations and is therefore indicative of systemic abuse of female political activists involved in a range of different groups. Officers are given extensive training in how to spin tales, groom, deceive and embed themselves deeply in protest movements. After the women formed loving relationships with these men, they disappeared when their posting ended, leaving the women to cope with the trauma of not knowing whether or not the person they were in love with would return, not knowing if they should be worried or angry and trying to discover what was real and what was not. In one case where the officer re-appeared, his training enabled him to create a new deceit and further abuse the woman who had been left in a state of shock and trauma. The responsibility for the lasting damage this caused goes right back to the undercover operation by the Metropolitan police and the training they gave him in the art of duplicity.

The subsequent discovery that the men they had loved were in fact undercover police officers spying on them and others they knew was a horrifying experience, leaving the women with both a sense of violation and difficulties in trusting others and their own judgement. Discovering that the fundamentals of the relationship were lies has left them trying to comprehend how someone they shared dreams with, knew so intimately and trusted so deeply had never actually existed. This abuse has had a severe and lasting emotional impact on those affected.

Quote:

"We believe our case highlights institutionalised sexism within the police. It is incredible that if the police want to search someone's house they are required to get the permission of a judge, yet if they want to send in an agent who may live and sleep with activists in their homes, this can happen without any apparent oversight!"

"We are bringing this case because we want to see an end to the sexual and psychological abuse of campaigners and others by undercover police officers. It is unacceptable that state agents can cultivate intimate and long lasting relationships with political activists in order to gain so called intelligence on those political movements."

So far twelve inquiries have been set up in relation to undercover officers, however none of them are focussed on the human rights abuses perpetrated by the unit, none is independent and none of them are open and transparent.

* The five undercover officers are **Mark Kennedy**, Jim Boyling, Bob Lambert and two others who have not yet been exposed, known when undercover as John Barker and Mark Cassidy.

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