

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Case of the Gringo Gazette vs. Crane, McGonagals, Kramer

Abusing the Power of the Pen

After reading the last three issues of the *Gringo Gazette* (Carrie Duncan, Publisher, David Flores, Editor), I became alarmed at the unchecked power of the poisoned pen to cause injury to persons and communities here in Los Cabos. This publication has featured an escalating campaign of disinformation, slander, innuendo, lies, and fabrications against four individuals from Los Zacatitos: Gene Crane, Peter and Ian McGonagal, Dr. Lynn Kramer. This campaign by the Gazette includes accusations of arson, attempted murder, extortion, vigilante beatings, denial of access to the Federal Coastal Zone by the above name residents.

These published charges are false and have not been supported by any police report or witness testimonials.

Duncan and Flores, acting as principal writers, have published accusations and slander which is meant to destroy the professional activities of Crane and McGonagal (they are legally involved in home construction in the area). Both publisher and editor have repeatedly called for immediate and summary deportation of the above individuals. They have taunted the authorities, demanding to know why these individuals were not arrested and deported, and have explicitly stated that certain (unnamed) officials were bribed by the McGonagals to avoid prosecution.

A home management business (Oceana Properties) has been called a 'protection racket' and the writers have accused the McGonagals of intimidating home owners into signing up for this management. I have known the McGonagals for years and have never heard of any instance of intimidation. In fact, Oceana and the McGonagals provide a useful service to the many part-time residents and their homes by maintaining the premises in their absence. Ms. Duncan knows this, for she was present when a number of testimonials on behalf of the good character of the McGonagals was submitted to her by homeowners at a public meeting at Buzzards Bar and Grill.

All of the accused have strenuously denied the published charges. The published allegations contain numerous errors and citations of anonymous origin that I must wonder if truth and reliability of source really matter to the *Gringo Gazette*.

Why the Gringo Gazette Doesn't Print the Facts

After the initial accusatory article by David Flores, an article that badly misrepresented the facts, Carrie Duncan met at a public meeting in early March with approximately 30 home owners and residents of Los Zacatitos to hear their views. She heard (evidently for the first time) the transcript of the police report and witness accounts concerning the charges against Crane and Peter McGonagal concerning the alleged arson and the purported attack on night watchman. The report, accounts did not bear out the allegations in the published article. She heard a number of testimonials about the good character of Crane and the McGonagals. She heard a number of complaints about the unsanitary conditions at the site and the possible threat of infestation and disease. She listened to a number of criticisms of her paper's story. The meeting was polite and orderly and moderated by Dr. Lynn Kramer.

Surprisingly, in the April 10th issue of the Gazette which followed the meeting by a month, Ms. Duncan asserted that the people at the meeting were 'frightened' to tell her the real truth, that it was a set up, that the accused were 'cockroaches' and that "These arrogant racist bastards need to be deported". (Editorial, Duncan) Quite clearly, Ms. Duncan distorted the entire context and content of the meeting. Quite clearly, none of the report contents, testimonials, and concerns of the community mattered and certainly they were never mentioned in her article of April 10 (titled: "Gringo Protection Racket Alleged in East Cape") and editorial (which refers to the four, including Kramer, as "vicious vigilantes").

Immediately following the March meeting at Buzzards many of us in the vicinity noticed that the problem of feces outdoor, in a adjoining construction site, and the number of insects increased. We decided to circulate a petition, signed by approximately 15 home owners, to request an emergency inspection by the Health Department of the Joe Neid construction site. We outlined our concerns, requested remedial or corrective action (including suspension of construction if non compliance was determined). The Health department came and inspected, declared the site unsafe and gave five days to the contractor to comply. This site has since shut down.

None of this was made public by Ms. Duncan or Mr. Flores. Their recitation of details implied that the workers were terrified by further intimidation by the McGonagals. She offered instead a number of allegations that 'death threats' (to the contractor) were in the air. And she continued to maintain, as her April 10th article reveals, that Mexican authorities were being bribed to keep the McGonagals free from prosecution. She also published a letter to U.S. Consular officials in Los Cabos from the departed contractor, Joe Nied, titled: "Joe Nied Leaves Letter Describing Rein of Terror on East Cape" which itself contains the same false allegations that she had been printing in her other articles.

Most importantly, several Immigration officials came to Los Zacatitos in early April to summarily deport Crane and Peter and Ian McGonagal. Since no formal charges had been laid by the police or the prosecutors, these immigration officials were presumably acting on the information published in the *Gringo Gazette*. Not finding Crane or McGonagal, the officials issued a summons for the accused to appear at Immigration offices. However, after meeting with immigration officials, and presenting their case to a judge in Los Cabos, the Court issued a Protection Order denying immigration officials the right to summary deportation until the matter could be heard in a proper court of law.

None of this information has found it's way into the pages of the Gazette. The April 17th issue of the Gazette featured yet another escalation and misinformations under the front-page headline: "Immigration Hunting for Gringos Accused of Harassment On East Cape" with the accompanying sub-head: "One has reportedly fled the country, others in hiding". In fact, no one had left the country, no one was hiding. And David Flores, author of this article, continued to offer fictional accounts of alleged crimes, non-existing meetings, and he offered the following (and frightening) scenario:

(Excerpts from D. Flores - April 17)

"If you have personal knowledge of any illegal activity by anyone on the East Cape, and in particular, in Zacatitos, call the police. OK, that's pretty scary.....So call the Gringo Gazette..... You may do this anonymously.....This is not a court of law , there does not have to be a trial." In short, he called for people to inform on one another for 'any' illegal activity and do so anonymously so that this information could be sent to Immigration for deperation consideration.

From the abundant examples, and I have not bothered to dissect the various articles for their contradictions, fallacies, it is clear that the *Gringo Gazette* is not interested in substantiated facts, credible and published sources, is not interested in reporting anything that contradicts its earliest accusations. It clearly turns a blind eye to those who make representations of fact and character on behalf of the four accused. Instead, this paper fabricates a climate of 'intimidation' and ascribes it via direct innuendo to the four named individuals.

Abusive Journalism that does not Inform but Destroys

When journalism, such as that practiced by the *Gringo Gazette*, becomes an organ of disinformation, slander and manipulation of local government practices, it becomes an organ of that destroys legal and social fabrics. Its actions are to escalate distrust amongst neighbors, to escalate tensions between resident and foreign populations, between Mexican government institutions (Immigration, Health Customs) and local judicial authorities (Police, the Courts). Ultimately, it impacts on the relations between Mexico and the US, because its distribution-publication range extends to Mexico, US, and Canada and with a readership that is typically unaware of any other side to their story.

This journalism masquerades as activist and reformist, making calls for the 'protection of the people', and yet it actually undermines real lives, real businesses, real communities and individuals.

This newspaper has become an organ of a personal vendetta directed at four individuals and an entire Los Zacatitos community. With the insinuations, distortions, lies and accusations (extending from government agencies to individuals), the paper is destroying the climate of trust that exists between Mexican authorities and people and American (and Canadian) visitors, residents and home-owners. It is in the spirit of trust that foreign investment, the tourist industry, real-estate sales and home construction are conducted in Mexico. In this paper's call for residents to inform anonymously to the *Gringo Gazette*, and the guarantee of action on behalf of anonymous informants, it is setting itself arbiter of relations, one that exists above any due process of law.

In short, this conduct of damaging news reporting sets itself up as unaccountable to anyone, except its advertising base.

Ms. Duncan declared at the March meeting at Buzzards that she was 'well connected' to the local authorities and that government workers read this publication. She also declared that she had never been sued successfully. And then she went to work to amplify and exploit any fears or suspicions that her readers might have about life in Mexico by targetting (for a change) American residents rather than her usual targets (the Mexican authorities).

The present published attacks on these four individuals might be as well attacks on the entire American resident and non-resident populations. What is to stop this publication from arbitrarily picking another group and fabricating accusations?

I have never seen such unbridled and savage attacks on innocent parties before. I have never seen such attacks on the integrity of government officials, on the due process of law. And while Ms. Duncan's publication can straddle the border between her offices in Long Beach and Cabo San Lucas, I would hope that members of the community, government and legal authorities act swiftly to end her 'reign of terror' and her disregard for truth, decency, and the ethics of journalism.

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I would ask the reader of this letter to participate in any and all legal and administrative actions that put an end to this paper's dangerous and destructive behavior even if it means that this publisher and her editor find themselves unemployed and out of business.

Al Razutis,
Home-Owner
Los Zacatitos