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Schneiderman denies allegations of violating Araxi Arslanian's charter rights. PHOTO: Mohamed Omar

# RTS PROFESSOR ACCUSED OF VERBAL

# ABUSE

In News (<http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/https://theeyeopener.com/category/news/>) / March 28,

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Reading Time: 3 minutes

*A former National Theatre School student claims that she was abused and discriminated against by current Ryerson Theatre School professor Perry Schneiderman, who denies these allegations. Online Editor **Jeff Lagerquist** reports*

Allegations of abuse, discrimination and a toxic learning environment made by George Brown Theatre School Students could spark an investigation into the Ryerson Theatre School (RTS) and its faculty.

Araxi Arslanian, 42, claims current Ryerson and George Brown faculty violated her charter rights by forcing her to leave the National Theatre School (NTS), where they were employed, in 1991.

Arslanian has bipolar disorder and suffers from depression. She claims former RTS chair, now instructor, Perry Schneiderman called her a “poorly socialized psychopath with deep-seated emotional problems” before asking her to leave the program six weeks before the end of her first year.

Schneiderman allegedly stated that Arslanian was violent and a danger to her fellow students. Arslanian stayed for the remainder of the semester where she said she was routinely subjected to intimidation and emotional abuse from faculty and classmates.

“When everyone found out I was going to stay the result was very violent,” said Arslanian.

She claims she was bullied and humiliated for being overweight and a virgin.

“Instructors would psychologically brutalize students by demanding that we discuss our most emotionally fragile moments,” she said. “They would viciously taunt us so we would ‘emote.’”

Schneiderman claims no such abuses occurred and has since consulted with attorneys as well as Ryerson faculty affairs. Arslanian claims that instructors Diana Reis and Sheldon Rosen, who both currently teach at Ryerson’s Theatre School, also participated in acts of abuse at NTS.

“This is shocking to say the least,” said Schneiderman. “Obviously people get upset when they’re asked to leave the program, but this was 22 years ago. I’m mystified as to why this is happening now.”

He doesn't recall Arslanian behaving violently, and denies calling her a psychopath. Schneiderman notes that students are only asked to leave most theatre programs after the faculty reaches an unanimous decision.

He also denies that instructors use painful or traumatic experiences as motivation in the classroom.

"I'm not into psycho drama. I work off of imagination. When we do anything that's going to be charged with emotion, it has to come from imaginative sources, not from your dog dying yesterday," said Schneiderman.

An online document compiled by a group of George Brown students tells a different story.

Entitled, "A Legacy of Trauma," the 12-page report includes anonymous student grievances ranging from unfair grading policies to sexual abuse.

"My friend at school came out crying after an interview with an instructor. He said that when he walks by her he gets a whiff of little girl, and it makes him sick, because he hates them, but loves women," said one student. "A first-year student of my class was physically abused by an acting teacher, in class, in front of other classmates. I believe the tool used was a long wooden pole, used to prod the student into creative thinking," said another.

RTS students are reluctant to condemn their instructors.

"I've never heard of anyone making these kinds of allegations," said Kamini Murthy- Kortewig, a second-year production student.

She said the theatre school is so small and tightly knit that any type of discrimination or abuse would be difficult to hide.

"The theatre school is a close, intimate community, but it is also a very competitive faculty. It is a reality of being in a competitive theatre program at the university level," said second-year production student Kate Glen.

Arslanian said the social dynamics of theatre schools make it impossible for some people to fit in.

"The ones who are doing well or who are chosen to do well stand aside and do nothing. They learn to minimize abuse. Other people learn to accept it," said Arslanian.


She says John Isbister, vice-provost faculty affairs and Ryerson President Sheldon Levy committed to look into the George Brown allegations and investigate potential abuses inside RTS.


Levy met with Arslanian and Isbister on Monday but declined to comment.


Arslanian is in her fourth year at Ryerson's School of Social Work, and has recently appeared in episodes of *Degrassi: The Next Generation* and *Little Mosque on the Prairie*.


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## COMMENTS



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student

I've often heard Ryerson profs calling their students names and bullying them.

Perry Schneiderman's salary: \$135,344.40

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/publications/salarydisclosure/2012/univer12d.html> (<http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/publications/salarydisclosure/2012/univer12d.html>)

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j-skule

every journalism student must be familiar with cathy dumbphey's scathing and venomous name-calling episodes

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APRIL 3, 2012 ([HTTP://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20200928162852/HTTPS://THEEYEOPENER.COM/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-23717](http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/https://theeyeopener.com/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-23717))


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Theatre Student

Ridiculous, this is something that happened 20 years ago at another school? NTS is a very tough school. Ryerson theatre school is a community, sometimes people don't fit, but I've never heard a teacher insult their students. We're close with our profs, so perhaps things are being taken out of hand. What a ridiculous thing to bring up so many years later. Both of these acts happened at completely different schools with completely different environments. (Lots of people drop out of NTS, the graduating classes are TINY compared to the first year.) The only thing the chair should look into is our ever decreasing budget.

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APRIL 7, 2012 ([HTTP://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20200928162852/HTTPS://THEEYEOPENER.COM/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-24108](http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/https://theeyeopener.com/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-24108))

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nts-er

Where did you get the fact that lots of people drop out of NTS? NTS takes 12 from the start and tries their best to keep it that way. I have not heard of someone getting kicked out for a while, people leave on their own accord. Sherry Bie is a completely different leader than Perry, with pros and cons, like any change would be.

This happened long ago, this woman was part of Sandra Oh's class, arguably one of the most successful classes to date (1993: Kristen Thompson of I, Claudia, Waneta Storms, Patrick Gallagher of Glee...) And also one of Perry's first classes... so whatever happened to this woman is between her and Perry and Faculty. Unfortunate.

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APRIL 16, 2012 ([HTTP://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20200928162852/HTTPS://THEEYEOPENER.COM/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-25288](http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/https://theeyeopener.com/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-25288))

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## Theatre Student

Oh, I didn't mean "drop out" in a negative way, I just meant I have heard of small graduating classes because people leave.

"so whatever happened to this woman is between her and Perry and Faculty"

Agreed.



APRIL 14, 2012 ([HTTP://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20200928162852/HTTPS://THEEYEOPENER.COM/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-25143](http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/https://theyeopener.com/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-25143))  
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## FS

This sounds like George Brown Human rights class where we must self reflect and share our most personal lives with the teacher or you don't get a good grade. Then she claims your oppressing others with your privilege for, like, having a disease.

You'll find that saying someone is violent is the easy way out of violating Charter rights and Ontario Human Rights codes.

Teachers and employers claim this right away, but they are, sometimes, actually, physically intimidating; so they claim the victim is dangerous. They also claim the victim is psychologically unstable or use knowledge of disease to marginalize the victim.

"At George Brown College, where the number of new students who arrive with a psychiatric disability has soared 95 per cent in three years, the director of student affairs..."

<http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1094018--student-stress-battering-the-ivory-tower>

(<http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1094018--student-stress-battering-the-ivory-tower>)

Then they referral the victim to councilors who have no real psychological or psychiatric training. It becomes evident through the process that the victim is a problem and should worry about their degree.

Teachers have said there are too many sick students. The victims are excused.

George Brown also has a new Chancellor.



APRIL 27, 2012 ([HTTP://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20200928162852/HTTPS://THEEYEOPENER.COM/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-26507](http://web.archive.org/web/20200928162852/https://theyeopener.com/2012/03/RTS-PROFESSOR-ACCUSED-OF-VERBAL-ABUSE/#COMMENT-26507))  
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anonymous

I think, Arslanian was not in the wrong. Something similar is happening to me, I was never with a man, so I received a lot of abuse from everyone and was reported by people in the University trying to sabotage my work. In particular another PhD student who was promised by my Supervisor that my work (my ideas etc.) were going to be given to her. So she sabotaged my work, I was intimidated by another student because my Supervisor lied about these to them, and he placed cameras against me and said I was aggressive. He did not supervise me at all. There is some kind of discrimination and I am pretty sure I am being bullied. Eventually he became really aggressive and I am scared at the girl who sabotaged my work as she looks at me really bad and I know she does met-amphetamines. Before all this happened, the first day, my Professor asked people to abuse me psychologically, by creating false accusations about me having had an affair with several professors in the Department and with my former boss. I was reported after the intimidation and the sabotage, and I was really shocked, although I had witnesses who proved that one to be wrong. I am really sceptic in believing this woman is not the victim, because I am experiencing the same on my skin. So never believe what you read guys.

Yesterday my Professor was being verbally aggressive. He insulted me so many times, and I remained very calm although I was really going to cry, these people are really sick. Of course bullying implies groups of people going against one person at the same time, thanks to the bully lying and discrediting them for everything. I think this woman was too naive and trusted the people in the environment, but it is really hard to fight against the bully, usually the victim leaves, if she stays/he stays it becomes a nightmare.

My professor will never apologize, but I am silently defending myself, by writing everything down.

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