

The Harvey Weinstein Scandal: Power & Privilege

On October 5th, the New York Times published a report that presented three decades' worth of sexual assault and harassment allegations towards Hollywood powerhouse Harvey Weinstein from actresses, executives and assistants. In their investigation, the authors note that while dozens of employees said they knew of



the inappropriate conduct, few ever confronted him. This silence was legally enforced, with Weinstein Company contracts including clauses that limited the employee's ability to criticize the company's leaders in a way that would "harm its business

reputation" or "any employee's personal reputation". Weinstein also had a history of reaching settlements with many of the women, including having them sign confidentiality clauses that prohibit them from speaking out.

The #MeToo Movement

Since the original article was published, many prominent actresses and employees of Weinstein's have come forward, speaking up about their experiences. This has created a national conversation about the prevalence and horrors of sexual harassment and assault.

On October 15th, actress Alyssa Milano tweeted in response to the recent events, "If you've been sexually harassed or



assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet", remarking, "if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem". Her goal to show the magnitude of the problem was met, as the tweet was retweeted more than 17,000 times in 24 hours. According to CBS News, within 48 hours, the hashtag #MeToo had been used nearly a million times. Democratic Congresswoman Jackie Speier even shared her #MeToo story, remarking that Congress has been "a breeding ground for a hostile work environment for too long". (See her #MeToo tweet here: <https://twitter.com/i/moments/923857942390231040> .) This movement has uncovered women's shared experiences of sexual assault and



harassment. The sheer magnitude of stories is stunning and the fact that this movement has empowered women to share their stories and stand in solidarity with women across the world has inspired many.

The Bigger Issue

As horrific as the accounts of Weinstein's sexually violent acts are, the #MeToo movement has shown how this narrative is not new, nor uncommon, in the experience of women. Harvey Weinstein is a textbook example of a rich, powerful man leveraging his power to abuse, intimidate and prey on the women who are seemingly powerless against him, however his acts are only one example of a greater problem. From the cases of Bill Cosby, Roger Ailes, Bill O'Reilly and Donald Trump to the countless stories shared online by women from every walk of life, this experience is not a rare occurrence. Powerful men using their position of power to sexually harass and abuse women has become a recurring headline. The culture of sexual assault and disrespect of women is not limited to the entertainment industry, but extends far past the boundary of occupation, bleeding into all professions and most realms of personal life. Our Berry College Provost, Dr. Mary K. Boyd was recently quoted in an article on workplace harassment in the world of chemistry and academia saying, "I'm saddened to think that women may chose not to pursue a brilliant career in academia because of their experiences with sexual harassment. What is the potential loss in what they may have brought to the discipline if only they felt they would be taken seriously?" The article goes on to state that 25% of women experience workplace sexual harassment, however only 6% ever report it, for fear of their career, safety, or because they blame themselves. Even more shocking 62% of female undergraduates and 44% of female graduate students experience sexual harassment. The prevalence of sexual harassment in academia creates a hostile environment that has the potential squelch a woman's potential in her career and personal life. (**Read the full article here:** <https://cen.acs.org/articles/95/i37/Confronting-sexual-harassment-chemistry.html>).



A Solution

This seemingly inescapable reality raises a few questions: how do we expand the support of women, in both men and women, to build a respect for each others' autonomy and humanity? How do we decrease the power struggle and build respect for women? While there are many possibilities, one stands out as the most promising: have more women in the positions of power. With more representation at the top of the power structure, there can be protection for women underneath and more advocacy for gender equality across all levels of power and wealth. The only way to combat the abuse of authority and privilege, is having people use their authority and privilege to advocate for those who have none. As consumers, let's support successful women directors, producers and performers, using our dollar as our voice to speak out for the equality and representation across all industries, entertainment or otherwise.



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Imagine this: What would happen if we were all brave enough to be a little bit more ambitious? I think the world would change.”

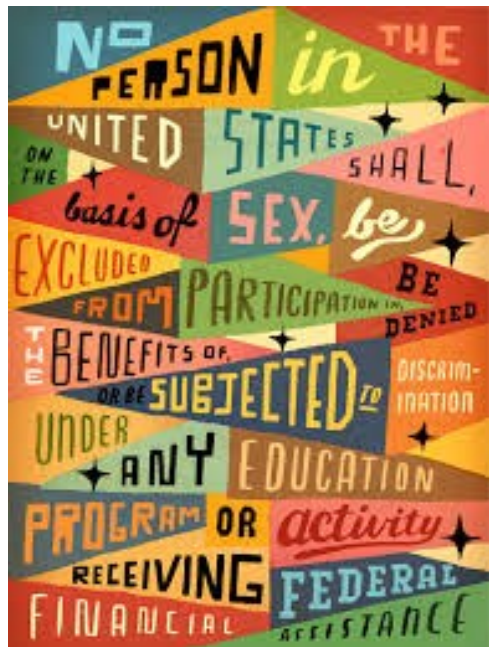
Reese Witherspoon

Learn more about female leadership in film here: [Reese Witherspoon's Woman of the Year Speech](#)

Betsy DeVos Calls for Reinterpretation of Title IX

In 2011, under the Obama administration, The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights issued what is known as the "Dear Colleague" letter. This letter gave new guidelines regarding sexual assault cases for colleges and universities receiving federal funding. Title IX is, at its core, a civil rights law, providing legal protection against gender discrimination, most famously in college sports, but also in issues of sexual assault and rape. Reinterpreting Title IX, the 2011 Dear Colleague letter called for colleges to expand the anti-discrimination laws of Title IX to apply to cases of sexual assault and harassment on college campuses across the country. The main points in the letter were the recommendation of a 60-day maximum time period for investigations, the change to preponderance of the evidence as the standard for proving guilt or innocence, and an end to cross examination of accusers. These changes were intended to help reform the process of investigation in campus rape cases, bringing justice to victims of sexual assault.

On September 22nd Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos spoke at George Mason University about her plan to reinterpret Title IX. As an opponent of the interpretation of Title IX under the Obama administration, DeVos claims that the changes created a system that has failed the accused in sexual assault and rape investigations. DeVos claims the standard of proof is too low for guilt to be accurately proven. She suggested a change from preponderance of evidence to a clear and convincing standard of proof as the standard of proof used in such cases. DeVos proposed a system in which campus assault cases would be sent to a regional center with trained experts. Schools would refer cases that rise to criminal level to the regional center, where trained experts would facilitate, but not require, criminal action. DeVos's proposed changes would serve to lessen the likelihood of victims of false accusations being criminally charged, however it would also make it more difficult for real accusations to be investigated quickly and thoroughly, which was the main goal of the 2011 letter.



While DeVos affirmed her belief that acts of sexual misconduct are "acts of cowardice and personal weakness", her plans question if she has the best interest of victims of sexual assault and rape in mind. Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) reports that in reality only 344 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police and The National Center for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women reports only 2% of reports of rape are false. In light of these numbers, these new changes may inadvertently protect rapists from legal consequences and cost justice for men and women on college campuses across the country. Every accusation should be taken seriously, and it is important to consider how campus rape victims will often see their rapists around classes and parties until they graduate if there are no criminal consequences. Rape is a crime, however criminal consequences are so often avoided due to holes in the system, especially on college campuses. This is why sexual assault and rape must be taken seriously and steps must be taken to reform systems – legal and institutional - so that victims can realistically see a way for justice.

OP-ED: DACA THROUGH A WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES LENS



If you have been on any social media platform or news outlet recently, you have most likely heard about the DACA program and its ever-changing fate under the current administration. DACA is a program allowing young men and women brought to the United States without documentation as children to stay if basic requirements are met. On September 5th the Trump administration declared that it would be ending the program effective March 5th, 2018. Even from this administration, whose rhetoric has been consistently antagonistic towards undocumented immigrants, this denouncement of DACA came as an unwelcome surprise, instilling fear into those whose future security depends on its support.

President Trump's policies on immigration, DACA specifically, emphasizes his commitment to nationalism over equality. In 2016, Trump said "It's our right as a sovereign nation to choose immigrants that we think are the likeliest to thrive and flourish and love us" (CNN, 2016). President Trump has aligned himself with the "America First" platform, which is emphatic to use our legal system to protect only those deemed "American-enough". This platform has a history of perpetuating oppression, with deep roots in anti-Semitism, a history that is being carried over in this current administration with a different ethnic group as its focus. The Trump administration perpetually diminishes the worth of immigrants to their contribution to America rather than their innate human value.

The removal of DACA will further disenfranchise more than 700,000 undocumented immigrants in our country. This verdict will result in consequences

for women that extend past the immediate effects of DACA's removal such as: further silencing of domestic violence victims, heightened workplace discrimination and heightened sexual assault without consequences for the perpetrator. By disadvantaging

immigrants, who are already marginalized, we allow those in power to abuse their power and force those who fall victim to remain silent out of fear of deportation. As feminists, it is imperative that we maintain our stance of intersectionality, which is the understanding that identities of race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion overlap to impact one's experience of oppression. We must use intersectionality to combat the hostile dialogue labeling undocumented immigrants as "illegal" and pragmatically apply this conviction of equality, by using our vote to communicate to elected officials our intolerance for injustice.



UPCOMING WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES COURSES

Spring 2018

WNS 210

INTRODUCTION
TO WOMEN'S
AND GENDER
STUDIES

MWF 10:00 – 10:50 AM | Dr. Conradsen

An interdisciplinary overview of the history and current status of women, addressing issues such as gender socialization, representations of women in culture, work and family, law & social policy, violence against women, health care and religion.

MWF 11:00 – 11:50 AM | Dr. Conradsen

Explores social justice and ethics, global gender issues, leadership, and how to become an agent of social change.

WNS 412

WOMEN'S
STUDIES
SEMINAR

COM 418

GENDER AND
MEDIA

MWF 11:00 – 11:50 AM | Dr. Field-Springer

Portrayals of males and females in U.S. media with discussion of the impact of such representations on audiences, the social inequities historically found in media content, professions and institutions and the contributions of alternative and feminist media to the field of mass communication.

TH 9:30 – 10:45 AM | Dr. Lewinson

Explores the crucial dimension of gender in organizing societies. Analyzes common patterns and cross-cultural variation in gender roles, sexuality, ideologies, symbolic meanings, hierarchy, and economics.

ANT 320

GENDER IN THE
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE

SOC 335

SOCIAL INEQUALITY:
RACE, CLASS,
AND GENDER

H 2:00 – 4:30 PM | Dr. Allred

Empirical and theoretical exploration into the causes and consequences of inequality in contemporary society. Emphasis on the economic and cultural disadvantages of minorities, women and the poor.

MWF 12:00 – 12:50 AM | Dr. Conradsen

Interdisciplinary investigation of the psychological, social, emotional and cognitive aspects of women in society. Investigation of research, theory and real world application of a variety of issues related to women.

PSY 385

PSYCHOLOGY
OF WOMEN

Summer 2018

PSY 211

HUMAN
SEXUALITY

ONLINE
DR. CONRADSEN

WNS 323

SOCIAL
JUSTICE AND
ACTIVISM

DR. CONRADSEN

