

Voices: A moment of reckoning, and not just for sexual harassers

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Matt Lauer, Charlie Rose, Garrison Keillor, Jeremy Piven, Louis C.K., Kevin Spacey, Jeffrey Tambor, John Conyers, Roy Moore, Al Franken, Harvey Weinstein and more.

Names seem to be added to the list daily.

As the [#metoo movement](#) has produced numerous allegations over the past several weeks, there are two questions that I have frequently heard in conversations about the matter.

Why now?

First, why now? Why did these women wait until now to make reports against these men? If it really happened, then why didn't they report it immediately? Are these women just trying to get a place in the spotlight since this issue is hot right now?

The simplest answer to this question is that these women are coming forward right now because they finally think people will believe them.

Victims of sexual assault and harassment are often put through a long, painful investigation and judicial process in which they have to endure countless retellings of some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Then, at the end of the process, victims are often not believed, or they are even blamed for the violent and violating actions someone has taken against them — not to mention the tremendous shame and wrongly placed

self-blame that accompanies sexual abuse.

Undoubtedly, there are millions more who still have not come forward for these very reasons.

Furthermore, in the cases of the high-profile men mentioned above, another factor plays into the hesitation, delay or nonexistent reporting of sexual misconduct. If the perpetrator is an integral part of an institution or industry that exerts power or influence of any kind, people know that, more often than not, power will act to protect itself. Institutions go to great lengths to protect their influence — whether financial or otherwise.

Before the past several weeks, could you have ever imagined a top-rated TV show or anticipated movie being canceled? Such instances only happened very rarely.

When reports like these have been made in the past, the most likely scenario was that the cases were “settled” with large amounts of money paid to the victims to minimize any scandal. Case in point: [Bill O'Reilly](#), until recently.

Women are coming forward because, as [Norah O'Donnell](#) and [Savannah Guthrie](#) poignantly put it, this is a moment of reckoning.

This moment of reckoning is one in which not only are people becoming more aware of the prevalence of sexual misconduct in our society, but it is one in which the tides of power are hopefully changing.

The workplace, the home, the church and our world must become safe for women, and all people, if equality is ever going to be achieved in our society.

How can men feel safe?

The second question or concern I've heard is this: How can any man feel safe in his position when these stories are being believed at face value?

They speculate that anyone who is holding something against a man could just make an allegation of sexual misconduct and get the man fired. Because of this, many men are worried and are analyzing every interaction they've had over the course of their careers.

I can certainly have sympathy for this concern. Unfortunately, people can and do take advantage of situations like these to make false allegations. Proper investigation still needs to happen so that people are not unfairly penalized for something they did not do.

However, we must emphasize that victims of sexual abuse are always unfairly penalized emotionally, physically, professionally and in so many more ways for things that they did not do either.

A moment of reflection

So, I do think that all men, and people in positions of power, should take an inventory of their interactions. Moreover, such self-reflection should not just take place now but should become a regular practice so that great care is always taken not to objectify or take advantage of others.

Then, for those who take stock and become concerned that they may have said or done something that was inappropriate, I would encourage them to be the one to speak up first. Ask the person in question if they felt victimized by your behavior. And if the answer is affirmative (or even if it is not), then seek forgiveness, pursue reconciliation and become educated on how to transform your interactions.

Don't let this be a moment when we just say that Matt Lauer and Harvey Weinstein should have known better.

Let this be a moment when we all examine the ways in which we interact with and think about the people around us.

Our fellow humans do not exist for our own self-amusement. Our fellow divine-image bearers exist so that, together with God, we might partner with each other in God's work of redemption, grace and love in this world.

In this moment of reckoning, let us become a people who stand *for* respect, equality and partnership and who stand *against* objectification, oppression and entitlement.

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