

#MeToo... but #ThemAlso

It's been a long time since I've posted - why now? In a word, #MeToo. The explosion of sexual harassment and abuse claims in Hollywood and beyond. My feelings about the movement are mixed, and it seems like something worth writing about. That said, I don't want to give the impression that I'm cold toward victims of sexual discomfort, fear, and worse, as I believe, like almost everyone, that rape is a tremendous offence, a violation of body and mind that can hardly be overstated. Even besides forcible penetration and other clear-cut assaults, all sorts of other actions short of what I'd label "rape" are also cringe-worthy and condemnable as well, from thinly-veiled groping ~~down~~ to obnoxious and persistent sexual comments that make a person terribly uncomfortable; so yes, I absolutely sympathize with victims, and it's a shame to feel a need to proclaim one's anti-abuse bona fides before saying anything remotely critical of a mass cultural movement about sexual harassment, but there it is.

My feelings about #MeToo are mixed because, on one hand, I can only applaud the potential for reducing fallous exploitation by people who imagine themselves somehow "untouchable" and "above" basic decency or consideration for the feelings and experiences of others. In that regard, #MeToo is a step in the right direction toward personal restraint and responsibility.

On the other hand, this movement looks more than a little bit indiscriminate, maybe even hijacked by people whose main concern ~~may~~ be less the taming of power than the obtaining of power, exercised differently but just as mercilessly as those they've taken it from. That's a problem, for me - a really serious problem of the two-wrongs-don't-make-a-right variety.

When ~~the~~ relatively minor incidents are discussed alongside obviously major violations, I fear the possible dilution of more serious claims. This isn't to disregard anyone's pain, but at the same time maybe we shouldn't attach our uncomfortable hangnail complaints to the concerns of paraplegics or cancer patients. It's a proportionality issue, you know? Anyway, more than that, I worry about another proportion problem at the other end of the spectrum, i.e. the likelihood that fairly minor discomforts and inconveniences may be elevated to "serious problem" status, turning virtually every human being into either a victim or victimizer, or both. In fact, that looks like where things are headed, from my perspective, which also seems

predictable at a time when many people eagerly seek opportunities to showcase how "deeply offended" they can be by just about anything. Again, I'm not suggesting there's nothing offensive about lecherous behavior, but perhaps we might modulate our offendedness with some sense of scale about the myriad unpleasant things we all experience in life. I'll throw in my lot with Eminem on this one: "You find me offensive? I find YOU offensive for finding me offensive...."

On that note, I wonder if anyone else sees the biggest problem in all this the same way I do. The #MeToo movement purports to empower people, and I believe it may be doing a good job of that for a lot of people. But however great it's been for some genuine victims who've felt powerless and silenced, helping put the brakes on unchecked exploitation, I'd argue there's another group feeling especially unempowered since #MeToo caught fire. No, I don't mean abusers and harassers... I'm talking about people, usually young people, who've had culturally disapproved sexual experiences and who, as a result, are pressured by society to accept and conform to a victim role they don't feel belongs to them. Because they are content in their lives and choose not to capitulate to the demands of something very like a victimologist mafia, they are shushed and shunned, shamed to protect the... the what? The sensibilities? The AGENDA?? ... of people who are so threatened by their existence and their unpopular reactions to their private sexual experiences that this unhappy majority literally refuses to acknowledge them. They say they are just "confused", when they reluctantly have to say anything about them at all.

These people, the non-victims, matter to me — a lot — because no one should be robbed of their right to feel and speak for themselves and define their own experiences. For a powerful majority to involuntarily label such a minority seems to me as bad an abuse of power as any act of true sexual coercion could ever be. Will anyone defend these people's rights to not reject their own experiences and to not attack people they've cared about just to satisfy others' thirst for blood? Can #MeToo supporters — and I am one, for the most part — also recognize and validate a range of human feelings, not just the ones that contribute to their cause or are otherwise "politically correct"? Victims are made in more than one way, after all.

Any chance anyone might take a stand for the truly voiceless? #ThemAlso?