

### **Sexual Misconduct, Callout Culture and the Possibility of Redemption**

Laura Finley and Matthew Johnson

Although it was actually started more than ten years ago by survivor Tarana Burke as a means for women, especially Black women, to offer support to others who had endured sexual assault, the rapid spread of MeToo as a hashtag and a movement came in fall 2017 when several Hollywood actresses commented on the frequency of sexual assault and harassment in that industry. Alyssa Milano is often credited with starting the movement but has repeatedly acknowledged Burke. Milano was spurred to use the phrase MeToo when actress Rose McGowan accused Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein of rape. It wasn't just Weinstein, however. The movement did prompt action against the accused in many cases — sometimes legal and other times shaming them within the industry. Yet there are definite limitations to the “callout culture.”

As Melo (2019) explains, what is missing in this public shaming is the chance for perpetrators to change. “The assumption is that tearing down fellow human beings will somehow eliminate their past bad behavior,” yet “Call-out culture seems increasingly concerned with the thrill of social assassination, rather than with remedying undesirable behavior. It does not seek justice for the wronged, but the destruction of the wrongdoer” (Melo, 2019). Similarly, Rebecca Hamilton (2017), assistant professor of law at American University, Washington College of Law, herself a victim of rape, asserts that naming her perpetrator would not help her, as it would bring him back to a place central to her thoughts. It would essentially force her to relive something she wish never happened. Further, calling him out would then also make her family, friends and colleagues share in the revictimization.

Hamilton (2017) further argues that social media campaigns like #MeToo view raising awareness as an end, not as a means to an end. They emphasize quick and visible solutions, such as the firing of perpetrators, and, “over time, they crowd out lower profile work that could ultimately create the structural changes needed to really resolve the problem” (Hamilton, 2017). What is particularly interesting is that progressives who typically critique the rush to judgement and the hyper-punitive system of justice in the U.S. often advocate just those things when it comes to sexual misconduct. That is especially true when it comes to allegations against someone who politically aligns progressive as well.

This paper addresses several high-profile sexual misconduct claims in the #MeToo era, focusing largely on those involving progressives. It discusses the concerns about how these situations have been handled and offers a model of forgiveness and redemption informed by restorative justice.

### **Allegations against celebrities**

As of January 9, 2019, a reported 263 politicians, celebrities, CEOs and other prominent individuals had been accused of sexual harassment since April 2017. 101 are in Arts and Entertainment, the largest group. Many renowned film directors have been accused of sexual harassment. As of December 2018, a total of nine women have accused French film director Luc Besson of sexual harassment. Since 1997, Director Bryan Singer has faced accusations of sexual misconduct involving minors. The allegations started when the parents of an underage extra sued him for filming their son and other boys on the set of the movie *Apt Pupil*. Although the case was withdrawn, Singer was later sued by model Michael Egan for sexual assault of a minor in 2014, and an anonymous plaintiff sued him for sexual assault the same year (this time the case was dismissed). In 2017, Cesar Sanchez-Guzman filed a lawsuit in Washington and alleged that Singer had raped him when he was a teenager. Singer was fired from directing the film *Bohemian Rhapsody* because of the many allegations. In December 2017, Director Morgan Spurlock admitted to a history of sexual misconduct. This included rape allegations in college, settling a sexual harassment suit, and infidelity in all his relationships. Spurlock is best known for his documentary *Supersize Me*.

The case receiving the most attention to date has been the litany of allegations against Weinstein. Public attention was focused on Weinstein after the *New York Times* published a story on October 5, 2017, describing decades of allegations. Shortly thereafter many actresses spoke out. Among the earliest to do so were Rose McGowan and Ashley Judd. Women alleged that Weinstein made inappropriate comments and propositions, forced women to massage him and watch him naked, and promised career advancement in exchange for sexual favors.

Weinstein issued an apology for “causing a lot of pain” and his lawyers claimed he planned to sue the *Times*. He announced a leave of absence from The Weinstein Company the same day of the *Times* report. Three days later the Board of The Weinstein Company announced it had fired him. Many other actors denounced Weinstein including Meryl Streep, George Clooney, and Dame Judi Dench. On October 10, 2017, the *New Yorker* issued a report with thirteen more allegations, three of which included accusations of rape. Mira Sorvino, Gwyneth Paltrow and Angelina Jolie all alleged that Weinstein propositioned them. That same day, Weinstein’s wife Georgina Chapman announced she was leaving him. Over the next several days, many others came forward, and on October 15, 2017, the organization behind the Oscars announced it was expelling Weinstein, as did the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. British law enforcement was also investigating Weinstein, as there were numerous allegations of sexual misconduct falling under its jurisdiction as well. The following day the Producers Guild of America expelled Weinstein and on October 30 it announced Weinstein was banned for life. Several actors and directors were accused of knowing about Weinstein’s behavior and doing nothing to stop it, among them Quentin Tarantino. Meryl Streep was criticized for staying silent about Weinstein for too long, although she claims she knew nothing. Also levying allegations were several staff members who had worked with Weinstein.

In the next several months, even more actresses came out with allegations, including Lupita Nyong’o, Cara Delevigne, Brit Marling, Daryl Hannah, Annabella Sciorra, Salma Hayek, and Uma Thurman. On February 11, 2018, New York prosecutors announced they were filing a lawsuit against the Weinstein Company, alleging that it failed to protect its employees from sexual harassment and on March 20, 2018, the company filed for bankruptcy. On May 25, 2018, Weinstein turned himself in to the New York police, where he was charged with rape and several other counts of sexual assault against two women. He pleaded not guilty on June 5, 2018. Another rape allegation was added in July and Weinstein pleaded not guilty to that charge as well. A trial date has been set for May 2019 while additional allegations continue to emerge in the U.S. and UK.

While it was roundly applauded that action was taken against Weinstein, in other cases some have criticized what they see as a rush to judgment against prominent people when the allegations are less serious or perhaps the context or details are not entirely clear. If nothing else, the #MeToo movement seems to have been unevenly applied, especially in cases involving politicians (Rosen, 2019). For instance, Tom Ashbrook was fired as host of National Public Radio’s “On Point” after being accused of creating “an abusive work environment.” He was cleared of sexual misconduct, and many felt like firing him was not necessary given that.

Ashbrook himself wrote that, while his behavior was “offensive and overbearing to some,” he wondered, “Is there room for redemption and rebirth, in our time of Google trails and hashtag headlines?” (Smith, 2018). Such cases can be especially challenging when they involve progressives or people otherwise respected by the Left.

### **Allegations against politicians**

Reaction was mixed when allegations of sexual misconduct were levied against former Senator Al Franken. Under pressure, largely from fellow Democrats, Franken resigned from the Senate. The alleged misconduct ranged from unwanted kissing to groping during photo shoots. Franken did issue an apology that most accepted as sincere, and he even called for an investigation by the Senate Ethics Committee into the allegations. New York Democratic Senator Kirsten Gillibrand was one of the most vocal proponents of Franken’s resignation and stands by that decision, noting in a tweet after fellow 2020 presidential hopeful Pete Buttigieg said he would not have called for a resignation, that there were “eight credible allegations of sexual harassment, two since he was elected Senator, and one from a congressional staffer. That is not too high a standard” (Miller, 2019). Some progressives thought that resignation was too heavy a punishment, especially given the allegations of far worse conduct that have been made against President Trump. Supporters also wanted to see an investigation into the allegations. Many progressive men cautioned against lumping together the type of allegations against Franken with those against Weinstein, asserting that it somehow dilutes the MeToo efforts and imposes higher standards on Democrats than have been placed on Republicans, who at the time were dealing with far more serious allegations against Alabama senatorial candidate Roy Moore, who nonetheless proceeded to face off against—and ultimately lose to—Democratic Senator Doug Jones (Blake, 2017). Others accused Gillibrand in particular for using the Franken situation for political gain, as she readied herself for a presidential run (McGann, 2018).

Presidential hopeful and former vice president Joe Biden has also come under fire for his nonconsensual touching of women in public settings. While these allegations do not rise to the level of those made against Franken and have not been labeled as sexual assault or harassment, they fall within the realm of women seeking to hold powerful men accountable for behavior that is no longer considered acceptable in the MeToo era. Lucy Flores, former Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor of Nevada, documented a 2014 incident that “changed how [she] saw Joe Biden” in a personal essay for *The Cut* (Flores, 2019). Flores claimed that Biden came up behind her, put his hands on her shoulders, and kissed the back of her head. For Flores, this was an unwanted and unwarranted intrusion of her

personal space. For Biden, this was a seemingly typical display of affection, as numerous similar incidents have been documented from the Obama era—with political allies and their families as the subjects of Biden’s physical contact (McGann, 2019).

While initially claiming he did not recall the Flores incident, after more complaints of unwanted touching followed, Biden posted a video to Twitter of himself explaining his behavior and promising to change with the times and to respect personal space. Biden’s critics condemned him for not directly apologizing for his actions while repositioning himself as a bystander rather than a perpetrator—much in the same way as he did while addressing his role in the controversial Anita Hill hearings, which he presided over as the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991 (Garber, 2019). It is unclear at the time of this writing to what extent these scandals will weaken Biden’s candidacy for president in 2020.

While never accused of sexual misconduct himself, 2020 presidential hopeful and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders was criticized by some progressives for sexual harassment that occurred within the context of his 2016 presidential campaign. This was not a problem confined to the Sanders campaign, however, as nearly 60 percent of political consultants in a survey stated that sexual harassment is at least “somewhat common” in the industry (Miller, 2019). President Trump was accused directly of sexual assault by an ex-staffer for his campaign (Corbett, 2019). For his part, Sanders released a comprehensive blueprint for addressing sexual misconduct and harassment within his organization (Moon, 2019).

### **Allegations against academics**

The allegations of sexual harassment against academic Michael Kimmel pose a different challenge. Kimmel is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He identifies as a male feminist and his life’s work has focused on gender equality. Shortly after the allegations were first publicized, Kimmel announced that he would defer accepting a major sociology award from the American Sociological Association but was criticized for referring to the accusations as “rumors.” Although they were initially circulating as anonymous, it was not too long before one of Kimmel’s former Stony Brook graduate students, who uses the pronoun their, stepped forward as the accuser. The student alleges that Kimmel engaged in explicit sexual talk, was homophobic and transphobic, and lacked respect for anyone who was not a cisgender heterosexual male. Bethany Coston, now an assistant professor of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, also alleges that Kimmel engaged in benevolent sexism by telling attractive students

they would have to work harder to get ahead professionally. Coston also claims that Kimmel refused to use students' preferred gender pronouns and says that Kimmel gave more privileges to straight male students. In all, Coston contends that these things, plus the sheer nature of the work required of graduate students, which they called exploitative, constitutes a hostile work environment. Stony Brook has said it is investigating the claims (Flaherty, 2018).

### **Critique of naming and shaming**

As noted earlier, not all victims want to publicly out their perpetrators for a variety of reasons. Further, using Twitter or other social media platforms to call out abusers and assailants might open victims up to another hostile environment. As feminist digital activism has increased, so too has a backlash of misogynistic vitriol (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018). Simply put, a goal of #MeToo is to provide a safe space for victims to share their experiences but Twitter is far from that. Additionally, in some cases, the naming and shaming strategy of the #MeToo era may even be backfiring. For instance, Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax was accused of sexual assault by two women but remains in office and has said he is strongly considering running for governor in 2021. Fairfax even implied that the attention was good for his career, citing many people who recognize him now in public and claim they believe he is innocent (Rosen, 2019). The Congressional Misconduct database (n.d.) reveals that many lawmakers who have faced allegations have suffered little, if any, sanction. Obviously, the seventeen allegations against President Trump have not resulted in anything close to accountability. Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed as a Supreme Court justice despite multiple claims of sexual assault. In fact, the president's rhetoric about the allegations, as well as those against Roy Moore and others, seem to resonate with many in a culture that is far too quick to believe that false accusations are common. Trump said "It's a very scary time for young men in America. It's a very scary time when you're guilty until proven innocent." Some women the hashtag #ProtectOurBoys "to denounce what they consider false claims" (Yan & Chavez, 2018).

One of the most important criticisms of naming and shaming is that it does nothing to address how rape culture is institutionalized. There has been little to no action to address Hollywood's misogynistic culture or the fact that in most of the cases involving "outed" artists and directors, it was a well-known fact that abuses were occurring but was considered simply how business is done, as in the "casting couch." The routine glorification of men's violence against women and objectification of women's bodies is left unchanged when individual perpetrators are named and even when they face some type of repercussion. In order to change

this culture, we must recognize “the larger context in which men are trained to seek control and pursue conquest in order to feel like a man, and how that control is routinely sexualized” (Jensen, 2014). Likewise, rape culture is institutionalized via State practices that exercise limiting economic control on anti-rape movements, viewing rape as an individual problem, rather than a gendered-social one (Bumiller, 2008; Whailey, 2018). When victims do report harassment and assault, institutions often fail them, what Freyd (2018) calls institutional betrayal. Institutional betrayal occurs through overt policies and behaviors but also through failing to do what is reasonably expected to assist victims or hold perpetrators accountable. This includes retaliation or backlash against the victim as well. Smith and Freyd (2013) found that more than 40 percent of college students who were sexually assaulted reported some type of institutional betrayal. Rather than assisting victims, institutional betrayal has been found to exacerbate trauma, increasing depression, anxiety, dissociation, and problematic sexual functioning (Smith & Freyd, 2013). Another study of military sexual violence survivors who experienced institutional betrayal found they had higher rates of PTSD, depression, and suicidal ideation (Monteith, Bahraini, Matarazzo, & Soberay, & Smith, 2016). Another study found institutional betrayal to be associated with several physical health outcomes, including difficulty sleeping, headaches and shortness of breath (Smith & Freyd, 2017).

Given these limitations of naming and shaming, it is imperative to consider alternate approaches that might 1) help victims heal; 2) hold perpetrators accountable; and 3) address the institutionalization of rape culture.

### **Forgiveness and redemption**

Many sexual abuse experts argue that forgiveness is a necessity in order to reduce instances of sexual misconduct. While perpetrators must be held accountable, exactly how that should happen is not clear. It probably goes further than a simple apology, especially since so many of those, like Weinstein, have issued half-hearted apologies at best. Celebrity chef Mario Batali, for instance, ended his apology for sexually harassing multiple women with a recipe for pizza dough cinnamon rolls (Smith, 2018). Similarly, weak apologies like that of actor Jeffrey Tambor, which often start with “If I offended anyone...” or refer to their actions in only vague ways reinforce that the victim was mistaken or at least overly sensitive (Wexler & Robbennolt, 2019).

Apologies must focus on the person who was wronged, and perpetrators must ask how they can right their wrongs, according to experts. Thus, asking for forgiveness is difficult for those who are powerful, as they are unaccustomed to

being so vulnerable. Comedian Aziz Ansari eventually addressed his own allegation of sexual misconduct on stage during a performance, expressing contrition and appreciation for lessons learned while stopping short of an apology (North, 2019). Men whose apologies are not deemed sufficient may retreat, as did comedian Louis C.K., until enough time has gone by that tensions are reduced. Many are shamed in the media, especially social media, but Alissa Ackerman-Acklin, sexual assault expert and assistant professor of criminal justice at California State University, Fullerton, argues this is the opposite of what will help: “If we want a society free of sexual misconduct and we want people to really understand the impact of their actions, then publicly shaming them is not the way to do it. It makes us feel good, but it doesn’t do anything to reduce sexual misconduct.” Instead, the men should be making connections — possibly with their victims, if that’s what the victims want, or with others in a “safe, non-judgmental space, people who have caused this kind of harm can really think about what they’ve done and get really introspective and come to a place where they can offer an authentic apology,” Ackerman-Acklin said (Smith, 2018).

“What atonement means, and what it looks like to truly take responsibility for one’s own choices and one’s own life naturally varies with the specific act of wrongdoing” (Filipovic, 2018). Sexual predators should not be treated the same as those who make inappropriate jokes. Both are wrong, but these acts are not equal; neither should be their penalties. For many of the men accused of serial sexual misconduct, one of the consequences may need to be withdrawal from public life. Redemption and forgiveness are not synonymous with a return to fame or a position of power. This goes for institutions as well, especially those “that position themselves as arbiters of authority” (Filipovic, 2019). “None of this means that the men who have harmed women can never have happy lives again, can never create art again, can never dedicate themselves to the causes they care about the most. It does mean that we will know the worst offenders understand the depths of their transgressions when they do their work quietly, without wanting or expecting public accolades; when they realize that public adoration, or even the public’s eyes and ears, are the price they have paid for what they chose to do” (Filipovic, 2018). Shunning, isolation, and in some cases incarceration, does nothing to heal an individual, let alone a community (Ortiz, 2019). Further, as Hamilton (2017) points out, naming and shaming should never be seen as the only option in order for a victim to be taken seriously or for action to be taken against a perpetrator. “We need to listen to the many women (and men) whose stories do not involve newsworthy perpetrators, and not demand that the signature ‘name and shame’ action of

this moment be the price of entry into the conversation about how to deal with all of this” (Hamilyon, 2017).

One strategy for this type of redemption and possibly even social change is restorative justice. Restorative justice has been used for more than forty years in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. It generally involves three components: victims and secondarily affected family and friends; community members who feel less safe as a result of the violence; and offenders and their family and friends (Shapland, 2014). The key to the last part is that the offenders and their supporters must feel guilt and shame about their actions — in fact, they must admit guilt in order to participate, which is a significant change from the retributive criminal justice system. There are several models of restorative justice including sharing circles, victim-offender dialogue, victim impact panels, community reparation boards, circles of support, sentencing circles, mediation, and conferencing (Umbreit et al., 2006). In essence, restorative justice is a victim-centered approach. There is a growing body of scholarly literature about restorative justice programs being used in sexual assault cases, with general findings that restorative justice is less traumatizing for victims (Daly, 2006), keeps victims safer (Koss, 2014), is empowering (Wager, 2013), affords them a greater sense of justice (McGlynn, Westmarland, & Godden, 2012), and can be more effective at holding assailants accountable (Daly, 2006). If there is a pre-existing relationship between victim and offender, restorative justice has been found to help redefine the relationship and diminish fear of retaliation (Mercer & Sten-Madsen, 2015).

One of the most well-known restorative justice initiatives is RESTORE, a pilot program that ran from 2003 to 2006 in Arizona. An evaluation of RESTORE found that it reduced victims’ post-traumatic stress disorder, and participants lauded it for helping them “take back their power” (Koss, 2014). It has been endorsed by some of the more vocal #MeToo celebrities, including Ashley Judd and Laura Dern (Griner, 2018), and has been touted as a method of compliance in sexual assault cases on college campuses (Koss, Wilgus, & Williamsen, 2014).

Some feminists have expressed concern about restorative justice. One concern is that restorative justice requires victims to face their assailants in situations of unbalanced power, but Lesley Wexler, a professor at the University of Illinois College of Law, whose work has focused on sexual harassment, armed conflict and apologies, said, “Part of what should be happening here is personal. Making amends to the victim, restoring the victim. And a separate part is acknowledging that the nature of this harm isn’t just the individual, you are a community. That suggests you also need to be public about what specifically was wrong and what you can do better” (Smith, 2018). Another concern of some

feminists is that restorative justice is “cheap justice;” that is, it allows the State to push its responsibility for handling these offenses to less formal, inexpensive programs (Daly & Stubbs, 2006). Yet a feminist framework of restorative justice can account for these concerns and furthers historical feminists’ concerns about excessive State involvement (Bumiller, 2008; Daley & Stubbs, 2006; Whailey, 2018).

Efforts to understand what is meant by a victim-centered approach have identified several primary characteristics, all of which can be found in restorative justice models. These include: “victims need to tell their own stories about their experiences, obtain answers to questions, experience validation as a legitimate victim, observe offender remorse for harming them, receive support that counteracts isolation and self-blame, and above all have choice and input into the resolution of their violation” (Koss & Achilles, 2008). Restorative justice may offer more options to the diverse group that is victimized, especially for those who do not prefer formal prosecution. It also gives greater attention to lay, not legal, understandings of the offenses and thus may offer a more holistic understanding (Curtis-Fawley & Daly, 2005). Restorative justice seems to have appeal when people are aware that it is an option. One study of 121 community members, 40 of whom identified as sexual assault survivors, found that both survivors and non-survivors supported restorative justice (Marsh & Wager, 2015). Curtis-Fawley and Daly (2005) interviewed victim advocates in South Australia and Queensland as well as indigenous and non-indigenous victims. Further, they conducted an archival analysis of nearly 400 sexual assault cases and an analysis of fifteen restorative justice conferences involving sexual assault and domestic violence in South Australia. Both victims and advocates expressed concern about the criminal (in)justice system. Most of the advocates felt that restorative justice would result in more positive outcomes for victims. In giving victims more voice, the advocates noted that restorative justice could help address power imbalances. While most of the cases discussed in this paper are not about sexual assault but rather various forms of sexual misconduct, an approach based on the model of restorative justice could be useful in these situations as well.

Yet there remain few restorative programs for sexual misconduct, which Koss and Achilles (2008) attribute to policy, system, and resource barriers, including the fact that programs working with both victims and offenders are not eligible for funding via the Violence Against Women Act. Funding further effects the development of new programs, and there remains debate over whether it is best to professionalize them as a part of the criminal justice response or lean toward more grassroots efforts. Moreover, misunderstanding about what it entails and how restorative justice differs from mediation have hampered progress in using it for

sexual misconduct cases (Griner, 2018). Additionally, more evaluation of restorative programs for sexual misconduct cases is needed. Gang, Loff, Naylor and Kirkman (2019) searched five databases for examples and found only one—Koss (2014)'s study cited earlier.

Redemption is far more consistent with the progressive position on the criminal justice system. Most progressives disavow the retributive prison industrial complex with its emphasis on retribution instead of rehabilitation. Progressives critique the rush to utilize criminal justice responses without exploring alternatives for accountability and see the stigmatizing effects of a prison sentence on ex-felons. Most believe that even those who have committed horrible offenses can eventually be redeemed. Restorative justice is more suited to minimizing the net-widening of the criminal justice system and to redemption, although some, including Shapland (2014), assert that restorative justice programs have increasingly been professionalized and coopted by the State. In addition, progressives often critique “trial by media” as an injustice. The Dalhousie University Facebook scandal offers an examination of the divide between some progressives and feminist groups when it comes to restorative justice and forgiveness.

In 2014, some male students in Dalhousie's dentistry program created a Facebook group called “Class of DDS 2015 Gentlemen” in which they posted sexist comments about female classmates including a poll asking participants to respond to which classmates they would have “hate sex” with. The female students were shocked and upset but determined to use it as an educational experience for the men. They called on Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law restorative justice expert Jennifer Llewellyn, who helped utilize a restorative approach that resulted in the men accepting responsibility for their behavior and, even more, helped uncover a culture of misogyny at the university that was at the root of the problem (Llewellyn, Demsey, & Smith, 2015). Yet, the restorative approach was met with great public outcry, even by women's groups, who felt the men should have been expelled and that the victims were being coerced to participate. The women did not feel that way, however; they felt as though the university had allowed them to choose, and they chose restorative justice because it had the potential to change the men's behavior before they graduated and moved into professional settings (Wemmers, 2018). Investigations of the allegations found that the dentistry program had a culture of “sexism, misogyny, homophobia and racism,” meaning these were institutionalized behaviors, not one-offs (CBC News, 2015). Restorative justice, then, was seen by many as the way to challenge the institutionalization of rape culture. Koss, Wilgus and Williamsen (2014) reviewed the White House's “Dear Colleague Letter,” which was issued in 2011 to provide guidelines to campuses on handling sexual assault, and found that restorative

practices are permitted and, “When implemented appropriately and effectively restorative justice processes support the shared interest of victim survivors, institutions, the Office for Civil Rights, and student conduct professionals” (p. 242).

## Conclusion

Forgiveness is not akin to acceptance or pardon but rather a way of affording some type of second chance that can reintegrate offenders into a society, with changed behavior. Without a model for forgiveness, survivors often face two competing options: “You must either forgive and stay silent *or* stay angry and press charges, and if you do forgive someone, you must be happy to have this person at Thanksgiving. What a toxic brew of nonsense” (Bettencourt, 2018). Further, as Bettencourt (2018) notes, “Merriam Webster defines forgive” as, “to give up resentment.” You can give up resentment *and* hold someone accountable — in private or public. You can, and in certain situations you should, forgive, yet never reestablish a relationship.” In other cases, victims are ready to have a relationship of sorts. Restorative justice allows that to be an option but does not require it. It also calls on the accused to not only acknowledge his or her behavior but to pledge, in specific terms, how he or she will do better (Wexler & Robbennolt, 2019). As Melo (2019) explains, “We can still hold people accountable: we do not have to give them their TV shows back, restore them as directors of movie franchises, or vote them into office. Even redemption does not absolve them of responsibility. But true accountability leaves room for the chance—however slim—that people can change their minds and help advance society.”

In sum, Bettencourt (2018) asserts: “The idea that forgiveness and justice are mutually exclusive is more than semantics. It robs sexual assault survivors of dignity, empowerment, and healing. To recover from trauma and change the culture that enables sexual abuse, we must be free to tell the truth, protect our safety, seek justice, and release our bitterness. Yet lumping forgiveness in with reconciliation and pardon prevents that.” Alternately, calling out abusers but never attempting to forgive can turn into a bitterness that Maya Angelou called “a cancer.” Bettencourt interviewed many sexual assault survivors who forgave their perpetrators, all of whom said they did so first for their own self-preservation. “The #MeToo movement, driven by righteous rage and demands for dignity, is an opportunity to upgrade the antiquated definition of forgiveness that deprives women of empowerment and healing. The more we view forgiveness as a process of releasing resentment, rather than an abdication of justice that implies silence or reconciliation, the better equipped we’ll be to help survivors” (Bettencourt, 2018). A model of justice based on forgiveness helps those who align as progressives be “for” something, not simply “against” the current system (Ortiz, 2019), and reduces

the “tribal mentality” of us/them, victim/abuser, thereby offering an opportunity for real change (Melo, 2019). It is indeed what Tarana Burke intended when she started the hashtag. ”In a 2017 interview, Burke described her multilayered vision of healing: victims use “Me Too” as a way of creating connections and sharing empathy; the community recognizes victims and their needs; perpetrators move toward discussions of accountability, transparency, and vulnerability; and everyone considers how “collectively, to start dismantling these systems that uphold and make space for sexual violence” (Wexler & Robbennolt, 2019). Callout culture can never work to truly change society. Instead, dialogue, understanding, accountability and sincere efforts will be what reduces sexual misconduct. For those involved in progressive peace and justice activism, it is important to practice what we preach consistently.

## References

- Bettencourt, M. (2018, September 25). How forgiveness has been weaponized against women. *Harper's Bazaar*. Retrieved June 10, 2019 from <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a23284069/metoo-sexual-abuse-forgiveness-weaponized-against-women/>
- Blake, A. (2017, December 6). Why Al Franken is done for—and Roy Moore isn't. *Washington Post*. Retrieved July 8, 2019 from [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)
- Bumiller, K. (2008). *In an abusive state: How neoliberalism appropriated the feminist movement against sexual violence*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- CBC News. (2015, June 29). Dalhousie dentistry report: University had culture of “misogyny, homophobia and racism.” *CBC Canada*. Retrieved September 16, 2019 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/dalhousie-dentistry-report-university-had-culture-of-misogyny-homophobia-and-racism-1.3131522>
- Congressional Misconduct database. (n.d.). *Govtrack*. Retrieved September 13, 2019 from <https://www.govtrack.us/misconduct>
- Corbett, E. (2019, February 25). Alva Johnson, former Trump campaign staffer, accuses President of sexual assault. *Fortune*. Retrieved July 8, 2019 from <https://fortune.com/2019/02/25/trump-campaign-staffer-lawsuit-against-sexual-assault/>

- Curtis-Fawley, S., & Daly, K. (2005). Gendered violence and restorative justice: The views of victim advocates. *Violence Against Women, 11*(5), 603-38.
- Daly, K., & Stubbs, J. (2006). Feminist engagement with restorative justice. *Theoretical Criminology, 10*(1), 9-28.
- Freyd, J. (2018, January 11). When sexual assault victims speak out, their institutions often betray them. *The Conversation*. Retrieved September 15, 2019 from <https://theconversation.com/when-sexual-assault-victims-speak-out-their-institutions-often-betray-them-87050>
- Gang, D., Loff, B., Naylor, B., & Kirkman, M. (2019). A call for evaluation of restorative justice programs. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 1*-5.
- Griner, A. (2018, March 13). The better way to support rape victims: Put their needs first. *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 6, 2019 from <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/mar/13/restorative-justice-putting-the-needs-of-victims-first>
- Hamilton, R. (2017, December 21). No, naming and shaming offenders doesn't always help. *Washington Post*. Retrieved September 13, 2019 from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/no-naming-and-shaming-sexual-offenders-doesnt-always-help/2017/12/21/4210486c-e5bb-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/no-naming-and-shaming-sexual-offenders-doesnt-always-help/2017/12/21/4210486c-e5bb-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340_story.html)
- Jensen, R. (2014, April 29). Rape, rape culture, and the problem of patriarchy. *Waging Nonviolence*. Retrieved September 13, 2019 from <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2014/04/rape-rape-culture-problem-patriarchy/>
- Koss, M. (2014). The RESTORE program of restorative justice for sex crimes: Vision, process and outcomes. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 29*(9), 1623-1660.
- Koss, M., & Achilles, A. (2008). Restorative justice response to sexual assault. *VAWN*. Retrieved July 6, 2019 from [https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/materials/files/2016-09/AR\\_RestorativeJustice.pdf](https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/materials/files/2016-09/AR_RestorativeJustice.pdf)
- Koss, M., Wilgus, J., & Williamsen, K. (2014). Campus sexual misconduct: Restorative justice approaches to enhance compliance with Title IX guidelines. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 15*(3), 242-57.
- Llewellyn, J., Demsey, A., & Smith, J. (2015). An unfamiliar justice story: Restorative justice and education. Reflections on Dalhousie's Facebook

- Incident 2015. *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Our Schools / Our Selves*, Fall, 43-56. Retrieved July 7, 2019 from [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2015/12/OS121\\_Restorative\\_Justice.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2015/12/OS121_Restorative_Justice.pdf)
- Marsh, F., & Wager, N. (2015). Restorative justice in cases of sexual violence: Exploring the views of the public and survivors. *Probation Journal*, 62(4), 336-56.
- McGann, L. (2019, April 3). Lucy Flores isn't alone. Joe Biden has a long history of touching women inappropriately. *Vox*. Retrieved July 8, 2019 from <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/3/29/18241598/joe-biden-lucy-flores-touching-women-media-history-explained>
- McGann, L. (2018, May 21). The still-raging controversy over Al Franken's resignation, explained. *Vox*. Retrieved June 10, 2019 from <https://www.vox.com/2018/5/21/17352230/al-franken-accusations-resignation-democrats-leann-tweeden-kirsten-gillibrand>
- McGlynn, C., Westmarland, N., & Godden, N. (2012). "I just wanted him to hear me:" Sexual violence and the possibilities of restorative justice. *Journal of Law & Society*, 39(2), 213-240.
- Melo, D. (2019, February 4). What's missing from callout culture: The opportunity to change. *Areo Magazine*. Retrieved July 12, 2019 from <https://areomagazine.com/2019/02/04/whats-missing-from-call-out-culture-the-opportunity-to-change/>
- Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). #MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(2), 236-46.
- Mercer, V., & Sten-Madsen, K. (2015). Doing restorative justice in cases of sexual violence: A practice guide. *European Forum on Restorative Justice*. Retrieved July 7, 2019 from [http://euforumrj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Doing-restorative-justice-in-cases-of-sexual-violence\\_practice-guide\\_Sept2015-1.pdf](http://euforumrj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Doing-restorative-justice-in-cases-of-sexual-violence_practice-guide_Sept2015-1.pdf)
- Miller, H. (2019, June 4). Kirsten Gillibrand defends Al Franken resignation push after Peter Buttigieg swipe. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved June 10, 2019 from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/kirsten-gillibrand-pete-buttigieg-al-franken\\_n\\_5cf67a90e4b0e346ce8516b1](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/kirsten-gillibrand-pete-buttigieg-al-franken_n_5cf67a90e4b0e346ce8516b1)
- Miller, S. (2019, March 6). Consultants mostly optimistic on industry's future, but 2020 worries loom. *Campaigns & Elections*. Retrieved July 8, 2019 from

<https://www.campaignsandelections.com/campaign-insider/consultants-mostly-optimistic-on-industry-s-future-but-2020-worries-loom>

- Moon, E. (2019, May 7). Bernie Sanders says his campaigns new sexual misconduct policy is “the gold standard.” *PS Magazine*. Retrieved July 8, 2019 from <https://psmag.com/news/bernie-sanders-campaigns-new-sexual-misconduct-policy>
- North, A. (2019, February 13). Aziz Ansari actually talked about the sexual misconduct allegation against him like an adult. *Vox*. Retrieved July 8, 2019 from <https://www.vox.com/2019/2/13/18223535/aziz-ansari-sexual-misconduct-allegation-me-too>
- Ortiz, W. (2019, April 10). Punishment is not justice. *Bitch Media*. Retrieved July 6, 2019 from <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/feature/punishment-is-not-justice>
- Rosen, C. (2019, June 25). The #MeToo movement is on life support. *Commentary Magazine*. Retrieved July 6, 2019 from <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/american-society/metoo-moment-is-on-life-support/>
- Shapland, J. (2014). Implications of growth: Challenges for restorative justice. *International Review of Victimology*, 20(1), 111-27.
- Smith, C., & Freyd, J. (2013). Dangerous safe havens: Institutional betrayal exacerbates sexual trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26, 119-24.
- Smith, C., & Freyd, J. (2017). Insult, then injury: Interpersonal and institutional betrayal linked to health and dissociation. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 26(10), 1117-1133.
- Smith, M. (2018, April 15). In age of #MeToo, can there be forgiveness, second chances? *AP News*. Retrieved June 10, 2019 from <https://www.apnews.com/c69e3a82417f4af280376fdc10cf8651>
- Umbreit, M.S., Vos, B., Coates, R.B., & Lightfoot, E. (2006). Restorative justice in the twenty first century: A social movement full of opportunities and pitfalls. *Marquette Law Review*, 253-304.
- Wager, N. (2013). *A scoping review considering the applicability of restorative justice to cases of sexual assault*. Paper presented at the International Psychological Applications Conference and Trends, Madrid, Spain.

- Wemmers, J. (2018). Judging victims: Restorative choices for victims of sexual violence. *Victims of Crime Digest Number 10*. Retrieved July 7, 2019 from <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd10-rr10/p3.html>
- Wexler, L., & Robbennolt, J. (2019). #MeToo and restorative justice. *American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Magazine*. Retrieved July 6, 2019 from [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/dispute\\_resolution/publications/dispute\\_resolution\\_magazine/2019/winter-2019-me-too/metoo-and-restorative-justice/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/dispute_resolution/publications/dispute_resolution_magazine/2019/winter-2019-me-too/metoo-and-restorative-justice/)
- Whailey, E. (2018). *Rape crises in rape cultures: Transnational dehumanization within sexual assault response complexes*. Thesis submitted to the University of Colorado Boulder. Retrieved September 16, 2019 from [https://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=soc\\_gradetds](https://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=soc_gradetds)
- Yan, H., & Chavez, C. (2018, October 3). Here are the stats on false sexual assault claims. *CNN*. Retrieved September 13, 2019 from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/03/health/sexual-assault-false-reports/index.html>