

*Has the “#Metoo” Movement Really*

*Helped Us in Restaurants?*

Senior Capstone

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The #MeToo movement was a popular social media movement in which people used the hashtag 'Me too' to show how common sexual abuse truly is. The movement originally started with Tarana Burke, but the hashtag went viral when Ronan Farrow published an article about Harvey Weinstein's pattern of abuse and the people he's affected. The movement has been very popular and helped survivors bond over their struggles. However, it has also been heavily criticized by both advocates, survivors and opposers. Many say that this movement "allows anyone to be accused of assault" or "can ruin someone's reputation." Essentially, the usual argument that is always brought up when discussing abuse. On the contrary, many advocates feel that despite the Me too movement's popularity it has yet to make actual change in places like the restaurant industry where sexual harassment is normalized. In the case of the # MeToo movement, there has been little shift in the culture of abuse surrounding the restaurant industry. So what has the # MeToo movement actually done?

While the movement raised awareness for victims, it did little for them in terms of politics. The movement solely created anger instead of harboring change. Nothing has been done to change the actual culture of abuse in the workplace. While it was cathartic for victims to share their stories, it did nothing to prevent more people from becoming targets of abuse. There needs to be more done than just raising awareness, people in politics need to make a change and create a safe environment for workers. (Jayoung Song) Primarily, The movement has initially solely helped the direct victims of Harvey Weinstein abuse. After Ronan Farrow's article broke the internet, many people were calling for action to be taken. In response the California legislature amended its Civil Code 51.9 on sexual harassment to include Hollywood movie directors and producers. This amendment led the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit's decision to reinstate a sexual harassment claim against Weinstein by Ashley Judd. (Dee) Judd was one of

Weinstein's many victims who were blacklisted in Hollywood for acting against him. The movement did allow her case, as well as many other victims' cases, to be reinstated while also starting a conversation about white men abusing their power. Many cases against powerful white men were finally being acknowledged and brought to trial.

It seemed like a shift in the culture and that as a society we were making progress. Yet, just a few short weeks ago the case was overturned. Years after the movement even began the victims are still suffering from the unethical behavior of powerful white men. The hype, like most cases of #activism, died down once something new caught the media's eye in the 24 hour news cycle. The media was fixated on this movement for weeks but quickly moved onto the next big celebrity scandal or useless fashion trend everyone needed in their closet.

This form of activism proved to have little success even for the women who had originally benefited from it. Since the trial has been overturned the movement has been proven to be unsuccessful even in its original attempt to change the culture of sexual harassment. The reason for the shocking outcome was because the court ruled it would create an unfair trial if they were to cross examine Weinstein. If they cross examined him it would allow the prosecutor to examine him on other accusations, which would make the jury completely biased. (Cramer) Therefore, since the entire world knew about his actions it actually made it harder for him to be prosecuted. It's a double-edged sword, it's comforting for victims to hear other stories— but the law diminishes the power of voices. Speaking out is empowering, but it also raises concerns for bias in a court of law. While this is unfortunate, it is eye opening to the fact that our laws still don't know how to deal with our culture of abuse. When individuals constantly watch repeat offenders act without consequences, it sends a message that we as a society do not care about victims. The culture is saying offenders can repeatedly offend and victims are at risk of

revictimization. This lack of change is what harbors toxic environments and allows places like the restaurant industry to go unscathed for decades.

Sexual harassment or abuse is known to be a common factor when working in the restaurant industry. Studies show of all the sexual harassment complaints reported at the EEOC, the major source of complaints is from a restaurant or hotel-related business (Min). But, why is sexual harassment so routine specifically in the food and beverage industry? For starters, the tipping culture plays a large factor. Studies have found that tipping culture was actually seen to increase the likelihood of sexual harassment because it “induced the predators.” Since the perpetrator is the one paying the servers, it makes it harder for them to stand up for themselves. That one table can determine if they pay their rent or get evicted, so why would they risk losing their income? (Klein) The predators know this makes the employees the perfect target because if they stand up it only hurts themselves. This theory was put to the test by the University of Nebraska and according to the study those who were offended by the unpleasant interaction ultimately dismissed the discomfort and claimed it was “inevitable parts of restaurant culture.” (Giuffre) Sexual harassment is ingrained in the restaurant culture to the point where it is expected. It's considered inevitable that you will receive some form of harassment while working in a restaurant. “It's the culture,” means it's expected to be overly sexualized and the individual is expected to deal with it.

Workers are expected to ignore these problems and do their jobs, as if it is not a violation of their human rights. It is already difficult enough for typical office workers to speak out about harassment, take Monica Lewinski. Lewinski was a young intern abused by her boss and the most powerful man in the country, Bill Clinton. Yet, she was a laughing stock to the rest of the world. Lewinski still has not received justice for being tormented and blacklisted by the entire

country. To this day she is still referenced in music and pop culture as if what happened to her was humorous rather than traumatic. She is punished for being abused while Clinton still holds a position of power. Generations of women were told from this instance that they are the problem in these scenarios. They are told that in our society being a survivor makes you a promiscuous homewrecker rather than a victim. (Bever) The media made her out to be a horrible person, similarly to the backlash many victims of the #Metoo movement received.

The #Metoo movement might have had its moment in the 24 hour news cycle, but there is a stronger need to change the normalized abusive culture. The world has evolved, but still has a long way to go in terms of change in the culture. The restaurant industry specifically is in desperate need of a revolution to fix the hostile environment that has accumulated over the last decade. Advocates of survivors need to focus on this area of the world because its problems are so prevalent, yet it is rarely discussed. In the cultural conversation of abuse in the workplace, the food and beverage industry should be at the forefront. However, it's being pushed to the side because no one has done anything to fix it. #Metoo ignored this major issue so, activists need to center their attention on restaurant victims.

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