

# #MeToo to “Me Who?”: US media has turned off the sexual witch-hunt for the moment

By David Walsh  
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The American media, and in particular the *New York Times*, has stopped paying much attention to the #MeToo sexual witch-hunt at present. Among other things, this “lull” demonstrates the extraordinary level of media manipulation and control involved in the launching and circulation of such campaigns.

Following the supposedly devastating revelations about producer Harvey Weinstein in the *Times* and the *New Yorker* in October 2017, dozens of similar accusations emerged, as though a tap had been turned on.

Prominent figures such as Kevin Spacey, Louis C. K., James Levine, Charles Dutoit, Garrison Keillor, Jeffrey Tambor, John Hockenberry, Aziz Ansari and Plácido Domingo were accused of sexual misconduct and, in many cases, driven out of public life, their careers at an end. Politicians and media personalities, including Al Franken, Matt Lauer, Charlie Rose and Les Moonves, came under attack as well. The ongoing hounding of Roman Polanski and Woody Allen are also part of this general picture.

Aside from Weinstein, whose conviction the American political and media establishment devoted considerable time and resources to ensuring, no one has been found guilty of a crime since October 2017, and very few have even been accused of one. The one case, in Massachusetts, against Spacey collapsed ignominiously. Nonetheless, the McCarthyite smear campaigns, often combining anonymous and unsubstantiated claims, rumors, gossip and sensationalism, have effectively destroyed careers and lives.

In 2017-19, the public was solemnly informed by America’s principal media outlets and Democratic Party leading lights that the sexual abuse and harassment of movie stars and others was one of the most pressing social questions of our time—this in a country that has prosecuted murderous, illegal wars for decades, whose government spies on everyone and everything and where

a handful of billionaires possess as much wealth as half the population!

*Time* magazine, pompously and emptily bestowing its “Person of the Year” honor for 2017 to the “Silence Breakers” (including Rose McGowan, Alyssa Milano, Ashley Judd and Taylor Swift), asserted that the issue “has actually been simmering for years, decades, centuries ... These silence breakers have started a revolution of refusal, gathering strength by the day, and in the past two months alone, their collective anger has spurred immediate and shocking results: nearly every day, CEOs have been fired, moguls toppled, icons disgraced. In some cases, criminal charges have been brought.”

The chorus of neurotic weeping and moaning in Hollywood in particular, where such undertakings can be organized as quickly and easily as an open casting call, had nothing to do with improving the rights or conditions of women (and men) in the film industry or anywhere else. It was a cynical, politically motivated campaign, led by the *Times*, the *New Yorker* and Democratic Party circles.

The fiasco of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 election campaign, which turned its back on the working class and placed central emphasis on racial and gender issues (including making hay out of the case of Stanford student Brock Turner, convicted of sexual assault), allowed Donald Trump to take the White House.

An instantaneous outpouring of mass opposition to Trump, particularly regarding the brutal treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers, threatened to move along left-wing and anti-capitalist lines. This frightened and shook the powers that be. The invention of “Putin’s interference” in the 2016 vote, and the general anti-Russia offensive, was designed to channel opposition in a rightward direction, as was the #MeToo witch-hunt, spearheaded by former Clinton aide and State Department official, Ronan Farrow.

But where is Farrow now? On May 17, the *New York Times* published an article by Ben Smith, “Is Ronan Farrow Too Good to Be True?,” which argued that the *New Yorker* journalist played fast and loose with the truth, omitting “complicating facts and inconvenient details.” By American media standards, Smith’s piece was devastating.

We suggested at the time that it was impossible “to know precisely why the *Times* has chosen to go after Farrow at this juncture, when the extent of his misconduct could have been investigated at any time over the past several years, but the decision cannot simply be an arbitrary or incidental one. No significant piece appears in that newspaper without fitting into and advancing a larger political agenda. Clearly, the famous wheel of retribution has turned.”

Farrow, who has the distinction, along with Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor of the *Times*, of receiving a Pulitzer Prize for witch-hunting, is relatively quiet these days. The last article of his *New Yorker* lists was posted February 25.

It may well be that the immediate electoral concerns of the Democrats, once Weinstein was disposed of, loom large in this. The charges of sexual misconduct leveled by former staffer Tara Reade in March against Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic Party presidential campaign, were received coldly by the *Times* and the media generally (except for its openly pro-Trump wing). Unquestionably, in that case, the #MeToo campaign and its slogan of “Believe women” cut across the plans and politics of the *Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Time* and the sections of the American ruling elite for whom they speak.

Reade’s claims have been treated with skepticism, as they may well deserve, and she has more or less disappeared from the headlines.

Alyssa Milano, Jessica Valenti and other #MeToo promoters have made clear that whether they believe Reade or not, that will not stand in the way of their supporting Biden. Valenti’s comments on *Medium* (“The Importance of Believing Women—Even When It’s Politically Inconvenient”) were remarkable for their sophistry and anti-democratic spirit. She argued it was the responsibility of feminists “to come to the aid of a woman [Reade] who accuses a powerful man. We can listen to her story, believe her, and speak out about what Biden has done—not just to Reade, allegedly, but to the many women he has made feel uncomfortable or diminished over the years. Doing all of this doesn’t mean we can’t vote for

Biden. We can be loyal to our feminist values while recognizing the moral obligation we have to reduce harm and oust the dangerous bigot who currently sits in the White House.”

Valenti manages to combine disregard for the presumption of innocence (“allegedly” seems thrown in here just for decoration), ridiculous concern for women made “uncomfortable” by Biden and subservience to “lesser of two evils” and the big business Democrats. The worst of several possible worlds ...

Farrow too presumably belongs to this #MeToo/pro-Biden camp. His silence may in part be self-censorship: “Let’s keep everything under wraps until after November.” Or he may simply have been given the word to keep his mouth shut.

The Jeffrey Epstein case, with its far-reaching ramifications, has also created considerable nervousness. His “black book” includes the names of many prominent New York Democrats and entertainment figures in particular.

Is the *Times* concerned that one or more of its leading figures may show up in the headlines at some point? The #MeToo campaign may be proving too much of a minefield.

For the time being at least, the *Times* and the media generally have staked everything on race. The need to block the development of a unified, multi-racial movement of the working class is a life-and-death priority for the ruling elite and its media representatives. The *Times* and its allies are treating every issue that arises first and foremost as a racial question.

In any event, the dropping of the #MeToo campaign is a further indication of its manipulated and fraudulent character. Never a deeply popular effort, it can be switched off and on as the *Times* and the Democrats require. Hollywood, or some equally amenable and abundant sphere, can always be relied upon to cough up a scandal, more or less to order. The American media is associated with endless conspiracy against the rights and conditions of the population.

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