

When will “Me too” become “Everybody too”?

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By Shelly Stow . . . Jan, a junior executive for a large company, was seeking approval for a new project. She was learning how essential it was to have the friendship and support of the more senior and influential company executives. Therefore, when Ted, one of those important and influential persons, made teasing comments to her about her physical attributes and flirted and joked about a sexual assignation with her, she took it in stride, smiled, and even flirted back a little.

That was twenty years ago. Jan is no longer with that company, but Ted is, now even more senior. Jan has realized, along with countless other persons, primarily women, that Ted’s comments and behavior were inappropriate and actually amounted to sexual harassment.

Swept along with the backlash against harassment by those in positions of power, she reported Ted’s past behavior to his company and in the media. She was applauded for her courage in

“coming forward” and “speaking out.”

No criminal charges were expected, of course. Ted hadn't broken any laws, and even if he had, the statute of limitations had expired. He had just been a bit of a chauvinist pig. He wasn't even sure that he remembered Jan or his behavior with her.

None of that mattered to the company. The board of directors fired him almost immediately.

A very familiar story, it is repeating itself over and over. The basic elements don't vary: a man (almost always) in a position of power; a woman (almost always) hoping to do well in the company or the profession; many years later accusations of inappropriate sexual behavior on his part and helplessness on hers; his very quick firing/removal/canceling of contract by the company.

So what's the problem?

Was he actually guilty? Only he and she know. Why did she wait so long to speak up? It doesn't matter. He isn't being charged with a crime. There are a few people here and there raising a stink about due process and innocent until proven guilty, but no one seems to be paying attention. One writer said that innocent until proven guilty is a legal concept, not a societal one.

The fact that it is a constitutional one seems irrelevant. But if we are willing to change the rules in the absence of legal action, how soon will we be willing to change them within the legal context? This may be the very definition of the slippery slope.

Will this run its course, causing enough concern for enough people that some actual pushback occurs?

Or will others, emboldened, see the perfect way to get rid of

unpleasant co-workers, grumpy and demanding supervisors, or others they just don't like?

What could be easier? Make a few accusations to top management, go public if necessary, and problem solved. How can he prove he didn't say that to you over the water cooler?

What's important is that you don't have to prove he did.

[Source](#)