



Handout 2b - The #MeToo Movement

Prior to actress Alyssa Milano's Tweet on October 15, 2017, most people had never heard of the "#metoo" movement. Milano was compelled to write the Tweet in response to an ever-expanding list of sexual assault and sexual harassment allegations against men in film, music, media, the arts, government, and technology that erupted following the allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein after a report published by The New York Times on October 5, 2017.



If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet.

Me too.

Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

Milano's resolve to connect her feelings about sexual harassment with those of other women resonated. The Associated Press reported that the "#metoo" hashtag was used more than 12 million times in posts on Facebook, SnapChat, Twitter, and Instagram in the first 24 hours following her initial Tweet.

Unbeknownst to Milano, in her tweet she had brought attention to the life's work of social activist Tanara Burke. During her time as a youth worker, a camper shared with Burke stories about the abuse she was suffering at the hands of her stepfather, and, after listening to the camper's story, Burke replied: "Me too." In the years that followed that exchange, Burke started Just Be, Inc. an organization which promotes the wellness of minorities and young people.

The #MeToo movement quickly became much bigger than either Milano or Burke likely could have imagined. The hashtag was translated into other languages, and many women felt compelled to use it to share their personal experiences publicly, often for the first time. Many have compared the "#MeToo" movement to a dam that has burst, and the effect of the shared experiences has been felt throughout many major U.S. industries.

In a December 2017 article in which it names the "Silence Breakers" of the "#MeToo" movement the collective "Person of the Year," Time magazine suggests that the movement has been "brewing" for decades. While the authors of the Time article support the "#MeToo" movement, they also caution, "We're still at the bomb-throwing point of this revolution, a reactive stage at which nuance can go into hiding. But while anger can start a revolution, in its most raw and feral form it can't negotiate the more delicate dance steps needed for true social change." But, the authors suggest, "At least we've started asking the right questions."