#MeToo Movement: The New Wave of Feminism

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By: Jannette Delgado
MeToo Before the Hashtag

Before the #MeToo movement went viral in October 2017, activist Tarana Burke coined the phrase MeToo for over a decade in her lifelong fight to help and protect victims of abuse (Giribet 2018). When Alyssa Milano went on Twitter on Oct. 15, 2017, she tweeted, “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet”. After many celebrities and high-figured people used the phrase #MeToo, it gained unstoppable momentum as it was the beginning of a new women’s movement of many social spectrums including outside of Hollywood. For that reason, Alyssa Milano received credit for creating the hashtag. However, Black women quickly corrected that error and acknowledged Burke for the creation of the #MeToo movement over a decade ago (Johnson 2018). Interestingly enough, Time Magazine named “The Silent Breakers” as their person of the year with the cover including actress Ashley Judd, singer Taylor Swift, corporate lobbyist Adama Iwu, worker Isabel Pascual, and former Uber engineer Susan Fowler. How could the voice behind the influential movement not face the cover? It might have to do with who society listens to and acknowledges when women report sexual abuse. By no means does that mean we discredit Milano, it means we wake up and acknowledge where credit is do and start paying more attention to women of color who don’t report for this reason.

"It wasn’t build to be a viral campaign or a hashtag that is here today and forgotten tomorrow,” she explained. “It was a catchphrase to be used from survivor to survivor to let folks know that they are not alone and that a movement for radical healing was healing and possible”

- Tarana Burke
The Downfall of Once Powerful Men Begins

It all began when the New York Times published a story that detailed numerous accusations of sexual harassment against Harvey Weinstein (Gonzales 2018). It’s amazing to see the once deemed most powerful man in Hollywood be held in handcuffs and face the consequences that were long overdue. The image of Harvey Weinstein in handcuffs serves as a reminder to women that even the most powerful men can come down if they keep talking and tell their stories. On September 25, 2018, at the age of 81, Bill Cosby was sentenced to three to 10 years behind bars for drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at his gated estate (Johnson & Hawbaker 2018). The once declared “family man” became the first celebrity of the #MeToo era to be sent to prison and only shows how powerful the cause has become. It has caused a ripple effect that has inspired and reached women internationally. There has been proclamations of #MeToo around the world: “#YoTambien in Spanish, #BalanceTonPorc (expose your pig”) in French and #quellavoltache (“that time when”) in Italian”(Bennett). It has gone beyond Hollywood such as the everyday workplace, schools, Olympics, and the higher court.
When Dr. Christine Blasey Ford walked in to face the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sep. 27, raised her right hand and swore to tell her truth on Judge Brett Kavanaugh, it was clear in that moment she was about to change the world on the #MeToo movement (Edwards 2017). Knowing she wanted nothing in return from the life changing decision she was about to make and the outcome it had, it was a realization to the entire country the shame women carry when they tell their truth. Many refused to believe her or didn’t care for it as they pushed to confirm then nominated Justice Kavanaugh at all costs as it would create an unbalance majority of conservative justices, a win for Republicans. This created the hashtag #WhyIDidntReport.

But the leaders of the #MeToo movement want her to know that her sacrifice was not made in vain. They called her a hero and promised that her words would have a lasting impact (Fortin 2018).

“Indelible in the hippocampus is the laughter, the uproarious laughter between the two, and their having fun at my expense.”

-Dr. Christine Blasey Ford
The Effect of #MeToo on Social Media

Can #MeToo have a lasting Influence?
As we know, changing what people perceive as socially acceptable can be effective in influencing beliefs and behavior. Showing how norms are changing can give people a model of how they can change, too, and lead to a circumstance where many people change (Walton and Neimand 2017). The momentum of #MeToo has not stopped as women contribute and change the dialogue of what it means to be in front of a movement. The frequency of #MeToo being used is a sign that women are being heard, but at the same time a hurtful reminder that women keep having to say #MeToo. That only means we have to keep talking and reinforcing.

The #MeToo hashtag has been used more than 19 million times on Twitter from the date of Milano’s initial tweet through Sept. 30 of this year, working out to an average of 55,319 uses of the hashtag per day (Pew Research Center 2018).

“And when that new day finally dawns, it will be because of a lot of magnificent women, many of whom are right here in this room tonight, and some pretty phenomenal men, fighting hard to make sure that they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to say, ‘me too’ ever again.”

-Oprah Winfrey