

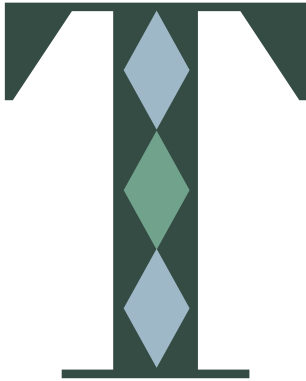


THE
YEAR OF
BIG
QUESTIONS

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Brett Ryder

In case you haven't heard, we've got a problem on our hands. (Hands, in fact, are a major part of the problem.) But in just a few months, we've made astonishing progress, sharing powerful stories, toppling powerful pervs. And now? It's time to channel our outrage at the sexual-harassment pandemic and figure out a righteous way forward.



HERE IS A stunning suddenness to these moments: Something that seemed immovable doesn't just move but shatters. What seemed inevitable and eternal falls apart, explodes, and in an instant, change is possible. But of course, even an earthquake isn't sudden; it's the result of tension built up over decades or centuries. So it was when apartheid ended in South Africa, when the Berlin Wall fell, when the Arab Spring broke out. So it was when Anita Hill testified

before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991 about being sexually harassed by Clarence Thomas. No, that did not halt his nomination, but it did revolutionize our understanding of sexual harassment. There was a crack produced by civil society pushing against injustices, by voices heroic enough to ring out even when winning was nowhere on the horizon.

It's easy to say that a pair of articles revealed decades of monstrous behavior by one depraved Hollywood producer and frame it as though it all came out of the blue. But feminism had laid decades of groundwork—has evolved the culture to a point at which significant numbers of women are assignment editors, TV and movie producers, and legislators in charge of deciding what the story is and whose story matters. And because plenty of men have also been transformed by the work feminism has done, they are increasingly in the habit of listening to women and treating them as at least as credible as the men they accuse.

I have watched this era unfold with both horror (at the stories of violence and hate) and joy (that at last we are doing something about it); I have seen myriad small actions build a bridge arching across the chasm to bring us into a new era; I have been moved to see women overcome shame and fear and defeat to break their silence. My grandmothers were born into a world that didn't let them vote. My mother's young adulthood took place at a time when marriage made a wife a husband's subordinate. I grew up in a better world, but still one that devalued women, often forcibly. When I look at my beautiful 10-month-old great-niece, with her cloud of dark hair and wide eyes, I hope we can do better for her.

A deeply moving aspect of the recent revelations is the way women have come forward to support one another—to say this or that victim is not a liar, because this also happened to me, and neither of us wants it to happen to another. Lifting each other up and holding one another's truths: That generosity toward strangers is, already, a triumph over the rigged value system from which predatory actions arise.

One of the greatest dangers is that in resisting your enemy, or defeating him, you become him. This is why, though punishment of sexual harassers may be necessary and appropriate, punitiveness and retaliation will not take us where we need to go. What will be ensuring that everyone has an equal voice—bosses, interns, pants wearers, actors, farmworkers—and that we hear one another.

There will be more earthquakes. In between, we all can do the slow, subtle, crucial work of love and generosity. And deepen the commitment to building a system, a society, a culture in which women are powerful, men are kind, and children are allowed to grow up whole and free. —REBECCA SOLNIT

"It Was Locker Room Talk"

...and other lies we should never fall for again.

REMEMBER WHEN

inappropriate was reserved for things like wearing flip-flops to the White House? Words such as *misconduct* and *improper* are a mixed blessing now that the news is teeming with salacious stories: They skirt the need to explain to small children what it means to "whip it out," but using euphemisms, which make the awful sound innocuous, also allows human beings to rationalize bad behavior. "It's part of what psychologists call moral disengagement—cognitive strategies that let us bypass guilt or shame," says Tom Page, PhD, a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Kent in England who's studied sexual harassment. And euphemism isn't the only moral-disengagement strategy that's come in handy lately. A few other popular mental acrobatics...

MORAL JUSTIFICATION

Rationalizing misbehavior as a bonding activity
"News is a flirty business."

—Geraldo Rivera, commenting on the way-beyond-flirty allegations against Matt Lauer

DISTORTION OF CONSEQUENCES

Failing to see what the problem is
"I have broached a topic that, unbeknownst to me until very recently, made certain individuals uncomfortable."

—Former congressman Trent Franks, who asked two staffers if he could borrow their wombs for nine months

DISPLACEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Blaming the people in charge
"I came of age in the '60s and '70s, when all the rules about behavior and workplaces were different. That was the culture then."

—Toxic fabulist and predatory ogre Harvey Weinstein

ADVANTAGEOUS COMPARISON

Making the old "it could have been worse" argument
*"I said to myself that what I did was okay because I never showed a woman my d*ck without asking first."*

—Performance masturbator Louis C.K.

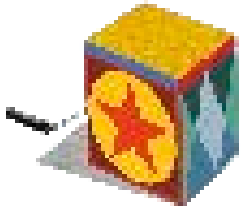
DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Saying it's okay because other people do it
"Mary was a teenager, and Joseph was an adult carpenter. They became the parents of Jesus."

—Alabama state auditor Jim Zeigler, on why the claims against the allegedly teen-loving ex-judge Roy Moore are no biggie

MEN, OVERBOARD

Terry Crews on how to save guys from themselves.



I CALL MASCULINITY a cult because it is. It's something you're indoctrinated into that blinds you to the truth. Growing up in Flint, Michigan, I remember asking friends how to talk

to a girl I liked. I was told to lie to her, to keep her off-balance. Having "game" was all about manipulating girls, getting them to give you sex, then tossing them aside. As a man, you're also taught to keep your girl in check, to maintain control. But you cannot control someone and love them at the same time. You only control things that are beneath you.

I'm guilty, too—I was a card-carrying member of the cult of masculinity. I was addicted to pornography for years, and that impulse was fueled by the thought that I was more valuable than my wife. I and other young men in my community watched our mothers and sisters be abused, which taught us that we were worth more than the women in our lives. When my wife finally said she wanted out of our marriage, I remember thinking, *Fuck this, I'll just go get another woman.* But a little voice inside me kept saying, *Maybe it's me.* And I couldn't put that thought away. Once the egg got cracked, there was no putting it back together.

I went to rehab eight years ago, then did a 90-day sex fast. I wanted to take sex out of the equation, to see my wife as a human being. Getting deprogrammed changed everything. Einstein pointed out that we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them; we have to rise above that mindset. Even though we're trained not to admit it, men want intimacy—for someone to see us for who we are and love us regardless. But to get true intimacy, you have to be emotionally open. You have to be vulnerable.

I'll spend the rest of my life making amends to my wife. Still, it's a joy to be out of that culture. And it feels good to speak out about the harassment I've faced—being groped by some Hollywood player. I see these men submerged inside this mentality, and I can only shake my head. They're in Guyana, sipping the Kool-Aid. I've been called a pussy, been told "all your muscles are good for nothing." But the question isn't "How strong are you?" It's "What is the real enemy here?" The process of being deprogrammed is eye-opening. Once you call yourself on your bullshit, you start seeing it everywhere. And now nobody can steal my joy.

—AS TOLD TO ZOE DONALDSON



"In the 1970s, women students invented the term *sexual harassment* to describe what was happening to them in summer jobs, and *Ms. magazine* wrote a cover story about it that was banned in supermarkets. Then the great feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon incorporated the concept into sex-discrimination law. And Anita Hill educated the country while facing down an all-male, all-white Senate Judiciary Committee.

"The really bad guys are still trying to destroy their accusers—Google 'DARVO'—but the not-so-bad guys are saying they're sorry and changing.

"Since democracy begins with power over our own bodies, this moment could be huge. If we keep talking and listening and acting, we just might restore the truth that human beings are *linked, not ranked.*"

—GLORIA STEINEM,
feminist icon

Yes, Sex Addiction Is a Thing

And no, it's not an excuse. A sex therapist explains.

A sex addict engages in sex for the same reason an alcoholic drinks: to escape unpleasant feelings. Whether those stem from childhood trauma, anxiety, depression, or some other source, often the addict isn't even aware of them. All he's aware of is an overwhelming urge. In the moment, sex addicts are in an almost-trancelike state. They feel as if their behavior is beyond their control, and often it escalates over time—they need to increase the

activity to get the same high.

Harassment is more deliberate: It's about one person exerting power over another. A powerful man may sexually aggress simply because he feels entitled to. But he may also be fulfilling a deep subconscious need, one that might have been established very early in life. For instance, a man who masturbates in front of women may be expressing a regressed part of himself. It's terrible for his victims, but you can imagine that little boy inside saying, "Look at me! Am I the greatest?"

Even someone who doesn't fit the definition of sex addict but uses sex compulsively can benefit from rehab if

they're motivated to change. Just wanting the problem to go away isn't enough. A man has to break down the walls of denial and compartmentalization and see his actions the way the world does, to look at the pain he's caused and the ways he's disconnected from himself.

One hopeful thing: More people are seeking help now. And many patients want to work even harder. They're shaken. They see the situation from the outside and feel horrible for the victims. They say, "I don't want to be one of those guys."

—Puja Hall, a therapist at the New York Center for Sexuality and Sex Addiction Treatment

#US Too

THE UNITED SHAME OF AMERICA

This is a true story. Fifty sentences long. Each sentence comes from a different woman. Each woman comes from a different state. Funny how it reads like they're all the same person. Because in a way, they—and we, all of us women—are.

AS TOLD TO
Natalie Beach

With thanks for speaking their truth: L., Alabama. L.M.L., Alaska. S.B., Arizona. A.R., Arkansas. K.G.B., California. H.K., Colorado. O.B., Connecticut. T.F., Delaware. R.W., Florida. S.L.S., Georgia. H.S., Hawaii. M.P., Idaho. A.H., Illinois. K.M., Indiana. M.B., Iowa. A.K., Kansas. M.N., Kentucky. C.P., Louisiana. K.R., Maine. A., Maryland. S.G., Massachusetts. E., Michigan. M.M., Minnesota. A.N.B., Mississippi. M.A., Missouri. K.L.L., Montana. K.D., Nebraska. R.S., Nevada. C.S., New Hampshire. L.R., New Jersey. L.M., New Mexico. F.M.G., New York. S.B., North Carolina. K.P., North Dakota. C., Ohio. H.M., Oklahoma. K.D., Oregon. V.C., Pennsylvania. J.M., Rhode Island. S.S., South Carolina. J.D., South Dakota. E.S., Tennessee. L., Texas. M.H., Utah. S.G., Vermont. C.H., Virginia. J.C., Washington. L.H., West Virginia. L., Wisconsin. M.D., Wyoming.

ILLUSTRATION BY Brett Ryder
LETTERING BY Gillian MacLeod

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