

An obnoxious Hollywood mogul, a man who for decades sexually harassed seemingly every female who came in range, has been named, condemned by everybody, and even fired from the successful film company that he founded.

A once beloved comedian, Bill Cosby, now in doddering old age, has been outed as a sexual predator of young women whom he was supposed to be mentoring.

A conservative Fox Network executive and a popular show host on the same network have both been fired after claims of relentless sexual abuse of their women colleagues. Add to that the death of the first champion of a new and "free" sexuality, who created a sort of playhouse where he had a harem of beautiful playmates and a couple of wives. He was once envied. Today, his passing has been marked by disgust.

And voters were not deterred from electing a President who confessed to how easy it was for a "star" to exploit women: "When you're a star, they let you do it."

A reader might assume that America is an oversexed kindergarten of sexual predators who make the lives of women miserable. One might think that, unless that one was a historian and a woman herself, me. I think that the outrage that has finally erupted over sexual exploitation of women by powerful men shows how much we have changed from one million years of human history. We need only look at the status of women in all parts of the world not part of modern western civilization.

Biology does matter. Women are generally smaller than men, have less upper body muscle, and could be impregnated by force. If pregnant, a woman needs protection. Women paid the price for this in being subjected to male rule, unable to protect themselves from beatings, and for centuries assumed to be in the category of children, ignorant, incompetent, and barred from any human activities other than drudgery, sexual service, and breeding.

What has changed in the modern world is owed to Western Civilization, which, throughout the centuries produced some men who, like Plato (ancient philosopher), believed that women could be the intellectual equals of men if given an education. The ancient Jews actually, for a short time, honored women judges (Bible readers take note). And from the mid-18th century on, the movement of strong, educated women to demand political emancipation emerged in England and the United States.

What finally tipped the balance was a medical invention, contraception. Women in Western society finally have control of their fertility. This has freed them to pursue careers in every field once exclusively held by men. Women lawyers, judges, surgeons, medical doctors, astronauts, and even heads of state (except in the US) are proving themselves as capable and sometimes even more capable than their male colleagues.

The emancipation of women is an interesting phenomenon. Once men feared that if women were emancipated, they would get revenge on men by dominating them. That was projection, of course. Women have not done this at all. They want partnership, not domination.

The sexual hijinks we are seeing in today's world are just a remnant, a throwback to the past. The vast majority of modern men value the partnership of women, love their wives and daughters, and are horrified at the behavior of the abusers. In western society, wife beaters are a loathed minority, as are rapists (who go to prison) and exploiters of those they should mentor and respect.

If anyone needs a reminder of how life for women used to be, visit the resurgent Muslim world in which women may legally be beaten, married against their will, sold as sex and labor slaves after capture by Holy Warriors, and forced to be invisible under cloaks lest their beauty "tempt" men.

In non-Muslim lesser developed cultures (Africa, Burma, Thailand) women are raped as an instrument of genocide, and in Africa are burned as witches if a hut catches fire or a child is born with an anomaly. That is what our own past was, but is no longer. Put it in perspective.

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