

The Me Too Movement in Perspective  
Posted On: December 31, 1969

As our political world is once more roiled by allegations of abuse of women, this time a woman who has come forth (obviously reluctantly) with an account of an attempted rape by a drunk schoolboy when the two of them were teens. She was 15 and he 17, but that boy is now a man, a judge, President Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court.

If this were the only question about this nominee, Brett Kavanaugh's behavior, it could well be dismissed as an example of "boys will be boys," and that since high school, he has had no other issues of sexual abuse. However, it is not the only issue of deliberate duplicity. Over the years, even in the first go-around with a senatorial hearing for a Federal Judgeship, there were questions about this candidate's candor. It took a second hearing a few years later to get him the appointment.

In the hearings this time, the problem of candor has come up again: when questioned about his acceptance of Roe vs. Wade, he says that it is accepted law. Indeed it is, but the lack of candor is about what he would do if this issue came up before the Supreme Court again---and this time, with four other Conservative justices, his vote could undo Roe vs. Wade as accepted law.

In addition, he has expounded the view in papers and lectures that a sitting president should never be prosecuted or subpoenaed to testify in court until his presidency is over. It seems less than accidental that President Trump, who well may be found culpable for conspiracy with a foreign government and for fraudulent monetary practices, wants a Justice with this protective view of the presidency. This sexual assault hearing could well be the final blow to scotch this questionable appointment.

That bipartisanship is going through a rough patch is obvious. We are seeing a group of 11 older, white, Republican senators grilling the woman, who has no apparent reason for putting herself through such misery aside from civic duty. They are in the rush to confirm this dubious nominee so that the Republicans can secure a very conservative majority in the Court for many decades to come.

For the past several weeks, the news media have revived the comparable Senatorial hearing to confirm Clarence Thomas, accused by a Black woman professor, Anita Hill, who had once worked for him. Her testimony was obviously embarrassing to her, as she was asked to describe in detail the sexually obnoxious daily patter from Thomas describing his taste in pornography, and his pressure for her to go out with him. One senator sternly asked Hill if she was a "woman scorned," a frequent question directed at women who complain about the behavior of a man or a boss. It was (and still is) very ugly.

What makes the Thomas-Hill hearing different from the present one is that this is not just an issue of "he said, she said." Professor Hill had plenty of corroborating material, and had she been a white woman confronting a white male candidate, she might have spiked his candidacy. The hitch was that Thomas himself was a Black man, and he angrily called this hearing and Hill's testimony a "lynching," chilling words coming from a Black man in America. It was, of course, no such thing, but he managed to frighten a bi-partisan Senate committee into disbelieving Dr. Hill instead of Thomas.

We also need to remember that when slavery was abolished, the vote was given to every Black male citizen. Black women had to wait another 56 years, along with all White women, to become voting citizens. That vote will matter now.

From our most primitive roots, women have been raped, beaten, abused, starved, and maligned in folklore and law. This is still true in much of today's world. In today's western world, abuse of women still exists, but is condemned by our laws and by most of our men. I consider that progress.

We need good character in our legislators, as well as in our judges. Women will be heard at last.

685 words

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