NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP

Five years ago, the collective voice of Survivors revealed how malignant the problem of sexual violence was and is – how it had been ignored and, in some cases, romanticized as part of the Hollywood lore. In reflecting on the 5-year anniversary of #metoo going viral, we asked Tarana Burke, survivor activist and founder of the “me too.” Movement, to share her thoughts on what accountability could look like in the entertainment industry, including strategies that leaders might consider in order to reimagine a safer, more inclusive industry.

We hope you enjoy this special edition issue featuring Anita Hill in conversation with Tarana Burke that, in our view, illustrates not only thought leadership but also, a bold vision for interrupting sexual violence and operationalizing systemic change. The Commission is honored to bring the reflections of these iconic women, at this landmark anniversary, directly to you.

Sincerely,

Raana Simmons

Director, Programs The Hollywood Commission
We've facilitated bystander trainings to more than 800 workers in response to these findings; hosted 2 summits, 4 industry roundtables, and over 14 panels and workshops for the largest entertainment employers, unions and guilds; and have distributed employer toolkits and worker FAQs to small entertainment companies to help build infrastructure within the entertainment ecosystem that will support inclusive and harassment-free workplaces.

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Currently, we’re assessing the needs of workers across entertainment through the 2022 Entertainment Culture & Climate survey and soon will launch The Resource and Reporting Hub, a secure portal for workers to access resources and reporting mechanisms, as well as anonymously share and store sensitive information related to workplace sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and other forms of abuse.

I wonder how you see the link between individuals taking responsibilities for their harassment and the systems that are in place to eliminate the harassment.

ANITA HILL:

Recently, The Hollywood Commission conducted a limited survey for Elle Magazine to measure the degree of progress that has been made in the entertainment industry since 2017. More than 800 women responded – they acknowledged a changing workplace culture, but with a tempered optimism, and by no means are they considering the problem resolved.

Notably, a majority of respondents (55%) shared that their industry colleagues rarely or never accept responsibility for their problematic behavior and that companies’ investments in better systems have been somewhat positive but have not gone far enough. They described a moderate investment to prevent and address harassment yielding only moderate results.

I believe that both findings are a call to build.

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TARANA BURKE:

Well, I think that the systems in place that are meant to prevent harassment are flawed. I’ve been in this work long enough to see that the individuals who are responsible for harassment are oftentimes protected by the systems they’re inside of. I think that we have very few models for accountability because the decision makers who have the power to transform current systems are most times the ones who benefit from its brokenness.
Holding harassers accountable is only one part of the solution. True change will come when the culture has shifted so much that bad actors recognize their behavior, accept responsibility for it, and do the hard work of changing themselves. According to the women in the Elle survey, we are not seeing that yet.

What conditions do you believe need to exist in entertainment workplaces for perpetrators to be able to hold and remedy the impact of their own harm doing?

Institutional accountability requires a certain level of transparency and diplomacy that is modeled throughout the institution’s culture, its policies, and its people. An institution that understands the urgency and severity of sexual violence and is committed to harm reduction will hold all of its employees, stakeholders and partners to an equal standard of personal safety and respect. Because sexual violence is about power-trading, gaining, and keeping- an institution that is accountable will work to address issues of harassment, assault and violence through the lens of power and privilege.

I think we can start with fair, equitable, and clear processes for reporting and investigating incidents of harm. Workplaces inside of the entertainment industry need to have a low tolerance for retaliation, and should seek the expertise of unbiased, third-party counsel in moments where harm has occurred. As a whole, we should be moving away from punitive systems that render people “good” or “bad”, “guilty” or “innocent” and begin building a world where we are invested in the restoration and transformation of people, as well as the spaces in which they live and work. I often say that because harm happens on a spectrum, so should the response. The consequences after harm has occurred should be based on the severity of violation and in alignment with the needs of the impacted party.

HC IN THE NEWS

- ELLE: What #MeToo Changed in Hollywood--and What It Didn’t
With glaring clarity #MeToo revealed the cultural acceptance of the problem.

—Anita Hill

ANITA HILL:

We talk a lot about lost potential – the talent, stories and creative genius lost when informal systems, or lack of formal systems, intersect to silence survivors. In your book, “Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement,” you write about the first iterations of ‘me too.’ workshops where you would tell young girls about stories of famous women who had experienced sexual assault –

“After sharing the stories ... I would reveal the names. When I shared names like Gabriel Union or Fantasia, it always caused a stir. And when I added Oprah Winfrey and Maya Angelou, it would cause a full-on ruckus. These girls couldn’t believe that the Black women they adored and admired had dealt with the same things and gone on to be somebody important and celebrated.

... not all of the participants were survivors of sexual violence, but they all left with a better understanding about how sexual violence impacted their lives and how building a deliberate community was essential for healing and change.”

How can the entertainment industry build deliberate community to interrupt sexual violence and other systemic issues impacting below the line production workers who we know from The 2019-2020 Hollywood Culture and Climate Survey are the workers most vulnerable to experiencing sexual violence in the entertainment industry?

TARANA BURKE:

Corporations and institutions inside of the entertainment industry need to be committed to understanding what sexual violence is, how it persists, and then be in the work to disrupt it at every turn. Brands who benefit from survivors’ stories should be equally invested in survivors’ healing and pursuit of justice, and publicly stand against retaliation, victim shaming and blaming, from backstage to onscreen, to social feeds. Lastly, there is so much potential for collaboration and partnership between media, entertainment and social justice, and it would be great to see the industry take a vested interest in the work of movement organizations like me too, International where we are changing the narrative about sexual violence and reshaping what survivorship looks like. We talk about this and more in our Social and Political Framework.
CONNECT WITH US

- For more information or to schedule a walk-through of the reporting platform, contact Raana Simmons, Director, Programs (raana.simmons@hollywoodcommission.org).

- The Hollywood Commission Entertainment Survey launched on October 20, 2022. We hope to have 20,000 entertainment workers complete the survey to learn from their experiences. They survey will be open until November 27, 2022. We need your help to make it happen. We are happy to attend meetings in person or virtually to spread the word. We can also provide materials for your communication staff to share. If you would like access to social media assets or additional materials please reach out to Lillian Rivera, Director, Education and Evaluation (lillian.rivera@hollywoodcommission.org).

- For media or press-related inquiries, contact Malia Arrington, Executive Director (malia@hollywoodcommission.org).

- To request to be added to or removed from the HC Insider mailing list, contact Julia Belanova, Program Coordinator (admin@hollywoodcommission.org).