

Actor Matt Damon comes under attack for his criticisms of the sexual misconduct campaign

David Walsh
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Actor Matt Damon came under vehement criticism this week for raising a few questions about the ongoing sexual misconduct campaign in the US.

In an interview for ABC News' "Popcorn With Peter Travers," after observing that "we're in this watershed" and "I think it's wonderful that women feel empowered to tell their stories," the 47-year-old Damon noted that there was "a spectrum of behavior. ... There's a difference between ... patting someone on the butt and rape or child molestation, right?"

Referring to comic Louis C.K., Damon argued that "we live in this culture of outrage and injury, and, you know, that we're going to have to correct enough to kind of go, 'Wait a minute. None of us came here perfect.'" The actor went on, "I don't know Louis C.K.. I've never met him. I'm a fan of his, but I don't imagine he's going to do those things again. You know what I mean? I imagine the price that he's paid at this point is so beyond anything that he ... I just think that we have to kind of start delineating between what these behaviors are."

Damon criticized the forced resignation of Minnesota's Sen. Al Franken, a Democrat, observing that he would have preferred "an Ethics Committee investigation ... [but] we're so energized to kind of get retribution, I think." Later, he told Travers that Franken's posing for a photograph with the sleeping LeeAnne Tweeden, "putting his hands on that woman's flak jacket and mugging for the camera ... that is just like a terrible joke, and it's not funny."

A few days later, Damon told *Business Insider* during promotion for his new film, *Downsizing* (directed by Alexander Payne), that not all men in Hollywood were predators or despicable. "I think one thing that's not being talked about is there are a whole s---load of guys—the preponderance of men I've worked with—who

don't do this kind of thing and whose lives aren't going to be affected." He observed that he didn't commit sexual harassment, "and most of the people I know don't do that."

Damon's comments were mild, and, in fact, in the course of them, he endorsed the disgraceful and cowardly erasure of actor Kevin Spacey, one of the first victims of the recent sexual scandals, from Ridley Scott's new film *All the Money in the World*. The actor called Spacey's removal from the completed work, which involved replacing the latter with Christopher Plummer and refilming 22 scenes, "smart" and "a total business decision by Ridley. ... Nobody right now is in the mood to see a Kevin Spacey movie."

Nonetheless, for having suggested that the sexual harassment crusade had perhaps gone too far, Damon drew down upon himself the self-righteous wrath of the media and various Hollywood personalities.

In *New York* magazine's *The Cut*, Madeleine Aggeler, for example, informed the actor "What We Want From You." Aggeler suggested that "while there's no way you can avoid journalists asking questions about the painful subject, you might want to try a different approach to answering them."

Aggeler grudgingly acknowledged that there was a difference between molesting a child and Franken's juvenile antics. However, she continued, "It's important to understand, that though wildly different, these behaviors are part of the same system—a system that allows powerful men to treat women like their sexual playthings, and then disproportionately punishes not the aggressor but the women brave enough to come forward. A system from which you, Matt Damon, have benefited immensely."

This insulting comment is a reference in part to the fact that Damon has worked with fellow actors Casey

and Ben Affleck, neither of whom has been convicted of any impropriety.

Damon's comments prompted one outraged commentator on Twitter to urge, "Any woman that has any sexual harassment story on Matt Damon, I encourage you to speak up right now. We are all here to support you." Under the present conditions, this amounts to a serious threat.

Actress Alyssa Milano, best known for her roles on the inane *Who's the Boss?* and *Charmed*, and one of the inspirations behind the #MeToo movement, attacked Damon in a series of tweets. "We are in a 'culture of outrage,'" she commented confusedly, "because the magnitude of rage is, in fact, overtly outrageous. And it is righteous."

Referring to Damon's comments about a spectrum of inappropriate behavior, Milano later tweeted, "There are different stages of cancer. Some more treatable than others. But it's still cancer." Someone might have pointed out to Milano that a better comparison might have been between *a sore throat* and cancer, but rational voices are few and far between in Hollywood at the moment.

Taking the cake for self-pitying and anti-democratic nonsense, however, was actress Minnie Driver, who performed with Damon in *Good Will Hunting* (1997) and had a personal relationship with the actor at the time.

Driver first tweeted, "Gosh it's so interesting (profoundly unsurprising) how men with all these opinions about women's differentiation between sexual misconduct, assault and rape reveal themselves to be utterly tone deaf and as a result, systemically part of the problem."

In an interview with the *Guardian*, Driver followed that up by suggesting that for "most men, good men, the men that I love, there is a cut-off in their ability to understand. They simply cannot understand what abuse is like on a daily level."

Driver, with a reported net worth of \$20 million, presented herself as one of the martyrs of sexual abuse, without offering any details. "I honestly think that until we get on the same page, you can't tell a woman about their abuse. A man cannot do that. No one can. It is so individual and so personal, it's galling when a powerful man steps up and starts dictating the terms, whether he intends it or not."

The actress suggested that men should not express any opinions about the sexual misconduct campaign: "It's not your job to compartmentalise or judge what is worse and what is not. Let women do the speaking up right now. The time right now is for men just to listen and not have an opinion about it for once."

The reactionary witch-hunt continues.



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