

New York Times whips up lynch-mob atmosphere

Producer Harvey Weinstein surrenders to police, charged in New York City

David Walsh
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The surrender to police and charging of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein have provided a further opportunity for the American media to exhibit its hypocrisy, deceit and bloodlust. And for that section of the upper-middle class invested in identity politics to reveal that it has no sympathy whatsoever for elementary democratic principles or legal due process.

After Weinstein turned himself in Friday morning, he was taken to court and charged, according to the New York City Police Department, with “rape, criminal sex act, sex abuse and sexual misconduct for incidents [in 2004 and 2013] involving two separate women.”

The identity of one of the accusers is known. Lucia Evans has accused Weinstein of forcing her to perform oral sex in 2004. The other woman remains anonymous. These are the first criminal charges filed against Weinstein, who also faces numerous civil lawsuits.

Weinstein was released on bail of one million dollars. He is represented by Benjamin Brafman, one of New York’s leading criminal defense attorneys, who previously defended French politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn, among others.

Brafman told reporters that his client would plead not guilty. “We intend to move very quickly to dismiss these charges,” he said. “We believe that they are constitutionally flawed. We believe that they are not factually supported by the evidence.”

He argued at one point, “Mr. Weinstein did not invent the casting couch in Hollywood and to the extent that there is bad behavior in that industry, that is not what this is about... Bad behavior is not on trial in this case.”

Brafman also suggested that when “the women who made these allegations” are cross-examined, “the charges will not be believed. Assuming we get 12 fair people who have not been consumed by the movement that has overtaken this case.”

The final point is not an insignificant one. The New York City media, led by the *New York Times* and the city’s other dailies and television channels, has already tried and convicted Weinstein. Through its sensationalism and scandal-mongering, the media has made it virtually impossible to assemble an impartial or fair-minded judge and jury. Not a single major publication as far as we know has uttered a word of caution about a rush to judgment.

The media generally treat the Weinstein case as though there were no question about his guilt. As Brafman indicated, the

distinction between “bad” behavior and criminal behavior is being ignored.

For the gutter press, having already tried and convicted the producer, the trial becomes a mere formality intended to confirm an outcome already decided upon.

We have no way of knowing, any more than the American and global media, what Weinstein has done or not done, or whether a crime has been committed at all.

It should be obvious by now to anyone who has a working brain that the legal and political implications of the Weinstein case go far beyond the alleged wrongdoings of one individual. The affair has been the occasion for the unleashing of powerful, reactionary forces and sentiments that have little to do with sexual misconduct or abuse of women in Hollywood or anywhere else.

The *Times* lead article on the case Friday read like an editorial, asserting that Weinstein’s court appearance was “a watershed in a monthslong sex crimes investigation and in the #MeToo movement.” After “decades of harnessing his wealth and his influence in the movie industry to buy or coerce silence from women,” the newspaper pontificated, “and after withstanding an investigation into groping allegations three years ago, Mr. Weinstein’s reign ended behind bars in a police holding cell on Friday morning.”

The accusations against Weinstein, the article went on, published first in the *Times* and the *New Yorker* last October, and other stories of sexual harassment and assault “by powerful men” had “spawned the global #MeToo movement, and since then, the ground has shifted beneath men who for years benefited from a code of silence around their predatory behavior.”

The *Times* alluded in another article Friday to a “once-powerful target [Weinstein] with high-priced lawyers,” as though the newspaper did not possess an entire “high-priced” legal department.

The *New York Daily News* carried a lurid, sneering article informing its readers that “the hulking ex-Hollywood honcho flinched as a Manhattan prosecutor denounced him as a sexual predator who perversely wielded his power for sexual gratification.”

Similarly foul pieces popped up in the media across the US. The Associated Press proclaimed that the arrest “was the moment the #MeToo movement had been waiting for: Harvey Weinstein in

handcuffs.” The court appearance was “a searing reckoning for the man who became a symbol of a worldwide outcry over sexual misconduct.”

The *Los Angeles Times* gloated, “‘We got you, Harvey Weinstein’: Hollywood celebrates disgraced film mogul’s arrest and surrender.”

The comments of alleged Weinstein victims Rose McGowan, Asia Argento, Mira Sorvino and others were not edifying to read, combining sadism and the dubious pleasures of participating in a lynch mob. Argento (who admits to having conducted a consensual relationship with Weinstein after what she alleges was an initial assault), for example: “Today Harvey Weinstein will take his first step on his inevitable descent to hell. We, the women, finally have real hope for justice.”

If anything undermines sympathy for the women involved, it is their perpetual insistence on responding in the most vengeful and socially blinkered manner.

Time magazine chimed in, “For Weinstein, a prolific producer who has racked up more than 81 Oscar wins, it was an epic fall. His revelation as a serial predator, after years of rumors in Hollywood and beyond, kickstarted the #MeToo movement and ushered in the current era of reckoning around sexual abuse and assault in Hollywood and beyond.”

One of the most vindictive and, frankly, stupid pieces appeared in the *Huffington Post*. Senior reporter Emma Gray’s headline sums up its moral level: “The Joy Of Watching Harvey Weinstein’s Perp Walk—There’s a delicious schadenfreude in seeing a powerful abuser finally held accountable.” For Gray and the others, the word “alleged” is a mere after-thought.

Since the *Times* published its account of Weinstein’s alleged activities last October, the sexual harassment campaign has morphed into a metastasizing international wave of accusations with no end in sight. Hundreds of individuals have already been pulled in and, in many cases, ruined.

Only a day earlier, CNN published an article alleging that actor Morgan Freeman had engaged in “inappropriate behavior.” Eight women claim to have been subject to lecherous comments or unwanted touching, while eight others asserted they witnessed such behavior.

The co-author of the lengthy, rambling article, Chloe Melas, reveals part way through that “she was subjected to inappropriate behavior by Freeman more than a year ago.” So much for journalistic detachment!

The conduct in question, if the accounts are accurate, may be lewd or boorish, but it hardly rises to the level of anything criminal.

All this comes at a time when this same media cabal is fresh from apologizing for mass murder on the Gaza-Israel border, when the US military is engaged on a daily basis in murderous interventions in every corner of the globe, when a trio of gangsters, including a self-admitted torturer, occupy the posts of secretary of state, national security adviser and CIA director, and when the president of the United States openly threatens entire nations with nuclear annihilation.

The Democratic Party, including figures such as Hillary Clinton and New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, which has been at the

forefront of the sexual harassment campaign, has emerged in the period since the charges were first made against Weinstein far more distinctly as the party of the Pentagon, FBI and CIA.

On Tuesday, the American Civil Liberties Union released a report detailing the systematic brutalization of unaccompanied immigrant children captured by Customs and Border Protection from 2009 to 2014 at the US-Mexican border. The behavior includes beatings, torture, starvation and sexual assault on a wide scale.

None of this elicits so much as a heavy sigh from the sexual misconduct warriors in Hollywood or the throng of pious editors in Manhattan. Indeed, through the sexual witch-hunt there is an effort to divert attention from the social crisis and threatened global disaster.

At the same time, certain social layers are convinced the Weinstein case means “their day has come” and are pressing forward with demands that sum up their selfish, mercenary concerns. “Gender parity” in the film industry will do nothing to improve the miserable quality of Hollywood’s offerings, but it will markedly improve the bank balances of a group of already well-heeled women.

Again, ignorance and cluelessness here mingle with cynicism and self-interest. There are those disoriented, unstable elements in the acting profession, egged on by the *Times* and trash like journalist Ronan Farrow, attached to the notion that “men” are the source of all evil. Others simply plan to cash in.

Big questions are at stake here. Arguments appear in the mainstream and “left” media that amount to ever more explicit repudiations of due process. In regard to Weinstein, the well-worn phrase inevitably comes to mind, “First we have the fair trial, then we hang him.”

Enormous resources have been expended in the ongoing investigation. Tremendous pressure will no doubt be exerted on Weinstein to accept some sort of plea deal. All of the might of the state and the media is being mobilized to ensure some sort of conviction or retribution. Powerful social and class interests are tied into this. Legal rulings can be made that will have far-reaching consequences.

The entire dirty affair should give those committed to democratic rights and social progress pause for thought.



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