

Production of *Being Mortal* suspended after actor Bill Murray accused of “inappropriate behavior”

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Production on the film *Being Mortal* was halted April 18 after leading actor Bill Murray became the latest Hollywood target of complaints about “inappropriate behavior” on the set.

The film, based on Atul Gawande’s 2014 nonfiction bestseller *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, and starring Murray, Aziz Ansari and Seth Rogen, deals with assisted living and end-of-life care for the elderly.

The film “was halfway through before the production halted,” according to *Deadline*. It is Ansari’s directorial and writing debut. According to the publication, “[i]t is unknown at this time what Murray’s involvement in the project will be going forward as the investigation remains active.”

Little concrete detail is available regarding the nature of the allegations against Murray. Fox Searchlight, the film company backing the project, declared in a letter that “[a]fter reviewing the circumstances, it has been decided that production cannot continue at this time.” The publisher was hoping “to resume production and [is] working with Aziz and [producer Youree Henley] to figure out that timing.”

The *New York Times* reported that the film company’s letter “did not provide any information on the nature of the complaint or who it involved, but the person working on the production, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the details of the matter are being kept confidential, said that the movie was shut down because of what was described only as ‘inappropriate behavior’ by Murray.” The nature of the complaint is unknown, as is the complainant—all of this reported by an anonymous source! And this is enough to destroy a career!

According to *Yahoo!* News, *Being Mortal* considered a comeback vehicle for Ansari.” The comedian has also previously been the victim of #MeToo allegations in the past.

Murray, 71, has featured in numerous oddball comedies and other popular films since the late 1970s. According to NPR, the actor-comic has become “something of a folk hero to some,” with a “deadpan style of comedy, something he honed at The Second City improvisational comedy troupe in Chicago and with The National Lampoon Radio Hour before joining the cast of Saturday Night Live in 1977.”

Murray is most celebrated for his string of memorable, if sometimes off-putting characters in films such as *Meatballs* (1979), *Caddyshack* (1980), *Ghostbusters* (1984), *Scrooged* (1988—a dark comic take on Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*), *What About Bob?* (1991), *Groundhog Day* (1993), *Rushmore* (1998), *Lost in Translation* (2003) and *St. Vincent* (2014), among many others.

If anything, the unifying theme of many of Murray’s most famous roles has been “inappropriate behavior.”

Being Mortal’s postponement occurs amid the ongoing #MeToo media witch-hunt, in which prominent actors, celebrities and other cultural figures are raked over the coals or worse for alleged “bad behavior” that often occurred decades ago.

The puritanical environment has done little good for the quality of society’s cultural output. In many cases, it has led to a definite lowering of culture, as celebrated actors, composers, musicians and performers are removed from projects and excluded from their fields.

The same week that *Being Mortal*’s production was

suspended, Netflix announced the firing of actor Frank Langella. The veteran actor was fired from the set of the streaming platform's miniseries *Fall of the House of Usher* after he allegedly told an "inappropriate joke that was sexual in nature," according to entertainment publication *TMZ*.

At the same time, veteran film actor Johnny Depp's ongoing defamation lawsuit against ex-wife Amber Heard in northern Virginia has revealed the often-convoluted and deeply dysfunctional relationships which persist among Hollywood's "elite." Heard's 2018 insinuation in the *Washington Post* that Depp had abused her has led to his partial blacklisting.



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