



## Me, Too. Asterisk. That Asterisk Makes All the Difference.

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On December 6, 2017, TIME magazine named "The Silence Breakers" TIME's "Persons of the Year." The asterisk on my story guarantees that it is unlikely that I or anyone like me will ever experience the vindication, camaraderie, or admiration that TIME's survivors may be experiencing now.

On October 19, 2017, the *New York Times* published Lupita Nyong'o's **account** of her history with Harvey Weinstein. Nyong'o's piece described, in clinical detail, a series of encounters that might be ominous, foreboding some future assault, or merely evidence of personal crudeness, like his pressing Nyong'o to consume vodka and diet soda pop, an icky mixed drink that she refused.

I saw myself as if in a mirror in Nyong'o's superbly written piece. I recognized how those subject to harassment think and how we write. Noticing every detail. Examining it to understand if it should have made us as nervous as it did. Excoriating ourselves for not being as bold and decisive as we should have been. Archiving each memory in discrete, photorealistic files.

On November 22, 2017, the *Times* published critic Wesley Morris' "**Who We Don't Talk About When We Talk about Weinstein.**" Morris confessed that he felt "utter ardor" for actress Annabella Sciorra, who had made her mark in the early 1990s. Sciorra, he wrote, could "put the feelings you want to see from an actor ... right there on the surface."

**Sciorra alleges** that Harvey Weinstein raped her and undermined her career. Rosie Perez, Sciorra's friend, **said that** Sciorra had been "riding high, and then she started getting reclusive. It made no sense. Why did this woman, who was doing hit after hit, all of a sudden fall off the map? It hurts me as a fellow-actress to see her career not flourish the way it should have." Morris, Sciorra's fan, penned a eulogy for a living person. What art would Sciorra have given the world had she not been crippled by her own trauma and Weinstein's sabotage?

I've had the same thoughts about myself. What if I had never gone to Indiana? Who would I be? What would I have accomplished?

Before I went to Indiana, and was harassed, I jogged five miles a day. I was a world traveler who had ridden a motorbike through African jungle and trekked in the Himalaya. After Indiana, I lost my life savings, I lived through years of rock-bottom poverty, and, since Indiana, I have not traveled as I used to. If I had never gone to Indiana, I would still be able to hear, as I once could. I would not need a cane to walk.

In 1994, I traveled to Indiana to do a PhD. I had previously been a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa and Asia, and a teacher in the inner city. I recognized academia as the manufacturer of truth. I further recognized that people like me were lied about in this truth factory. Several aspects of my identity – white skin, Catholic faith, Polish heritage, immigrant history, my work life lived paycheck-to-paycheck – were distorted and weaponized in academia. Being white meant being a recipient of evil power and privilege. Being Catholic meant being an oppressive obscurantist. Being working poor meant that I was a seething cauldron of resentment, requiring constant policing by my betters lest I spontaneously break into my preferred leisure-time hobbies, a lynch mob or a pogrom. I was told, in academia, that I could not be Polish because I can read. I recognized that the highly developed stereotype of Polaks that academia cherishes is very similar to an All-American stereotype: that of the white-trash redneck.

I was a resistance fighter down behind enemy lines. I wanted to take control of the printing press churning out *The Truth*. I wanted to tell a different truth, one in which working poor whites – Polish or Appalachian – are not the monsters we are depicted as in films like *Deliverance* and *The Deer Hunter*. I had begun this mission at UC Berkeley. There I organized a presentation. One of my invited presenters, Eileen O'Malley Callahan, was the waitress granddaughter of an Irish immigrant ditch-digger. She presented "**Tonya Harding Goes to Berkeley**." Callahan spoke about how the academy obsesses on race and gender, while imposing silence, or even self-betrayal, on its own working-class students. This made her feel that "I'm being told to swim while the lifeguard holds my head under water."

Not many poor whites try to do a PhD. It is a huge financial drain. There are fellowships, but no one was handing out fellowships for people working on my topic. One of my kinder advisors told me to abandon my project. "You will never get a job, or funding. Write about Africa. You lived in Africa. You speak an African language." But everyone was doing Africa and other trendy topics. I wanted to write about reviled men and women who lacked champions.

I received an assistantship. That covered tuition and offered a stipend. I went to work for a professor – Professor A., for "Anonymous." There were warning signs right away. I struggled to work around Professor A.'s "idiosyncrasies." I had been working for a paycheck since I was 14. I was used to being the low man on the totem pole and doing what needed to be done to make my boss happy.

I got a phone call. My father was dying. I asked Professor A. for permission to take time off to visit my father's deathbed. "No," I was told. "I need you to type up the program for a conference."

I felt myself shredding, skin ripping from muscle, muscle ripping from bone. That night I did something I've never done before or since. I broke glasses against the pavement. Then, of course, I swept up and discarded the jagged shards. We Polish girls do not leave messes.

I wanted so badly to write the dissertation that would vindicate my dad and others like him. I needed money to do that. Professor A.'s assistantship, that I had had to struggle to receive, underwrote my work. But I wanted to write this work for my dad, and he was dying. I had to see him.

Just as my train was pulling in to Manhattan's Penn Station, my dad, in New Jersey, was breathing his last. I attended the funeral, and traveled back to Indiana.

Professor A. harassed me for missing four workdays to attend my father's funeral. And that's all I'm going to say here. I will not detail the harassment.

I put up with for as long as I could. I kept reminding myself: You have no power. Your boss has all the power. If you speak up, you will not be believed. If you speak up, you will be the problem, not your boss. If you speak up, you will lose this chance to say what you need to say in your published work and future career. You endure ugliness now so you can achieve a worthy end. You will change things for the better for everyone.

One day, after the semester ended, after the campus emptied out and Christmas approached, I just couldn't stand anymore. I began to pack my things in cardboard boxes. Professor A. had won whatever sick game was being played. I lost my father. I lost my dream. I lost my self-worth.

I wanted to create at least one bright spot. I would tell someone. Maybe that someone would do something with the information, and make the world a better place, for whatever graduate student had to work for Professor A. in the future.

I told my story to a kindly dean I had previously met at a wine-and-cheese reception. I began to cry. I had never cried so hard in my life before that moment. I have never cried so hard since. These wrenching sobs may or may not be responsible for my subsequent health problems.

The dean said, "You can't leave. You are not Professor A.'s only victim. The others are afraid to speak. They might lose funding or standing. You have nothing. So, you have nothing to lose. You must speak, to make this campus safer for others." I was told that Professor A. had "almost killed someone." That Professor A. was a "sociopath." That I alone could stop this.

For the next six months, I was sent to a number of campus officials. These were important, powerful men and women in hushed, sumptuous offices. My testimonies began in the darkest days of winter and continued till the long evenings of spring. I confronted these officials alone. They demanded that I recount, in detail, everything that happened. When I finished, they dismissed me coolly, offering me no hint of how my words had affected them. I was also a first year PhD student, taking a full load of coursework, writing papers I would later publish.

One day I found I could not walk down a hallway whose floor was freshly laid in high-contrast tile. Other days, I heard popping sounds in my ear. My eyes began to dart, uncontrollably, back and forth – this is called nystagmus. I found it hard to see and impossible to do what graduate students do – read or write. Some days I could not stop vomiting. Unable to assimilate even a glass of water, I required hospitalization and intravenous rehydration. My weight dropped rapidly. Some days, for days at a time, I could not move.

I didn't know it at the time, but my inner ear had ruptured. I was disabled for the next six years. I applied for SSDI. In spite of testimony from doctors, the judge who heard my case turned me down. He was removed from the bench for discriminating against women applicants. His removal did not help me. I could not work and I was penniless. I would eventually receive three pro-bono surgeries. Finally, doctors recognized that my ear could not be saved and it was "killed" using gentamicin, an ototoxic drug. I am now deaf in the ear, and I lack bilateral vestibular function, but I no longer suffer from vomiting, overwhelming vertigo, or nystagmus.

After the final surgery, I completed the dissertation I dreamed of writing, **Bieganski, the Brute Polak Stereotype**. It became a prize-winning book.

What caused the inner ear rupture? For some with ruptured inner ears, **the cause** of the injury is deep scuba diving or exposure to a loud noise. Me? I think it was the wrenching sobs I cried in that dean's office, but I can only guess. No, the professor who harassed me did not take a baseball bat to my ear. But I doubt that I would have developed the problem without the stress of the harassment combined with the extended testimony.

Here is the asterisk to my story. The professor who harassed me and others was not a man. She was a woman. A black woman. And that's why, I was told again and again, everyone was so afraid to speak up. "We are afraid to be called racist. We are afraid to be called sexist."

WNYC, the NYC metro NPR affiliate, has broadcast commentaries exploiting the Me-Too movement to monger hostility to whiteness and maleness, to what they call "the patriarchy" and "structural racism." "This is so emblematic of all of these kinds of circumstances where these white male predators have created these microcosms of, sort of, the country at large, which is systemically racist, systemically patriarchal," said **WNYC's Rebecca Carroll**.

In the comments section, listeners pointed out that anyone, of any gender or skin color, can abuse power. Most of Bill Cosby's accusers were white. This truth was denounced as "vitriol" by **Francesca Rheannon**, an NPR freelancer. Anyone who didn't board the "blame white men" train was labeled part of a "backlash" that "always arises when people of color – and in this case women of color – clearly express how they have been subjected to racism ... these small minded commentators are so unwilling and unable to step outside of their self referential bubble to consider the damage that has been done to our society by pervasive racism and sexism. It has led directly to the disastrous leadership we have at this very moment at the head of our country that is bringing us to ruin."

This exploitation of the Me-Too movement to further irrational hostility to men is inaccurate. It has been reported in the press that Charlie Rose had female enablers. Charlie Rose's assistant, Yvette Vega, **acknowledged** that she enabled Rose's abuse of other women. Harvey Weinstein allegedly used a "honey pot" technique to lure naïve victims. He would summon aspiring actresses to meetings made to appear safe by the presence of one of his female employees. He would then dismiss the female employee and be left alone with his prey. At least one female employee appeared to **acknowledge** that she knew of this strategy, although the Weinstein Company staff later issued a **statement** denying knowledge. The *New York Times* identified Weinstein's "**Complicity Machine**." Weinstein was enabled by many other people, some of them female.

Too, I knew women, both grad students and professors, who used their sexuality to advance their careers. As one of my well-endowed friends put it, "I'm going to ask [a powerful professor] for funding today so I'm wearing a low-cut blouse." I know a man who was in charge of multimillion dollar purchasing at a high-tech company. Women vendors would say to him, in a suggestive manner, "I would do *anything* to get this contract." It takes a village to harass a victim, and all too many of those villagers are women themselves.

"Yes, but," Politically Correct persons insist to me, "your experience was a freak accident. It is not analogous to the Me-Too movement. Women are victimized by men in a system called the patriarchy. They suffer from misogyny. In your case, as a white female victim of a black harasser, there is no analog to patriarchy or misogyny. Perhaps your harasser was emboldened by an affirmative action mentality on the part of her enablers, but affirmative action is good and

necessary. That there was one white roadkill in this overall noble march toward progress is an unfortunate but necessary side effect. To make an omelet, you have to break a few eggs."

Let's examine these assertions.

In several respects, Professor A. was analogous to other harassers. Abusers, if confronted, attack the character of their accuser. "My accuser cannot be trusted because I am a high-status person and my accuser is a low-status person. My accuser can't be trusted because I have many allies and my accuser stands alone."

Professor A. was shrewd when she chose me as her victim. I was new in town. I had no local contacts to stand up for my character, while she had intimidated important people on a major campus. I was financially desperate. I was ambitious. I was dependent on her job to achieve my dream. She was up to her eyeballs in funding from national foundations eager to festoon their webpages with their support for "diversity."

But there is more than Professor A.'s strategic choice in victims that makes my story emblematic of Me-Too. We can acknowledge that African Americans, as a group, are poorer and less well situated in comparison to whites as a group. But university campuses are not American culture as a whole. Academia is a microcosm, and in that microcosm whiteness is demonized and to be poor and white is to be not only demonized, but punished, in concrete ways.

No, Professor A.'s career was not the result of any official, on-the-books affirmative action quota. The affirmative action that benefitted Professor A. was de facto, not de jure. University officials spelled out to me again and again that she was treated with kid gloves because she was a woman and because she was black.

Is the de facto affirmative action that cocooned Professor A and imperiled her bruised victims an otherwise noble march toward progress? The assertion that affirmative action is an unalloyed benefit to American blacks has been interrogated, not just by whites, but by blacks, as well. Significant facts render the assertion suspect.

Sheryll Cashin, herself an African American woman and law professor at Georgetown, is author of the 2014 book **Place, Not Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America**. Affirmative action operates primarily on the basis of skin color without reference to economic class. For this reason, Cashin **argues**, affirmative action benefits middle class blacks who need it least, not those poor blacks in generational poverty who need it most. It **achieves** "a skin color diversity that does not mitigate segregation, wealth disparities or other serious structural disadvantages that are causing opportunity hoarding in access to selective colleges."

Law professor Kevin Brown **argues that** an influx of black immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa has made it more likely that non-native-born blacks will benefit from affirmative action. "As **David Leonhardt put** it in the New York Times, 'low-income students, controlling for race, receive either no preference or a modest one, depending on which study you believe.' In other words, affirmative action is now another upper-middle class benefit," said former Department of Justice employee **Lloyd Green** in the Daily Beast.

Professor A. was decidedly not representational of the kind of person affirmative action is meant to uplift. Professor A is wealthy and successful. To my eyes, she appeared to live an almost Disney princess lifestyle. My mother was a cleaning woman and factory worker who had had to

quit school to support her siblings after her father developed emphysema in the coal mine. My father was a child coal miner who never finished elementary school. He was an adult manual laborer whose last job before he died was carrying rich men's bags in a country club.

The most damning criticism of affirmative action is that, not only has it not significantly helped the poor blacks it is meant to help, it has actually harmed them, in three distinct, measurable ways. First, it has placed blacks in academic environments for which they are not prepared. Richard H. Sander **argued** in the *Stanford Law Review* that affirmative action may have depressed the number of black lawyers. Blacks were admitted to top-flight law schools where, unprepared, they were more likely to fail. Had these same blacks attended less prestigious law schools, they would be more likely to have succeeded, and joined the ranks of lawyers.

Affirmative action, Marie Gryphon argues in a Cato Institute **paper**, increases stereotype threat – it makes blacks feel more insecure about their academic performance. Most punishing of all, affirmative action sets in motion a ratchet effect. Top schools select top black applicants and simultaneously reject top white and Asian applicants. The end result is that the least prepared black students end up in the same, non-competitive college classrooms with the best prepared white and Asian students. The mismatch of student to academic environment makes failure more likely. The best solution is to fix high schools in low-income areas.

In short, empowered whites on university campuses have adopted a de facto and de jure affirmative action that has arguably not significantly helped, and has possibly harmed, the black underclass. Why do empowered whites persist with affirmative action? Because it makes them look good. By advancing Professor A., a woman they privately labeled a "sociopath," and by shafting her white victims, university officials could maintain a public façade of diversity and enlightenment. I compare this window-dressing affirmative action to the systemic "patriarchy" that allowed some male harassers to misbehave with impunity.

In the same way that misogyny makes it hard for women victims to come forward, an anti-white, specifically an anti-poor-white environment on campuses intimidates, silences and marginalizes white students who have been victims of injustice. Anyone who doubts that universities communicate an anti-white bias need only refer to various online archives; see, for example, *Minding the Campus'* clips **here**.

Anti-white bias is not class blind. The whites one must hate to be politically correct are poor whites, a.k.a. white trash, trailer trash, rednecks, hillbillies, crackers, Guidos and Polaks. Sociologists have **published**, at least since the 1970s, examinations of elites' claims that poor whites pose a specific threat to decent, enlightened, civilized society. Such studies argue that wealthy whites deflect criticism of their own racism by placing the entire onus on poor, disempowered whites. This process continues today. Poor whites are demonized as the real racist menace. Don't take my word for it – if you are Politically Correct you most certainly will *not* take my word for it.

**Van Jones** is a black man with unimpeachable leftist credentials. He worked for the Obama administration but was forced out after criticism by Glenn Beck and others. At the June, 2017, "**People's Summit**" in Chicago, Jones attempted to rouse in his leftist audience a spark of compassion for poor whites. Jones spoke of so-called "**Deaths of Despair**," that is the statistically significant and anomalous deaths of whites, often poor whites, dying of suicide, alcoholism, and drugs. Jones said that "White men are sometimes the punching bags of liberals

... the pain was present and progressives were not." By this final comment, Jones was saying that progressives don't care about the pain of poor whites. This talk was part of Jones' year-long, post-2016-election crusade to get his fellow liberals to talk about poor whites as if we are human beings.

Jones' brief and innocuous comment urging progressives to experience compassion for "Deaths of Despair" was met with **protest**. Liberals were aghast that Jones would express compassion for poor, dying white people. "You're kidding. He didn't really say that, did he? What was context?" wrote one. Another liberal tweeted that one should not focus on whites' pain because of "the pain the black community always been facing." Another mocked that Jones was living in "the universe where problems don't exist until white people experience them." Attacks became personal. "Van Jones is lost." "Bye Van Jones. Adding to my used to admire list." "I used to have so much respect for you. You've been chipping away at that. Bigger chunks lately." "With allies like Van Jones who needs enemies?" One black man tweeted, "There's no evidence of any of this coonery." Another, "Oh, he coonin." In addition to being called a "coon," Jones has also been denounced as an "Uncle Tom." Others wrote: "Why is Van Jones always on a white apologist campaign?" After all, whites deserve to die. If whites are dying deaths of despair, "That's called karma." "Their lifetimes should be shorter because they're wicked." "I'm going to save my sympathy for someone else."

Jones, in spite of this criticism, continues to soldier on. In an October 2017 appearance on **The View**, Jones said, "I don't see Democrats ... saying, 'Maybe we drew our circle too small'. I love that we are hugging LGBT and Muslims ... but maybe we need to have a bigger hug and include some of those folks in Appalachia ... When I listen to liberals when they are not on TV, trying to make it sound good, we are still mad ... even at people who have no jobs, even people for whom our hearts should be broken, even coal miners who have black lung disease and are dying and Democrats haven't said anything about for years."

I am entirely familiar with the liberal refusal to feel compassion for poor whites. During the entire time I testified, I don't think I ever heard that most conventional of platitudes, "I am sorry for your loss." My father, his life, his death, and my grief were not even a footnote. The focus of the university: the chance that a powerful black woman might be spoken of in a less than laudatory way, and the consequences for IU if that were allowed to occur. The single most revolting thing I heard in this process was, "Well, you know, in slavery days they were not allowed to take time off after a family member died."

The speaker of this drek did not know, or care, that my people have a history of slavery, not just from medieval times in Muslim Spain, when Slavs were such standard cargo of human traffickers that we gave our name to the world in the word for "slaves." Not just to 1861, when serfs were liberated in Czarist Poland, but to the Nazi occupation that ended in 1945, during which a million and a half Poles were enslaved.

There is another feature I share with other victims of harassment. One of the many hideous sequelae of sexual harassment is the conflation of the identity of the victim with the crime of the victimizer. If the most memorable biographical detail you hear about a person is that he or she was raped, you always associate that person with a sex crime. If she isn't a whore, perhaps she is a man hater. Perhaps she is merely attempting to bring a good man down.

If I speak in public as a white victim of a black harasser, many listeners will hear me only as a monger of white grievance, as a low-level David Duke.

The above process is especially ironic. In fact, the puppeteers pulling the strings on the IU campus were *not* black. The powerbrokers in the plush offices to whom I testified, the "men and women behind the curtain," were white, both male and female. Professor A.'s blackness was merely their blackface, a politically correct façade.

My story is only an anecdote, not evidence, of the systematic denigration of poor whites on university campuses. But there is evidence. In July, 2016, in his *Minding the Campus* **column**, Princeton lecturer Russell K. Nieli summarized **the work** of Princeton sociologist Thomas Espenshade and his colleague Alexandria Radford with the five-word phrase, "Poor Whites Need Not Apply!" Elite colleges, Nieli argues, display a "bias against lower-class whites." "Poor whites ... are clearly not what most competitive private colleges have in mind when they speak of the need for 'diversity.'" Nieli suggests that elite colleges may as well be involved in "a plot to deny access to poor whites."

Anyone living through an experience like mine will strongly identify with Lupita Nyong'o, Annabella Sciorra, and other voices in the Me-Too movement. And anyone living through an experience like mine will recognize the differences between us. Rose McGowan does not have to explain basic vocabulary terms like "patriarchy" and "misogyny." As Eileen O'Malley Callahan made clear in her "**Tonya Harding**" piece, elites pressure us always to focus on patriarchy and misogyny. Political Correctness makes it very hard for us to talk about the anti-poor-white bias on American college campuses. It makes it very hard for us to talk about the injuries that de facto affirmative action policies have caused to poor whites. Just to tell my own story – whose retelling sickens me anew – I have to educate my audience in taboo realities. I have to risk being labeled a white supremacist of the pettiest kind. In that is my asterisk.