

**Abuse and sexual misconduct in Hollywood and the arts have been going unchecked for far too long.** Many instances of sexual misconduct in the arts—and in business in general—stem from an easily abused power dynamic, often manifesting in coercion. Those with the authority to influence someone's career, whether positively or negatively, hold a bargaining chip or threat, coercing individuals into sexual acts they would not otherwise consent to.

**Historical Cases and the Culture of Silence** For example, [Errol Flynn](#), a famous actor in the [1940s](#), was publicly known for engaging in inappropriate sexual relationships with underage girls, yet those around him did nothing to intervene. Two of his specific victims, Betty Hansen and Peggy Satterlee, filed complaints, but their moral character was attacked by Flynn's lawyer, Jerry Giesler. Giesler accused them of infidelity and illegal abortions, a tactic designed to discredit and intimidate them into dropping their complaints. This kind of manipulation and character assassination, akin to extortion, remains common. [New York Extortion Laws](#) criminalize the use of "criminal accusations against the victim or [prosecution of charges](#) against the victim" to protect the accuser. California should follow New York's lead by implementing similar laws, ensuring that victims are shielded from retaliatory tactics and that abuse in the arts is more effectively mitigated.

**The Normalization of Celebrity Misconduct** Sexual misconduct among celebrities became so normalized that many felt comfortable openly admitting to behavior that we now recognize as sexual assault. [John Stamos](#), for instance, recounted on a radio show how he deceived a fan into having sex with his friend by making her think she was with him. This is a clear example of how coercion and manipulation went unchecked and unpunished. Although the climate around abuse has improved, encouraging more victims to speak out with the hope of being believed, the problem persists.

**Challenges in Accountability** Even when high-profile figures bring cases forward, powerful fixers and public relations strategies are used to protect the accused. As a result, victims—especially those without fame or influence—are hesitant to come forward for fear of backlash. The power imbalance in Hollywood often allows abusers to escape real accountability.

**Even Leaders Can Be Abusers** Alarming, even figures known for speaking out against sexual misconduct have been accused of abuse. [Eric Schneiderman](#), a former New York Attorney General lauded for his stance against misconduct, faced accusations from four women, including Michelle Manning Barish and Tanya Selvaratnam. This paradox highlights the pervasiveness of abuse and the need for stronger legal frameworks in California to address both sexual misconduct and the manipulation that often follows these accusations.

**Call to Action** To combat this pervasive problem, California must adopt new laws that address not only the abuse itself but also the culture of intimidation and character assassination that discourages victims from seeking justice. By implementing protections similar to New York's extortion laws, the state can take a crucial step in preventing abuse and holding abusers accountable.