

# #MeToo: Changing The Narrative

## More than a hashtag

Fortunately, I am not someone who felt I needed to tweet or post #MeToo. Although I would be lying if I said I had never been in situations (yes, more than once) where a boy's words or actions could have easily turned into sexual assault.

I am lucky that I don't have a personal story to share, but I know people that have been sexually assaulted and harassed that hash-tagged their story and I know others that have been sexually assaulted and harassed that did not. For those of you who don't know, #MeToo was made popular by actress Alyssa Milano on October 15. She tweeted this in response to the sheer number of women who have made accusations of sexual assault and harassment against Harvey Weinstein.



**Alyssa Milano** ✓

@Alyssa\_Milano

If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet.

Me too.

Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

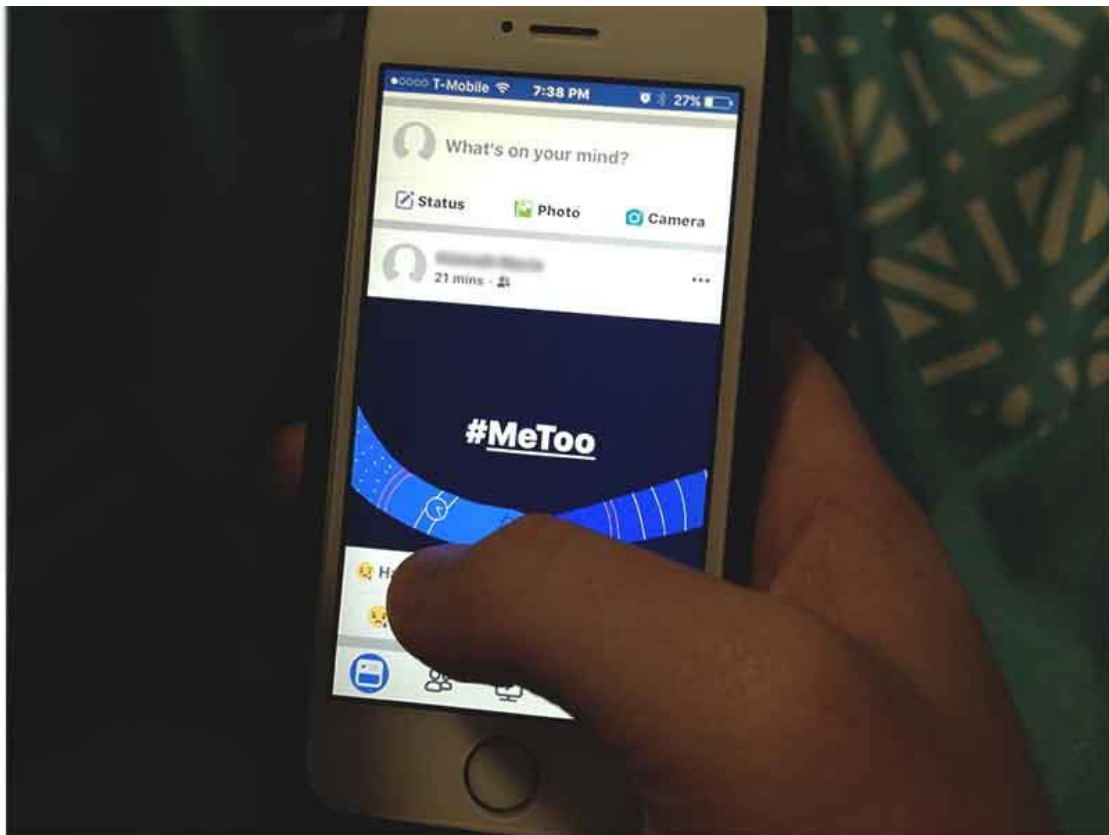
- [Alyssa Milano's tweet of Tarana Burke's campaign](#)

While the hashtag went viral seemingly overnight, "Me Too" has been around for more than ten years, starting with activist Tarana Burke's campaign to bring awareness of the number of women of color who had been sexually assaulted, abused, harassed, and exploited. Her campaign also helped make women of all ages feel that they weren't alone and could share their stories if they wanted to, exactly what the movement is doing now.

The #MeToo not only encourages victims to share their stories but also takes the focus off the predators. In the media, abusers get the most coverage, almost setting the victims aside as a side note.

When I think of sexual assault scandals as seen in the news, my mind goes to Bill Cosby, Jimmy Savile, Kevin Clash, Roman Polanski, Brock Turner, and most recently Harvey Weinstein. All of these men are abusers; all of them have their stories shared more than the men, women, and children they assaulted. With the hashtag, only the stories of the survivors get told.

#MeToo is shedding light on the sheer number of people who have been sexually assaulted or harassed. The reaction of Facebook and Twitter users has been horrific, simply due to the sheer number of people they know who have bravely posted or tweeted #MeToo.



With mass attention on rape culture, it is time to do something to help stop sexual violence. Because as much as I like the ideas being started by the hashtag, as of right now that is all they are ideas. Actions do speak louder than words and clearly, action is needed to stop sexual assault and harassment, or at least bring the number of people affected down so women feel safe again.

While women are told to take precautionary steps to "prevent" sexual assault, it is not enough because it is a one-way conversation.

To help change the narrative being told in rape culture, we need to start conversations with respectable men who will help convince abusive men to act differently. We need to educate children about consent, behaving with respect and expecting their friends to do the same, and how to protect themselves and speak out against sexual abuse. We need to support and believe sexual assault survivors, make them feel safe, and encourage them to take action against their abuser.