**OP-ED: Let’s Not Allow Him to Fool Us**

By Aja Simpson

Over the past few decades dozens of women in the film industry have come out to the media with stories about their experiences with a truly well-known and once beloved person in film, Harvey Weinstein, a Hollywood producer. Years later and these women are finally being taken seriously: as Weinstein and his flurry of accusations against him for sexual assault have in mere days become a blizzard. As a response, he released a statement to the New York Times saying he knows he did some wrong in the past and is now working on becoming a better person.

The stories surfacing are from women who had professional relationships with Weinstein from working on his films. Weinstein had star-making powers and everyone knew it, especially him.

But let’s not allow him to fool us. For years he conned the entire world, advocating for the improvement of women’s rights and opportunities in film and media, created a foundation to give scholarships to women directors at USC, supports liberal talk show hosts and government candidates. He continues to sell himself as an advocate for women’s rights, but fortunately no one is buying it.

As a weak defense, Weinstein reminds us he grew up in the 70’s, supposedly, a time when casual sex and the playful grope were in Vogue.

He attempts to distract from his predicament by saying he will take on the NRA. He doesn’t explain exactly what that means, but it may seem a sure fire way to retain the love of the liberal left. Who doesn’t hate the NRA?

He basically says he understands how cliche and underwhelming his statement is, but assures us he is sincere. He is actually trying to make a change. He needs to be better for himself and the people around him. He will be different from the countless other powerful men in the industry who have used their position to take advantage of people around him. But, despite his liberal stripes, he is no different than other abusive men in positions of power who experience the cycle of accusations, lawsuits and redemption, from Bill O’Reilly to Roger Ailes to Bill Cosby. (And still hope that eventually our “pussy grabber in chief” will face the music.)

Weinstein’s statement only tells me that he has a great team of people that make him sound like the real embodiment of a remorseful man who made a mistake that he won’t make again. But, a man at his age doesn’t just “change” his ways. All of the damage he caused for years and years to so many women doesn’t just go away. Why should he get the opportunity to start over when he has always had so many opportunities?

He could have stopped after the first time, when the first woman he assaulted told him no over and over again. But he didn’t.

He could have stopped while he was paying off all of his hidden lawsuits throughout the decades. But he didn’t.

He could have stopped when he got married and had children, when he went on all of those daytime talk shows to talk progressive politics with people like Oprah, Ellen, or Michelle Obama*.* But he didn’t.

He lived a lie his entire life, expecting no repercussions because powerful men are hardly ever exposed, and even less of the time are they prosecuted. (Weinstein, instead of being sent to jail, is actually seeking “rehabilitation” for his sex addiction in Europe for 6 months.) They’re hardly ever really seen as the monsters they are.

What’s perhaps more important than whether an obnoxious sexual predator has learned his lesson is whether all those who facilitated his behavior or covered it up for years have also come to know better. When people like Quentin Tarantino, who recently came out to say he “knew enough to do more than he did,” are surrounded by normalized harassment and disrespect toward a group of people, will they say something about it now? Or will these elites continue to allow shady behavior to go unnoticed as long as their movies are made?