

Longstanding Sexual Abuse in Hollywood

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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stephenlendman.org

([Home - Stephen Lendman](#)).

Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

It's been commonplace throughout tinseltown's history. The so-called casting couch has been around for the past century, producers and other industry executives demanding sexual favors for roles in films, aspiring actors and experienced ones pressured to submit.

The Harvey Weinstein scandal is no aberration. Countless other film executives act the same way, now and earlier throughout the industry's history, the tip of the iceberg alone reported.

Hollywood moguls want sexual abuse incidents suppressed. Amy Berg's 2014 documentary "An Open Secret" discussed film industry underage victims of sexual exploitation, minors especially vulnerable to predatory vultures, powerful men believing they can get away with anything and usually do.

Stories of abuse the film recounts represent the tip of a sordid iceberg. Most victims are too ashamed to go public, others not sure they'll be believed.

Berg said "(w)hen you meet the victims and see how prevalent this problem is, it's difficult to ignore" the sexual abuse they and many others endured, adding:

"(W)hat I found really disturbing was the number of convicted pedophiles who are still being hired on set, on kids' shows. These are people who technically should be nowhere near children. That was really upsetting."

The earliest industry sex scandal occurred in 1921. Actor Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle's rape of actress Virginia Rappe led to her death from a ruptured bladder.

He was charged with murder, downgraded to manslaughter, then acquitted after three trials.

Errol Flynn had a two-year affair with Beverly Aadland, beginning when she was aged-15. Earlier he was accused, then exonerated of raping two underage girls.

Aadland recounted her ordeal, saying

“(h)e was just too strong for me. I cried. At one point he tore my dress. Then he carried me off to another room, and I was still carrying on. What was going through my head was, what was I going to tell my mother?”

In her autobiography, actress Joan Collins explained she lost the lead role in “Cleopatra” to Elizabeth Taylor for refusing to sleep with 20th Century-Fox’s studio head, saying:

“I had tested for ‘Cleopatra’ twice and was the front-runner. He took me into his office and said, ‘(y)ou really want this part?’ And I said, ‘Yes. I really do.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘then all you have to do is be nice to me.’ “

“It was a wonderful euphemism in the Sixties for you know what. But I couldn’t do that. In fact, I was rather wimpish, burst into tears and rushed out of his office.”

At age 12, Shirley Temple said an MGM producer exposed himself to her during their first meeting. She laughed nervously. He threw her out of his office – after she signed a contract.

Marilyn Monroe said she knew numerous Hollywood lechers.

“I met them all,” she explained. “Phoniness and failure were all over them.”

“Some were vicious and crooked. But they were as near to the movies as you could get. So you sat with them, listening to their lies and schemes. And you saw Hollywood with their eyes – an overcrowded brothel, a (sexual) merry-go-round...”

Judy Garland said she was pawed and propositioned by study bosses and others from aged-16. She called MGM founder Louis B. Mayer a notorious harasser, her biographer saying:

He “would tell her what a wonderful singer she was, and he would say ‘you sing from the heart,’ and then he would place his hand on her left breast.”

Comedian/actor Bill Cosby faces numerous accusations of sexual assault – more than 50 women saying he molested them from 1965 to 2008. He denies wrongdoing.

He faces numerous lawsuits. Attorney Gloria Allred represents 33 women, saying others requested her help. Cosby faces retrial for one incident next year. If convicted, he could be imprisoned. He’s now aged-80.

Two women accused actor Casey Affleck of sexual abuse, both claims settled out of court. Affleck denied charges against him.

Actress Theresa Russell said producer of “The Last Tycoon” Sam Spiegel propositioned her during a casting session. His biographer explained he made liberal use of the casting couch.

Producer Julia Phillips’ book “You’ll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again” discussed much

about Hollywood's sordid history, including commonplace casting couch abuses.

Writer Peter Keough called Hollywood "a town where everyone is selling body and soul for fame and fortune and all – especially women are considered commodities."

Actor Woody Harrelson said

"every (acting) business I ever entered into in New York seemed to have a casting couch...I've seen so many people sleep with people they loathe in order to further their ambition."

Actress Goldie Hawn accused cartoonist Al Capp of propositioning her, adding he exposed himself to her when she was aged-19. She rejected his advances.

Producer Chris Hanley claimed

"almost every leading actress in (his) 24 films has slept with a director or producer or a leading actor to get the part that launched her career."

Actress Gwyneth said early in her career, a film producer explained a business meeting should end "in the bedroom." She accused Harvey Weinstein of sexual harassment.

Actress Susan Sarandon described what she called a "really disgusting" casting couch experience in New York.

Cher tweeted about a "scary experience" with a film producer. Jane Fonda said she was once fired for refusing to sleep with her boss.

Instances of casting couch sexual abuse are endless. Hollywood is a virtual den of iniquity. The silver screen hides what goes on behind the scenes.

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About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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