

RESPECT OTHERS AND YOURSELF



THE FUROR OVER the alleged actions of Harvey Weinstein and his ilk was always likely to erupt, for tales of the “Hollywood casting couch” have been around since before I was born. Of course, in those days it was not a subject discussed in polite society, and thus the practice was al-

lowed to continue with the acquiescence of both those who did know and those who didn't want to.

Today's interactive media, however, provides a forum to discuss anything, so once the initial stories began to emerge, others were emboldened to share their own experiences. What has emerged is that Hollywood is just a microcosm of the world at large, with various surveys showing up to a third and a half of women and up to a fifth of men have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

While it includes damaging and morally deplorable behavior, the boundaries of sexual harassment can vary.

While most view physical assault as a criminal offence, verbal harassment is harder to define—what was once dismissed as a crude comment can today be defined as an unwelcome advance. What's clear is that our moral indignation has been aroused, and rightly so, for the alarm must be raised by those who suspect persecution as well as its victims. Moreover, such matters must be followed through, and action taken no matter who is involved. All parties are entitled to equal respect.

I deliberately widened the subject to persecution, as sexual harassment falls under the general category of bullying or persecution. It is closely associated with

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domination, as domination is frequently just a step away from persecution. The reasons are many, but fear of loss of dominance and of those who are in some way different are to the fore. Slavery, religious

persecution and racial intolerance are prime examples of where this can lead, and one is mindful of Martin Luther King's speech: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

We are not there yet, I'm afraid, for we have not yet learned to respect others no matter who they are. We may not always agree, but we must respect their right to hold different views, and it is worth noting that many of humanity's greatest advances have come from those who dared to be different. As this will be my final column for the current year, may I close by saying I respect each and every *Forbes Indonesia* reader and hope none have been offended by the thoughts I have expressed in 2017. **F**



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