

Cory Booker Sexually Assaulted Me

and why it won't matter to the #metoo movement

Yes, you read that right. The man who would be the modern incarnation of the Thracian Gladiator turned rebellion leader, once tried to aggressively force me to give him a blowie in my (then) workplace restroom. That may be a hard pill to swallow, given Mr. Booker's distinguished political pedigree as a champion of liberal populist issues and marginalized communities. But despite his whimsical penchant for theatrical displays of impassioned defiance, he's just another asshole.

Now I know what you might be thinking if you're a Booker backer. You're thinking that I'm full of shit. But before you jump to that conclusion, let me tell you a little about myself. If we were to travel just 4 years back in time, you and I would find solidarity on the subject of Cory Booker. As a matter of fact, he was a hero of mine. I was and still am, a liberal in principal with a record of voting exclusively for Democrats since I was 18 with the exception of the 2016 election cycle. But it was in the summer of 2014, when Senator Booker visited my workplace, that my political worldview began to shift.

I had the chance to meet and speak with him at some length in an informal group setting. I made it quite clear that I was a great admirer of his, especially with regard to his record of being an advocate of the LGBT community. I left the meeting prior to the rest of the group, just as everyone was finishing up and went to use the restroom. It was there that Booker and I bumped into each other again for what would prove to be a much less pleasant interaction.

Here is a description of the incident as I described it to a lawyer:

I stopped to use one of the building's single-occupancy restrooms. Upon washing my hands prior to leaving, I heard knocking on the door. When it comes to these restrooms it is customary to knock first in case someone is using it, even though there is an inner lock. When I opened the door, Mr. Booker was there. He smiled and very gregariously said "Hey!" We engaged in some brief idle chitchat in the entryway and then he asked me to speak in private. What happened next, happened so fast that it was hard for me to comprehend what was going on. It was one of those surreal moments where what was happening was such a deviation and such a perversion of one's natural daily routine that I hardly knew how to react. He pulled me into the restroom, albeit not too forcefully and slowly pushed me against the restroom wall. He said that "Being a hero was a serious turn-on". He continued, "The Senate appreciates fine citizens like you. Especially this Senator." He then put his left hand on my groin, over my jeans and began to rub. I seem to remember saying something like "What is happening?" It was a bit like having vertigo. He then used his other hand to grab my left hand with his right and pulled it over to touch him. At the same time, he disengaged from rubbing me and used his left hand to push me to my knees from my shoulder for what was clearly a move to have me perform oral sex on him. At that point, I pulled away quite violently and told him I had to go. I did not see him again before he left.

If you find that far fetched, then this next part might give you reason to dismiss the rest of this story completely. I am a gay man. If you're still with me, I should be clear that I am not making any suggestions contradicting Cory Booker's public stance on his own sexual orientation. In my experience, straight men are fairly non-discriminating in terms of their receptiveness to the prospect of oral sex. And despite the unusual cultural trend towards pathologizing people we don't know, I make no claim to know what Mr. Booker considers himself to be privately in terms of sexual labels. But if I were to hazard a guess as to his motivation, I would say that he saw an opportune moment to exploit what he thought to be a devoted sycophant. But that turned out to be a serious miscalculation.

Now I realize that I have been pretty vague on the details. And there's a reason for that. I've struggled with a history of abuse in my life going as far back as childhood but I've been able to manage the enduring trauma for the most part. Just 3 years prior to my encounter with Mr. Booker, I was subjected to sexual harassment from an employer. Subsequent to disclosing the incident, I was swiftly fired despite providing definitive proof and involving a third party investigation. But I got over that incident. And I learned the unfortunate cynical lesson that coming forward with the truth can oftentimes be more punishing than rewarding. But with Booker it wasn't just harassing words. It was physical. And he wasn't some supervisor who held sway over my job. He was and is a highly influential, political power player. He could have (and still could) destroy my life if I were to disclose my name and the full facts of my case. So as with my previous experience, I initially let it go. And I feel the need to reiterate that this was someone I looked up to. Do you have any idea how disenchanting an experience like that must feel like?

Fast forward 2 jobs, 3 therapists and one suicide attempt later to the latter half of last month. Watching Mr. Booker's histrionic defense of alleged sexual assault victims was so laughably ironic, so jarringly cringeworthy and so triggering that it put me into a state of depressed rumination. I wanted so badly to speak out but I was highly ambivalent about the consequences of going public. So I reached out to two lawyers anonymously. One of them got back to me; Harmeet Dhillon of the Dhillon Law Group, a 1st amendment trial lawyer and RNC committee member. Once we established privileged communication, I told her my story; disclosing my real name and the details of my case. This included the precise date, location, some corroborating photographic evidence and two possible hearsay witnesses that I had told my story to subsequent to the incident. It was, at the very least, much more probative evidence than what was brought forth during the Kavanaugh debacle. Ms. Dhillon responded to me with respectful immediacy, offering candid advice and compassion tempered with pragmatism. And in a refreshingly rare act of bipartisanship, she recommended I contact Ronan Farrow, the father of the modern #metoo movement himself.

So on October 7th, I contacted Mr. Farrow, albeit anonymously, providing him with some of the details of my story and with a number of follow up questions. 4 days later he responded asking for a phone conversation. I replied the following day with a way to contact me and an open schedule. Between October 12th through the 15th, I emailed him 2 additional times with the final email stating that I would move onto trying to contact another journalist and wished him well. It wasn't until this morning, 8 days after his initial response that he contacted me again with an email, a voicemail and text message. This put me in an awkward position of re-evaluating his intentions and I have yet to respond to him. The second journalist I contacted following my interaction with Mr. Farrow has not responded to me either.

Now, I am all too aware of the fact that print is a flawed tool for gauging intonation, so let me preface this by saying that I don't mean to come across as incredulous or indignant. I respect Mr. Farrow as a journalist. And I did appreciate his apology. But it's been 8 days since I last heard from him. Perhaps I have an antiquated notion of proper social graces. But it seems to me that if he has the time to tweet, he can take 10 seconds out of his day to briefly respond with something like "I do have prior obligations but I promise to get back to you." Given his expertise on the subject matter, I'm sure he knows how much anxiety it can cause someone like me just to initially come forward. I do know, that like Mr. Farrow, Harmeet Dhillon enjoys a certain measure of political celebrity status. But regardless of her numerous TV appearances and spending all day dealing with lawyers, judges, and court appointments, she's been sensitive enough to respond to me with some urgency.

To someone like myself, the #metoo movement is more of a precarious bridge over croc infested waters than it is college safe space. #metoo should have been a catch all phrase that included any survivor, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or political affiliation. But instead, it seems, that those have become the very prerequisites that determine what is and is not attention worthy. When Ronan Farrow's cause was born, it was beautiful and innocent. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter, it was C-List actress Alyssa Milano who named it, appropriating the movement by Tarana Burke. And it was ideologues like Milano who nurtured it and gave it a PC framework. The 'me' in #metoo had become a preferred pronoun for liberal women accusing conservatives. And #IBelieveHer became #metoo's new nickname.

So therein lies the rub. I'm not a woman. I do consider myself liberal but I no longer consider myself a Democrat. And the perpetrator of my story is a Democratic hero/2020 contender...hardly a tale that can be programmed, categorized or easily referenced by the modern American media apparatus. Especially one that caters to reductive, easy to follow narratives with a clear view of who is the good guy and who is the bad guy. So what recourse does that leave someone like me? Do I continue to engage with Ronan Farrow? I have no idea if he's giving me the run around. Nor do I have any guarantee that his political

ideology will not color his objectivity as a journalist. In light of the Ramirez story, it's clear that that is a distinct possibility.

They say information is power. In reality, the power lies with the one controlling the information and how that information is spun. So this is me attempting to take the power back by writing and releasing this on my own. Minus the spin. No one has advised me to do it this way. And I have no idea if anyone will take this seriously. Given my intentional omission of some salient details, I wouldn't blame you if you didn't. I'm simply trying to protect myself from becoming a pawn in the arena of political bloodsports.

This is not an appeal for sympathy. Nor am I demanding anything. As you can probably tell by the sardonic tone of my writing, I tend to undercut solemnity with humor. It's always been a comforting coping mechanism for me. I have to concede that nothing I brought to Ms. Dhillon was fundamentally dispositive. So I certainly can't begrudge anyone who chooses not to believe me. In fact, I always thought the #IBelieveHer was a something of a non sequitur; a strange accompaniment to the #metoo movement. Because belief is a personal choice, one that is typically predicated on instinct, trust and loyalty. These are tenets of faith, not reason or facts. When it comes to one person's word against the other, we usually believe the one we know personally. When we don't know either party on a personal level, we usually allow our ideology to color our judgment in the absence of definitive proof. And when it comes to politics in general, most of us tend to see the issues but through a glass darkly.

But belief and truth are not mutually exclusive. Nietzsche once said, "Sometimes people don't want to hear the truth because they don't want their illusions destroyed." So if you take away nothing else from this long winded statement, let it be this: I am a lower middle class nobody. I having nothing to lose or gain by coming forward with the truth. Cory Booker, on the other hand, has everything to lose if he doesn't flip his script in response to this. Watch how quickly he defaults back to the presumption of innocence. And then decide for yourself...is he really Spartacus? Or just another asshole.