

#MeToo in 2025: Where Do We Stand Now?

By Effie Blassberger and Thomas Dollar

July 14, 2025

In June 2025, Harvey Weinstein was once again on trial in Manhattan. The outcome—a conviction on one felony sex crime, an acquittal on another and a hung jury on a third—may seem anticlimactic, but it offers a telling snapshot of where the #MeToo movement stands today.

The trial followed days of chaotic deliberations. Upset jurors clashed over Weinstein's reputation, and the foreman said he felt unsafe continuing. It was a tense, fractured conclusion to a case that originally helped launch a global reckoning around sexual misconduct.

Since the first bombshell reporting on Weinstein's behavior by the New York Times in 2017, nearly every business sector—from Hollywood to academia—has been impacted by a wave of disclosures, demands for accountability, and, at times, swift public judgment.

The recent civil trial in July 2025 involving Sean "Diddy" Combs—where a jury returned a defense verdict despite near-universal recognition that his conduct, as acknowledged even by his own lawyers, was morally reprehensible—further illustrates the shift.



Jurors are not simply reacting to headlines or public pressure; they are approaching their role with discipline, focusing on the specific claims and evidence before them.

Taken together, the mixed outcomes in the Weinstein and Diddy trials show that there is no longer a unified narrative. The pendulum has swung.

Not Quite 'Post-#MeToo'

The term "post-#MeToo era" is frequently invoked as shorthand for the backlash: a return of "canceled" men to public life and a decline in what had been almost guaranteed public sympathy toward accusers. But from our vantage

point as lawyers representing both victims of sexual misconduct and individuals accused of it, the picture is more complex.

On one hand, real legal reforms have taken root—changes that empower victims, expand liability for enablers, and increase access to the courts. These gains are structural and likely permanent. On the other hand, we’ve witnessed a cultural cooling: greater skepticism of accusers, intense litigation, and juries increasingly unwilling to rush to judgment.

The social solidarity that initially drove #MeToo has given way to contentious, adversarial legal battles.

But contrary to some claims, victims have not stopped coming forward. Instead, they now do so with full awareness that there will be a hard-fought, contested process—and that “believing victims” is not the end of the story, but merely the beginning.

The Legal Legacy of #MeToo

One of the most profound legacies of #MeToo has been the transformation of civil law. In New York state alone, the Child Victims Act (CVA) and Adult Survivors Act (ASA) created historic “lookback windows,” temporarily reviving civil claims that were otherwise time-barred by the statute of limitations.

The CVA, enacted in 2019, created a one-year window (later extended due to COVID-19) for individuals who were sexually abused as minors to file suit, regardless of how long ago the abuse occurred. That window closed in 2021, but the statute continues to allow survivors who had timely claims as of the CVA’s enactment to file suit until the age of 55.

The ASA, enacted in Nov. 2022, provided a similar one-year window for adult survivors

of sexual assault to bring previously time barred claims.

Another significant statute is New York City’s Gender-Motivated Violence Act (GMVA), which establishes a seven-year statute of limitations for civil claims arising from gender-motivated violence. The GMVA allows plaintiffs to sue not only perpetrators, but also individuals or entities that enabled, directed, or participated in the abuse.

A 2022 amendment created a one-year revival period for previous time barred GMVA claims, which expired in March 2025. That amendment has prompted a wave of litigation, however.

Courts in the Southern District of New York remain divided over whether the GMVA’s retroactive provision is constitutional, with some challenges—including arguments advanced by our firm—asserting that it is preempted by the state level ASA and CVA.

A National (and Global) Shift

New York is not alone. California, New Jersey, Vermont, and other states have enacted similar “lookback” windows. Even Texas, despite constitutional limitations on retroactive laws, has extended statutes of limitations for sexual-assault claims going forward.

These state revival laws are not the only post-#MeToo legislative action in the United States: changes have also been made at the federal level. In 2022, Congress enacted the Speak Out Act and Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act, both of which passed by large, bipartisan majorities and were signed into law by then-President Joe Biden.

These two new laws limit the enforceability of mandatory-arbitration clauses and non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) as they pertain

to sexual assault and sexual harassment. However, both statutes apply only to limit *pre-dispute* agreements—not agreements entered into to resolve an existing dispute, such as settlement agreements.

Indeed, NDAs are still often an important provision to include in settlement agreements where consideration is being paid to settle a claim or dispute that has already accrued.

Crucially, all three statutes reflect an evolving understanding of how sexual abuse operates. These laws do more than hold individual perpetrators accountable – they empower survivors to pursue claims against the institutions that enabled, ignored, or covered up the misconduct.

Religious organizations, employers, schools, and other entities that failed to protect victims now face the prospect of civil liability.

This legal evolution finally recognizes a fundamental truth recognized by mental healthcare professionals for decades: abuse rarely occurs in isolation. Perpetrators often thrive within ecosystems of access, silence, and institutional complicity.

With these statutes, the law is finally catching up to the reality that by exposing not only the abuse itself, the structures that allowed it to persist must also share the burden.

Backlash and Recalibration

While the law has evolved, public discourse concerning #MeToo has grown more fractured. The early #MeToo era was characterized by swift and strong consequences for those accused—job losses, resignations, canceled projects. But this “zero tolerance” approach is now being reexamined.

Here, examples abound. Former U.S. Senator Al Franken, who resigned in Dec. 2017 after

accusations surfaced that he had forcibly tried to kiss or grope several women, later stated that he regretted his resignation.

Notably, several of his senator colleagues also stated that they regretted pushing him to resign, especially before the Senate Ethics Committee was able to finish its planned investigation.

In New York, former Governor Andrew Cuomo resigned in Aug. 2021 after the State Attorney General published a report detailing allegations of sexual harassment made against him by several women.

As Cuomo mounted a political comeback to be Mayor of New York City, he recently stated that he regrets resigning, and one of his accusers voluntarily dropped her lawsuit against him.

And it’s not just politicians. Joe Paterno, the legendary head coach of Penn State’s football team for more than 40 years, was abruptly terminated in Nov. 2011 as public outrage mounted over his failure to stop his assistant coach Jerry Sandusky’s years-long sexual abuse of children.

Paterno died just over two months later, after which the NCAA vacated all of Penn State’s football wins dating back to 1998.

Despite the enormity of Sandusky’s crimes, many opposed the collective punishment of the school, the football team, and Paterno’s legacy. The backlash was so widespread it led to a student riot in 2011. Following a lawsuit and settlement in 2015, Paterno’s and Penn State’s win record was restored.

More recently, the 2022 lawsuit between actors Johnny Depp and Amber Heard—involving public accusations of physical abuse by her against him, defamation claims by him against her,

and defamation counterclaims by her against him—were simultaneously litigated on social media as well as inside the courtroom, becoming something of a societal Rorschach test.

And the jury's seemingly contradictory verdict—finding that both Depp and Heard were liable for defamation against the other, albeit awarding Depp significantly higher damages—served as a preview of the recent Weinstein verdict with jurors being no better than the rest of us at reaching consensus as to these sorts of cases.

The Case for Due Process

As attorneys who represent both plaintiffs and defendants, we've come to recognize that the only way forward is through a fair, evidence-based process. Hashtags and headlines have their place. But real accountability—whether for victims or the accused—can only be achieved through judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings with clear rules, trained adjudicators, and time-tested procedures.

This means recognizing that not every accusation is equally credible, and not every accused person is equally culpable. It means resisting the temptation to believe or disbelieve based solely on who is speaking.

And it means appreciating that litigation is not easy: for victims, it involves reliving trauma under cross-examination; for defendants, it involves reputational and financial ruin even before a verdict is reached.

Representing individuals on both sides has made us better lawyers. When we represent

victims, we ask tough questions up front—about inconsistencies, corroboration, timelines. This doesn't mean disbelieving clients; it means preparing them for the rigorous process ahead. The strongest cases are built on evidence, not outrage.

In defending the accused, we advise candor, not forestalling. Many lawsuits will be filed no matter what a client says in an initial meeting. The goal is not to hide—but to engage with the facts and construct a clear, good-faith defense.

Conclusion: A Movement in Motion

Eight years after Weinstein's fall, the #MeToo movement has reshaped law, politics, and public discourse. But its trajectory is no longer linear. We are not in a "post-#MeToo" world. We are in a contested, evolving one where the scales of justice may be in closer balance.

The legal system has responded with new tools for victims and new focus on institutions. But in courtrooms across the country, the reality is that sexual misconduct cases are now deeply adversarial.

The presumption of guilt that sometimes characterized early #MeToo discourse has receded—replaced by lengthy legal battles, nuanced verdicts, and increasing public ambivalence.

The pendulum hasn't swung all the way back. But it's no longer swinging in just one direction.

Effie Blassberger is a partner with Clayman Rosenberg Kirshner & Linder. **Thomas Dollar** is an associate with the firm.