

Is Redemption Possible In The Aftermath Of #MeToo?

<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/766843292>

SCOTT SIMON, HOST:

Today marks two years since the #MeToo movement burst into plain view with The New York Times reporting Harvey Weinstein. #MeToo has brought down hordes of powerful men accused of sexual misconduct. Many of them are now attempting to make a comeback. So today, we begin a series of stories looking at this phase in #MeToo and asking questions about rehabilitation, redemption and reentry. As NPR's Tovia Smith reports, some say it's time for more focus on the road back for offenders.

TOVIA SMITH, BYLINE: Some guys who are ousted for alleged sexual misconduct have been talking about comebacks since the day they were accused. But the pace of those actually doing it seems to be picking up.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, Louis C.K.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

AL FRANKEN: Hi, this is Al Franken. I have a new podcast, and it's great.

(SOUNDBITE OF RADIO SHOW, "THE MICHAEL SMERCONISH PROGRAM")

MICHAEL SMERCONISH: Now, this is Mark Halperin. Hey, Mark. Thanks so much for coming back to the program.

MARK HALPERIN: You're nice to invite me. I really appreciate it.

SMITH: From comedian Louis C.K. to former U.S. Senator Al Franken and once-TV political pundit Mark Halperin, their alleged offenses run the gamut, as do their expressions of remorse. And it's all fueling questions about what it should take to be worthy of a return.

TARANA BURKE: We have to grapple with the question of who can come back and who can't. We can't move to a culture that eliminates sexual violence if we're not dealing with how harm-doers become harm-doers and how they undo that.

SMITH: Tarana Burke, the activist who coined the term #MeToo, says her focus remains on supporting survivors. But she says society should also focus more on rehabilitating the perpetrators, not so much for their sake as for the sake of real, lasting change.

BURKE: Leaving them in a heap on the side of the road is not the answer. Allowing them to sneak back in through the back door is not the answer and act like nothing happened. None of those are the answer, right? There should be an expectation that

there's real rehabilitation and that they have seen the light and want to make dramatic shifts in their behavior.