

Harvey Weinstein Trial News: Hollywood Mogul's Case Begins in NYC

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Harvey Weinstein on Trial: A #MeToo Reckoning Two Years in the Making

Disgraced movie-mogul Harvey Weinstein arrives at state court in Manhattan, New York, for the start of his criminal trial on five felony counts, including predatory sexual assault and rape.

More than two years and a lifetime ago, Hollywood's open secrets about Harvey Weinstein finally spilled into public view.

Few back then could have predicted all that would follow or where the #MeToo movement would go. Now, for Weinstein, a reckoning is at hand: His criminal trial, on five felony counts, including predatory sexual assault and rape, is scheduled to begin on Monday in state court in Manhattan. Jury selection could last two weeks, the trial six more.

The proceedings will mark an extraordinary moment in the still-unfolding story of harassment and abuse by powerful men and the implications for every corner of society. For some in the movement, simply seeing Weinstein facing a jury, and charges that could send him to prison for life, will be a victory.

"The fact that this has made it this far is remarkable in its own right," said Tina Tchen, the chief executive of the advocacy group Time's Up.

Most rape accusations don't make it to court. Much has changed since the New York Times and the New Yorker reported that dozens of women had accused Weinstein of rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse, unleashing a torrent of similar claims against others as the MeToo hashtag went viral and developed into an international movement. But the legal challenges remain.

"He seemed like a very broken man...I think he's taken some good acting tips... He seemed cowardly, he wouldn't look at us."

Actresses Rosanna Arquette, Rose McGowan, and other Harvey Weinstein accusers comment on his entrance into the courthouse ahead of the trial pic.twitter.com/1AIYvCOkhH

— QuickTake by Bloomberg (@QuickTake) January 6, 2020

Such cases can be difficult to try because there are often no witnesses. For the office of Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., prosecuting the former movie producer could be complicated by the fact the charges are based on allegations about long-ago events. The more memories fade, of course, the easier they are to challenge.

Weinstein, 67, is accused of raping one woman in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and of performing a forcible sex act on another in 2006 in his apartment in the city. He pleaded not guilty, maintaining any sexual activity was consensual.

The hurdle of an extended time between an alleged assault and charges being filed isn't always insurmountable for prosecutors. After one trial ended in a hung jury, Bill Cosby was convicted in 2018 of drugging and sexually assaulting a woman in 2004. At the second trial, prosecutors called five other women as so-called prior bad acts witnesses to testify about how the comedian allegedly assaulted them.

The Weinstein prosecutors will follow a similar strategy, indicating in court filings that they plan for at least four Weinstein accusers, beyond the two in the indictment, to testify in an attempt to show a pattern of behavior by the defendant. The district attorney's office declined to comment.

Members of Weinstein's defense team also declined to comment for this story. One of his lawyers, Donna Rotunno, said in an [interview](#) with CBS This Morning in September that the many accusations leveled against Weinstein, in civil cases and in the media, aren't relevant to jurors, saying that "frankly, those allegations don't matter in the context of the criminal case."

Weinstein and the board of his bankrupt film studio, [Weinstein Co.](#), reached a tentative \$47 million [settlement](#) last month with dozens of his accusers. Other civil complaints against Weinstein remain active.

Eric Bachman, a lawyer in Chevy Chase, Maryland, who has represented employees in discrimination cases for two decades, said the criminal trial will encourage more victims of abuse and harassment by other powerful people to come forward. And if Weinstein is acquitted? Still, "the fact that these complaints were taken seriously and vetted and pursued will have a very positive impact on encouraging people to speak up."

As it is, the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund said it receives some 80 new requests daily from women asking for help finding legal counsel or advice. In the last two years, [hundreds](#) of men, and some women, have lost their jobs or faced professional repercussions after being called out for sexual misbehavior. Companies have changed outdated policies and 15 states amended or updated workplace-harassment [laws](#). One in five workers is now [required](#) to go through sexual harassment training, up from one in 100 before the MeToo movement.

"People's perceptions about sexual assault and rape of women have evolved," said Douglas

Wigdor, a lawyer who represents a Weinstein accuser who may testify at the trial, and two other women who have made claims against the former producer. “Now people understand that it’s not something that happens just at knife point or at gun point, and women don’t necessarily run to the police immediately. There are power dynamics also at play.”

That is progress that won’t be stopped if Weinstein should walk free of the criminal charges, Time’s Up’s Tchen said. “I firmly believe the outcome of the trial does not affect momentum, either way, because this was never about just one person.”

President Trump’s classified War Powers Act notification raises more questions than it answers about the timing, manner and justification of the decision to engage in hostilities against Iran. <https://t.co/T9Oi6bRMDP>

— Nancy Pelosi (@SpeakerPelosi) January 5, 2020