



Bill Cosby and I

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Posted on April 27, 2018 16:38

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Even though I was well-versed in the power of celebrity, I was appalled that fame and money can give a celebrity such control and immunity.

No, I wasn't a victim. But I have a different reason for feeling gratified that Bill Cosby has finally been found **guilty** of aggravated sexual assault and faces up to 30 years in prison. Back in 2005, I had a front row seat to the heavy machinery that protected the so-called "America's Dad" and successfully dissembled his decades-long sexual criminality.

As a senior **reporter** for The National Enquirer, I tried to report the story of a woman I'll identify as "Debra," who told me she was 15 years old when Cosby assaulted her in the 1980s. The shocking headline wrote itself: "BILL COSBY IS A SECRET RAPIST. It would have been the first such story ever published.

Debra, a sweet, bright and articulate woman, told me about the day Cosby lured her to the Playboy mansion. It was difficult to hear, and to watch her face as she relived her trauma.

"I had never had sex before, never even seen an erection. Suddenly his pants were down and he was masturbating. He took my hand to touch it, but I was too scared so I just watched him do it. Afterward, he drove me home. I didn't dare tell anyone."

As with any source in a possibly litigious story, Debra was polygraphed and she passed with flying colors. I emailed a comment letter to Cosby's representatives. Within an hour, a letter arrived from his legal team, threatening a \$50 million lawsuit if we published the story.

The National Enquirer made the decision to bury the story in exchange for a one-on-one softball interview with the TV legend. I was livid, and deeply disappointed. I had to explain to Debra that Cosby, with the help of his powerful defense machine, got the better of her for a second time. Even though I was well-versed in the power of celebrity, I was appalled that fame and money can give a celebrity such control and immunity.

I moved on to the next news cycle and stories – many of The Enquirer's juiciest stories were left on the cutting room floor – until several years later, when an avalanche of Cosby's victims, encouraged by one another, **talked** publicly about their disturbingly similar experiences.

I spoke with Gloria Alred, the high-profile attorney representing many of Cosby's victims, and I agreed to be called as a witness to Debra passing her polygraph. By making myself available, I hoped to redress my journalistic powerlessness.

As it turned out, Team Gloria didn't need my help. The world of celebrity is often corrupt and unjust, but in a court of law the **truth** usually emerges. Bill Cosby is a phony, arrogant and vile man, and now a convicted sexual felon.

Yes, I know. He's a frail 80-year-old – but he nevertheless deserves to go to prison. It's just a shame it didn't happen sooner.



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