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# Our pupils must ask whether #MeToo is also creating a victim culture

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I am struck by how resolutely the daughters of the 1970s “Me” generation have become the #MeToo generation — young women everywhere joining the clamour to shout “me too”.

What a powerful force their voices have become in solidarity against misconduct and abuse. I also applaud my pupils at St Albans High School who choose to debate this as part of their celebrations of International Women’s Day today.

Young, engaged, outward-looking girls, starting to understand the complex world they are stepping out into. Complex it is, and full of choices: to think, to listen, to challenge, to rebel and to criticise.

It’s for this reason that I will remind our pupils of Nora Ephron’s wise words: “Be the heroine of your life, not the victim”.

Our pupils are right to call time’s up, but they are not victims, they are a force to be reckoned with. We will ask together whether #MeToo is in fact creating a victim culture, even though it seeks to empower. Is it part of the emergence of a new puritanism, which restricts rather than liberates?

Last year a leaving teacher gave me a wonderful passage by William Cory, the famous Etonian schoolmaster of the 19th century, which talks about how education at “a great school” is above all “for the art of entering quickly into another person’s thoughts, for the habit of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms”. For the quality, in short, of discerning judgment.

Has this ever been more important amid the ungovernable noise of social media campaigns, coming loud and fast on all sides?

Voicing dissent is an important liberty, but I hope that our pupils here dish out their “disses” with discernment. We want them to object to the objectionable and stand against misconduct, but also be mindful of other values. Like the presumption of innocence; moderation; restraint.

So it’s great that we can declare #MeToo, and recognise that #TimesUp on ugly abuses of power. We build wonderful, assertive young women at the High School who are confident of their freedom to stand against what is wrong, but who also make sure that there is space for discernment before a “diss”.

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The original article appeared [here](#).