

R. Kelly Verdict Called Overdue

Black women react to trial conviction

(AP) — For years, decades even, allegations swirled that R&B superstar R. Kelly was abusing young women and girls, with seeming impunity.

They were mostly young Black women. And Black girls.

And that, say accusers and others who have called for him to face accountability, is part of what took the wheels of the criminal justice system so long to turn, finally leading to his conviction last week in his sex trafficking trial. That it did at all, they say, is also due to the efforts of Black women, unwilling to be forgotten.

Speaking out against sexual assault and violence is fraught for anyone who attempts it. Those who work in the field say the hurdles facing Black women and girls are raised even higher by a society that hypersexualizes them from a young age, stereotyping them



R. Kelly arrives at court to face sex trafficking charges in this 2019 photo from AP. The R&B superstar was found guilty last week by a jury in New York.

as promiscuous and judging their physiques, and in a country with a history of racism and sexism that has long denied their autonomy over their own bodies.

For years, girls suffering at R. Kelly's hands were treated

as more of a punchline than a travesty, even during a trial on child pornography charges where a video, allegedly of him abusing a girl, was shown. He was acquitted in 2008.

Those who welcomed his new conviction, which came

after several weeks of disturbing testimony and now carries the possibility that Kelly will spend decades in prison, said it's a testament to the strength and perseverance of Black women, who have been the driving force, especially in

recent years, of speaking out against him and demanding attention remain on him.

Tarana Burke, founder of the Me Too movement against sexual abuse, pointed to the #Mut-eRKelly campaign, a protest started by two Black women in Atlanta in 2017 to put pressure on radio stations to stop playing his music and venues to stop allowing him to perform.

And the most widespread public condemnation followed in the wake of the 2019 docu-series "Surviving R. Kelly," executive produced by dream hampton, a Black woman.

Asked about the guilty verdict on "CBS This Morning," hampton said, "You know, I want to believe that this means that Black women survivors will be heard, but I don't want it to be dependent on a piece of media going viral or being successful." She said she thinks about "all of the stories of everyday Black girls in neighborhoods like the ones that I grew up in Detroit who don't have a predator, who don't have an abuser that was famous or rich."

Demand Grows for Civil Engineers

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incorporates hands-on training with the latest in technology at the Sylvania campus.

"This is a new program that was created using industry input," said Tara Nelson, faculty chair of the program. "The CCET program will offer a blend of remote learning, online and hybrid courses. With the new infrastructure bill passed nationally, and the growing need to upgrade our infrastructure, we expect that the demand for technicians in this field will increase in the next several years.

Faculty will train qualified workers for jobs in local mu-

nicipalities like the City of Portland, City of McMinnville, Washington County, as well as private companies like KPFF Consulting Engineers and David Evans & Associates.

"To create this degree, we focused on what local civil engineering technicians told us they do on-the-job on a daily basis," said Greg Gerstner, CCET instructor. "The result is a more focused industry-specific degree that will create industry-ready employees. We're excited to get started."

For more information about the Civil and Construction Engineering Technology Program, visit pcc.edu/ccet/.



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