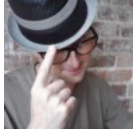


I Was Cyberbullied Before Being Cyberbullied Was Cool



[Keith E. Lee](#)

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“I want to put my suffering to good use”, said Monica Lewinsky on Monday, October 20th, 2014 during a speech at the Forbes “30 Under 30 Summit” in Philadelphia. Forbes.com describes the

summit as “a tally of the brightest stars in 15 different fields under the age of 30”. Lewinsky seemed an odd choice to speak though since she hasn’t held a full time job since working for The Pentagon in 1996 (where she was moved after her superiors noticed that the intern was conspicuously spending time with President Clinton). And the fact that she’s 41-years-old. The theme of her remarks at the summit were: public humiliation, privacy and cyberbullying.

Lewinsky said it was the case of cyberbullying victim, Tyler Clementi, that made her own suffering “*take on a different meaning*”. Clementi, an 18-year-old Rutgers freshman, killed himself by diving into the Hudson River from the George Washington Bridge after his roommate secretly recorded a video of him kissing another man and posted it online. But that was in 2010, so why did she wait until now to speak?

Some believe that the timing may have less to do with Clementi than it does with Hillary Clinton’s Presidential ambitions. And some might find it tasteless that Lewinsky compares his suicide to her “*fear that I would be literally humiliated to death*”. I find it a tad melodramatic that she’d describe herself as cyber-harassment “patient zero” at a time when people are dropping dead from Ebola, thus granting her story far more weight than it likely deserves.

In 1998 she was mortified by the [Starr report's](#) lurid details of her dalliance with the President. And she's still so mortified that in 2014 she's launched yet another comeback to talk about it all over again. This is just the latest marketing of Monica. In the aftermath of the report, with its graphic depictions of her, Bill Clinton and that infamous cigar, she engaged in several headline-grabbing ventures, such as; designing a line of handbags, being an advertising spokeswoman for Jenny Craig, working as a television personality for British Channel 5 and publishing a tell all book. She reportedly earned \$1 million from international rights to a 1999 Barbara Walters interview.

“Stop Judging Monica Lewinsky” ordered a headline on CNN.com the day after her Forbes speech. Well, I suppose I wouldn't judge her if she wasn't all over the media again. And how humiliated could she really be when making a point of publicly reliving her infamy again now?

Lewinsky was a trailblazer in the world of celebrities who are famous for nothing more than being famous or notorious and parlaying that into a career-sort of a proto-Paris Hilton or Kim Kardashian. But she embodies the contradictory persona of one who is shamed and yet shameless. And she's enough of a pop cultural phenomenon to have been lyrically referenced by several rappers and on a recent Beyoncé hit song.

Although Lewinsky has expressed remorse for her affair with Bill Clinton, she continues to deflect culpability by playing the role of victim. And it seems likely that the very behavior that has led to her public shaming is part of a pattern that should not be overlooked in this context.

Lewinsky's former high school drama instructor told the Washington Post that he had a longrunning affair with her that began in 1992 during her college years in Portland, Ore., and continued throughout much of the time she had the affair with President Clinton. The teacher, who was married at the time, turned over to prosecutors souvenirs, photographs and documents she sent to him and his wife while Lewinsky was a White House intern.

And according to her biography, the night after the first flirtation with Clinton (another older married man) the young intern studied up on how to seduce him by reading Gennifer Flowers' autobiography.

That woman, Miss Lewinsky, has used the media time and time again to enhance her profile while crying foul that she's traumatized by that very same industry. Poor Monica is always being taken advantage of; first by Linda Tripp (who she asked to lie under oath), then Kenneth Starr and then Bill Clinton. She recently joined Twitter (which The Washington Post described

as “*ground zero for Internet misogyny*”) and (surprise!) got teased and taunted.

Through it all she’s managed to establish her brand and respectability enough that now she’s invited to speak at the Forbes summit-though not about her life of accomplishments, but about her plight as perpetual victim.