

# DOES THE PUBLIC OBJECT TO SEXUAL ABUSE?

It is becoming ever so clear that what matters most regarding sexual abuse in the U.S. today is the profile of the abuser, not the abuse itself.

For instance, if the abuser is a priest, John Q. Public calls for his head. If he's a celebrity, he wants his autograph.

Larry Flynt is one of the nation's richest pornographers. He is also a man who has been charged by his daughter with sexually molesting her before the age of 10, and of beating and molesting her and her sisters. But none of this stopped him from getting 15,000 Californians to vote for him for governor in October.

Kobe Bryant, the Los Angeles Laker star, is on trial for rape. In his first appearance on the basketball court during the preseason, Bryant was greeted with "thunderous applause" according to the ABC show "Good Morning America." When ESPN reporter David Aldridge was asked whether any of the fans were wearing his number-eight jersey, here is what he said: "Oh, sure. Yeah, there were a lot of number eights in attendance. You know, a lot of kids wearing number eights."

R. Kelly is one of the biggest stars of rap music in America. In June, 2002, he was indicted in Chicago on 21 counts involving child pornography. In January of this year, he was arrested in Miami on child porn charges; included in the charges is the accusation that he was photographed having sex with a minor. According to the *New York Times*, when he appeared before a sellout crowd in New Jersey on January 16, "the crowd gave him a sustained standing ovation." His new album, "Chocolate Factory," has sold 2.5 million copies.

All of which proves our point: there is one standard for

priests, and one standard for celebrities. Sexual exploitation—even of kids—seems not to matter, just so long as the person doing it provides a service the public wants.