

Men's Violence Against Women

Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz is an enlightening book defining men's violence against women and how, as a society, we need to change it. Katz talks a lot about how we have turned a blind eye to what is happening in our everyday lives. Women are being sexualized everywhere we look these days. We see unfair and degrading portrayals of women throughout all kinds of different media platforms. Media is what our lives are immersed in. Therefore, what is portrayed is viewed as reality and structures our mindset about how the world is run. This not only affects women, but these portrayals of women also affect young boys and their perceptions of how women are supposed to be treated. Katz approaches this issue in a way that is educational for males, as well as, informative to females.

This book talks about the current problem of male violence against women. Male violence against women is a major issue that media has portrayed as acceptable in society. It is seen all over media and sometimes in our own lives. There are many platforms that contribute to the problem of sexual violence against women. For example, Howard Stern, like many other radio announcers, has a radio broadcast that constantly degrades and discriminates against women. He talks about things like sexualizing women and making light of sexual assaults. Another media influencer that makes light of sexual assaults is the rapper Eminem. His music depicts violent acts against women, and he even describes brutal acts towards his mother and ex-wife in his music. The Macho Paradox has a long section specifically on Howard Stern and Eminem. One point that Katz is adamant about is how we should teach by example. Even though Howard Stern and Eminem make jokes about, and basically advocate for male violence against women, they are still depicted as role models and are admired by young men. Katz does not

bring this point up, but even after the amount of demoralizing comments about women on Howard Stern's radio show, he was still a judge for four seasons on America's Got Talent. This is a family show that is watched in millions of households by all ages of children. That is the opposite of what Katz recommends in order to teach by example. Now Howard Stern is idolized on this show and looked up to by young men. Howard Stern is not the example we should want our youth to learn by. This idea goes for Eminem as well, he has a movie about his life and multiple songs that degrade women that young boys watch and listen to. These are not the public figures we should want our young boys to look up to and resemble.

Social media is teaching young boys that it is acceptable to discriminate and degrade women because media tends to characterize women as objects, not as people. When the media constantly shows half naked bodies, sexually depicted and unrealistic women, boys see them not as a person, but as an object. Boys and men in media are not seen as objects, but instead as people in intellectual roles and affluent positions. Again, media is contributing to the mindset that men are the dominant gender that can take advantage of females. Young boys see this as an acceptable way to treat women because it is what they see on social media, television, and in magazines. Social media is an enabler of male violence against women because it demonstrates a derogatory way of treating women.

In relation to how women are seen in media, women are oftentimes too afraid to speak up and report these crimes because they are scared of the repercussions from men in charge and society. Victim blaming is a common occurrence in sexual assault cases because part of society feels as though if women dress a certain way, or if she ends up at a wrong place at the wrong time it is automatically her fault. No female walks out of her house in hopes of being sexually

assaulted. It is wrong to make the victim think it is her fault. Another form of victim blaming is the lingo used in media to describe a case. The lingo written for the public “refers to the raped victims as “accusers””, rather than victims (Katz, 77). This is wrong because now the offender “becomes the victim of her accusation” (Katz, 78). Calling the victims the accuser takes the blame from the male offender and puts him in the good light. This completely derails some cases and makes the victim feel as though she is in the wrong. It is a common practice among media and society making sexual assaults a female problem, not a male problem.

Katz explores the social conflict theory in affiliation to how females are “disadvantaged by a system that gives wealth and power to men”(Macionis, 119). Men are seen as the dominant gender when it comes to most things. Katz explains how this makes men feel as though they can take advantage of women; however, they do not take violence against women as a male issue. Instead, they try to make it sound more as if it were a female issue. When you call “rape, battering, and sexual harassment “women’s issues”, and many people do this without a second thought, they contribute to a broad shifting of responsibility from the male perpetrators of violence to its female victims” (Katz, 13). Men tend to displace responsibility and place it on women when it comes to male violence against women. Now generations of younger men “have been conditioned to think about sexism, including gender violence, as something they need to only concern themselves with when forced to do so, usually by a women in their life” (Katz, 13). If the issue at hand does not affect the male personally then he feels as though its not his problem, he’s not the rapist. This is the case in many male minds. A major problem Katz brought up was about how men get defensive when told about the issue of male violence against women and argue that they are not a rapist; however, during the conversation or training they were never

told that they are one. Katz says “defensiveness... is one of the greatest obstacles to men’s involvement in meaningful discussions about gender violence... non-violent men cannot hear about the bad things some men do to women without feeling blamed themselves” (Katz, 25). The problem is that “most men see gender violence as an individual problem, they figure all that is required of them is to keep a check on their own behavior” (Katz, 115). In retrospect, it is not just about their own actions, it is about teaching and making sure your actions stop the discrimination around you in order to make a change in the world for women.

The #metoo movement has had a popular uprising on social media and is very enlightening and encouraging for females who have gone through sexual assault. It is designed to let females be free to share their story with the world. It is very encouraging because it shows survivors that they are not alone and have a strong community behind them. People who contribute to this movement make a safe space and give support to any victims who tell their story. Katz writes about how women are almost condemned in society from talking about their story because they are afraid of the backlash. He talks about how women are made to feel outcasted and that they should not talk about their victimization. Society has created the norm of “don’t ask don’t tell” when it comes to sexual assault. This creates an environment where men do not have to take responsibility and survivors who want to help the movement to stop male violence are referred to as feminazies. People who support fellow women and want better for them are compared to a group of people who killed millions. This is an unfair and disgusting comparison. Women are constantly being put down because in today’s society you are not allowed to speak the truth about your sexual assault. You are blamed or called a feminazi if you even try to change the way the world thinks about women.

Katz' assertions are very accurate about how male violence against women has impacted far too many lives. He depicts male violence in a way that does not blame the entire male population; however, he is openly talking about the topic and how to teach men about it and how to deal with it. His writing is very useful because he gets the word across in a variety of ways. He talks about women in his life that have dealt with this topic, his own views on it, his personal struggles, his struggles when teaching other men about, and the life lessons and demonstrations when attempting to change the world in regards to stopping male violence. Katz proposes many viable ways of changing this social problem. One way he proposes is to change the way men see women and how they act around their friends. A common occurrence Katz talks about is when men are with a group of other men and a degrading conversation starts about women. If someone in the group feels uncomfortable with the conversation, there is a high probability that they will not speak up against the majority. This is due to the fear of being outcasted outweighs doing the right thing. Most men will just not participate in the conversation instead of speaking up and saying it is wrong. Katz encourages men to speak up, because that is the beginning to stopping male violence. If men stop thinking it is acceptable to make degrading comments or to do discriminating things to women it will change their perception of women. This is also valid when identifying how we talk about male violence against women. We have to start talking in a way that stops blaming women for male issue. Sexual assaults are never a victim's fault, so men should start sharing the responsibility and changing how they treat, act, and interact with women. Another proposed solution is to not only tell young boys how to treat women, but actually demonstrate and model it for them. Katz proposes this because children are intellectual sponges and like to follow and do the things their mentors do, whether that be their parent, teacher,

babysitter, or other family members. This starts a change because boys will grow up knowing the right and respectful way to treat women; instead, of learning to degrade and disrespect them.

Katz makes very interesting points and solutions to stop male violence. He takes the initiative to do this in his own hands. He travels around the country and hold seminars and training sessions ranging from middle school boys to military men. He talks about his struggles teaching them, but he also talks about the changes he sees in these men when the training ends. This shows that society can start the change and start treating women with respect. Katz definitely proposed solutions that everyone can apply in their life and spread on to others around them.

In my opinion, I think Katz is correct in his explanation of how to handle the change that is needed regarding male violence against women. Some of my proposed ideas would be to start as young as possible to not only talk to, but demonstrate to boys the right way to treat women. Katz is correct that a male child who sees his father treat his mom with kindness and respect will exemplify the same attitude as he grows up. Changing male violence starts young, and the younger we teach boys the sooner we can change their perception of women.

References

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