

Blaming the Victim, or Digging for Wisdom?

I'm going to share the first two things I wrote on Facebook when the "Me too." campaign filled my newsfeed. Here is the first:

There's a very big difference between sexual harassment and sexual assault. That this "me too" business is lumping them together is unfortunate and quite disrespectful to men and women who've suffered real sexual assault.

After some discussion in the few places I posted that, I wrote "'Me Too' is a Branch Issue, and a Distraction". I stand by that article. Me Too and related topics are branch issues. The root issue is childhood trauma and compulsory environments like school. Here is the second:

"Me too" doesn't tell me anything. If you really want to make a difference, why don't you tell me how the experience made you stronger, gave you power that you didn't have before? That's what I want to hear, not only for myself, but more importantly, for my daughters.

I tagged some friends who had joined the "Me too." campaign, and they understood what I was asking and gave me some good stories.

Somebody, I don't know who, shared that in some group, I don't know where, which invited all sorts of strangers to my wall to give me their "what fors". Total strangers who don't know me from Adam decided to misread what I wrote and then tell me off. Here are a few examples (some friends, some strangers), but all can be found at the link above.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Are people not expressing **their experiences with sexual abuse** to your liking? In a way that would help you? Poor Skyler."

"Wow. I have zero nice to say to this. Women don't **owe you their takeaway** from trauma. And the fact that you are more challenging those trying to explain to and discuss with you instead of LISTENING speaks volumes. I feel like if YOU really want to make a difference, tell your daughters they owe no man- not even their father- their explanation,

experience, or takeaway from any traumatic experience they suffer at the hands of men. Check yourself. You owe it to your daughters.”

“You **ask us to share our rape stories**. You ask us to confirm your deluded belief that sexual assault somehow and some way gives us power. Why do **you have a right** to our stories?”

“A lot of us are gentle parents and would still **not victim blame and tell women they don’t matter** in this only they do.”

“You were clearly stating that **women owe you** an explanation no one owes you jack shit. Think before you speak buddy.”

“The language you use puts the **ownership of rape on the victim**. I have no control over being assaulted or harassed again. I can try to do things to protect myself, but I have no control over someone else’s actions.”

“I find it gross that he tagged women on his post **to explain their rape**.”

The items in bold express where they obviously misread what I wrote. But I take full responsibility for not writing it better, in order to prevent misreadings in this way. It’s unfortunate, and because it caused so much drama, I recording a fantastic podcast episode with my friend Jessica, Episode 086.

What they read into what I wrote was that I think that women don’t matter, and every woman owes me their entire rape or harassment story. Give me a freaking break. I agree, all of those ideas are completely stupid. **Nobody** owes me anything of the sort, and the only people that don’t matter to me are those who insist on bastardizing my words and proceeding to attack me for them. They’re pricks, and can go fuck themselves.

What any intelligent person would have done before expressing their misguided outrage was seek clarification. Some took that route. My hats off to them. They are great examples of intellectual honesty and diplomatic discourse.

The idea that asking about ways a crime may have been prevented is not “blaming the victim.” To consider it such is to ignore how wisdom develops and spreads. I for one am rarely interested in blame. But I am very interested in learning. And on this topic, as I have a wife and two young daughters, and a son, it is absolutely imperative that I learn the salient lessons from both sides of the issue (preventing the creation of predators and protecting yourself from crime).

It would be absolutely foolish of me, and is foolish of these people, *not* to tease out these

important lessons, apply them to their lives, and then teach others within their influence.

As a man dedicated to stopping the widespread abuse of children, I am very much an ally in this particular fight. I don't deserve to be attacked like this. These people don't know me and the work that I do. They don't know the trauma I've suffered and its long-term effects, effects that I deal with every day of my life.

They were wrong to do what they did, but they are not alone in carrying responsibility. I recognize the role I played, and will be more careful in the future.

I live, I learn.