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Man to Man: We Can Stop Sexual Violence

James H. Garrett
Gettysburg College

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Man to Man: We Can Stop Sexual Violence

Abstract

I was lucky enough to grow up with a loving mother who taught me early on to respect every woman and, more so, to never overstep the boundaries between people unless I am invited to do so with full cognizance of the actions of both parties. To be less philosophical, she was always very clear with me that touching no-no parts with any person (in my case, a lady) without express consent is wrong every time and that I would never forgive myself if I forgot that maxim in a flight of “passion.” At no time in my life have I ever thought that it was okay to “go the distance” with a woman who had not opened herself up to me in that way. This all makes sense, right? Everybody with me? See, I never thought I had to clarify that understanding; that is, until I got to college. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality, gender, college, sexual violence, sexual abuse, rape

Disciplines

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Higher Education | Sociology | Women's Studies

Comments

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SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

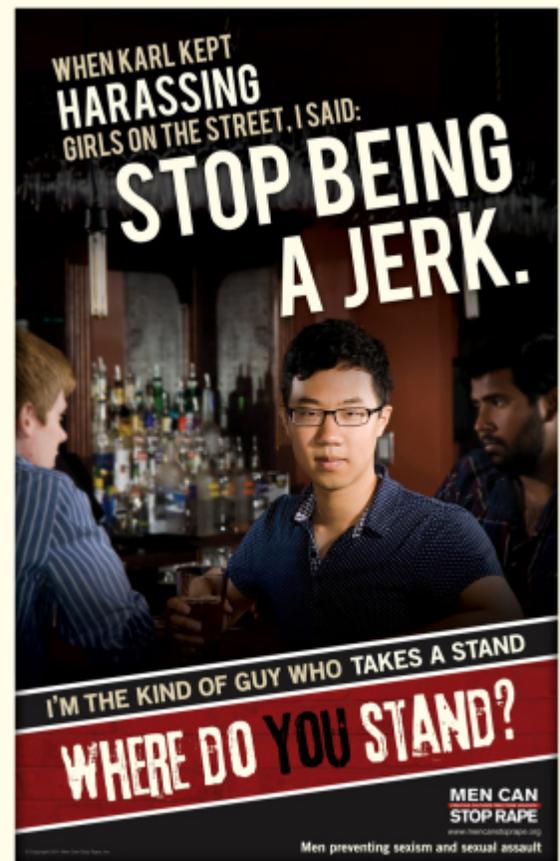
MAN TO MAN: WE CAN STOP SEXUAL VIOLENCE

April 29, 2013

I was lucky enough to grow up with a loving mother who taught me early on to respect every woman and, more so, to never overstep the boundaries between people unless I am invited to do so with full cognizance of the actions of both parties. To be less philosophical, she was always very clear with me that touching no-no parts with any person (in my case, a lady) without express consent is wrong every time and that I would never forgive myself if I forgot that maxim in a flight of "passion." At no time in my life have I ever thought that it was okay to "go the distance" with a woman who had not opened herself up to me in that way. This all makes sense, right? Everybody with me? See, I never thought I had to clarify that understanding; that is, until I got to college.

One of my first memories from freshman year was an orientation seminar about collegiate-level sex that all of the guys on my floor had to attend. I guess you could say it was our Cock Tales. The seminar was led by at Gettysburg College administrator, and he was very straight with us: "Guys, you gotta treat every woman like she is your friend's sister." In my mind this was all good; I had no questions, if's, and's, or but's. You treat every woman with the utmost respect and you never assume that she is trying to do anything intimate with you regardless of her clothing, the fact that she is dancing with you, or any "eyes" that you think she is making at you. More so, even if she is doing anything "suggestive," that is still not a reason to press yourself upon her, both literally and metaphorically.

After the facilitator implored us to respect all women and to not force ourselves onto anyone, there was a beat, a moment of silence, before a young man who lived on my hall stammered, "Yeah, okay, but what if..." and he was off. I am not judging this dude; I'm not saying that he was wrong or that he somehow implicated himself as an inevitable rapist. What I am saying is that I never imagined that there was a discrepancy that needed to be



cleared up or otherwise explicated: you don't sexually assault anyone ever for any reason. What this guy was stabbing at were the potential "gray areas" that exist in some people's minds about the actions that are considered sexual assault or rape: What if you're both drunk? What if she gave you permission and then, for whatever reason, she cries rape? What if she rapes you? What if? This is where things started to get complicated for me because I understood where he was coming from and it wasn't a place of malice or rape apology: he was confused and he was just trying to look out for himself. However, this kind of excusing and "explaining away" cannot stand because there is nothing hypothetical about the [reality of sexual assault and rape](#), especially on college campuses like ours.

I have too many female friends who have stories about sexual acts to which they never agreed. I know too many women who can say that sexual violence was used against them "just because he could." Every woman is told to watch herself and to be careful in certain situations, to not wear certain clothes and present herself in a certain way, to not make herself a victim, to not become a statistic. It has been my view since I was old enough to think that no woman should ever have to have these worries and it is still my view that you should never have to worry about the threat of sexual violence. And, honestly, I think that's what makes me so angry.

Maybe this plays too much into my learned masculine role of the violent protector, but when I hear my female friends talk about their experiences with sexual assault, I want to find the guys who did it and reciprocate their violence with my own violence. My first response is always "I want to make them feel that pain." But, just like that guy's refusal to see my friend as a person worthy of respect, I am similarly debasing them as a person. I am enacting my will on them without their consent, and I am answering violence with violence which does not and cannot reveal the question that has been hidden by the answer of violence, the question of, "Why did you think it was okay to force yourself upon her in the first place?" If we can find the answer to that question then we can start moving much further into the issue of sexual violence and start enacting true changes that will reverberate for generations to come.

How do I deal with my wanting to assault sexual assaulters? There will always be a part of me that feels like I should respond to their violence with more violence, but I know that this is the wrong course of action based on principle. As such, I respond to the problem of sexual assault and the perpetrators of these actions by letting them know in every way that I can that 1) [we know who you are](#), 2) [we outnumber you](#), and 3) your violence and inhumanity can never stop the [surge of love](#) that exists in the hearts of the supporters of your victims. When you choose to deny another human being the basic right of freedom from oppression, you are wrong. You are wrong every time. Sexual assault is oppression on every level and the conscientious majority can and will fight back against you with words, with the law, and with love.

Guys, we need to examine what it means to be a man today so we can hold each other accountable, listen to women and create a nonviolent world.

Jamie Garrett '13
Contributing Writer

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/04/29/man-to-man-we-can-stop-sexual-violence/>