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Let's Talk About Sex

Ali Lauro
Gettysburg College

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Let's Talk About Sex

Abstract

It's a typical morning: you wake up, stretch, get out of bed, and check your phone; there's a notification. Another man has been accused of sexual violence.

The #MeToo movement has sparked a national and global conversation about sexism in all its forms. Powerful men like Kevin Spacey, Harvey Weinstein, and Matt Lauer, among many others, have been publicly ousted for their predatory behavior. One of the latest men to be called out is Aziz Ansari, a writer, actor, comedian, and self-proclaimed feminist. However, his behavior, unlike these other men, was **not universally decried**.

[*excerpt*]

Keywords

#MeToo, Aziz Ansari, consent, Gettysburg College, Harvey Weinstein, Sex

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com. Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

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

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

February 19, 2018



It's a typical morning: you wake up, stretch, get out of bed, and check your phone; there's a notification. Another man has been accused of sexual violence.

The #MeToo movement has sparked a national and global conversation about sexism in all its forms. Powerful men like Kevin Spacey, Harvey Weinstein, and Matt Lauer, among many others, have been publicly ousted for their predatory behavior. One of the latest men to be called out is Aziz Ansari, a writer, actor, comedian, and self-proclaimed feminist. However, his behavior, unlike these other men, was **not universally decried**.

Aziz's behavior was not as cut and dry as that of Harvey Weinstein, who used physical force and threats to assault countless women. Aziz tried to get a woman to have sex with him, over and over; she never said "Yes, I want to have sex with you," but she also did not explicitly say no. Aziz did not hold Grace down, did not disregard her pleading for him to stop, did not threaten to hurt her or hurt her career. Instead, he kept going with a sexual encounter when he likely knew, at the minimum, that this woman, more than ten years his junior, was not into it.

Aziz's behavior is more difficult to condemn than some of the other men who have been exposed through the

#MeToo movement. This is not because his actions were harmless, but because they are so common most of us have not allowed ourselves to think actions like his could be wrong. We have accepted a reality that expects men to pursue women and sex. These men have healthy sex drives, and if they push a little too hard, what's the harm? After all, she says no, but she might mean yes. Just press her a little more. Women, on the other hand, have been taught for centuries to be the passive receptors of this behavior. We have been taught to guard our sexuality like it is the most valuable thing we possess; there *are* probably times when a woman want to say yes (to sex, to dating, to a phone number), but does not because it looks bad for her, or she might come off desperate or “easy.” There are also many, many times she may say no because she doesn't feel like having sex in that particular moment, she doesn't feel safe, she isn't enjoying the foreplay or lack thereof, she doesn't have time, she doesn't want to make time, or a million other possible reasons. The absence of an absolute yes is an absolute no. But, many of us have experienced sex that is coercive, and know men who do not find this behavior problematic. And, if we have friends, brothers, boyfriends, and husbands who commit behavior like this, and we suddenly decide this behavior is not acceptable, how do we go on?

Some writers have referred to Grace's experience as “bad sex.” To me, bad sex is when you realize halfway through the encounter that neither of you are into this and you awkwardly end things. Bad sex is when someone's roommate walks in on you. Bad sex is when someone finishes too quickly. Bad sex is not sex you did not consent to, did not really want to happen; bad sex is not sex that makes you feel humiliated or unimportant. It's not difficult, at Sunday morning Servo brunch, to find a woman discussing a sexual encounter like this—sex where she feels that she doesn't matter, that her body could be substituted for anyone else's, and it wouldn't matter, because he is looking to have sex with her, a person, he's looking to fuck a body.

Some people have said this story is setting the #MeToo movement back. Isn't it just expanding it? Aziz's actions might not have been legally punishable, but can't we envision a world where the sex women have is better than debatably consensual, sex that is simply non-criminal?

There was a lot of victim blaming after Grace's story came out. She should have said no, she should have simply left if she didn't want to have sex. What's wrong with her? Why is she trying to ruin his career? We cannot ignore the role of race in this situation, either. Aziz is one of the only prominent celebrities of South Asian descent in this country. He has positively portrayed diverse characters who are not mere stereotypes of what an immigrant is, or what a lesbian is, or what an Asian man is. I criticize Aziz's actions here, but I don't think his career should be ruined. I don't think he should disappear from the spotlight. On the contrary, he should acknowledge what he did was wrong, and work to change the culture. He should use his influence to educate others; he should write a TV episode where he delves into this messy issue and examines himself, and the wider culture we live in.

Aziz is not Harvey Weinstein, we all know that; we all know a man who has acted like Aziz, and we all know a woman (or are that woman) who was in Grace's situation. That doesn't make what happened okay. We live in a culture that gives men unspoken power to pressure women for sex, while women are led to believe that they shouldn't complain as long as a man doesn't rape them.

Sex should be consensual, not negotiated. Sex should be pleasurable, not just tolerable. Sex should be discussed without shame, not politely avoided.

Ali Lauro '18
Staff Writer