

Social Justice Watch 0314

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Not all men are predators.
Some are sympathisers and apologists.
Some are victim-blamers. Some need nonexistent “evidence” to believe a survivor, while others don’t want to ruin a guilty man’s reputation. Many don’t have the courage to confront and alienate the predatory men around them. And the rest? They just don’t care.

Before you say “not all men,” answer this: are you actively holding the predatory men in your life accountable and supporting survivors? No? Then you’re part of the problem.



Sheila Luecht ▶ Global Feminist Perspectives

1 hr ·

...



A racist left graffiti in Walthamstow, London, and this is how the community responded 🇺🇸

Like

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My favourite is when transphobes say "I identified as a dinosaur when I was six, kids that age are too young to know they're trans!".

Nah mate, you didn't identify as a dinosaur. You didn't cry yourself to sleep because you couldn't figure out why you had no tail. You didn't feel an inexplicable sense of shame at your lack of claws. When you saw yourself in a mirror in a dinosaur costume, you weren't upset about all the non-dinosaur bits you could still see. When others saw the costume, you weren't brought to tears by them treating you like a child-wearing-a-costume instead of a real dinosaur.

You were playing make-believe. Kids do that. Kids also have genuine insight into themselves as no external observer can, and we should be helping them to explore that so that they can make better choices.

If your child told you that they were hearing voices, you wouldn't care that they were too young to understand schizophrenia. If they said that they had a wrenching pain in their gut, you wouldn't rage about "liberal doctors brainwashing children". Yet if a kid says "It hurts when people say I'm a boy/girl." suddenly the idea of treating that symptom becomes a conservative bogeyman.

...

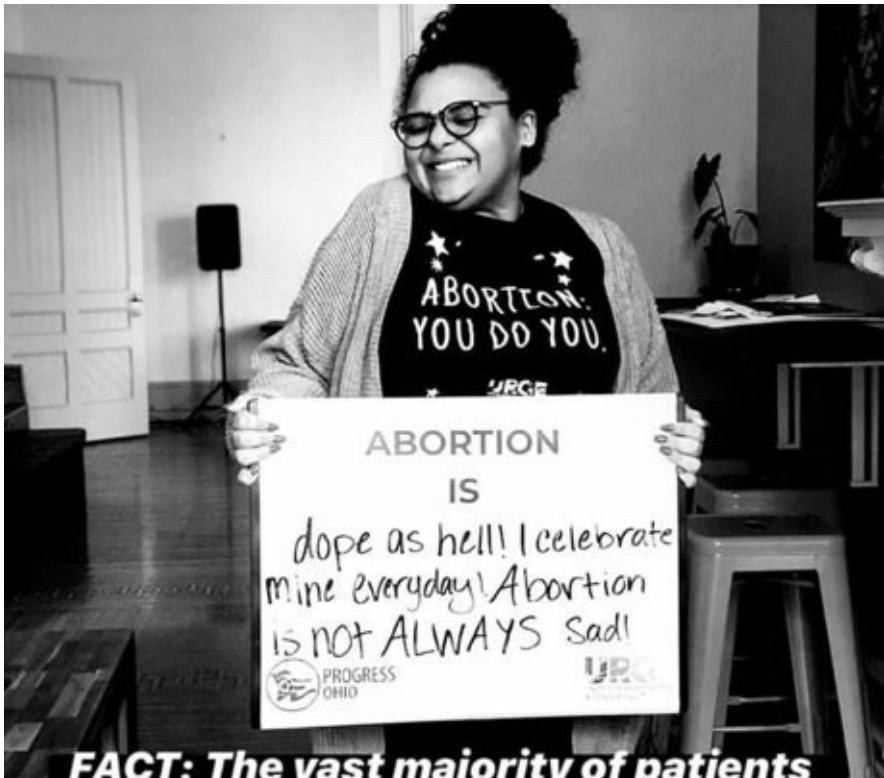


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640





FACT: The vast majority of patients do *not* regret their decision to have a safe, legal abortion. Stop stigmatizing other people's personal medical decisions.

#StopTheLies #StopTheBans

**A woman
without a man
is like a fish
without a bicycle.**

- Gloria Steinem

今日所感：一个女人没有男人，就像鱼没有自行车。 [Natalie不明白](#)



你就是你。节日快乐！ [DIANLIN](#)



Ryan Knight @ProudResister



Masculinity is not under attack.
Masculinity is being redefined to not include harassing women or bullying people who are different than you.
Masculinity is being expanded to a more loving space and if you can't handle that then you deserve to be left in the past with your hate.

I'm pro-CHOICE.

That means, **if you want or need an abortion**, I support your decision.

If you **choose adoption**, I support your decision. If you want to **give birth and parent**, I support your decision.

CHOICE looks different for everyone — and everyone **deserves the freedom to decide** for themselves.



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https://www.ted.com/talks/deepa_narayan_7_beliefs_that_can_silence_women_a_language=zh-cn

Ted

Transcript of "7 beliefs that can silence women -- and how to unlearn them"
TED Talk Subtitles and Transcript: In India (and many other countries), girls and women still find themselves silenced by traditional rules of politeness and restraint, says social scientist Deepa Narayan. In this frank talk, she identifies seven deeply entrenched...

<https://www.yourtango.com/2019327054/who-haben-girma-new-details-first-deaf-and-blind-person-graduate-harvard-law-school?fbclid=IwAR122PZA-KkDNgzMWYERNFON8XdgfAF5hPtT8ZajcEzeBiTFb8rgAovJ4Qg>

YourTango

Meet Haben Girma, The First Deaf And Blind Person To Graduate From Harvard Law School
Her memoir was released this month.

<https://youtu.be/qBwtCf2X5jw>

YouTube

I Was the Fastest Girl in America, Until I Joined Nike | NYT Opinion
Mary Cain's male coaches were convinced she had to get "thinner, and thinner, and thinner." Then her body started breaking down. At 17, Mary Cain was already...

Brains of girls and boys are similar, producing equal math ability

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ScienceBeta

No Gender Difference Found In Brain Function Or Math Ability

1992: Teen Talk Barbie is released with the controversial voice fragment, "Math class is hard." The toy's release met with public backlash.

But this underlying assumption persists, propagating the myth that women do not thrive in science, technology, engineering...

The assumption that boys are more likely to be adept at math and science than girls has no foundation in the brain, according to a new study. It is the first to look at human neurobiology to try and understand whether supposed gender differences in mathematical ability are grounded in biology.

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Inverse

A tired stereotype about men and women's brains has been debunked

No, the sexes are not hard-wired to process mathematical information differently, scientists say.

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Body camera video shows 6-year-old Orlando girl arrested at school

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Recently released body cam footage shows the arrest of Kai Rolle at Lucious and Emma Nixon Academy. [Photo from video/Facebook]

ORLANDO — Kaia Rolle was sitting, listening to a school employee read her a story when two officers came in the room to arrest her.

“What are those for?” the 6-year-old girl asked the Orlando police officers.

“They’re for you,” Officer Dennis Turner said about the zip ties, before another officer tightened them around her wrists. Kaia immediately began weeping.

“No … no, don’t put handcuffs on!” she wailed in body camera footage from the arrest, which Kaia’s family shared with the *Orlando Sentinel* on Monday evening. The arrests of the girl and another 6-year-old at Lucious & Emma Nixon Academy in September drew national headlines and widespread condemnation, leading to the officer’s firing.

“Help me, help me, please!” the girl choked out through tears. The officers continued with the arrest. Employees at the Orlando charter school stood by.

After Kaia was placed in a police SUV to be taken to the Juvenile Assessment Center, Turner returned to the school’s office and spoke to administrators, who were concerned about Kaia. He downplayed the juvenile detention center, saying it’s “not like you think.”

He told them he had arrested 6,000 people in his career — the youngest, to that

point, was 7. When school employees told him Kaia was 6, not 8 like he thought, he did not seem concerned.

“Now she has broken the record,” he said.

Related: Feds seize \$181,000 from trucker at Tampa airport. His company says ‘something is fishy.’

Kaia, a first grader at the charter school, had a tantrum earlier in the day where she had kicked and punched three school employees, leading to her arrest on a charge of misdemeanor battery, according to her arrest report. However, by the time Turner and another officer approached Kaia to detain, cuff and arrest her, the girl had calmed down, the video shows.

The school staff member who had been reading to her told Kaia she had to go with the officers, and that her grandmother would pick her up later.

While walking with the officer to the car, Kaia continued to cry, “I don’t wanna go in a police car.”

The second officer, who has not been identified, replied, “You don’t want to? ... You have to.”

“Please, give me a second chance,” the girl responded, still crying.

The officers put her in the backseat of the police SUV.

Turner then returned to the school’s office, reminding one employee that he would need a statement from her, and said she would likely get a subpoena. The woman agreed, though she said she was upset.

The arrest report Turner completed said that a member of the school’s faculty, Beverly Stoute, had requested to press charges against Kaia, something the school has denied. The video does not show any staff member attempting to stop the arrest, though several are obviously rattled.

“The restraints, are they necessary?” one school employee asked.

“Yes,” Turner said.

Then, he added: “If she was bigger, she would have been wearing regular handcuffs.”

He then told the school administrators that the youngest person he ever arrested previously was 7 years old, a boy who he had caught stealing at a supermarket. He said he arrested the boy because he “thought it was a joke” while the other children caught in the act had started crying.

Officials have said that Turner also arrested a 6-year-old boy at Nixon Academy the same day as Kaia for misdemeanor battery in an unrelated incident. However, the boy’s arrest was halted by superiors before the child made it through the full arrest process.

Details about the boy’s arrest have not been made public.

The following day, prosecutors dropped the charge against Kaia.

Orlando Police Department officials have said Turner violated agency policy on arresting children younger than 12, which requires officers to get a supervisor’s approval — something Turner did not do. However, his decision was not illegal as Florida currently does not have a minimum age for arrest.

Meralyn Kirkland, Kaia’s grandmother, said she is hoping that when people watch the footage of her granddaughter’s arrest, they will support a proposal to change that law by making 12 the minimum age for arrest. She said she would also like to see school resource officers receive more training and preparation, especially to work with young children.

Related: After five years of indecision, St. Pete officers may finally get body cameras

“I knew that what they did was wrong, but I never knew she was begging for help,” Kirkland said in an interview Monday night about the video. “I watched her break.”

The body camera footage still upsets her, Kirkland said, especially when Turner “callously” talks about arresting children.

“You’re discussing traumatizing a 6- and 7-year-old — and that’s a boasting right for you?” she said. “These are babies.”

Kirkland said her granddaughter had sleep apnea, which could cause her to act out in school — a condition Kirkland had repeatedly worked with the school to manage, she said.

Kaia was completely processed at the county Juvenile Assessment Center, where the girl's mugshot and fingerprints were taken, Kirkland said, adding that employees at the center had to use a step stool so Kaia could reach the camera for the mugshot.

Kaia has since enrolled in a private school, after refusing to attend a school with an officer on campus, Kirkland said. She said she worries about how the trauma from the arrest will affect her granddaughter in years to come.

Turner, who was fired days after the arrest became national news, had worked in OPD's Reserve Unit, which is made up of retired officers who are required to work a certain amount of hours at the agency per month and can pick up extra-duty jobs for pay.

Over the course of Turner's 23-year tenure at OPD prior to retiring last year, he was disciplined seven times for violations of department policy that ranged from unsafe driving to a child-abuse arrest in which he was accused of injuring his 7-year-old son, record released Tuesday showed. He was also accused of sending threatening text messages to his ex-wife in 2009 and racial profiling, records show.

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Domestic Violence Cases Surge During COVID-19 Epidemic

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On Feb. 11, Xiao Li received a distressing call from a 12-year-old crying for help.

The child was wandering the deserted streets of their hometown in the central Henan province with his mother and 7-year-old sister. Their father had physically abused their mother and then kicked them out of the house at a time when many cities, including theirs, were on lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Their mother, surnamed Wang, had already divorced the man, but he had coerced her and the children into spending the Lunar New Year with his family.

Xiao told Sixth Tone that Wang — a distant relative — had wanted to escape her abusive ex-husband and make the 50-kilometer trip to see Xiao. But it was extremely difficult to get a permit from the police to leave a city under lockdown.

After much fruitless discussion, Xiao said she finally managed to convince the police to give her a driving permit. Xiao said she met Wang and the children at her town's border — which they had walked five hours toward before Wang's ex-husband picked them up and drove them the rest of the way.

"We were super worried about how easy it was for the abuser to beat her during the lockdown," Xiao said. "There were no restaurants open, no transportation allowed. They (Wang and her children) hadn't eaten in so long."

According to our statistics, 90% of the causes of violence are related to the COVID-19 epidemic.- Wan Fei, founder of an anti-domestic violence nonprofit

While millions of people are spending time indoors, rights activists say there

have been increasing instances of domestic violence — a crime in China since a landmark anti-domestic violence law went into effect in March 2016.

Wan Fei, a retired police officer who is now the founder of an anti-domestic violence nonprofit in Jingmen, a city in the central Hubei province, told Sixth Tone that reports of domestic violence have nearly doubled since cities were put under lockdown.

He said that as of Friday, the police station in Jianli County, which administers Jingmen, had received 162 reports of domestic violence in February — three times more than the 47 reported during the same month the previous year. The number of cases reported in January had also doubled compared with the same period last year.

“The epidemic has had a huge impact on domestic violence,” said Wan. “According to our statistics, 90% of the causes of violence are related to the COVID-19 epidemic.”

Wan believes the fear and anxiety from the extended quarantine, as well as the economic strain put on many families, may have contributed to the uptick. Meanwhile, support systems for survivors of domestic violence have weakened.

On Wednesday, a woman from the southern city of Shenzhen shared a recorded conversation with a police officer on microblogging platform Weibo in which the latter is heard asking her to forget about pursuing the case.

“He has a very good job. You would ruin his life if you reported him,” the officer is heard saying. “Why would you believe his words (death threats) when he was drunk?”

A day later, Shenzhen police said the abuser would be detained for five days, and that the police officer in question had been “educated.”

Although Wan said his colleagues have personally visited many individuals who’ve reported domestic violence, police in some parts of China have been reluctant to help the survivors, especially during the epidemic. He added that many shelters for survivors have been converted into homeless shelters by the authorities, while some officers vacillate when it comes to detaining perpetrators due to several recent COVID-19 clusters in prisons.

While everyone's attention is on the epidemic, victims of domestic violence are very much being neglected.- Wan Fei, founder of an anti-domestic violence nonprofit

“While everyone’s attention is on the epidemic, victims of domestic violence are very much being neglected,” Wan said. “They deserve more attention and help.”

With a spike in domestic violence-related cases amid the epidemic, some nonprofits have even published special manuals instructing survivors on how to better protect themselves and directing them to online legal aid, if needed.

Feng Yuan, the director of Beijing-based women’s rights nonprofit Weiping, told Sixth Tone that they have also received a substantial number of domestic violence-related reports since the Lunar New Year vacation a little over a month ago — beginning around the time several cities went into lockdown. She added that police should be more proactive in registering survivors’ complaints instead of finding excuses to not help them.

“The police can detain people for insulting (leading respiratory disease expert) Zhong Nanshan online and arrest someone for not wearing a mask on the street. It looks to me like the epidemic has not affected their law enforcement capacity,” Feng said. “If they use the epidemic as an excuse to not deal with domestic violence cases, that’s not acceptable.”

To empower women, Feng held a livestreamed workshop on Saturday where she shared what a person can do when they witness or become aware of domestic violence.

“It’s very important to let domestic violence survivors know their rights, and as witnesses we should all give them confidence and support,” she said.

Editor: Bibek Bhandari.



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For The First Time In History, Girls Won All Five Top Prizes at the Broadcom Masters STEM Competition

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Photo: Society for Science & the Public

When the winners were announced at this year's Broadcom MASTERS Competition, America's premiere science and engineering competition for middle school students, the stage looked a little different than previous years — for the first time ever, all of the top prize winners were girls! 14-year-old Alaina Gassler won the top award, the \$25,000 Samueli Foundation Prize, while 14-year-olds Rachel Bergey, Sidor Clare, Alexis MacAvoy, and Lauren Ejiaga each took home \$10,000 prizes. "With so many challenges in our world, Alaina and her fellow Broadcom MASTERS finalists make me optimistic," says Maya Ajmera, President and CEO of the Society for Science & the Public, which runs the competition, and Publisher of Science News. "I am proud to lead an organization that is inspiring so many young people, especially girls, to continue to innovate."

The Broadcom MASTERS — which stands for Math, Applied Science, Technology, and Engineering for Rising Stars — was founded in 2011 and aims to encourage middle school students to see how their personal passions can lead to career pathways in STEM. The competition is open to students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades; science fairs affiliated with the Society for Science & the Public nominate the top 10% of their participants, who then apply for the chance to join the national competition. This year, there was a pool of 2,348 applicants; 30 finalists were chosen, including 18 girls and 12 boys — the first time the finalists have been majority female as well.

In this blog post, we introduce you to these clever and creative Mighty Girls and their incredible projects. Their initiatives include reducing the size of blind spots in cars, creating new methods for protecting trees from an invasive insect species, studying how to build bricks on Mars, inventing a water filter that can remove heavy metals, and researching how increased ultraviolet light from ozone depletion affects plant growth. Their innovation and curiosity is sure to inspire science-loving kids everywhere!

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Hispanic man burned with acid says attacker accused him of invading U.S.

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Nov 4, 2019 1:45 PM

Milwaukee police arrested a man suspected of throwing battery acid on a Hispanic man who says his attacker asked him, “why did you come here and invade my country?”

Police said Monday they arrested a 61-year-old white man suspected in Friday night’s attack, but they haven’t identified him. Police said they’re investigating the case as a hate crime and charges are expected Tuesday.

Mahud Villalaz suffered second-degree burns to his face after a man confronted him Friday about how he had parked his truck and accused him of being in the country illegally. Villalaz, 42, is a U.S. citizen who immigrated from Peru.

The attack comes amid a spike in hate crimes directed at immigrants that researchers and experts on extremism say is tied to mainstream political rhetoric.

At a news conference on Monday, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett expressed shock at the attack and blamed President Donald Trump for inciting hatred against minorities. The president has repeatedly referred to migrants attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border as an “invasion.”

“To single out someone because they’re from a Hispanic origin is simply wrong. And we know what’s happening,” Barrett said. “Everybody knows what’s happening. It’s because the president is talking about it on a daily basis that people feel they have license to go after Hispanic people. And it’s wrong.”

A report issued last year by the Anti-Defamation League said extreme anti-immigrant views have become part of the political mainstream in recent years

through sharp rhetoric by anti-immigration groups and politicians, including Trump.

Surveillance video shows the confrontation but does not include audio.

Villalaz told reporters on Saturday that he was headed into a Mexican restaurant for dinner when a man approached him and told him, “You cannot park here. You are doing something illegal.” He said the man also accused him of invading the country.

He said he ignored the man and moved his truck to another block. But when he returned to the restaurant, the man was waiting for him with an open bottle, Villalaz said.

The man again accused him of being in the U.S. illegally, Villalaz said. He then told the man that he was a citizen and that “everybody came from somewhere else here,” Villalaz said.

That’s when he says the man tossed acid at him. Villalaz turned his head, and the liquid covered the left side of his face.

Villalaz’s sister told The Associated Press on Monday that her brother believes the man was prepared and wanted to attack someone.

“He’s in shock. He says he can’t conceive how someone would be intent on harming someone like that,” Villalaz said in Spanish.

She said her brother is recovering. She said the doctor who treated him said it helped that he immediately washed his face several times inside a restaurant. His family created a GoFundMe page to cover his medical expenses.

Data collected by the FBI showed a 17% increase in hate crimes across the U.S. in 2017, the third annual increase in a row. Anti-Hispanic incidents increased 24%, from 344 in 2016 to 427 in 2017, according to the FBI data. Of crimes motivated by hatred over race, ethnicity or ancestry, nearly half involved African Americans, while about 11% were classified as anti-Hispanic bias.

Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University-San Bernardino, released a study in July that found a 9% increase in hate crimes reported to police in major U.S. cities in 2018. Levin

found a modest decrease in bias crimes against Hispanic or Latino people — from 103 in 2017 to 100 in 2018 — in 10 major cities, including New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. However, Levin has said the totals likely would have increased last year if not for an unexplained drop in anti-Hispanic bias crimes reported for Phoenix, from 25 in 2017 to 10 in 2018.

Associated Press writers Gretchen Ehlke in Milwaukee and Michael Kunzelman in College Park, Maryland, contributed to this report.

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Opinion | Enough Leaning In. Let's Tell Men to Lean Out.

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If parents were giving their children virtue names today, as the Puritans used to do, nobody would choose Charity or Grace or Patience. Instead, half of all baby girls born in America would be named Empowerment or Assertiveness.

For women in this cultural moment, assertiveness is perhaps the ultimate in

aspirational personal qualities. At the nexus of feminism and self-help lies the promise that if we can only learn to state our needs more forcefully — to “lean in” and stop apologizing and demand a raise and power pose in the bathroom before meetings and generally act like a ladyboss (though not a regular boss of course; that would be unladylike) — everything from the pay gap to mansplaining to the glass ceiling would all but disappear. Women! Be more like men. Men, as you were.

There are several problems with this fist-pumping restyling of feminism, most obviously that it slides all too easily into victim blaming. The caricature of the shrinking violet, too fearful to ask for a raise, is a handy straw-woman for corporations that would rather blame their female employees for a lack of assertiveness than pay them fairly.

There’s also the awkward issue that it turns out to be untrue. Research shows that despite countless attempts to rebrand the wage gap as a “confidence gap,” women ask for raises as often as men do. They just don’t get them.

But even if we leave these narrative glitches aside and accept the argument that female unassertiveness is a major cause of gender inequality and that complex, systemic problems can be fixed with individual self-improvement, we are still left with a deeply sexist premise.

The assumption that assertiveness is a more valuable trait than, say, deference is itself the product of a ubiquitous and corrosive gender hierarchy.

As a rule, anything associated with girls or women — from the color pink to domestic labor — is by definition assigned a lower cultural value than things associated with boys or men. Fashion, for instance, is vain and shallow, while baseball is basically a branch of philosophy. Tax dollars are poured into encouraging girls to take up STEM subjects, but no one seems to care much whether boys become nurses. Girls are routinely given pep talks to be “anything a boy can be,” a glorious promotion from their current state, whereas to encourage a boy to behave more like a girl is to inflict an emasculating demotion. Female hobbies, careers, possessions and behaviors are generally dismissed as frivolous, trivial, niche or low status — certainly nothing to which any self-respecting boy or man might ever aspire.

“Women: Improve yourselves!” has always been a baseline instruction of both

the world at large and the self-help movement. Take the whole “Women Who ...” subgenre, a surprisingly large range of books whose titles start with the words “Women Who ...” and end with a character flaw that then blames us for our own failure to be happy or successful. “Women Who Love Too Much,” “Women Who Think Too Much,” “Women Who Worry Too Much,” “Women Who Do Too Much.”

Rarely do we stop to consider that many of life’s problems might be better explained by the alternative titles “Men Who Love Too Little,” “... Think Too Little,” “... Worry Too Little” or “... Do Too Little.” But instead we assume without question that whatever men are doing or thinking is what we all should be aiming for.

Now the assertiveness movement is taking this same depressingly stacked ranking system and selling it back to us as feminism. We in turn barely question whether the male standard really is the more socially desirable or morally sound set of behaviors or consider whether women might actually have had it right all along.

After all, one man’s “assertive” is often another woman’s abrasive, entitled or rude. Surely many of our most pressing social and political problems — from #MeToo to campus rape, school shootings to President Trump’s Twitter posturing — are caused not by a lack of assertiveness in women but by an overassertiveness among men. In the workplace, probably unsurprisingly to many women who are routinely talked over, patronized or ignored by male colleagues, research shows that rather than women being underconfident, men tend to be overconfident in relation to their actual abilities. Women generally aren’t failing to speak up; the problem is that men are refusing to pipe down.

Take apologizing, the patient zero of the assertiveness movement. Women do too much of it, according to countless op-ed essays, books, apps and shampoo ads. There’s even a Gmail plug-in that is supposed to help us quit this apparently self-destructive habit by policing our emails for signs of excessive contrition, underlining anything of an overly apologetic nature in angry red wiggles.

The various anti-apologizing tracts often quote a 2010 study showing that the reason women say they are sorry more often than men is that we have a “lower threshold for what constitutes offensive behavior.” This is almost exclusively framed as an example of female deficiency. But really, isn’t a person with a

“high threshold of what constitutes offensive behavior” just a fancy name for a jerk?

Rarely in the course of this anti-apologizing crusade do we ever stop to consider the social and moral value of apologies and the cost of obliterating them from our interactions. Apologizing is a highly symbolic and socially efficient way to take responsibility for our actions, to right a wrong and clear space for another person’s feelings. It’s a routine means of injecting self-examination and moral reflection into daily life.

Indeed, many of our problems with male entitlement and toxic behavior both in the workplace and elsewhere could well be traced back to a fundamental unwillingness among men to apologize, or even perceive that they have anything to apologize for. Certainly many emails I have received from men over the years would have benefited from a Gmail plug-in pointing out the apology-shaped hole. The energy we spend getting women to stop apologizing might be better spent encouraging men to start.

So perhaps instead of nagging women to scramble to meet the male standard, we should instead be training men and boys to aspire to women’s cultural norms, and selling those norms to men as both default and desirable. To be more deferential. To reflect and listen and apologize where an apology is due (and if unsure, to err on the side of a superfluous sorry than an absent one). To aim for modesty and humility and cooperation rather than blowhard arrogance.

It would be a challenge, for sure. Pity the human resources manager trying to sell a deference training course to male employees. She would need to paint all the PowerPoint slides black and hand out Nerf guns just to get started. As long as the threat of emasculation is a baseline terror for men, encouraging them to act more like women still instinctively feels like a form of humiliation.

Which is exactly why we need to try, because until female norms and standards are seen as every bit as valuable and aspirational as those of men, we will never achieve equality. Promoting qualities such as deference, humility, cooperation and listening skills will benefit not only women but also businesses, politics and even men themselves, freeing them from the constant and exhausting expectation to perform a grandstanding masculinity, even when they feel insecure or unsure.

So H.R. managers and self-help authors, slogan writers and TED Talk talkers: Use your platforms and your cultural capital to ask that men be the ones to do the self-improvement for once. Stand up for deference. Write the book that teaches men to sit back and listen and yield to others' judgment. Code the app that shows them where to put the apologies in their emails. Teach them how to assess their own abilities realistically and modestly. Tell them to "lean out," reflect and consider the needs of others rather than assertively restating their own. Sell the female standard as the norm.

Perhaps some capitulation poses in the bathroom before a big meeting might help.

Ruth Whippman, the author of "America the Anxious," is working on a book about raising boys.

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She Faced Her ISIS Rapist in Court, Then Watched Him Sentenced to Death

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For the first time, an Iraqi court has held the Islamic State accountable for its atrocities against the Yazidi religious minority.

BAGHDAD — Iraq has held thousands of trials for members of the Islamic State, but until Monday none had sought to bring justice specifically to the thousands of members of the Yazidi religious minority who were kidnapped, raped and killed.

A soft-spoken 20-year old Yazidi woman changed that when she decided to testify in open court.

The witness, Ashwaq Haji Hamid Talo, gave a restrained but searing account to judges and before the public — in the presence of the ISIS militant to whom she was once given as a gift, and who raped her repeatedly.

The defendant, Mohammed Rashid Sahab, 36, who is an Iraqi, was found guilty of participating in a terrorist organization and in the rape and abduction of Yazidi women. He was given the death penalty.

“The most important thing to me is that my dream came true and I was watching the one who raped me being sentenced to death,” Ms. Haji Hamid said afterward.

The trial, which ended on Monday, was the first in Iraq to specifically address the Islamic State’s crimes against the Yazidis — or at least one militant’s crimes. It was also the first in which a Yazidi victim personally confronted her attacker.

“I want my story to reach the whole world, so my message is heard by my friends and gives them the courage to do the same thing that I did, so that they can get revenge on Daesh,” she said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State.

The chief judge in the case expressed a similar wish.

“We hope that if people hear about this case, others will come forward,” said Judge Haider Jalil Khalil of the Kharkh Criminal Court in Baghdad. He said the judiciary had been hampered in bringing this kind of case by the reluctance of victims to testify in public.

In Iraqi society, it is especially difficult for women to speak out in public about rape, as Ms. Haji Hamid did, for fear that they will be accused of having allowed the men to rape them and that they will tarnish their family name.

“But perhaps if they see that the judiciary will give them their rights, they will come forward now if they hear about this case,” Judge Khalil said.

The international human rights community has criticized the Iraqi judiciary for holding rapid-fire trials against large numbers of ISIS members without detailing their individual crimes. “A vague charge of terrorism just does not do justice to the act committed,” said Belkis Wille, the senior Iraq researcher for Human Rights Watch.

Ms. Wille said this prosecution appeared different.

“This would be the first case I have come across in the last four years where a victim has had any meaningful role in the proceedings,” she said. “And it would be first case where the charge of rape was added and addressed by the court, which is significant.”

She explained that the rape charge seemed to show that the Iraqi judiciary recognized how important it is for individual ISIS victims to have their day in court.

Ms. Haji Hamid grew up in Khana Sor, a small town in the Sinjar mountain region of northern Iraq near the Syrian border, which is entirely populated by people of the Yazidi faith. She had six sisters and 12 brothers; her father had two wives.

“We had a stable life there,” she told the court. “I was happy with being with all my cousins.”

Then armed members of the Islamic State rolled into town on Aug. 3, 2014.

“They told us we were infidels and that our sect needed to become Islamic,” Ms. Haji Hamid testified. The Yazidi religion is shaped by a variety of faiths, including Zoroastrianism, Islam and Judeo-Christian practices.

Her father declared that they were committed to their faith.

The militants gave him a day to decide whether to convert. After that, they warned, those who did not would be “slaughtered, except for the women,” Ms. Haji Hamid said.

The family resolved to escape by night and loaded up their cars. More than 70 of them piled in, but before they could leave, a group of ISIS members intercepted them. They separated men from women, and then young girls from their mothers.

Ms. Haji Hamid was with a group of nine girls who were sold to Islamic State fighters for “\$100 or \$200,” she said. “Four of my sisters were sold in Syria, and me and my younger sister were sold in Nineveh Province in Iraq,” she said.

Later, she was held in a place with about 50 girls.

“We were forced to change our clothes,” she said, “and they kept us almost naked, like dancers, and they told us to do prayers in the Islamic way five times a day.”

Eventually, Ms. Haji Hamid was given to Mr. Sahab, who at the time was about 30, and had escaped from prison with the help of the Islamic State.

In court on Monday, the judge asked if she recognized her captor in the room, where he was now wearing prison yellow.

Ms. Haji Hamid looked at the defendant directly and nodded.

“I know him better than I know myself,” she said.

She said it was just one day after she was given to Mr. Sahab that he “forcibly raped me.” At the time, she said, she was a virgin.

He asked her to marry him, and when she refused, he went to an Islamic judge and had a ceremony anyway. Under Iraqi law, marital rape does not exist.

“He raped me every day, sometimes two or three times a day,” Ms. Haji Hamid said.

The only reason she did not become pregnant, she said, was because she got her captor to take her to the doctor on the pretext that she was ill. When she was alone with the doctor, she begged for birth control pills, and then took them secretly, she said.

During her captivity, Ms. Haji Hamid testified, she tried to cut herself with the idea of committing suicide.

Finally, she went to the doctor and asked for sleeping pills, saying she needed them to get some rest. Instead, Ms. Haji Hamid and the other Yazidi girls prepared a meal for the ISIS fighters, and put the sleeping pills into their food.

While the fighters were sleeping, the young women escaped to Sinjar mountain.

When the Islamic State took control of northern Iraq in 2014, it singled out

Shiites and Yazidis for the worst treatment, killing or enslaving many and sending the Yazidis fleeing from their homes around Sinjar. Many of the atrocities came to light after the Iraqi army, backed by the American forces, retook the north.

Mr. Sahab is originally from Anbar Province, an overwhelmingly Sunni area of western Iraq. When he was 19, he killed a taxi driver and stole his car, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. When ISIS broke into the prison, freeing the prisoners, Mr. Sahab quickly swore allegiance to the group.

At his trial, Mr. Sahab expressed neither regret nor a sense that he had done anything wrong.

In court, he described himself as “a Quran teacher,” and said, “I also did spiritual things like driving demons out of people.”

Mr. Sahab said that he had been told by the Islamic State leadership to participate in the attack on the Yazidis, and that he had been injured, spending a few weeks in the hospital.

“They came to me and said they had a captive, a sabiha, for me,” he testified. He said, “She was given to me as a gift.”

Mr. Sahab insisted he could not tell if his “gift” had been happy or unhappy. “I did not see her crying or laughing,” he said.

Although Ms. Haji Hamid is now back with her family, not all of her brothers and sisters were able to do the same.

“My father bought five of my sisters from Daesh,” she said. “He paid \$15,000. They were all forcibly raped many times.”

“We have them all back except Reham — we do not know her destiny,” she said.

Then she paused: “And five of my brothers went with Daesh, and they are lost.”

Falih Hassan contributed reporting.

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