

Mens' Rights Movement is a fraud

By Andrew Dyer
A perspective

Nowhere has regressive and toxic ideology festered like it has on the Internet. Socially isolated individuals have found connections in countless insular electronic communities. Surrounding themselves with those who share a common perspective, they become inoculated against infusions of different ideas.

This toxic feedback loop of circular reasoning is evident in the Men's Rights Movement and its adherents, Men's Rights Activists (MRAs.)

Throughout its history, feminism has been met with reactionist male resistance, but the Internet has fueled new level of vitriol. Browse any web forum devoted to men's rights, like A Voice for Men and it will burn with a litany of misogynistic ideology peppered with defensive male posturing. Though they pretend to be advocacy groups, one would be hard-pressed to find any evidence of advocacy. Instead, many pages are devoted to abject denial of today's feminist issues. Things like the wage gap and rape culture are dismissed as coordinated deceptions. The entire scene is fit for an academic study on missing the point.

A more popular men's rights forum on Reddit, the self-styled "front page of the Internet," boasts more than 100,000 subscribers. On the Men's Rights subreddit, the forum's most popular submissions are posts defending statutory rapists, anti-feminist screeds and links to articles detailing false-rape accusations. Though statistically rare, the spectre of the false-rape accusation dominates the forum. The Department of Justice estimates that only 35 percent of rapes are reported. Coupled with findings by the National Center for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women that a mere seven percent of those were false, the false-rape fear machine sputters and fails.

One tent pole of anti-feminist theory is abject denial that our society is patriarchal. Recently, Dilbert cartoonist Scott Adams turned off his brain and logged into his blog to complain that men are expected to pay for dates with women without the guarantee of sex. He went on to argue that, as the gatekeepers of sex, it was actually women who held the power in society. In dropping this brain-turd into his toilet of a blog, Adams claimed he had single-handedly refuted any notion of patriarchy. Adams should not deny the existence of patriarchy in the same breath where he also whines about the necessity of obtaining consent. Adams' repulsive notions are what feminists are referring to when talking about rape culture.

Internet echo chambers incubate toxic attitudes like these, with sometimes violent consequences. A popular meme among these communities is avoidance of the "friendzone," a sexless orbit self-styled "nice guys" are condemned to inhabit around women they desire. Women only view



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male companionship as a commodity, they say, trading their sex for material security. To them, any man who provides friendship without receiving sex is viewed as a fool, because sex is the only thing of value women have to offer.

"Nice guys" are doomed to this fate while jerks, jocks, and the bullies of their youth win the girls by virtue of their physical appearance or income bracket. The myth of the "nice guy" crumbles when, considered from the woman's perspective, they are actually attempting to manipulate their way into bed by feigning friendship. But, like much of men's rights ideology, the only perspective worth consideration is a man's.

The danger in buying into this narrative was illustrated in blood by Isla Vista shooter Elliot Rodger. In 2014 the troubled 22-year-old shot and killed six people at UC Santa Barbara. His 137-page manifesto was an extreme example of the frustration many young men experience when their romantic realities do not align with their hormonal desires. His life, isolated and dominated by online games, is one many men his age can identify with.

Rodger's complaints mimicked common themes of men's forums online when he talked about the brutality of the "real world."

"The meanest and depraved men come out on top, and women flock to them," Rodger's manifesto reads. "The good, decent men are laughed at."

When the hashtag #yesallwomen began trending after the shooting, it was an outlet for women tired of the harassment they receive from men online. It was not long before the reactionary hashtag #notallmen popped up, as if on cue, to derail the conversation and make it again about men's feelings instead of women's.

It is rare to meet a woman who has spent any time on social media who has not experienced unwanted

comments, critiques and photos. Discussion of this issue was co-opted by reactionary men, the delicate fragility of their masculinity again under threat by the mere acknowledgment of the problem.

Another online maelstrom, "gamergate," was an egregious example of organized Internet communities coordinating a harassment campaign against women. Although participants claim their crusade was about ethics in video game journalism, the death threats and constant social media harassment towards women in the media and industry did not lend any credibility to that claim. Developer Brianna Wu had to leave her home due to death threats. "I hope you enjoy your last moments on earth," read one post. "You did nothing worthwhile with your life."

MRAs see a world where they are constantly under attack, beset on all sides threat by angry, militant feminists and good men cower under the threat of false-rape accusations. Women's issues, when brought to the forefront, are met with skepticism and attempts to rationalize away. Campus sexual assault continues to be a leading concern and the most prevalent threat to women on campus, yet statistical outliers, like the Rolling Stone rape story or the Duke lacrosse scandal, receive disproportionate media coverage and are heralded as examples of the dangers of taking feminist concerns too seriously.

Feminism today is no more extreme or less relevant than it was a century ago. Acknowledgement of the issues raised in feminist theory, like male privilege, does not threaten men or minimize anyone's accomplishments. Men should recognize that anti-feminist ideologies are a threat to them as well as women. The nature of these internet communities is not conducive to rational discussion of the issue, because evidence opposed to the prevailing narrative is unwelcome and dismissed out-of-hand. Before subscribing to the anti-feminist groupthink of the internet man-o-sphere, young men should be the logical beings they claim to be and rationally consider the world from another perspective, that of a feminist.

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