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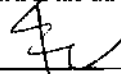
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That Type of Girl Deserves It



Reut Amir
Filed to: TRUE STORIES, 9/27/14, 2:59pm

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Every young woman I know was violated when the nude pictures of Jennifer Lawrence and other successful women were posted on the internet for public consumption against their will. Some of us reason that these young women deserve to be sexually and publicly violated because they created these images. We reason that we have a right to their naked bodies simply because the images exist somewhere in the ether. That is to say that the mere existence of a woman's body is justification for its violation.

This has nothing to do with celebrity. Or revenge. Notwithstanding the fact that a victim of revenge porn or a hacking created those images within the confines of an intimate relationship or for herself, we believe she deserves to be punished. We seek to punish her for her immodesty. For being a sexual creature in the first place. *That type of girl* deserves it. Hell, she probably benefits from it. This line of reasoning releases the voyeurs of any responsibility, as they sexually violate a woman who has not consented to the viewing of her naked body.

It is an exercise in victim-blaming as old as time itself and as relevant as ever. But what those of us who view these images may not understand - or are apathetic to - is the impact of these "leaks" on the young women we love.

Each time these images are leaked, it makes me feel that I have lost control over my own body and destiny. It makes me believe that merely existing as a female in this world makes me vulnerable and subject to violation. It makes me shrink, to become invisible. It makes female success feel dangerous. It demonstrates to me that the power of influential women is limited and that all women are ultimately reduced to mere sexuality. It teaches me that despite my whole personhood, my sexuality is the most powerful and obvious tool to shame me. *I am* shameful.

But I also come from a generation of young women who were taught that their physical

appearance and sexuality are directly linked to their success. We are the generation that was taught how much the world had changed and how much more we could achieve than those who came before us. But when we open our eyes and look around it is unquestionably clear that it is more advantageous to be seen as sexual creatures. Society is talking out of both sides of its mouth to young women and it is confusing and dangerous. We are expected to walk the finest of lines along this false binary of womanhood in all aspects of our lives.

We have produced a generation of terrorized and terrified women. We are the generation of women who are afraid to be intimate, to explore our sexuality in safety, to take private pictures of our bodies, to walk to the parking lot, to dance. We are the women who won't walk alone after dark. Think about that. That means that for much of the year, we spend half the day afraid to walk down the street without a companion. We are constantly calculating which is the safest path and whom to trust.

It means that when I want to go for a run after dark, I won't. It means that in law school, I would often leave the library early with a friend so that I would not have to walk to the parking lot alone at night rather than focusing on my studies. It means that when I spend the night with a new partner, I scan the room for hidden cameras rather than looking at my lover. It means that I will hesitate to go out with my friends at all if I know I will have to cab home alone at the end of the night. It means that as a young professional woman I continuously regulate my behavior, both in my personal and my professional life. I have done so since I was 15 years old. If I wanted to be respected, to succeed, I could not be *that type of girl*. The onus was and remains entirely on me. We are taught and then self-teach to make *minor* adjustments to every aspect of our lives. These are the solutions we are given to avoid being victimized. To become smaller, more dependent, more afraid.

The corollary to these tools is to blame a victim who fails to use them. What was she doing walking alone at night like that? Why would she take those pictures if she didn't want them seen? She shouldn't drink so much if she doesn't want to be treated that way. Protect yourself because we, society, are ravenous. We cannot control ourselves and we cannot be held accountable for our actions if you remove your veil and exist before us.

The fact that the conversation is centered on nude photos rather than on consent is a powerful reflection of how our society regards violence against women. We are not concerned with what it means to violate a young woman by viewing her unwilling naked body. We see hacking a computer as a crime but viewing the hacked image as a misdemeanor rather than an act of sexual violence. We absolve ourselves of the crime. We pretend we are not causing harm in fulfilling our role as the intended audience.

When society fails to object loudly to its sexual abuse of victims of "revenge porn" and continues to perpetrate sexual violence with every click on their naked bodies, it illuminates how we value consent in other forms of sexual abuse. It tells other young women about the protection they can expect against sexual abuse in light of the absent outrage at what amounts to a young woman's societal gang rape. It tells us we are not worthy of protection. It tells us we were asking for it. It tells us we bear responsibility.

During my first year at law school, my criminal law professor stood before us and surveyed the class. He said that according to the statistics, anywhere between 50 and 80 percent of the women in that lecture hall would have been survivors of a sexual assault, in most cases by people they knew. I didn't believe him at the time. Later that year, a classmate was sexually assaulted. After that, I discovered how a staggering number of my friends had their own stories of sexual assault. Later still, I recalled my *own* story. It's not that I had forgotten. I simply didn't know where to place it. Naming it caused a tremor in the core of my being that released the fear, shame, helplessness, and fury that had been lying dormant and yet affecting everything.

Almost none of us had gone to the police. Many of us had not spoken about it until that time. Merely this was because we had not categorized it as rape even though our bodies and souls had

Mostly this was because we had not categorized it as rape even though our bodies and souls had known exactly what it was. We didn't call it rape because we were drunk. Because after we said no and he wouldn't stop, we gave in. Because we couldn't remember all of it. Because we were afraid no one would believe us. Because we didn't believe ourselves. Because we blamed ourselves. Because this couldn't happen to us. This only happened to *that type of girl*.

Reut Amit lives in Vancouver, British Columbia where she works in commercial litigation. She holds a M.A. in Diplomacy and Conflict Studies from the IDC Herzliya and a J.D. from the University of Victoria. She writes essays about feminism, politics and public policy. Follow her on Twitter @reutamit.

[Illustration by Jim Cooke]

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Reut Amit's Discussions

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Sanjay O'Brien · Reporter
37714 · 30 Jun



Amazing (and aggravating, in a good way) article, but the illustration that accompanies it takes things to a whole different level. These reflective pieces are why I come to Gawker.

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