



by KATE McEVILLY

Kate's Kulture: Rape, Catcalling and Respecting Women

With the recent article on the University of Virginia's handling of a rape case primarily told through the perspective of Jackie, a currently enrolled student; with the recent video experiment of a woman walking through New York City with a camera following her to show how many times a day she was catcalled, objectified and made to feel unsafe and uncomfortable; with the recent speech by Emma Watson at the United Nations about why men need to be feminists, too; with Barbara Walters' 10 Most Interesting People list where Amal Alamuddin was listed as the No. 1 most interesting person of 2014 because, with the help of her spectacular wardrobe, she tied down the world's most eligible, elusive bachelor, I found myself questioning the role of women in our society.

Jackie's case, whether altogether true or not, shined a light on the fact that female college students are not always safe at college parties, and that highly regarded universities still do not have adequate safeguards in place to handle allegations of sexual assault on campuses.

The video experiment of the woman being catcalled reminded me that women are still viewed by some men as objects and not as full equal people.

Watson's speech was enlightening because, several generations after the women's movement, she still needs to plea for equality while making the rather obvious point that men should be feminists, too. And as for Amal Alamuddin, or should I say Amal Clooney, why are we mostly hearing about what she wears rather than what she does?

As a proud feminist, I wonder: How do we change this dialogue? What can I do to change the way that some of our society views women and their contributions, as well as the disrespectful and sometimes violent behavior that harms women?

First, let me define what feminism means to me. I believe in equality for both women and men. I believe that women are strong, powerful, capable beings who deserve to be treated the same and paid the same as men.

I do not believe that women are inherently weaker than men or that women should define themselves mainly by their relationships with men. I hope to have the same opportunities as the male students in my class, and not feel that my opportunities are limited by my gender.

On Dec. 14, 2014, I turned on ABC to watch a pioneering woman in journalism, Barbara Walters, name her 10 most fascinating people of the year.

I watched segments on a Koch brother, on Neil Patrick Harris and on Oprah Winfrey, who were all lauded for their career achievements. Then came Amal Alamuddin.



In the video "Ten Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman," a female experiences catcalling and unwanted approaches as she strolls the city. YOUTUBE

For those of you who are not aware of pop culture as much as I am, Amal Alamuddin is the new wife of mega-movie star George Clooney. She is a very well-educated, respected British barrister who has represented Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, an array of high-profile clients and countries, served on United Nations commissions, and is currently representing the country of Greece. But you wouldn't know any of that from her segment.

Amal was honored for "one of the great-

“ We want to try to galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change.”

Emma Watson

est achievements in human history," and by greatest achievements in human history, Barbara was referring to her marriage to George Clooney. Yes, I know this is hyperbole. Yes, I know Barbara is probably not serious. But was her marriage really the only thing that makes Amal interesting, noteworthy or worthy of respect?

The fact that Barbara briefly mentioned some of Amal's law work but with the precursor that she did this work "while looking gorgeous" made me nauseous.

As a woman who had to break through glass ceilings in journalism, a woman who was the first female co-anchor on main-

stream news, that Ms. Walters would describe Amal as another Jackie O, Princess Di or Kate Middleton, women who while fabulous do not have the same personal or professional success that Amal does, was wrong and frankly, demeaning.

I have a hard time imagining her treating a man the same way. You might ask yourself, why does this matter? It is just entertainment. Who cares? Well, I care. These types of characterizations reduce women to caricatures. It is all about the clothes, the beauty, the style...and no substance.

When was the last time you heard an interview with a man where he was asked who made his clothes or the reporter commented repeatedly on his beauty? These characterizations of women are rooted in a culture that has an inherent lack of respect for women.

This lack of respect is further seen when watching the recent video of a woman in New York walking around being videotaped as numerous men ogle and catcall her. And no, she was not dressed provocatively and was not engaging in conduct that "asked" for the attention.

Again, some might say why is this important? Why do you care? I care because it makes me feel sad that women have to worry about being disrespected as they walk through a city like New York. And don't tell me that women should be flattered by this type of attention.

It is not positive or healthy to have someone objectify you. Would you want

someone to treat your sister or mother or friend that way? I don't think so.

Then, finally, we have the case of Jackie at the University of Virginia, who may or may not have been raped by a number of students at a fraternity party.

When I first read the story in *Rolling Stone*, I was horrified and shocked. Now it turns out that some of the details of the story are untrue, and it is not clear what happened.

Regardless of the truth of Jackie's story, the article has shined a light on a very real problem on college campuses. Campus sexual assaults are not uncommon, and many schools are not prepared to handle these types of matters. And even more important, what can we all do to try to ensure that these types of things don't happen in the first place?

One rather obvious way to minimize campus sexual violence is to have both male and female students watch out for their friends and intervene if someone acts inappropriately. We have to look out for each other.

Men and women must come together in order to stop all of these obvious and subtle ways of minimizing women. Emma Watson said that "we want to try to galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change."

Sticking together at parties, always having a buddy system, pulling away friends that are harassing others, treating women as people and not as sexual objects, and remembering that every person is worthy of respect and dignity, is the beginning of creating lasting, meaningful social change.

This is something all of us can do.

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