



Episode 814: A Feminist Takes a Second Look at the Men's Rights Movement

Guest: Cassie Jaye

WOODS: All right, I watched *The Red Pill*. Very, very interesting. By this point you're probably tired of telling your story, of how it is that you went from holding one view to being willing to entertain another view, but at the same time, to me that's the heart of the whole thing, because it's so rare for somebody to say, You know, people I thought were 180 degrees away from me actually have a point of view after all. So I wonder if you can, before we even get into the details, just comment on that aspect of this.

JAYE: You know, it's interesting that you say that's so rare, and a lot of people do say that's rare, and I think that's kind of sad that not more people are willing to challenge their own strong-held beliefs and go to explore the opposing viewpoint to see if they have a point. And that is what I did with *The Red Pill*, although I didn't go into making *The Red Pill* thinking that was what was going to happen. I never imagined that my feminist views would be challenged by going to talk to a bunch of men's rights activists, but sure enough, they were. And the whole film took three and a half years to make, so it was a very long journey of me really starting with these opposing views and really letting them soak in and doing the research to see if they were accurate in what men's rights activists were saying about men's issues. So it was a very long process. It didn't happen overnight, but the film does show a bit of that journey.

WOODS: I'd be there are a lot of people listening who don't even know what the men's rights movement is. If you had to summarize it, what would you say it's all about?

JAYE: Oh gosh. Well, okay, so the mainstream media version of the men's rights movement is that they're this hate group, they're misogynists that want to turn back the clock on women's rights, and through my years of making *The Red Pill* movie I find out that that was quite a different story once you start talking to men's rights activists. So really what men's rights activists are about is trying to shine light on the ways that men as a gender are being systematically discriminated against in societies worldwide.

And some of the issues that they talk about a lot are definitely fathers' rights. Then there's so many issues under that umbrella, with child custody and joint custody opposition from feminist organizations that are fighting joint custody legislation. There's also paternity fraud, which is a man raising a child that he later finds out isn't his. There's alimony. There's false accusations where people in divorce court, women kind of have I guess more of a free pass to make allegations against men and be

believed, whereas it's not often that you'll find a man being able to say, "My wife is abusing me," and therefore he gets custody of the children. So it really is kind of this disproportionate privilege that women have to make these false allegations in order to get custody of their kids or child support.

And then beyond fathers' rights, there's also domestic violence issues, where if the police are called to a domestic violence situation the assumption is that the man was the primary aggressor, so he's the one handcuffed and taken to jail, even if he has a stab wound and she has a bruise.

And beyond domestic violence, we have boys in school, in grade school with this kind of feminized way of teaching and learning, where you should sit still in your seat and be quiet, which girls find it a lot easier to learn that way and be in school that way, whereas boys really need to run around and touch things, be involved. And then once they go to college, boys have a lower enrollment rate. They're earning less college degrees. False accusations on college campuses is an issue.

And gosh, there's so many issues. Men's health issues, male disposability, which is that majority of war deaths are men, the majority of workplace deaths and dangerous jobs are men. So yeah, I could go one and on, but there's a lot of men's issues, so the men's rights movement is really just trying to shine light on all these various issues.

WOODS: But at the same time, you've come out of feminism. You've come out of — at least get influenced by the women's rights movement, and I'm sure you wouldn't say that because you find merit in the men's rights case that there's suddenly no merit to the women's rights movement. So if there are complaints that men have and complaints that women have, what the heck's going on here, you know? That pretty much exhausts it. So what's happening? How can that be?

JAYE: Yeah, well, I definitely haven't lost compassion for women's issues after making *The Red Pill* movie. All my previous work was really about women's issues and sexuality, LGBT issues. My previous films were largely about women's issues and LGBT issues. So you know, I have a lot of compassion and interest in those topics, in exploring those issues.

But with the men's rights movement, they really are just trying to shine a light on something that's rarely discussed, and when it is tried to be discussed on college campuses, in organizing men's rights groups to talk about these issues, they are shut down with protests or pulling fire alarms, and that's what I saw when I was making the film and also at the release of my film *The Red Pill*. We've had a lot of experiences with censorship and pulling and banning of screenings, even a petition to ban me from the entire country of Australia. So there's definitely this kind of cultural dialogue that, when we're talking about gender issues, we really mostly — most people just want to talk about women's rights issues in the gender equality discussion, but if men's rights or men's issues are ever brought up, it's called hate speech, and there's efforts to shut it down.

WOODS: Let me ask you this: this is somewhat rhetorical, but when you were doing your work on the LGBT documentary, was anybody trying to bar you from entire

countries, or was anybody shouting down opposing views? Any conservatives shouting down opposing views, as far as you could see?

JAYE: That's a very interesting question. Now looking back, no, we didn't have — I wasn't banned from countries, and the film wasn't pulled from screenings because it was about LGBT issues. The worst that we had with my last film, *The Right to Love*, which was chronicling a family's fight for gay marriage rights — the worst we had was the Westboro Baptists sending some threatening emails, but, you know, that's kind of to be expected.

WOODS: Oh yeah, no, they don't even count. I mean, they were threatening to protest an Ian Anderson concert I went to. Ian Anderson's a flute player who's been around for 40 years. And what they were protesting was that he had gotten a divorce back in like 1973, and then he's only been married to his current wife for 27 years. So they were protesting his divorce from about 40 years ago, and I thought, All right, look, nobody's perfect and everything, but for goodness sake, that's what you — of all the things in the world you're going to be upset about? And they didn't even bother to show up, as it turns out. They were not there. But that was the show that I got to meet him afterward, and they were all wondering, you know, We've toured the world as musicians. We have never encountered a group like this. Who on Earth are these people?

So all right, I just wanted to raise that, because I do think there's an asymmetry, let's say, in the way different groups greet controversy and opposing views. They might not agree with you, but at least they let you talk, and that's not always the case the other way.

Now, in your movie you do have both sides have their say, and you have some feminist voices in there. And one of the points that one of the people in the film makes is that when you're talking about men and their rights as parents or their right to decide about the disposition of a child, the very life of a child, the argument that they made was that men can exercise their rights before they have intercourse, but once impregnation has taken place, one person in your film said it's entirely the woman's choice from that moment on. The men have no input whatsoever. And the argument for that was: after all, it's the woman who bears the burden of childbirth and who bears the burden of nine months of pregnancy and the health risks involved, so she really should be the one making all the decisions from that moment on. What would you now, Cassie Jaye, post-*Red Pill* movie, say to that? Is there not at least a superficial plausibility to that argument?

JAYE: Oh my gosh. I would like to share an email I got today, because I think it speaks to this topic. I got an email from a gentleman saying thank you for making this film, and he said, I was raised that you never hit a woman or do anything physical violent to a woman, and you also never get a divorce. And he entered a marriage when he was very young to a woman who was violent. And he's in the military, and she became pregnant, and a couple months after they found out she was pregnant, he found out he was going to be deployed. And she started throwing herself on the ground, pounding her abdomen. Obviously it sounds like this woman has some kind of mental disorder or issue.

But he was trying to restrain her from causing this miscarriage, and luckily his daughter was born, and now he's gone through a horrible divorce and custody battle, and they got joint custody even though there was all this proof of her stabbing him with broken glass vases and cutting up his face where he has to wear a bandage all the time to cover the scars. I mean, just a horrible story. But he still has to send off his six-year-old daughter half of the time to the mother's house with his daughter's stepfather and the ex-wife's new family. And even though they have joint custody, he's still having to pay child support and be the financial breadwinner and caretaker of his family.

But anyways, I say that, because the story about her being pregnant, and then when he found out he was going to be deployed she started trying to induce this miscarriage or abortion of sorts, and how could you not call that a men's issue, when here's a father who's for the first time learning that he's going to be a father and wants to protect this child, even though the fetus is in the woman's body, and you could say it's her body, her choice. But could a man just helplessly sit there watching as his wife is trying to kill their baby? So I think that, you know, obviously a lot of these issues are very sticky, and people have a lot of opinions that come from their ideology or morality or religion and all that, but I think that's just a really heart-wrenching story. In the film, in *The Red Pill* there's a leader in the feminist movement who says that once a woman is impregnated, it's her choices from then on what happens with the fetus or the child, and he has no say. That's where his reproductive rights end. So it's just an interesting discussion.

WOODS: What about the argument that part of the reason that men don't get equal time with children following a divorce is that this is a reflection of the fact that before the divorce a lot of men are not exactly 50/50 parents, and then after the divorce suddenly they want everything divided right down the middle? It doesn't work that way. That was the kind of argument I heard in the film. Do you — I know the film is not about your personal opinions, but in my conversation with you I'm curious about your personal opinions. What do you think when you hear that kind of argument?

JAYE: Oh, I'm glad that you brought that up, because I really struggled including that sound bite in the film. It was from a male feminist scholar. He's a gender studies professor at USC. And he said that when men's rights activists want equal custody after marriage, why should they be entitled to that when they weren't an equal parent during the marriage, meaning that they weren't helping raise the child full time or being at home half the time and being more involved in that kind of way.

And I struggled including that comment in the film, because I do have very strong opinions about that comment now after making this film, which is, even though historically speaking the genders have evolved into these roles largely because of biological differences with women being the one to give birth and also breastfeed, so it made more sense for her to be at home with the child, and there's been studies that show that skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby is important for the first few months of the baby's life — so there's all these reasons that science says that women should be attached to the child right after they're born. And so it did make more sense to have the man go out and be the breadwinner and producing in society at large.

So when this feminist scholar says that these fathers weren't actively involved as parents because they weren't home half the time to help raise the child, it's saying that the breadwinner role isn't an important role to have for a child, which I'm sure many parents listening obviously know that you do need to make a living and be able to pay the mortgage and be able to buy the groceries and pay the gas money or pay for the diapers. And I met a lot of kind of reverse gender role couples throughout the years: so the woman is the breadwinner, and the man is the stay-at-home dad. And they also acknowledge that the woman being the breadwinner is such an important role. They need a breadwinner. And I even saw this with gay couples when I was making films about LGBT issues, that oftentimes gay married couples did have designated gender roles. There was one that was more kind of the stay-at-home parent, and the other was the breadwinner. So yeah, that's my thought on the comment about fathers not being actively involved if they're the breadwinner. But children cost a lot of money.

WOODS: What about the argument that's been made against you that the cases that you're talking about are maybe outlier sort of cases, or this is largely driven by anecdote rather than hard data, and that the hard data shows that, eh, overall men are more or less given a fair shake?

JAYE: Yeah, when we're talking about gender issues it is easy to slip into the kind of anecdotal, you know, Well, I know a person that does XYZ, you know, when I was talking about the reverse gender roles couple. So it's easy to slip into that, and I think those conversations are important too. They humanize a lot of these issues.

But absolutely I believe that studies and research and facts that aren't advocacy-based studies, where so many of even women's rights issues that have stats that are thrown around, a lot of them are studies that were funded by feminist organizations. So we have to have that in mind when we're looking at these statistics: who funded it, what organization was behind it, so it does get very muddy when you start looking into that. So with my film I try to always use statistics that were from organizations that most people would agree are more or should be more balanced in their reporting and how they conduct their surveys. So I used statistics from the CDC and Harvard research papers, that kind of thing.

But gender, everyone's entitled to an opinion about it, because we all have a gender, we all have experiences with our gender. If we choose to look at it or not or express our experiences or not, we all have those experiences. And with my film I'm just trying to elevate the conversation and look at — You know, when we talk about gender equality and this battle of the sexes, gender equality, that term is usually applied to the idea of women's rights, progressing women's rights. And I became a feminist when I was in my late teens, and the reason I became a feminist was because I thought it was the movement for gender equality. And then when I started making *The Red Pill*, I realized that I didn't know any of these men's issues, and I thought, how could feminism be the movement for gender equality if I couldn't and other feminists that I was interviewing — even these very prominent leaders of the feminist movement — couldn't name any men's rights issues and would flat out say, Men have no issues. They're the privileged gender. They're not being discriminated against in any way.

But we know that they are in family court and with domestic violence. In my film we talk about domestic violence shelters and how rates of domestic violence is almost equal. 43% of all intimate partner violence are male victims. So that's almost equal, very close. But there are 2,000 women's shelters in the U.S. for domestic violence victims that are female and a single domestic violence shelter for male victims, and it was just started this past year in 2016. So I'm really just trying to look at the gray area that's not really addressed in the gender equality discussion, and I hope that's what the film does.

WOODS: All right, I've got more questions for you, but let's first thank our sponsor.

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All right, let me ask you something related to some of the reaction to the film — I mean, I guess it got the kind of reaction you almost certainly expected it would get, that in men's rights circles they're glad to see somebody they wouldn't have expected giving them a respectful hearing. In feminist or frankly just mainstream circles, hostility, open hostility.

But in particular, though, one of the arguments that's been made is that maybe there was a sanitizing — and I want to give you an opportunity to answer this — a sanitizing of some of the voices in the men's rights movement. Sometimes, if you believe the quotations that we read on these left-wing websites, they say some quite blood curdling things about women. And I'm the father of five girls; I wouldn't want my girls spoken to or about that way. I don't want to mention names, but I think you know people in the men's rights movement who just say horrible things about women. And I understand people might be angry because they were treated unjustly, but you can't blame all women for your injustice. How do you answer that argument that these people should have been called to account for their terrible language?

JAYE: Well, definitely in the film I do point out some of these shocking headlines that men's rights activist websites have, and many of them are clickbait kind of headlines to get people to think, What's that about?, look at the article, and then when you read within the article you do find out that it's satire.

Of course these kind of tactics I would never do. That's not my personality style. But oddly enough, the irony of it is that those kind of headlines are what got me to jump down this rabbit hole of making *The Red Pill* movie. I thought these were the misogynists that I've been hearing about from feminist circles, that they're trying to turn back the clock on women's rights, and that's what got me making this film about the men's rights movement.

And keep in mind that there are some men's rights organizations that utilize these kinds of clickbait tactics more than others, and A Voice for Men is definitely one, and that was the website, AVoiceForMen.com, that originally led me into looking more into the men's rights movement. And they have only been around for — I think five years by now? But the men's rights movement at large really started around the '70s with the men's liberation movement, which started in the San Francisco Bay Area, where I live. And Dr. Warren Farrell, who wrote *The Myth of Male Power*, which is kind of viewed as the book that inspired a lot of men's rights activists to become men's rights activists,

he was a part of the men's liberation movement in the '70s, and he's been speaking for decades about men's issues and really getting drowned out by the feminist perspective on gender.

And so when A Voice for Men came around with these shocking headlines and these shock-and-appall tactics to get clicks, that's when the men's rights movement really started to get written about, but unfortunately, with mainstream media painting them all as misogynists. So obviously it's a double-edged sword, where they took this shock tactic to get attention, but now they have negative attention. And a lot of men's rights activists don't agree with that shock-and-appall approach, but oddly enough it did lead into me making this film, and the more reasonable men's rights activists who just want to talk about the issues are now able to because more people are hearing about the men's rights movement.

But one thing I would like to say is that across the board, all the men's rights activists that I met, none of them want to turn back the clock on women's rights, and many of them became a men's rights activist because they were originally a feminist caring about women's issues and women's equality. And then when they started to learn about men's issues they wanted to bring that into the gender equality discussion, and they were basically kicked out of the groups, shunned from the feminist movement because they wanted to talk about men. And so that's how the men's rights movement really started to gain members, if you could call it that. I mean, it's not like this organized group that you get a membership card or anything, but that's how they started to care about men's issues, was because they weren't allowed to talk about it within feminism.

So within my film, I really wanted to explore the differences of the platforms between the men's rights perspective and the feminist perspective. And you know, I guess you could do this with, like, Democrats and Republicans. You could either make a film exploring their different platforms on the issues, or you could make a film exploring their different tactics and comments that are made online or this kind of mudslinging that happens on Twitter. I didn't want to make that kind of film. Someone else can if they want to. I wanted to make a film that was really exploring the differences between the platforms, and that's what my film became.

WOODS: I do want to ask you one more thing that's only indirectly related to the film. Again, I know that when I've come out with books that have been controversial, I've relished the opportunity to be able to respond to critics. And one thing critics have tried to say to you is: you've appeared, they say, on some controversial podcasts, and how dare you do that? You've been on controversial shows promoting your film, and this is reprehensible. My personal view is that within reason anybody who wants to give me an opportunity to speak to their audience, I'll do it. Why wouldn't I, right? It's an opportunity to speak to a lot of people, and if those people are wrong, all the more reason for me to go talk to them. Has that been your answer?

JAYE: Yeah, I have yet to turn down an interview. I'll talk to anyone who wants to talk to me. And that has gotten me in trouble, apparently, because early on when I started releasing the film in October 2016 I agreed to be on a podcast from — I guess it was like a pickup artist site that a lot of feminist groups claim that they're white supremacists — I mean, I don't do some massive background check before I go on a

podcast, but when I did that podcast with — I'm sorry, I can't even remember the name. But when I did that podcast interview with them, it was just all about my film and what I've learned by making this film, so I don't see what's wrong with that. But you know, obviously I'm sure opponents to me and the film, they're going to find any way to discredit me or try to smear my reputation, and that's I guess to be expected.

But once I start picking and choosing who I'm going to do interviews with, I think that's even a more slippery slope than just doing every interview you're invited to do, because then who do you choose to talk to and not talk to? And what's the agenda behind that? But I don't know.

WOODS: Well, the very fact that you're on this show shows you're not very selective about the shows you appear on.

JAYE: (laughing)

WOODS: What do you want people to do — what is the call to action at the end of this film? You don't want them to just walk away and say, Huh, that was interesting, and then forget all about it. What should they do?

JAYE: Well, you know, there's not really a call to action at the end of the film, because I don't tell people what to think. I do briefly say where I ended up after making this film, but in no way, shape, or form am I telling the audience to do the same, and I think when people see the film for themselves they'll absolutely see that it's not a call-to-action film.

But it is a film that lets multiple perspectives share their view within the film, and a lot of it contradicts each other, and there's obvious divides between the movements, and it does inspire discussion. I don't think it's the type of film that someone could — It's a two-hour-long film. I don't think anyone can watch it and say, All right, on to the next thing. Let's talk about the weather. It really does inspire discussions and debates, and I've seen that with people attending our screenings and then going and doing their own YouTube videos or podcasts talking about their experience.

And there's actually one great podcast of a boyfriend and girlfriend after seeing the film in New York, where they did I guess like an hour-long podcast talking about their experience seeing the film, and they obviously had very different experiences. The podcast is called *Dirty Sexy Monogamy*, and you can find their link on TheRedPillMovie.com. But it was really interesting, because she was obviously offended and triggered by a lot of the things in the film, and he was actually thinking, well, I thought it was a pretty reasonable argument. And so they end up having a debate live on this podcast. It's really interesting.

So anyways, the goal of the film is to encourage discussions. And mind you, right before I started making *The Red Pill*, the biggest argument I ever had with my boyfriend, who I've now been with for almost six years — the biggest argument I've ever had with him happened right before I started making *The Red Pill*. And I was very easily triggered by, we were having a disagreement over the idea of rape culture. And he was in hindsight posing these very rational arguments, but I was unwilling to listen

to what he was saying or try to understand where he was coming from, and I was immediately writing him off as that it was misogynistic kind of talking points — which is crazy to think, in hindsight, because he was actually raised in Berkeley as feminist and his family are all feminists. So there was no reason for me to believe that he was some closeted misogynist. But just the opposing views that he was bringing up in this discussion about rape culture, I just completely turned off and immediately started otherizing him, thinking, You are a part of the shadow side of men in the world. And it was very strange.

And I think there are a lot of people, especially feminists, like how I was when I started making this film, that are easily triggered and upset without really trying to understand the opposing view. And it took me a very long time to understand the men's rights perspective, to get past that point of being easily angered and wanting to shut down and just start screaming and arguing with these different points of view I was hearing.

But once we could get past that point of just utter disgust and rage about hearing a different perspective and get beyond that point to the point of trying to understand the opposing point of view or the alternate perspective, I think that's where the magic happens. I think that's where gender equality can thrive, and that's where we can all look at each other — I mean, this sounds very frou-frou in the moment, me saying this, but that's where we can all really start to treat each other like people and like family and have compassion for each other's experiences. And I think that's where we need to arrive.

WOODS: What's next for you now?

JAYE: Oh, well, I'm going to be traveling with the film and screening all over the world. We just signed on with a distributor who's going to be taking *The Red Pill* to online platforms and getting on-demand platforms like Netflix and Hulu and iTunes and Amazon, all of that. So the projected release date for the worldwide release online is March 2017, so we're really looking forward to that.

And then eventually I would love to make another film. I know I've kind of branded myself with a scarlet letter after making this film, where I don't know if I'll be able to continue making documentaries in the same way that I used to be because now I have this stigma, that I'm attached to this film about men's issues that gives them a fair shake, but I would like to keep exploring these different controversial topics and see where that goes.

WOODS: Yeah. Okay. Well, that sounds great. And by the way, that's not a bad thing to have people think about you, that you give people a fair shake, you know? Because as you said at the beginning, isn't it a shame how rare that is, that when we feel like there are people who are very far from us philosophically, it's very rare that we sit down with them and try to hash it out and not worry about who's scoring points and who's winning, but rather just try to have a meeting of the minds and see if we can sort out the source of our differences? That never happens. That's the only thing that never happens. That's the one thing you can guarantee won't happen. And yet I think you went out of your way to try to make that happen in this film. So the website is TheRedPillMovie.com?

JAYE: Correct.

WOODS: All right, so TheRedPillMovie.com is where you should go to check it out. We're going to link to it at TomWoods.com/814 for Episode 814. And I'll wish you the best. I was wondering if you had thought about specifically what your next topic would be, but it sounds to me like your whole heart is still in your current project.

JAYE: Yes. I haven't picked a new topic yet, but I definitely want to figure that out within a year or so.

WOODS: Well, maybe on some of these flights around the world you'll have the time to sit and think. Well, thanks so much for your time today. I really hope people check out TheRedPillMovie.com. Very, very worthwhile viewing.

JAYE: Thank you so much. It was great talking to you.