

Sexual Harassment vs. The LDS Church

by Miguel Barker-Valdez | Dec 11, 2017 | Featured, Modesty, Racism, racism, sexism | 0 comments



On Friday, December 1st, we learned that John Hokenberry, host of the award winning NPR program, *The Takeaway*, had been accused by several women of sexual harassment and bullying women, especially Women of Color. He was so effective in his bullying that *The Takeaway*, which was supposed to appeal to minorities, had only the white disabled 61 year-old Hokenberry as the host – managing to push out all the People of Color co-hosts by the end of his career; a terrible intersection of sexual-harassment and racism.

A former *Takeaway* intern told *The New York Times Magazine* of something Hokenberry had told her:

“Your shoulders are really distracting.”

In a completely different interaction, a pants-wearing woman was told one day when she wore a skirt:

"I just wanted to let you know, I think you look much nicer in a skirt."

Shoulders and pants.

But wait.

The latter comment was **NOT** said by John Hockeberry to a co-host or an intern. It was actually said to my wife, Cathy, several years ago by an LDS man at church, on a Sunday where Cathy wore a skirt instead of slacks. I asked Cathy this morning, "Why didn't you have me say anything to him?"

Cathy responded:

"Because I don't need you to fight my battles for me. I was taken so off guard and quickly thought to myself, 'Why does Brother so-and-so's opinion even matter to me?'"

Admittedly, when Cathy first told me what happened, I just thought, "Mormon men acting like dumb Mormon men."

Now step back.

- What if this comment to my wife had been said to her by a male supervisor at work?
- What if Hockenberry had said this to a woman? What if it was a VIP radio host who had said this to a Woman of Color – legally, how would this have been seen?

Answer:

Sexual harassment and with the latter question, **Racial Harassment** too.

Think of all the modesty policing and body shaming of women which occurs in the LDS Church. Now think of all the comments that LDS women must endure and ask yourself these questions:

- If this was occurring in the work place and reported to the Human Resources Department what would happen?
- How would this legally be seen and treated?
- Is the Mormon policing of women's bodies protecting women and men or is it just a way for men to control women?
- Is the LDS Church's obsession with women's clothing and bodies a form of sexual harassment?
- Does the LDS Church's obsession with women's clothing and bodies encourage sexual harassment in the work place?

Now, let me speak to you men – especially white liberal men.

- Being a conservative is not the problem.
- Being a liberal is not the cure.
- This is a male problem

Too often white liberal men are completely blind because of their so-called “enlightenment.” This liberal enlightenment is often only a cover for discusting thinking and behavior. So what is the male’s responsibility? What is the cure?

My wife put it correctly, *women don't need men to fight their battles.* Us men need to be allies. Part of allyship is speaking up when we see sexual harassment occurring in the work place and at church. Part of allyship is speaking up in places where women don't feel safe to occupy or are not allowed to occupy.

NOTES

Photo courtesy of the New York Times

[click here](#) to read NYT Magazine’s December 1, 2017 article about John Hockenberry

[click here](#) to read the NYT article discussing allegations against John Hockenberry.

To learn more about sexual harassment, [click here](#).

To learn more about racial harassment, [click here](#).

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