

# #YesAllWomen

By Phil Plait

*The following article is a discussion about violence, violence against women, and the oppression women face every day. Have a care if these topics disturb you. Note too: I am a cisgender male, and the hashtags I discuss below deal with the issues in binary men/women terms, so I do as well. Trans and other folks may well have very different feelings about these issues, and I welcome their input.*

On Friday, May 23, 2014, a man killed six people (and possibly himself). The manifesto he left behind stated he did it because women wouldn't sleep with him. I won't recount the details here; they can be found easily enough. I also won't speculate on the controversies involving his mental health, or about the NRA, or the police involvement in this. I want to focus on a narrower point here, and that has to do with men and women, and their attitudes toward each other.



**Taryn O'Neill**  
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My husband didn't 'get it' until he spent half an hour on the feed. Then he looked ashen. "I had no idea". [#YesAllWomen](#)

1:33 PM - 25 May 2014

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The murderer was active on men's rights fora, where women are highly objectified, to say the very least. They are seen as nonhuman by many such groups, and at the very least lesser than men—sometimes nothing more than targets or things to acquire.

What these men write puts them, to me, in the same category as White Power movements, or any other horribly bigoted group that “others” anyone else. While it may not be possible to blame the men’s rights groups for what happened, from the reports we’ve seen they certainly provided an atmosphere of support.

Of course, these loathsome people represent a very small percentage of men out there. Over the weekend, as the discussion across Twitter turned to these horrible events, a lot of men started tweeting this, saying “not all men are like that.” It’s not an unexpected response. However, it’s also not a helpful one.

Why is it not helpful to say “not all men are like that”? For lots of reasons. For one, *women know this*. They already know not every man is a rapist, or a murderer, or violent. They don’t need you to tell them.

Second, it’s defensive. When people are defensive, they aren’t listening to the other person; they’re busy thinking of ways to defend themselves. I watched this happen on Twitter, over and again.



**Karin Robinson**  
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No, [#NotAllMen](#) are violent against women, but [#YesAllWomen](#) have to navigate a world where those who are look the same as those who aren't.

6:17 AM - 25 May 2014

3,193

2,823

Third, the people saying it aren’t furthering the conversation, they’re sidetracking it. *The discussion isn’t about the men who **aren’t** a problem.* (Though, I’ll note, it can be. I’ll get back to that.) Instead of being defensive and distracting from the topic at hand, try staying quiet for a while and actually listening to what the thousands upon thousands of women discussing this are saying.

































