

## What We Lose When We Give Awards to Men Like Casey Affleck

By Sady Doyle – Feb 27, 2017

White men in entertainment can **get away with** anything. That one, soul-deadening lesson has been drilled into women's heads recently. We saw reality TV star Donald Trump caught, on tape, sexually harassing a female colleague and giggling about "grabbing [women] by the pussy"—and we saw America elect him president a few weeks later. We saw the image rehabilitation of Mel Gibson, who was similarly caught on tape telling his ex-girlfriend that "you look like a fucking pig in heat, and if you get raped by a pack of n— it will be your fault," shortly before threatening to kill her. At the Academy Awards, the 61-year-old Gibson sat in the front row, **racking up** awards for Hacksaw Ridge and happily **chortling** along at jokes about O.J. Simpson. And Casey Affleck took home the prize for Best Actor.

Affleck, for those who are unaware, stands accused of sexually terrorizing female colleagues on the set of his 2010 film *I'm Still Here*; this allegedly included everything from referring to women as "cows" to insisting that one employee, Amanda White, share his hotel room, then deluging her with abusive text messages when she refused. Another woman, Magdalene Gorka, says she woke up in a private hotel room to find Affleck "curled up next to her in the bed wearing only his underwear and a T-shirt," according to her complaint. When Gorka managed to get Affleck out of her room, he allegedly rallied crew members to **harass** and bully her until she quit the project.

Affleck's Best Actor win isn't the most upsetting item on this list; for one thing, an Oscar doesn't come with nuclear launch codes. But it is grim confirmation of an all-too-common pattern. An Oscar provides an invaluable **career boost**; Affleck will probably get more roles, better roles, and more name recognition as the result of the award. As he becomes increasingly successful, he will become increasingly untouchable; meaning, if the allegations are true, that the women he's victimized will have less and less chance to be heard. That's not just damaging to the individuals involved here, but to all women who find themselves victimized by powerful men.

The standard objection to excluding men like Affleck or Gibson from the entertainment industry is that excluding any great artist means we get less art, and anyway, penalties should be dealt out by courts, not bosses. Yet as Affleck becomes more successful, he becomes more of a financial asset to the people he works with—meaning they're more inclined to protect him and less inclined to give his accusers a fair hearing, because dealing justly with the accusations will endanger **the bottom line**. If the allegations are true, more and more women will be forced to work with Affleck despite the danger he poses to their physical safety and mental health, even as it becomes more and more risky to report any **harassment**. In the end, many of those women will do what White and Gorka did—they'll quit, either the project or the filmmaking industry altogether. Keeping great male "artists" around while they endanger their female coworkers isn't only unjust, it actively lowers the number of great female artists by creating a workplace in which women are primarily valued for their ability to accommodate and ingratiate themselves to sexist men, and not for their actual talents.

The problem with Affleck or Gibson winning awards isn't just that it's unfair. It's that someone else could be getting them. Someone else could be standing on that stage—maybe even holding that Best Director trophy, which, to date, only one woman has ever done. By endlessly forgiving and validating abusive men, we tell women that the abuse they suffer is less important than some white guy's right to **get** his point of view **across**. We lose those women's stories, and their art, because we've told them they don't count.

Adapted from: <http://www.elle.com/culture/movies-tv/a43408/casey-affleck-oscar-win/>