

GUEST COMMENTARY

Be worthy of ourselves, reject Trump

By **Linda McConchie**

Since the beginning of time women have been told explicitly and implicitly that our power resides in our sexuality.

Culture, literature, the economy, evolution have all continued to pound the message deep into our marrow. Cleopatra was a brilliant woman and a benevolent leader but that wasn't enough for her to retain her power. She shrewdly recognized that her most valuable commodity was her sexuality, and she used it to surround herself with scholars, to keep her people safe, her coffers full and her empire steady for decades.

We have internalized the message that our power is in our sexuality, and despite the fact that it is more than 2,000 years since Cleopatra's reign, women continue to hold less power than men in all spheres of life, and like Cleopatra, many women are still forced to access power by submitting to the sexual advances of powerful men, or predatory men or stupid men. The producer's couch pervades society. Ave Caesar.

It is hard for decent men like my husband and my male friends to understand how pervasive and demeaning this reality is because they don't see it and they wouldn't exploit it. But I know that almost every woman walking has experienced unwanted sexual advances: being groped by a stranger on an ordinary sidewalk in an ordinary city; having a teacher or boss demand sexual favors; being in a service position while male customers make audible disgusting remarks about boobs, asses, blowjobs; having the very respectable husband of a very good friend stick his tongue down your mouth and in your ear in lieu of the polite Happy New Year kiss you thought you were exchanging. Never mind being told you are ugly, undesirable or unworthy of love when you reject those advances. Every one of these experiences demeans, humiliates and enrages the woman who is subjected to it. And just like me, most women brush it off, walk away and rarely speak of it. It happens so often it's becomes normal. It's universal and it's disgraceful.

As long as we accept - that our power lies in our sexuality and conventional standards of beauty, nefarious men like Donald Trump can steal our power from us every time they grope, paw, push, pant and ogle. And even worse, men like Trump demean us further when we lose our youth and conventional beauty by dismissing us with a passing look that says "no, I wouldn't f*ck you." This sexist, ageist and utterly reprehensible attitude reduces women to a fungible commodity. It also invites a facile and unfair stereotyping of all men, which is equally destructive to our health as a society.

I am grateful that my daughters and their peers know their power lies in their character, their decency, their intelligence and their achievements. Maybe Donald Trump has finally done us a favor by bringing this issue to the forefront of our national dialogue. His remarks are not just "bad boy talk," as Michelle Bachmann has described them. They are symptomatic of a widespread, malignant attitude that some men hold about 50 percent of the people who share the earth with them.

Before he died on Bunker Hill, Dr. Joseph Warren exhorted his fellow Revolutionary Patriots: "be worthy of yourselves." Let us be worthy of ourselves and the unparalleled rights and freedoms Dr. Warren and the rest of our founders died to earn for us. Let us be the decent, civilized society they envisioned and died to bequeath to us. Let us reject Donald Trump and the ignorant, hateful values he espouses. Let us all be worthy of ourselves.

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