

PENN STATE: What About The Boys?

Violence, anger and threats have erupted on the Penn State campus by students and others who feel that Joe Paterno is a victim in the much-publicized abuse situation. The true victims are the boys who were allegedly molested over many years by an assistant coach, accused as the perpetrator. Several alleged heinous crimes were committed, some reported within hours after they happened by witnesses, but the matter has reportedly been silenced within the athletic organization for years. You could make the argument that this makes all those who are in positions of power in the organization complicit, including the head coach who ran the show there!

Voices of Men will speak up for the boys in this case. Our organization is training well-meaning men, including coaches, to avoid these types of occurrences in their lives and organizations. My take on Joe Paterno is that he is considered a well-meaning man by many, but where he went astray was in not protecting those molested boys who could not protect themselves. He may not have known them, which many people feel means it is someone else's place to deal with the problem. This is called bystander behavior and it enables perpetrators. It hides the problems temporarily but, as seen in this case, the consequences are still harsh even decades after the infractions occurred.

Our male-dominated institutions are continuing to come under fire, one-by-one, because of the protectionist behaviors within these 'good old boys clubs'. The protection is misplaced when the men are protected and the boys molested are left without protection, even leaving the opportunity for additional boys to be exposed to these atrocities because of a cover-up. Albert Einstein said, "The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything." Don't be a bystander when it comes to abuse, whether it's women, girls or boys; protect those who cannot protect themselves. Men, we have to be better. It is, collectively, our problem! Do Not Remain Silent!

Joe, you have learned the hard way that being in a position of power means you are responsible for all that happens within your organization. We here at Voices of Men sincerely hope you and others learn from this that leadership has many complexities and that success on the playing field is not necessarily the most important thing a coach teaches. In fact, coaches hold a unique position of respect from their young athletes and with power comes the responsibility to protect their well-being!

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