



THE RESPECT PODCAST with Mike Domitrz

And Guest Chris Kilmartin

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Mike: Welcome to the Respect Podcast. I am your host Mike [Donashrum 00:00:04] from Mikespeaks.com where we help organizations of all sizes, educational institutions and the US military create a culture of respect and respect is exactly what we discuss on this show. So let's get started.

Mike: I'm very excited to have someone on today. Someone that I've know for a while in the work that we do and that is Dr. Chris Kilmartin. Chris is an emeritus college professor, consultant, performer and trainer. He is the author of four books on men and masculinity and has been doing violence prevention work for more than 25 years. So Chris, thank you so much for joining us.

Chris: My pleasure. Now, what kinds of works have you done when it comes to gender education generally and violence prevention specifically?

Mike: I do a lot of ... my major scholarly area is on men and masculinity. So I help men to understand the social pressure to behave and experience themselves in line with what the culture says they should be for the body they're perceived as having. And help them understand this cultural pressure to do that. But your reactions to that cultural pressure are widely variable. So my mantra of late is, it's very difficult to resist a pressure that you cannot name. So what I'd like to help men do is name that pressure of masculinity and then we put them into a position to resist that pressure when conforming to it, hurt somebody or it conflicts with important life goal or value.

Mike: So that's just the basic gender education kind of stuff I've been doing. I've been teaching an academic course in men and masculinity for more than 20 years and been doing a lot of guest speaking on campuses and military and companies. Specifically with violence prevention I've done a variety of things. All are around prevention, that's my expertise. I'm not [inaudible 00:02:08] I know a little bit about a lot of things but I'm not an expert in victim services and things like that. I'm much more of an expert in trying to cause something not to happen in the first place.

Mike: And that is around leadership skills for setting the right tone in your organization to make sexual assault and harassment less likely and also bystander intervention. Getting people to step up when they hear dangerous attitudes or view problematic kinds of situations and help them learn what they can do and how they can help to prevent the problem.

Chris: Now Chris this is the respect podcast. So let's dive right into this element. Let's go back to men and their roles. Because a lot of that has to do with respect and we create this image that men are supposed to be. This stereotype that men are supposed to be and they're not able to be themselves. They're not able to explore full emotions. They're not able to explore their full creativity or whatever it may be. Therefore there's a lack of



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respecting the human being, the human content that it can really be because it's supposed to fit into this box.

Chris: And when we do that we disrespect the individual. Would you agree that's part of that work?

Mike: I would absolutely agree that's part of that work and a big part of it is to help and understand that a lot of what they're being asked to do is about a performance. It's not so much about who they actually are but how they're socialized to perform and that other men are performing as well. But we don't see them as performing so much as we think that's who this person actually is and my own research is that when men are in stereotypical all male groups and they're calling women by animal names or the names of their genitals or making derogatory jokes. Most men don't like that.

Mike: But the problem is they overestimate how much other men do like it. So it's like laughing at a joke that you don't think is funny. If I watched you laugh at that joke I would think you thought that was funny unless you let me in on your private reaction. Which, as we know, most men are not exactly famous for doing. And so we can ... once we can kind of widen out and I can absolutely agree with you if we can respect the person inside the man and not expect him to be this machine then lots of things become possible and lots of people are doing that kind of work.

Chris: And why men? Some people may be listening going, why men? They're the ones with the privilege. They have it so much easier. Why focus on men?

Mike: I don't think you necessarily have to focus on men. That's just where my work is focused but I think that if we as a group have obviously greater levels of privilege and power than women as a group. Although they're great individual variation among men and among women, then we can make a difference. But there lots, majority of men are really good people but they've been under involved in this work. So if we can mobilize, if we can amplify the healthy voices then we have a role to play.

Mike: And I think that anytime that the group that's in privilege has sometimes a different kind of role to play. We need men to step up and fight sexism just as we need heterosexual people to fight homophobia. We need rich people to work against economic inequality. We need cisgendered people to work against transphobia. There are people in the majority population have to be for us to all solve these problems we have to be good allies to people in the more marginalized populations.

Chris: Absolutely. And you brought up a good point earlier about men are not allowed to show these vulnerabilities. These honest moments. These expressions and there is a difference gender wise of what is acceptable at least in Westernized culture of the



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world. Women, it would not be uncommon for a group of women to joke around about breast size. That would not be a surprise.

Mike: Sure.

Chris: But you would almost never hear a group of men have any kind of conversation about penis size of themselves. [crosstalk 00:06:55] Unless it's a bragging of whose the largest. But there's not going to be this honest conversation but you may find that amongst those who identify as women. You may find that more likely to happen. Is that the kind of be willing to be honest and open that we're talking about or is that farther down the road? Are there some opening steps first before somebody can feel that kind of vulnerability on the human body, which men never talk about on a vulnerable level typically as a society, I don't mean individual men.

Chris: But as a society we don't talk about from a place of vulnerability.

Mike: Yeah and I think we can make spaces and there are people who do make spaces for men to explore the depth of their feelings about themselves. One of the things ... Now I've lost my train of thought, sorry. That I've seen a lot lately are these assumptions that men are simple or that men, especially when the Me Too movement started to take off, I saw these people on social media saying things like, "Men suck." Which is shorthand for, men lack morality.

Mike: And so if we embrace the sense of ourselves as being simple and lacking morality then we are incapable of that kind of work but most men are good people who are complex and so the other part about men suck or men are simple is it lets us off the hook because if we're simple or we're immoral and we're immoral then whose job is it to make the world a better place. We're leaving it up to women as if they don't have enough to do already.

Mike: So we need to redefine men as being complex. As being fair minded and caring and explode this myth of men are simple and immoral.

Chris: And we as men then have to uphold those value, right? That if we're going to say we're complex, we need to show complexity.

Mike: Yeah.

Chris: To display complexity. If we're going to say we're caring then we need to show caring. That becomes critical to this for the general society of belief. Those who have been taught men are bad. For them to believe anything else they have to see something else.



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When we're hearing men are bad or men are cruel, it's because somebody caused that pain to that person and often way more than one.

Chris: So there's a track record of men being bad in that person's life. And what we have to understand as men is don't take it personal when Person A over here says, "All men are bad." What you should step back and go, "Wow, the amount of men that must have created that impact and how sad that is that so many of my gender could cause that." And that's what we should recognize. Not, "How dare they blast me in with everyone."

Chris: Which is I think the most offensive reaction and we've seen it a lot in the Me Too movement. Now, I'm looped in with everybody else. Now, we're all rapist and that's not what people are saying.

Mike: Right, and I absolutely agree that defensive reaction is quite common and part of just the way that we think culturally about men and women. I mean we have this term, "the opposite sex." Men and women are not opposite. Or the battle of the sexes. Where 90% of the combatants are allegedly in love with and having children with the enemy. And so when we hold these kind of adversarial beliefs about men and women and somebody says that men are bad. Then we think we gotta defend ourselves and a lot of people believe that as women gain power that women will lose it and it's just not true. Power is not a zero sum game. We can enhance each other's power.

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Mike: Power is not a zero sum game. We can enhance each other's power. So once we start to see men and women on the same team, and we understand how much pain many men have caused to women, and other men for that matter. Then we can start to understand, I mean I don't like male bashing anymore than anybody else, but I sure as hell understand where it comes from. And so, if you don't like it, really I think the most enlightened response is to do what you can to stop it.

Chris: Yes definitely, and in the Me Too movement, since we've brought it up. How do you think that is impacting this kind of work, this kind of enlightening, and just our society as a whole?

Mike: I think it has certainly I think increased the credibility of women and men, who have come forward and have said that, "People have mistreated me sexually." Either harassment or assault. It has I think, increased the empathy of some men, not all men, for women. 'Cause I think that part of what we see around sexual assault and harassment is rampant kind of victim blaming. That these were women who behaved badly, and they kind of got what they deserved. And that these are bad women who have been victimized, and the good women that I know, the women I know and love.



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Well once the Me Too movement started, if you were paying any attention at all, you'd be like, "Wow, all of these women I know! All these women, these friends of mine, these people I love. These family members have been victimized."

Mike: Then that breaks down that kind of sense of victim blaming, and I think increases empathy, because I think if you think in a victim blaming kind of way, there are victims like them, and victims like us. And victims like us are for instance, victims of random violence. I could have been in Parkland High School, I could have been in the Twin Towers, I could have been at Virginia Tech. We can't distance ourselves psychologically from those kinds of victims. But what we can with victims of inter personal violence to say, "Well I wouldn't have been stupid enough to be married to that person." Or, "Get that drunk." Or, "Have that poor judgment." And I think we have to move to a place where we understand that all victims are victims like us, and so I think the Me Too movement have been really good for building empathy in not all men, but some men. And an understanding of how rampant this problem is.

Chris: Well yeah, and you bring up an important part, which is we try to say, "well that's them, not me." Right? "I wouldn't have been there." And a reason a lot of people do that for our listeners to understand is, self defense.

Mike: Yes.

Chris: If I believe I wouldn't be there, I can feel safer in my day to day life, 'cause I don't have to fear this crime happening to me. If I think that could have been me, now I might live in fear. And I don't wanna live in fear, so it's easier to blame the other person and say, "They did something I would not do. Therefore I do not need to worry about this." This is shown in research in jury's when they look at sexual assault, and jurors don't convict the rapist in what appears to be a blatantly obvious case, because the juror's subconsciously want to believe, "Well, I've been in that same kind of situation, and so I don't wanna believe that could happen to me. So subconsciously I'll say, they must have done something different than I would have done. Therefore, I'm safe."

Mike: Right, and I think that's absolutely right. It's a security operation. So, I'm gonna find one thing that, that person did, and attribute it. Attribute the attack to that, and then if I avoid that. And victims do this to themselves, right? If I don't do that again. Right? I always tell people, "Don't bother blaming the victim, they're usually experts at it. They don't need any help from you." But, the other thing that you hear is, "If I had been there, here's what I would have done." And I saw this on social media around sexual harassment. Women saying, "I've never been harassed at work, because the men I work with know if they had done that, I would have slapped their face."



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Mike: And well this is known as a post diction. It's the opposite of a pre diction. It's after the fact, saying what you would have done. We have tons of research over years in psychology. Post diction's are notoriously unreliable. You don't know what you would have done, because you cannot experience the kind of social pressure of the moment that would have happened. You can imagine what it would have been like, but you have the luxury of hindsight, and taking apart a situation, and forming a strategy that a person in the moment doesn't have. And so, the other layer of victim blaming is this post diction, this belief that I would have acted differently. When you actually have no way of knowing how you would have acted.

Chris: And I think that's brilliant, because we all do that, regardless of the topic. What I mean by that is if, you say to somebody, "If somebody said something highly inappropriate in front of you, would you say something?" 90% maybe 80% of people go, "Oh yeah, I'd say something." And then you have been with that person when somebody in the group has said something highly inappropriate, and they didn't say anything. So it's easier to preach our values on roles and our strong character, than it is to exercise it %100 of the time the way we'd like to. We're human, no one is gonna always speak up. Is going to always do the right thing in a tough situation. No one. So I think it's so brilliant that you bring up that post diction, because we live that on our daily basis, many of us. I mean all people do to some degree.

Mike: Yeah, absolutely. And we know that we can help people to be prepared for situation, like that, by practicing them as well. So, how many times have somebody said something that bothered you and you think, "Well this would have been a good thing to say." You think about that about two days later. And what I always tell people to do, is to put it in your pocket. Because you might be able to use it later on, but the other thing, this is a really simple technique that you can learn. When you hear somebody say something inappropriate and you can't muster an articulate response, just ask the person to repeat it, "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

Mike: And then the person's, often people will say these kinds of things without really thinking, just off the cuff. And when you ask them to repeat it, then they have to repeat it very consciously, and they may feel uncomfortable repeating it, in which case you've educated them to how their behavior was inappropriate. They may say it again, who knows. But at least you're making them make a really conscious decision to say or do what they said.

Chris: When I love that, the tone you just did that with, that you taught us to do that with, was brilliant. Because you didn't do a tone of, "Oh, I'm sorry. I couldn't hear you." It was, "Excuse me, what did you say?" That right away tells someone, "Uh-oh. They're surprised I made that statement." Right? And so, it does send a red flag out. Like, "Did you just say what I think you said? 'Cause I'm surprised." What you're suddenly doing



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there is, "I'm surprised you would say that." Which is actually ... And this is what I teach people too.

Chris: Say to people, "Wow, I don't think you meant what you just said, 'cause I know you. This doesn't reflect how I know you to be." And I know some people don't have those words sometimes, which is why you teach it that way. Which is when I don't have the words. I love it. Now speaking of fears and reacting to fears, a common one nowadays is this fear that, "I'll be falsely reported." That because of what's happening in the world, I'm walking around, and I'm afraid someone's gonna false report me. How do you help people understand the fear of false reports?

Mike: Yes, and thank you so much for using the word "report" instead of accusation, or allegation. I think that we get in trouble when we start to use these legalistic words, and often when I hear the word "allegation" I think, "Oh, a person's lying." Report is a much more neutral term. It's a much less judgemental term, so I think that we need to use that language. Well, the reality is that sometimes people do lie. I mean, but people overestimate how often that happens. And so, the myth of false reporting, a myth does not have to be completely untrue for it to be a myth. The importance of a myth is how it operates.

Mike: And how the myth of false reporting operates, is to make the disbelief of the person reporting, the default option, right? We're gonna make the assumption, and many law enforcement people do this, until they've been trained out of it. They make the assumption that the person is lying, because the story doesn't add up. Well if I'm gonna lie, I'd make a really good story. If I were gonna lie about a sexual - ... Say, "Well we got drunk, and we were kissing consensually." And make it sound like the kind of situation where it's hard to believe. Why wouldn't I say the person held a gun to my head, and why wouldn't I make it be the kind of-

Chris: Salaciousness almost-

Mike: Salacious, yeah. The kind of egregious rape story that people tend to believe. So, their estimates are between two and eight percent. I certainly believe they're closer to two percent. And then if you look at-

Chris: Well let's pause there. I think that, that's so important. 'Cause that's the numbers that I share too. That's two to eight percent of reporting-

Mike: Of reporting.

Chris: This is key here, because only a third to tenth that report it. So if you do two to eight percent of what is actually a third to a-



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Chris: ... though few do 2-8% of what is actually a third to a tenth. You're actually talking about .3 of a percent to about 3% at the high end of cases. And what I think is important for people to realize there is understanding that we're talking about 97% of the time. That means that survivors speaking total truth 97% of the time, so why are you focusing on the 3? Why? 'Cause TV and the media, when they get that 3% runs with it. And everybody goes, "Proof I don't need to worry about the topic." Isn't that really what's caused this myth?

Mike: Yeah, I think so. And yeah, I mean my estimation, and it's just an estimation, is that for every false report of a sexual, there are about 475 unreported assaults, so you tell me which is the bigger problem. And if you're focused on these rare false reports ... And we have to acknowledge it would be a horrible thing for somebody to say that you did something, a felony, that-

Chris: Yeah and a false report is horrible for everyone. It's horrible for survivors, yeah.

Mike: Yeah, but the fact that you're focusing on that tells me who you are identifying with. You're identifying with the person being reported rather than the victim. We have a huge problem with unreported rapes, because we don't ... we're doing better with this, but we're not very good at supporting victims who come forward and making them feel safe to report. We're doing better. And so-

Chris: Right. What is the key steps we can do to help people recognize sexism and to speak out? So what are some steps you give groups you work with about, "Hey. Here's how to notice. Here's how to catch. Here's the action step to take,"?

Mike: Right. Well, one of the things is to help them understand that if you're bothered by sexism, you're not alone, and this is especially true with men. Men are often comparing their inner experience with other men's performances. As I said, when somebody says something sexist, most men are bothered by that, but they think they're alone in that. I show them age old social-psychological research on conforming and once you perceive an ally and you talk with other men, "Does this bother you? It bothers me," then you start to feel supported coming forward. So there's the noticing the event, this is the classic social-psychological intervention steps: Notice the event, define it as a problem, take responsibility for doing something about the problem, decide what you're going to do and do it. If you're an EMT and you see somebody clutch their heart and fall to the ground, you go through those five steps in about a half a second because you've been trained to do it and you've thought about it. So we help people understand sexism and how sexism harms everybody, not just women. Then we mobilize the good guys and we



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amplify their voices, so that's the attitudinal part of course and then there is the skill part.

Mike: Which it's interesting too, part of the research that we did is we brought men into our lab and we showed them statements, we say, "You're in a situation where another man says this sexist thing and you're offended," and we didn't say, "If you're offended," we say, "And you're offended. So what we want you to do is construct a challenge to that," and so we give them practice at it and then we had them write a letter to a man. So part of what we know, we look to our attitudes to shape our behavior, but what is less obvious is that we look to our behavior to shape our attitudes. So if we can get people to behave in the direction of the attitude, that's going to increase the attitude. So for instance, men who were asked to role play being an advocate for a woman bringing a sexual harassment complaint in a company, become more sympathetic to the problem of sexual harassment. So we're working both sides of the street, we're inside out, attitude to behavior, but also outside in, behavior to attitude.

Chris: I love this idea for everyone to think ... If I were to sit down, "What are situations that I've been in that made me uncomfortable," and then to write out what are possible responses I could've, precise language that I could've used in that moment, so like you said earlier, I've got it in my pocket. I think that's so usable, it's so implementable, we can all do that. And Chris, you have three books you really recommend, I always ask everyone on the show to give me books that they recommend, you had three you shared with me. And that was: 'Our Guys' By: Bernard Lefkowitz, and then 'The Trouble with Testosterone' By: Robert Sapolsky, and then Sandra Bem's, 'The Lenses of Gender'. Why those three?

Mike: Well, I think that we need to have gendered and social context for this problem. So Sandra Bem's 'Lenses of Gender' is just ... She doesn't talk about violence at all, that I can remember, in that book, but it's a formidable intellectual piece of work that changed the way I think about gender and how we grow up with it and how we can learn to be conscious of it. It's a great book for that regard. Sapolsky's book, actually, the title of the book, it's a collection of essays. Sapolsky is world's foremost endocrinologist, he's an amazing biologist, and so often people biologize male aggression and gender and testosterone is usually the culprit-

Mike: ... an issue with that because I've got plenty of testosterone and so do you and so do most every man we know and vast majority of us are not violent, so it's not a straightforward kinda pathway. Sapolsky is brilliant, and by the way, this is a collection of essays on various biological topics, so we're talking about 'The Trouble with Testosterone' is only like a four page thing, that's one of the essays. But he liked it well-enough that he decided to name the book after it. And he explains the biology of it and what Sapolsky is really good at is to take complex science and explain it to people who



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don't necessarily have a really good science background without dumbing it down, so that's a brilliant essay.

Mike: 'Our Guys' is about the gang rape of a developmentally disabled girl in a privileged community in New Jersey and I think the power of that book is that Lefkowitz talks about these boys who did this horrible thing, but also looks at how a community enabled them, and I think that's brilliant.

Mike: And also, by the way, speaking of Sapolsky, if you're interested in the biology things, I highly recommend Frans de Waal's book, he's our world's foremost primatologist. And one of the things you hear in the culture often is this alpha male language, well, de Waal explains that the stereotype of the alpha male is a bully, there's somebody who gets what he wants through intimidation, violence, threat of violence and there are primates who do that. But the most successful primates are actually what he calls 'populists', that they aid in food sharing in the group, they break up fights, they're loved, they're leaders. And so we think of that this is the only way for men to gain power, well, the bullies in primate troupes, they don't last very long because other animals form coalitions and overthrow them. And so he helps us understand through our closest animal relatives, what is true about human nature and what is not.

Chris: Well, I think the irony of talking about the animal world, and the dogs are speaking out there at the same time at your house.

Mike: They're [crosstalk 00:30:58].

Chris: Yeah, so that's ironic. But it sounds like brilliant, so we'll have the links to all those for listeners right now, you'll find those in the show notes, either iTunes or on our website. You'll also be able to find Chris at chriskilmartin.com. Kilmartin is K-I-L-M-A-R-T-I-N, just like it sounds, and Chris is C-H-R-I-S. Chriskilmartin.com, all will be on our website, at respectpodcast.com.

Chris: And for our listeners right now, remember you can go on Facebook and we have a discussion group, you can join other people, share with other people, talk about everything Chris has said. Because Chris, this has been brilliant. Now, that Facebook group is called 'The Respect Podcast Discussion Group', super easy, and that's how you find it on Facebook.

Chris: Chris, thank you so much for joining us today.

Mike: It was my pleasure, Mike, anytime.



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Chris: Thank you for joining us for this episode of The Respect Podcast, which was sponsored by The DATE SAFE Project at datesafeproject.org. And remember, you can always find me at mikespeaks.com.

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