

Misogyny, it's not just for breakfast anymore.

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Abstract

Recently I came across an interesting story in my newsfeed. It seems Sir Richard Branson, of Virgin Air lost a wager to Air Asia Group CEO Tony Fernandes. Sir Branson bet Mr Fernandes over whose Formula 1 team would be ranked higher in the 2010 Championships. Branson lost the contest and as a result, he [...]

Article

Recently I came across an interesting story in my newsfeed. It seems Sir Richard Branson, of Virgin Air lost a wager to Air Asia Group CEO Tony Fernandes. Sir Branson bet Mr Fernandes over whose Formula 1 team would be ranked higher in the 2010 Championships. Branson lost the contest and as a result, he must serve as flight attendant on AirAsia's Perth to Kuala Lumpur flight. It all seems a bit of fun. The proceeds from the flight go to charity. However, there is something less charitable to all of this. Sir Richard's shame is complete, only after he dons a dress.

Rock icon Iggy Pop has posed for photos in a dress which have been turned into an internet meme. That meme intended to cast off the negativity of being a woman. Yet all too often it's the other way around. While the Iggy Pop meme has not been authenticated as the original intent of the photo shoot, Sir Branson's career as a flight attendant in drag is clearly meant to "shame" the loser and in turn, it insults all women. Our society seeks to bring women down through their body image, the clothing they wear, how sexually active they may be, or even because they may out earning their male partners. It's all based in misogyny. Misogyny is not just the marginalizing of women, yet the marginalizing of any gender, gender identity, or gender expression which does not conform to the standards of the masculine oppressor.

I worked at a large, well known department store. The store manager made a wager with some of the store associates, that if the associates met their goals for soliciting new credit card applications, he would, wear a dress. This wager was made prior to my arrival at the store; however the "contest" was ongoing at my arrival. The store manager lost the bet. The insult was felt doubly for me. The image of my supervisor, was mocking not only women, yet anyone less than the image of masculinity. I had to endure the photos in the break room, and in the office. I approached my assistant store manager in charge of Human Resources, and made him aware of my concerns and the harm I felt. He immediately removed the photos. However the store manager then posted them on the inside of his office door. The reason I know this, is it's at his desk I was asked to take my annual training on diversity and respect. Ironical, isn't it?

When our society continues to create stereotypes for men and women and enforces adherence to those boundaries inherent in these stereotypes, anyone crossing the line is subjected to ridicule. Sometimes

that's willingly, yet most of the time it's not.

Sir Richard's willingness is someone else's pain.

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