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THE PULSE

BEATING
TRUTH
DEMANDING
CHANGE



WHY POP CULTURE FORGIVES FEMALE VIOLENCE

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HOW ABC TURNED A
FELONY INTO A
PREMIERE

The Cost of Looking Away

Pop culture doesn't just entertain—it arbitrates. It functions as a moral mirror, reflecting back the biases we already hold. It decides who is entitled to a 'redemption arc' and who is met with an instant 'blacklist.' When the victim is a man, those decisions are not neutral.

The abrupt cancellation of Taylor Frankie Paul's *Bachelorette* season didn't just end a show—it exposed a system that prioritizes a woman's journey over a man's safety.

ABC pulled the plug on March 19, 2026—just three days before the premiere was set to air. Not when executives first learned of Paul's 2023 arrest. Not during production.

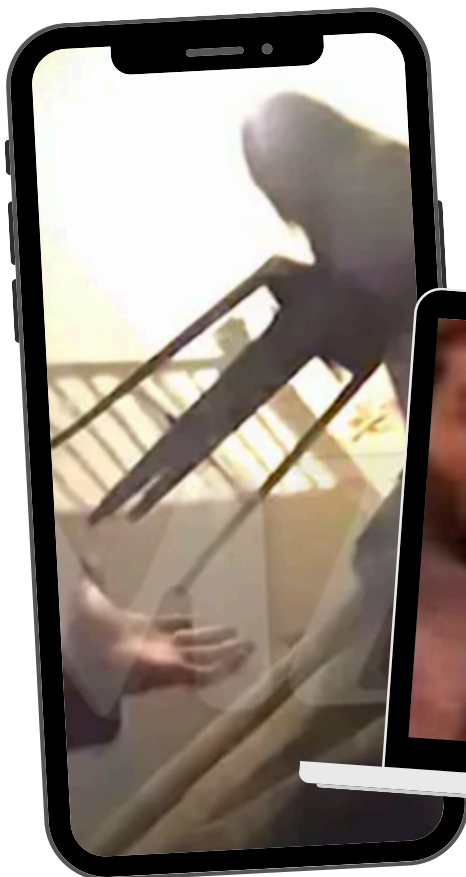


Photo Credit: TMZ
(Stills from March 19th video). Watch the full video at TMZ.com.

EXPOSING **Violence** *Against Men*

Not even after filming wrapped. The network acted only after graphic footage surfaced publicly, making the situation impossible to contain.

The TMZ footage reportedly shows Ms. Paul assaulting her then-boyfriend, Dakota Mortensen: kicking him, restraining him, hurling a few metal barstools—one of which strikes her child in the process. It is difficult to watch and impossible to explain away. Yet, until these images went viral, the industry's strategy was silence, not accountability. The entertainment industry didn't invent this double standard; it merely monetizes a culture that remains uncomfortable with male victimhood.

How ABC Turned A Felony Into A Premiere

In the public imagination, men are cast strictly as aggressors or protectors, leaving no narrative space for their vulnerability. When a woman is the perpetrator, we reflexively reach for context—citing stress or trauma—to rebrand an act of violence as a personal 'journey' rather than a disqualifying offense.

This is the “Redemption Loop”: a cycle in which female perpetrators are afforded narrative elasticity, their actions absorbed into a broader arc of growth. Men, by contrast, are more likely to encounter the “Instant Blacklist”—a swift, often permanent collapse of public standing.

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Male victims exist outside the dominant script, and what falls outside the script is easily ignored. Data increasingly disrupts this cultural shorthand. Research published in the American Journal of Public Health has found that in nonreciprocal violent relationships, women are the primary aggressors in a majority of cases. An Ohio 2025 Domestic Violence Fatality Report, (published by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network), adds a further complication: in a single year, more men than women died in domestic violence-related incidents in the state.

These are not comfortable facts. They fracture a long-standing narrative—men as perpetrators, women as victims—that has shaped both policy and perception. But reality does not conform to narrative convenience.

The industry, however, still does.

Entertainment does not merely reflect culture, it enshrines it. For it selects which stories feel legible, which victims feel credible, and which offenders feel redeemable. It reshapes who is dismissed and who never comes forward at all. Female violence, when it appears, is often softened into a storyline. Male victimhood, when it surfaces, is treated as an anomaly. ABC's decision reveals what happens when that system breaks down.

The ABC financial fallout is staggering: tens of millions in sunk production costs, collapsed ad buys, and broken 'trade-out' deals with brands that paid for exposure that will now never air. But the real cost isn't on the balance sheet; it's structural. ABC didn't just 'miss' the warning signs; they filmed an entire season around a star who was still serving probation for a domestic violence felony. They even chose the Oscars—the industry's most prestigious stage—to parade her as their new romantic heroine. ABC only acted when the audience could no longer be persuaded to look away.

That distinction matters: it proves they didn't have a problem with the violence—they had a problem with the visibility. Not by principle—but by pressure.

The 'Glass Ceiling of Accountability' isn't just about who gets canceled; it's about who is granted the grace of 'context' and who is reduced to a single, irredeemable headline. Violence cannot be a matter of narrative framing. It must be a non-negotiable line. Until that line is drawn without regard to gender, accountability will remain a marketing strategy—shaped by optics and enforced only when denial is no longer profitable.

Until then, justice remains conditional, and the victims remain invisible.



Lake Erie–raised and Rocky River–rooted, Kat Stevens is a former boat racing photographer whose work spans photojournalism, television, and poetry. After time in Los Angeles, she has returned to Ohio to begin a new chapter in songwriting.