



breakthrough

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## **Former NFL quarterback Don McPherson challenges media response to Steubenville verdict**

NEW YORK — Don McPherson, former NFL quarterback, college hall-of-famer and longtime feminist advocate, issued the following statement in response to troubling media coverage of the Steubenville, Ohio rape verdict:

“The troubling reaction of many media outlets to the sentence of two teenage football players who were convicted of raping a 16-year-old girl is a crystal clear example of how society continues to teach boys that girls and women are “less than.” As we saw in Steubenville, and its aftermath, this approach to masculinity leads some men and boys to perpetuate violence against women and other men and boys to remain silent.

This kind of toxic masculinity creates a culture that leads to a national of conversation that express sympathy for the young boys that committed a crime, focusing on their destroyed football careers and uncertain futures in prison, while completely ignoring the victim. Where was the sympathy for her?

We must challenge how we raise boys regarding masculinity, as it is often at the expense of women. I’ve realized that society doesn’t raise boys to be men; we raise them to not be women. The lives of men are inextricably interwoven with the lives of women. Women’s issues of safety and equality directly affect our lives as men. Beyond that, women are humans, with the same rights to safety and freedom as men.

Instead of allowing the humiliation of a young girl to pass unchallenged through social media and text messaging, we must teach men it is our moral responsibility to not remain silent or passively on the sidelines, but to be actively engaged in confronting this problem in every corner of homes, communities, and societies.”

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*McPherson recently joined human rights group Breakthrough’s [One million men. One million promises](#) campaign to engage men to end violence against women.*