

# 'The Red Pill' is a Film Feminists Find Hard to Swallow

Intellectual humility—the acknowledgement that the truth is more important than your version of it—requires you to be open-minded enough not only to listen to an opposing viewpoint but to be willing to change yours when you are wrong. It is a quality in short supply and sadly undervalued in our age of arrogance. Filmmaker and former feminist Cassie Jaye not only possesses that sort of humility but was willing to risk documenting a profound ideological transformation in her latest film, a highly [controversial documentary](#) about the men's rights movement.

"Have you ever been through something," Jaye begins the film, "and you don't know what just happened, but you know it was important to go through? This was that journey for me." That admission signals that this film is as much about her personal struggle to come to grips with her topic as it is about the topic itself.

*The Red Pill*, out recently via streaming services and on DVD, began as a critical look at the Men's Rights movement from the perspective of a feminist activist. But as Jaye explored the topic she found the Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) among her interview subjects, both men and women, unexpectedly sympathetic and their complaints surprisingly legitimate. "When I decided to make a film on the men's rights movement," she states in the movie, "I never anticipated questioning my feminist views. But the more MRAs I met, the more I felt compelled to remind myself why I was a feminist."

The title of the documentary comes from the cultural meme of the "red pill/blue pill" scene from *The Matrix*, in which

Morpheus offers Neo the choice between a blue pill, which would allow him to live in the comfortable fantasy world of the Matrix, or the red pill of harsh reality.

Jaye learned that the blue pill in the context of her topic is a misandrist perspective which so dominates the culture that men's rights concerns are scorned as privileged patriarchy and whiny misogyny. The truth that Jaye uncovered is that men are unfairly discriminated against in family courts; they are turned away by all but one out of 2,000 domestic violence shelters; and they are overwhelmingly the victims of everything from workplace accidents and criminal violence to drug addiction, unemployment, and suicide. Attempts by MRAs to bring such issues into the national conversation are dismissed.

When asked what she has to say about the points raised by MRAs, a feminist activist who goes by the moniker "Big Red" and is proud of her profane verbal confrontations with men tells Jaye, "Cry me a river." Katherine Spillar, an executive editor at *Ms. Magazine* and an executive director of the Feminist Majority Foundation, flatly denies that the men's rights movement has any validity. Rather than concede, for example, the statistical evidence that women constitute a surprising percentage of domestic batterers, she dismissed

even the gender-neutral term “domestic violence” as just another word for “wife-beating, ‘cause that’s really what it is.”

The unsympathetic denial which characterizes so much of the feminist response in *The Red Pill* began to unsettle Jaye. The documentary includes excerpts from her video diary recorded during the making of the film, in which she tearfully confesses at one point that her feminist worldview is beginning to crumble. “I don’t know where I’m headed with what I believe, and what is right and what is wrong, and who is wrong and who is right . . .” By the end, Jaye affirms that while she does not have all the answers, of one thing she is certain—she no longer calls herself a feminist.

Once the rumor began spreading that the film would present a balanced and possibly even sympathetic perspective of the men’s rights movement, not only did Jaye have to resort to using crowdfunding to finish financing the film, but screenings of *The Red Pill* were met with fierce protest. The Australian premiere in Melbourne was cancelled after a petition circulated calling the film “misogynistic propaganda.” A private screening in Ottawa was cancelled after longtime patrons and a sponsor threatened to stop doing business with the theater if this reportedly misogynistic event went forward. No one who protested the film had seen it.

Sage Gerard, an executive for of A Voice for Men, tells Jaye in the film, “It’s so hard to convince people to look at men’s rights’ activism supportively without first allowing them to at least escape the stranglehold that feminism has on their minds. I do believe it is dogma, it’s zealotry.” The radical feminism which has led to such misandry, says Gerard, “is based on hate.”

“There are so many perspectives on gender,” Cassie Jaye concludes in *The Red Pill*, “and I believe they’re all worthy of listening to. However, the conversation is being silenced.

For society to accept anything being said on behalf of women's rights and then to shame any dialogue about men's rights and call it hate speech, is precisely the problem."

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