Tender’s Director Speaks Out About Digital Abuse and #StandUpWorldCup

Tuesday 8 July, 2014

A rather odd thing happened as I sat down to write the final draft of my response to the negative comments on the YouTube page of our #StandUpWorldCup campaign, designed to raise awareness of domestic violence during football tournaments. I realised that a very large spider was sitting on the wall by the computer regarding me as I started to type. In general I am not bothered by spiders, happy for them to go about their business, apart from the really big ones that actually make a noise as they walk across your living room floor. This was the big kind. I went to find a glass, carefully covered the creature and, with my handwritten draft of this comment piece, captured him deftly and returned him to the great outdoors. I hope we won’t cross paths again and we both came off unscathed by our mutual disregard for one another.

“What an analogy” I thought, as the spider made his way into the night. I avoid spiders, as I avoid negative, rude or nasty comments because I would rather spend my energy more usefully.

I would, however, like to extend my thanks to all who made those kinds of comments on Tender/BMB’s film campaign; for contributing to the debate and bringing the issue of violence against women into the public arena – what better space than YouTube. I don’t agree with these opinions but I will not dismiss the commentators who helped us build a platform that our supporters could respond to. They didn’t mean to help forward the conversation, but they did.

The fact is that out of the 718 comments that have been posted so far, I would estimate that a third would be classified as ‘trolling’. These comments, fall into three categories:

A) The Jokers – funny is clearly in the eye of the beholder;

B) The Irrational that make no actual sense ;

C) The Researchers – I wonder if they challenge the statistics of other issues such as racist attacks, cancer deaths or knife crime – after all a dead woman is a dead woman

I remain convinced that all of them – apart from Group B maybe – know the truth; that any kind of violence against someone you love and to whom you have made a commitment, is wrong. I live in hope that their public opinion is not genuine, that in their own relationships they don’t get pleasure or gratification from frightening, belittling or hurting those they claim to love.

Regardless of whether they know better offline, much like the escalation of violence around the World Cup, there are no excuses for the digital violence. Tender will continue to fight the battle against internet harassment by educating young people about healthy relationships, respect, and equality thus arming them with the knowledge and vocabulary to challenge these views online and in life.

There are those who are trying to change the world and those who would prefer to maintain the status quo. I will continue to do what I am doing, and I will make no further comment on a platform that offers anonymity to those whose views are so nasty. I will save my energy for continuing to do the work we do and I will save my tears and anger for the two women who will no doubt be murdered in the next week, somewhere in the UK by partners they hoped they could trust.

A bit like that great big spider, I have put them from my mind. I will simply say, thank you for showing the world that this battle truly is ongoing.

-Susie McDonald

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