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The following quotation is taken from US Senator, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, from 2020

“I was minding my own business, when Representative Yoho put his finger in my face and called me disgusting, out of my mind, and dangerous. And then in front of reporters Representative Yoho called me something that I can’t even bring myself to repeat”?

It happens everywhere. It happens on the street and in bars and in shopping centres. Perhaps most shockingly, it even happens in the house of representatives and Parliament house. Sometimes, it happens on live T.V.

Female politicians are often verbally abused and belittled by their male counterparts. This has to stop. Women in public life should be treated with the same respect as their male counterparts.

So, what is the root cause of this appalling behaviour? What justification do these men have? What narrative are they spinning inside their head? Psychologist Patty Kinnerly makes it obvious: “Such abuse is meant to maintain what some men feel is their right to a position of power. Their view is that we shouldn’t be normalising, promoting, and celebrating women in public life.”

When someone verbally assaults a woman in high office, it’s frightening. But what’s even scarier is when no one calls them out. When they get away with their behaviour. We need to make sure this doesn’t happen anymore. We need to call out this dehumanizing behaviour. Take Julia Gillard as an example,

“The Leader of the Opposition says that people who hold sexist views and who are misogynists are not appropriate for high office. Well, I hope the Leader of the Opposition has got a piece of paper and he is writing out his resignation. Because if he wants to know what misogyny looks like in modern Australia, he needs a mirror.”

This quote is taken from Gillard’s famous misogyny speech in which she called out Tony Abbott for degrading behaviour and commentary directed at her. Her response was voted one of the most unforgettable Australian TV moments in history. It shined a powerful light upon male chauvinism in the corridors of power.

From Ms Gillard’s example, ignoring this abuse and harassment is not the answer.

Fighting back is.

Let us be inspired by the strength of Julia Gillard.

Let us be inspired by the tenacity and ferocity of Alexandria Ocasio Cortez

These are women who are normalising, promoting, and celebrating women in public life. Regardless of how many bruised male egos they leave in their wake.