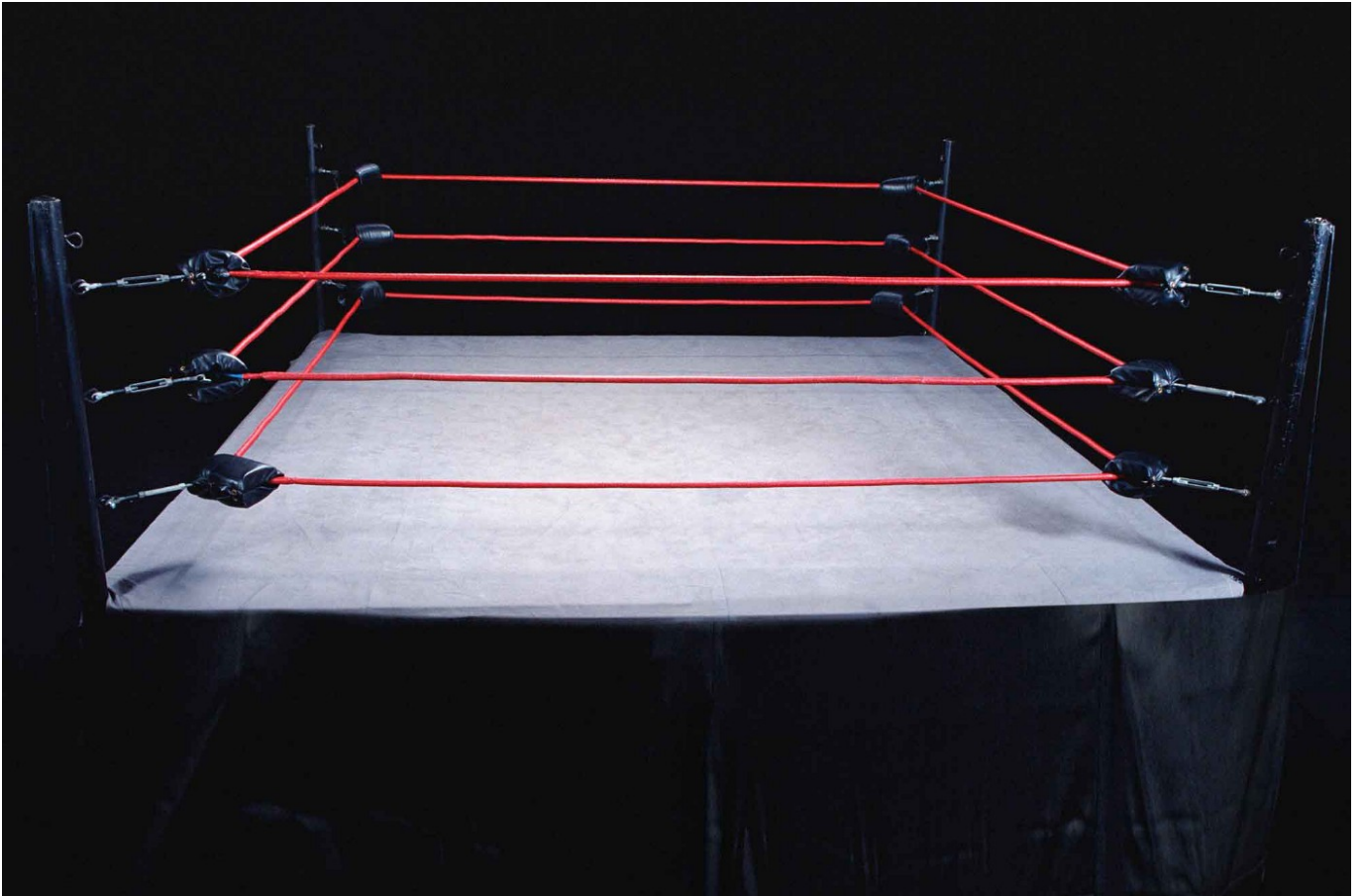


Wrestling Community, Let's Talk



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Like many wrestling fans, I've been horrified to see the many stories and allegations that have been told by women, men, and non-binary wrestlers alike during the [#SpeakingOut](#) movement. When you're a younger wrestling fan, you tend to look at things like you do in comic books. The bad guys take advantage and often cheat to win. One day, the good guy comes and overcomes everything and we cheer and celebrate. When you get older, the veil starts to come down a bit. You still see some of the beauty, but you're no longer blind to the ugliness that your adolescence wasn't able to understand at that time.

If the temporary pause of COVID-19 has given us anything, it's the need for deep reflection and change throughout many systems that only seem to benefit a few people. The wrestling business is certainly taken on a radical form of that. Before wrestling can

welcome fans back to a live capacity, we mustn't let this moment pass us by without extensive and permanent change.

All facets of wrestling need some type of change to go forward and make this better. With wrestling fans; education is key. RAINN has very good statistics about sexual violence. You can see how much of a rampant problem this is. Although we watch these athletes on our TV and tablet screens every week, we have to understand that there are people outside of these characters they play. That's for better or worse. Even outside of wrestling, it's upon us as fans to call out gross behavior in the community and our circles — right down to how we speak. If we are brave and do the right thing, it will make a world of difference. This even goes for outside the world of wrestling. We can constantly educate ourselves on things like proper consent, DARVO, and the many methods of mental and sexual abuse — so that we can accurately stop them and help those in need. Make it a daily practice and correct yourself and others if needed.

It's way past the time for us to be bystanders in this fight. Chances are, any women in your life or that you have conversed with have experienced some sort of assault in her lifetime. It's terrifying to even think about that. When we discuss these things in an open forum, please keep that in mind. Also, listen. Don't interject with what you think they could have done to “avoid the issue” and other conjecture. It's for that reason that many sexual and mental abuse victims don't come forward. Listen and give compassion when needed — not your opinions.

In terms of wrestling journalism, it's one thing to critique a match or a move set. It's another thing entirely to be hurtful about wrestlers' appearance and age. We can certainly be more mindful of the words we type and say. If you have a platform, you have a responsibility in the way you use it. Companies can work to elevating women into higher positions, more head trainer roles, writers' rooms, and corporate positions.

We have made strides where women wrestlers can hold their own PPV's and headline Wrestlemanias' — but that's not enough. It's never been enough. Thankfully, we are a long time away from when women were just factored into bra and panties matches. They are often the best part of many shows. Wrestling needs to cultivate both culture and environment where professionals can go to enjoy their craft. A workplace without harassment or where they have to fear retribution for turning down advances and reporting such.

If you love the sport and just want to be a good person overall, do not let these stories fade off into a trending topic. These are real live people who have been carrying trauma and hurt for a long time. Most likely long after they have told them. Looking around the world, change is the only constant. The world that we knew pre-COVID-19 is not coming

back. Honestly, in many ways, that's a good thing. We all come together on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and sometimes Sunday nights to enjoy the fruits of labor from these athletes. The least we can do is the same thing to demand lasting change to keep them safe and for the bad actors and the guilty to not have access to them.

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