

Featured in The Nerd League

By Katie Knecht

“As with most artists, I was forced to reconcile his talent with his flaws.” —Roxane Gay, “[Nate Parker and the Limits of Empathy](#)”, *The New York Times*, August 19, 2016

When I saw *Manchester By the Sea*, I did not know. When I proclaimed the beauty of the movie to my friends afterward, I did not know. When I wrote the piece “Review: Manchester By the Sea” for *The Nerd League*, I did not know. After I posted it on Facebook, I found out.

Two women who worked for Casey Affleck on his 2010 film *I’m Still Here* made allegations of sexual assault against him that same year. Affleck denied both accusations and settled them out of court for an undisclosed amount.

Art is often birthed from pain, but this is more than an artist using his past to generate a beautiful performance. *Manchester* is still a gorgeous movie and Affleck’s acting is still incredible. But we cannot continue to reconcile a man’s talent with his flaws when women’s rights are actively stomped upon and Hollywood culture shrugs and moves on. How can we continue to support this man, prop him up with awards, and send the message to men everywhere that we accept this? That we not only accept it, but reward it—as long as he is talented enough?

NY Mag [reported](#) on the incidents and how the media has largely ignored them. “His behavior, as described in their [the two women’s] complaints, is not the behavior of a humble actor uncomfortable with fame,” the magazine stated. “It is the behavior of someone who uses his own power and privilege to take what he wants from women.”

Of course Affleck is shy about his celebrity. Of course he fades from the camera while still in the scene. He hides his shame and fear that these allegations will undermine his work under the guise of disliking fame and the attention that accompanies it. He knows that the critical acclaim, Golden Globe nominations, and SAG nominations he has received are tainted.

As Roxane Gay notes in her *NYT* piece about Nate Parker, director and star of 2016’s *The Birth of a Nation* whose own sexual assault allegations [resurfaced last summer](#), it is unsurprising that actors, directors, and artists in the public eye have made mistakes like the rest of us. It happens that theirs are prone to scrutiny by the media and the public. But personal histories peppered with wrongdoings are different from allegations of sexual assault.

Nate Parker’s career has likely come to an end with the reprisal of the 1999 rape case in which he was acquitted. Although he was found not guilty through trial by jury, he lost much of the acclaim

surrounding *Birth*. When asked, he [said he would not apologize](#) for something he didn't do. Parker is black and does not have a patriarchal Hollywood squad surrounding him.

When Affleck has been asked about the allegations made against him in 2010, he has referred to the effects on his family but has not addressed it in a real way. Affleck is white and his brother Ben and his brother's best friend Matt Damon have rallied around him by appearing at premieres together and posing as a trio, daring any journalist or outlet to question Casey Affleck's past in front of them. By keeping his head down, Affleck has gone on to continue his career largely unharmed, even without an acquittal to fall back on.

NY Mag went on: "Affleck has all the privilege and protection that Parker did not, which is why, although their cases are not completely analogous, their Oscar journeys have played out so differently. "

Affleck won a Golden Globe for his performance in *Manchester* last Sunday, and the film won five more awards. But no man is more talented than—nor is any film, painting, novel, or other piece of art more important than—the right of a woman to work and live without being sexually harassed or assaulted.