

#NotAllMen and #NotMyPresident: The Limits of Moral Disassociation*

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Abstract

Moral disassociation occurs when an agent separates herself from an unjust collective practice that is upheld by a social group to which she belongs. I examine two contemporary phenomena that can plausibly be understood in at least some cases as attempts to morally disassociate from injustice: #NotAllMen and #NotMyPresident. I argue that even though moral disassociation matters for the moral assessment of individual agents, it is far less important for the project of social change. More specifically, I show that even in the best cases, questions of moral disassociation function to draw our focus toward “good” vs. “bad” individual actors, actions, and attitudes—thereby diverting attention away from wider systemic processes of injustice. At best, moral disassociation is nonessential, and at worst, specious or counterproductive, because what matters most for

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rectifying structural injustice is recognizing that we *all* bear remedial responsibility for collectively bringing about radical transformation.

Key Words: moral disassociation, collective responsibility, blame, social change, structural injustice