

Book Review

‘See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse’¹

by Jess Hill

Peter Mathie ²

This book is hard to read. Not because it is so thoroughly researched and eloquently written, because it is, but because it is real, it shines a light on our inadequacy to notice, to respond, to trust and believe, to own our beliefs and the behaviors they routinely excuse.

It is a clarion call to action, and we all need to hear it.

Jess Hill committed four years to the painstaking investigation that underpins this book. She doesn't make wild claims, she starts from the beginning and tells each story so the reader can decide. She has done the hard work for us.

She talked to victims and perpetrators, men and women on both sides and while agreeing that men can be victims of domestic abuse, she reminds us it is an Australian woman who will die every week at the hands of an intimate partner and that domestic abuse is experienced by one in four Australian women. Domestic abuse also accounts for sixty percent of all women hospitalised for assault, is a driving force behind homelessness and a leading cause of mental health disorders and suicidal behavior.

She talked to policy makers and service providers, researched the literature and put it all together in a way that ought to change the minds and behavior of legislators, policy makers, service providers and people like me in our daily interactions and through the work we do.

¹ Black Inc 2019, ISBN: 9781760641405 available as an eBook as well; <https://www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/see-what-you-made-me-do> accessed 28/8/20.

² Peter Mathie is a nationally accredited mediator and registered family dispute resolution practitioner. He is a practicing mediator at Perth Mediation Centre in Western Australia and is a regular coach in mediation and FDR at the Resolution Institute and College of Law.

She explored the mythology of the Stockholm Syndrome and how it feeds the unconscious bias that helps us to blame the victims for not leaving. And, she helps us to understand the various forms of violence and abuse that take place in homes across our cities and regions.

Unpicking the details from the people who were there, through the police reports and court transcripts we are told the story of Tamica who was bashed and stripped of her clothes in the middle of a Broome street, left with life threatening injuries to endure the indifference of the services that are meant to care for us. We learn how Tamica and her father fight to save her son who died a horrific death at the hands of her boyfriend and how it was they who left the Broome Courthouse carrying criminal convictions and an earful of trite platitude.

She spends time to explore and tell the real-life stories of children damaged by the abuse of their parents, stories of rehabilitation and survival. Stories that should galvanize our communities to change.

For me as an older male in the world and working as a mediator with families and workplaces it drives me to understand, to question and confront. The responsibility to change the way that men understand and relate to women lies at the feet of men. It is down to us to challenge the way we think and the way we act. As mediators we can't change the past, but we can help people to change the future, we don't dispense justice, but we can help people find it. And we should.

This book has been recognised and awarded. It earned the 2020 Stella Prize. Hill has been recognised with two Walkley's and numerous other awards for her work reporting on domestic abuse. The greatest award and recognition though, will be when people who care, and will commit to whatever change is in our gift read it, become inspired by it and make the changes we must make to move it from the genre of current affairs to that of history.