

Why I'm Not Cheering for Floyd Mayweather

It's official: Boxing champion Floyd Mayweather Jr. is the highest-paid sportsman in the world. He took home \$180 million last weekend when he won the so-called Fight of the Century against Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao in Las Vegas.

But the question remains: Why was Mayweather even allowed in the ring when he is a convicted abuser of women?

The 16,800-seat MGM Grand Garden Arena was sold out for the May 2 fight, and some people reportedly paid \$350,000 for a ringside seat. Hundreds of thousands more fans paid \$100 each to see the contest from their homes on pay-per-view. And no one knows how much money was made on legal and illegal betting on the fight.

It was the most lucrative boxing match in history—and it will also be remembered for being a shameful testimony of just how low America can go.

It was revolting not only because Mayweather is a known abuser of women, but also because leaders in media, entertainment and sports didn't penalize him for his crimes. Instead of kicking him out of the boxing ring, they rewarded his sick behavior with millions in cash and a \$1 million belt covered with 3,017 emeralds.

Mayweather has been arrested numerous times for battering and abusing women, including his former girlfriend, Josie Harris, who is the mother of three of his four children. In one incident, Mayweather threw Harris to the ground, kicked and punched her and pulled her hair—and their son, Koraun, witnessed it all and documented it for the police.

Mayweather has served jail time, once after he tried to break

Harris' arm and threatened to kill her. He also allegedly pointed a gun at his former fiancée, Shantel Jackson. He was last released from jail in 2012.

Yet today the prizefighter is riding high, celebrated by adoring fans who are willing to bankroll his lifestyle of domestic violence. Shame on any American company for supporting last week's fight with advertising dollars. Shame on CBS, which owns the Showtime network, for airing the fight and profiting from Mayweather's abuse. Shame on Hollywood stars who claim they are against domestic violence yet bought front-row seats for this fight.

I don't care how famous Mayweather is, how big his Las Vegas mansion is or how many Rolls Royces he owns. Shame on anyone who paid to watch a boxer who has used his fists to hit women.

It's tragic that our nation is willing to ignore the crime of domestic violence just to rake in lots of money from a boxing match.

In my travels I talk with women all over this country who have suffered painful abuse from their husbands or boyfriends. Many of them overlook the violence, or even cover up their husbands' behavior, so they can appear to be "submissive" wives. (This happens in more Christian homes than we want to admit.) In other cases women fear retribution or financial loss, so they tolerate abuse and even brainwash themselves into thinking violence in the home is something to tolerate.

Mayweather's girlfriend, Josie Harris, put up with abuse for years. But in 2014 she woke up to realize that her life was in danger. She told a reporter that Mayweather monitored her every move, picked out what clothes she could wear, screened her phone calls and held her as a prisoner in her own house.

And sometimes his famous punches were aimed in her direction.

She told *USA Today*: "I was a battered woman. ... But I didn't

understand what a battered woman was at the time. Now I know I was in a very hostile, dysfunctional relationship and a victim of domestic violence.”

I have been involved in confronting the sin of abuse for many years, and I’ve learned that the cycle of pain won’t stop if women aren’t willing to come forward and challenge their husbands or partners. But they cannot do this alone. We also must have the courage to stand up to abusers and call out their bad behavior.

It’s too bad the greedy American sports industry didn’t have the moral courage to tell Mayweather he wasn’t eligible to compete.

When asked about NFL star Ray Rice, who was caught on video knocking his wife unconscious in an elevator in 2014, Mayweather dismissed the incident and said violence is common in many homes. When questioned by a reporter about his own domestic abuse violations, Mayweather downplayed the evidence and said: “Only God can judge me.”

I hope Mayweather is ready for a knockout, because God is a defender of the abused, and He is certainly no fan of bullies.

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