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"Turkey, shut up." From Rubiales, masculinity and silences



Luis Rubiales en una foto de archivo. Oscar J. Barroso

Sources: <https://www.eldiario.es>

Male power implies the possibility of controlling silences, having the ability to decree them as well as to break them.

No one was indifferent after the assembly of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) in which Luis Rubiales shouted that he was not going to resign while repeating a string of phrases that could be considered great *hits* of timeless machismo such as that one cannot be macho because he loves his daughters. The man of the moment, who has taken the spotlight from the covers of Daniel Sancho, opened the doors of the RFEF in what seemed a seedy version of the series.

As the detailed description of his speech has already been made countless analyses in a short space of time we will focus here on addressing the ways in which men and power relate to silence. One of the expressions of masculine power is the empowerment to control silences. Have the ability to decree them as well as break them. A man with power can silence a woman and, if she speaks, make sure no one listens to her. You can also request the complicit silence of your peers. The "quiet you are more beautiful" is now accompanied by a "quiet we are stronger" that seeks the inaction of men as the classic tool that has always acted as a guarantee of the various oppressions around gender.

Silence and women

From all this national grotesque is creating the image that Rubiales is a primitive bonobo in a progressive and respectful Spain with women in such a way that this type of behavior could not occur without consequences. Not so. The complicated reality to manage is quite different. There are two types of silence for women in these cases; The first silence, that of being silent, and the second silence, the one that occurs when once you speak, you are silenced so that you are not heard. The possibility of imposing the dignity of Jennifer Hermoso on both is sponsored by the fact of being a winner.

Patriarchy and capitalism are two structures that are intertwined in much of social relations. Capitalism offers the success/failure dichotomy as delimiting tools of the positions of power from which patriarchy acts. At the beginning of the Rubiales case, all this aubergine appeared in some media as 'controversial'. Perhaps, if the distributor of non-consensual kisses had been a fan any would have spoken of 'reprehensible attitude'. But let no one doubt that if the one who decided to ignore the consent of the footballer was a person who lived on the street, there would have been talk from minute one of sexual crime.

Success (political, economic, sports,...) gives license to impose silences. It is no coincidence that we saw Luis Rubiales defend himself by citing his management successes as an argument for why he did not intend to resign. What, then, is the strategic mistake that Rubiales made and that will prevent him from leaving the abuse committed? Not realizing that he was no longer the only successful person in the stadium. Jennifer Hermoso, as well as the rest of the national team, had just acceded to a position of success that she achieved through football, one of the great founding estates of the national meritocracy. Together with the world champion star, she won with the same rules of the game of capitalism the right to choose what to say, when to say it, how to say it and to be heard. If Rubiales was right about anything, it was in asking that Spain continue to

advance in freedoms. Only instead of understanding freedoms as the ability to do whatever you want, as the suspended president of the RFEF understands, it would be convenient to focus on improving the freedom of women so that if they are in this situation they do not need to have triumphed in their field to be defended and heard.

Silence and men

While women's football has staged one of the greatest examples of what feminism calls 'sisterhood', men's football has been missing. Until the immolation of Luis Rubiales with his speech thrown into the mountain in the assembly of the RFEF there had been hardly any support from the men of the world of football in defense of the women's team and Jennifer Hermoso. Even afterwards, the support continues to arrive with droppers. Needless to say, Rubiales counted on these silences.

Some sports journalists allege that silence occurs because they are elite athletes whose words have a lot of significance and prefer not to risk being misunderstood or entering into controversies from which they can not get out. If the real reason was that they prefer not to comment publicly on anything that is not strictly sporting, what justification does it have that so many of them supported Vinicius when he received racist insults? Of course, perhaps they would not demonstrate to the press against racism when something similar happens again in another sport. So it may be that it is a silence that stems from not truly respecting women's football at the same level as men's football or considering the players as companions of their male counterparts.

However, that is not the only explanation. Right now there must be many players who are even privately upset thinking "why do I have to talk about this? What does it have to do with me?" To understand such obtuse thoughts one must understand a basic element of masculinity; Individualism.

In many cases, male supremacism is articulated as a group against women, especially when they also organize as a group to claim rights. However, individualism remains a fundamental part of male identity. Even in team sports, there is still this feeling that each man is responsible for his failures and triumphs and that, therefore, any incident that may arise corresponds to a solo approach. The way to show support and complicity in this case is through silence. If another man in your circle trips, breaks down, snorts glue or plants a kiss on the mouth of a soccer player against her will, the way to support that many men have is to shut up. It comes out almost automatically, you reach a point where you do not really understand that there may be someone, in this case half of Spain, who is waiting for them to position themselves publicly.

For many changes in society in general and in men in particular that feminism has caused, there are still remains of a very old machismo with elements of sociological Francoism. I refer to that maxim that considers every man sovereign of what happens behind closed doors in his own house. And the home of Rubiales were the football stadiums of all Spain. Of course, we can forget the other main type of silence. In the world of football it is the area of Spanish society where we can find more similarities with a system of families, capos and mafias. That is why the other type of silence we are witnessing is preventive. We could give as an example the statement of the Football Club Barcelona in which they played balancing in order not to position themselves openly against Rubiales hiding behind the fact that he has already apologized. The reality is that in his last speech what he did was accuse Jennifer Hermoso of lying which does not seem like an apology. Once Rubiales falls, there will continue to be in the football world a good handful of men who have been using their positions of power in the same way as Luis Rubiales who, because their obscenities are not so visible, will continue to stagnate the sport for another good season.

The spiral of silence

What did Rubiales intend with his incendiary speech before the RFEF assembly? He was trying to force a repositioning of many men. He is not interested in women because he knows that he has already lost them, hence he takes the liberty of lashing out with feminism that he calls false. His aim was to encourage these "good men" to break the spiral of silence.

The spiral of silence is a concept proposed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. In a simplified way, we could say that it consists of the strength of the opinion considered the majority to silence minority opinions for fear of social exclusion. Using what happened as an example, it is evident that the opinions and positions of much of the sports world as well as the media and political spectrum have been changing since the problem originated. Some newspapers did not give it importance at first until they saw the repercussion and level of social response to the acts of Rubiales. The President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, shook hands with Rubiales at the reception of the players in Moncloa, a fact that is not contemplated that could be repeated now.

It has been the overwhelming social response affirming that the body of women is not a territory of conquest or prize of celebration that has conditioned the formation of a majority of support for Jennifer Hermoso and a silencing of the most rancid voices. "There are many people, who although silenced, are supporting me," Rubiales said in what could

have been his inauguration speech as the new leader of Vox. It was his way of trying to break the spiral. He was telling his supporters that, unlike the long list of shady affairs he's been involved in, to get out of this mess he was going to need more than complicit male silence. Rubiales needs his backers to come out of their respective caverns to form a corridor, so typical of the football world, and greet him by clutching his testicles as a sign of fraternal respect.

What should have been a resignation speech became a kind of declaration of culture war. What Rubiales does not know is that he has already lost it. Their people will have broken the silence with their applause, but they will not be silent from now on not even half a word.

Source: https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/tribuna-abierta/pavo-callate-rubiales-masculinidad-silencios_129_10467745.html

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