Twitter Thread by Joshua Todd James



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Sunday thoughts:

I've had an untold number of abusive bosses over the years (I speak primarily of before I became a screenwriter.)

A large number. Same is true of teachers, instructors and coaches. I had those before I ever had abusive bosses. 1)

2) I've also lost jobs when it was clear I wouldn't put up with a abuse, or wasn't hired when it seemed like I wouldn't take shit. I interviewed for an assistant manager position in a business in Union Square eons ago. The manager looked at my resume, then looked at me, and said,

3) "it says here you've done a lot of martial arts, and you're a black belt. That worries me," he said. "The owner of this establishment is a former football player. He likes to throw his weight around. You don't look like someone who'd be okay with him screaming at you."

4) He screams at his employees? I asked.

"Among other things," he said. "He's a big guy, he might challenge you to step outside, if he doesn't like the look on your face. How would you respond to that, since you're a black belt?"

"I'd probably call the police, first," I said.

5) I didn't get the job. This wasn't the only time. There were other times I DID have a job & my employer vetted me, knew I needed the job, knew I'd be homeless without out it, I had no family or resources to fall back on.

And proceeded to torture and torment me as a result.

6) Threaten me, threaten my friends, short my wages (wage theft is also rampant) and daily put the fear of being fired in me. To them, that's how you established authority.

7) There are two men I know of now, who used to run a direct mail company in Chelsea and now do so out in Long Island, who were the most abusive, racist bosses I've ever had. They still owe me my last paycheck, in fact, which I never got after I quit.

8) They would listen in on my personal calls, during my break. If someone came in to talk to me, they'd tell me that "you talk to him and distract him, he's gonna get fired" which got them in trouble once when they mistook a former client as only a friend of mine.

9) I hope for their sake I never run into them. If you wish to know their names, PM me and I'm happy to tell you.

They weren't the only ones. There's the sexual harasser who everyone called crazy, who disappeared from sight one day (I think she went to rehab)...

10) the self-professed rage-aholic, the woman who believed she had to inspire her staff by PAIN, which she symbolized by pretending to stomp on someone's foot.

The list goes on.

11) In most every case, they chose me specifically, they groomed the situation. I was vulnerable when I first moved here. No bank account, bad credit, no family, no wealth. They knew that. They chose me for that. So they could treat me however they pleased.

12)And these days I don't take shit like that, I don't suffer abuse. Nor do I care for it when I see others doing it to their assistants. It's cowardly bullshit.
I adapted a project about Harvey Weinstein when I broke in & the stories of his mistreatment of his staff are legend.

13) Beyond the rapes (which wasn't a secret, even back then) he had a ferocious temper and loved firing people. HE's not the only one, there's another, famous producer who is legendary for doing the same thing. We know his name. We do.

14) I know people who worked for him, I heard directly. They're awful people.

There's even a film about the topic, SWIMMING WITH SHARKS, about that very thing. It's not an exaggeration. There's also THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA, WHIPLASH, etc.

Let me tell you something, re WHIPLASH.

15) That's not how jazz drummers get good & the day a teacher throws a chair at my kid's head is his last day of eating using his natural adult teeth.

We've long held it up as a ritualistic hazing, that this is how you are made strong. Gives you talent.

16) This is what proves you have what it takes. It's one of America's long held beliefs.

Here's the thing. It's complete and utter bullshit. Truly.

Nothing to it at all. I was hazed in high school athletics, and did nothing but give me PTSD. Didn't make me a better athlete.

17) None of it. I was hazed on jobs, too. I have SO many stories. THere is one common denominator... it's a powerful person mistreating a person without power. For sport. For amusement. Casual cruelty masquerading as wit.

Joss Whedon is the latest, before that it was Ellen.

18) Am I surprised? No. Joss worked for Rosanne on her TV show, a famously abusive boss. Then Cybill, same. He worked on projects for Michael Bay, among others. All screaming bullies, to a person.

We created this monster, this abuse-is-good-for-business monster.

19) It's been a myth in our nation forever.

It's time to put that myth to bed.

Abuse is not good for anyone.

Do not let people in positions of power abuse you. Don't let them abuse others in your presence. Just don't.

And don't ever do it in front of me.