

134 NFL Pleasure #1

This figure represents cheerleaders and the many other young women who are exploited in and around the sports arena.

Although trained athletes, cheerleaders are chosen primarily for their looks and measurements. At the very least, they are subject to objectification and sexualization by team owners, players and/or fans. They also earn remarkably low wages: unlike players, cheerleaders have no unionization and no protection from the “supply outweighs the demand” imbalance of their jobs.

In colleges and high schools, a disproportionate number of athletes, particularly football players, are responsible for sexual misconduct, assaults and rape. When USA Today Network tried to collect disciplinary records from 226 NCAA Division 1 schools across the country, only 35 complied. In those schools, athletes represented fewer than 3 percent of the student body – but were responsible for nearly 9 percent of sexual offenses reported.

We must help girls find their own power and self-worth, rather than having their value defined by men. Women and girls ideally should be strong and confident enough not to need the attention of people prone to hurt them. But educating and weaponizing young women is not sufficient; as a society, we also are responsible for raising our sons differently.