

BY RACHEL CASSANDRA ([HTTP://SOCIALDANCECOMMUNITY.COM/AUTHOR/RACHEL/](http://socialdancecommunity.com/author/rachel/)) /
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SEXY TIMES AT DANCE FESTIVALS: IN RESPONSE TO LA EPOCA'S "ARE DANCE FESTIVALS REALLY SEX FESTIVALS?"

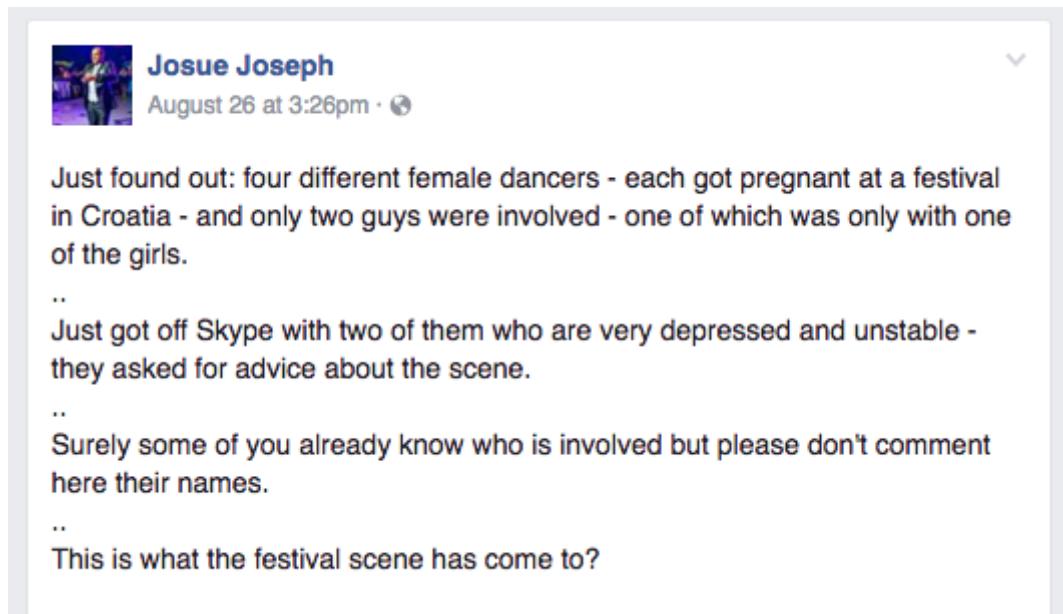


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I've been thinking about how to write this response for weeks. I knew I had to respond, but it hasn't been easy sorting out my thoughts and feelings into something I can share.

I first read about the kernel of the story on August 26th in [Josue Joseph](#)(<https://www.facebook.com/Josue.LaEpoca>)'s initial public post to his Facebook wall. Apparently four women reached out to him about having become pregnant, three of them thanks to the same man, all at one festival in Croatia. We aren't connected, but a friend of mine showed the post to me because she found the comments so

upsetting. Many of those comments have since been deleted, but they ultimately amounted to “If you have sex without condoms, you accept the risk” or “Why are these women complaining about something they got themselves into?”



Josue Joseph
August 26 at 3:26pm · 

Just found out: four different female dancers - each got pregnant at a festival in Croatia - and only two guys were involved - one of which was only with one of the girls.

..

Just got off Skype with two of them who are very depressed and unstable - they asked for advice about the scene.

..

Surely some of you already know who is involved but please don't comment here their names.

..

This is what the festival scene has come to?

Further details unfolded when Josue Joseph used his La Epoca page to publish a note that has been shared 193 times as of my writing this response. Entitled [“Are Dance Festivals Really Sex Festivals? \(https://www.facebook.com/notes/la-epoca/are-dance-festivals-really-sex-festivals-/1825900880971626\)](https://www.facebook.com/notes/la-epoca/are-dance-festivals-really-sex-festivals-/1825900880971626)” it is mostly a defense of dance congresses. Josue revealed that the two men involved are both dance instructors, “one of whom is well-respected by many, many dancers around the world,” while the women included a studio owner, a dance instructor, and two dancers of some experience. In summary, his note concludes that individuals are responsible for their own actions, sex happens when you get a bunch of people together for any purpose, and so really no one can be blamed, particularly not the festival organizers. These two men and four women made their choices and now have to deal with the consequences. It can serve as a warning to all of us, but especially new dancers who may be naive when faced with a partner who speaks romantically about moving from the dance floor to the hotel room.

It took me a while to figure out why this note bothered me so much. After all, I agreed with many of his points. I do believe in personal responsibility and accepting the consequence of your own actions. Yes, people have sex at dance festivals, but not more so than at other hotel gatherings, and it’s nothing new. I don’t feel like it’s happening more than in the past or that it’s being actively encouraged by particular dance forms, but those are normal speculations. I do think that this can be a good warning for newbies to put the brakes on before getting swept up mistakenly in a

false romance. As for those who go in with eyes wide open to the physical act, it's a good reminder of the importance of practicing birth control.

Still. It stuck with me. I felt that this wasn't right somehow. I was uncomfortable.

I checked around on Facebook for comments on the walls of those who had shared the note. Over and over I saw laughter at the absurdity of the situation, sighs of despair over the festival scene going downhill, defense of the awesomeness of congresses and the need for individuals to take responsibility, and innumerable comments blaming the 'girls' for not using birth control.

I realized at last that what troubled me most was the lack of discussion of some very problematic elements of this story. It bothered me that I didn't see these things being discussed much in the social media storm surrounding his note.

1. The 3 women who shared a man had no idea that he was having sex with other women at the festival.

There are definitely people who have multiple relationships at any given time; a broad term for this is non-monogamy. But ethical non-monogamy always involves a disclosure of other sexual partners. If you're going into this just for tonight – or this hour – all parties should be made aware. You don't get questions like "Do instructors secretly have multiple families and children they collect?" from a woman who knew she was one fling among many.

We don't usually tolerate it when people in the dance scene leave out information we might find relevant. For example, we would all be upset if we registered for a dance festival in Miami in the summertime and arrived to find there was no air-conditioning in the ballrooms. Even if the fine print never guaranteed us any AC, plenty of people would be asking for their money back. Why should this situation not call for similar disclosure?

2. The majority of negative comments on Facebook focused on the women, showing a troubling double standard.

Men are praised for getting women into bed. Women are derided for sleeping around. Men get a few shakes of the head for their trespasses on professionalism. Women are shamed for being too sexy, for being teases, for playing games, for giving it up, for doing anything but have a committed relationship with a man who defends them from other men. Men are shamed for not 'getting it' wherever they can, and they are taught to value situations that put them into dominance over women.

Are you kidding me? Women all jump on board the "that instructor is so hot" train and then get mad they get got? As if they didn't know that a consequence of sex is pregnancy? There's this woe is me going on now? Instructors are the NBA superstars of t... [See More](#)

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One can easily find a hook up partner at the mall, grocery store, local bar, myriad websites or anywhere - I attend dance festivals to dance, though when males and females are gathered people will find attractive partners.

This has nothing to do with ... [See More](#)

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Because obviously it's evident whether or not he's a good father by the way he teaches you a dance move. Eye roll. This article is ridiculous.

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Sure, hookup culture has become common and women are theoretically liberated to have sex just as much as men. However, we have a habit of putting full responsibility on the women for birth control even though both parties are fully accountable for their decisions, and it is in many cases the man who is pressuring the woman not to use protection. Ask a young woman in your life if she has ever heard any remarks like these: "You're killing the mood / I can't feel anything with a condom on / I'll put a rubber on in just a little while / I'm out of here if you keep bitching about some condom / Why are you worried? This is something special, I want us to really share all of this."

3. The men are dance instructors. What does that mean about our expectations?

I don't mean that becoming an instructor automatically holds you to some kind of ethical standard. But we should acknowledge that dance teachers have more influence and power not only because of their skill but also their position in the scene. Given the double standard, we should think about the ways male instructors may choose to leverage that status when we evaluate their actions.

Imagine a designer who promises to create a completely unique item of clothing for you, a vendor who has an exclusive collector item, an artist who sells you a one-of-a-kind work of art ... only then it turns out that he was giving the same to plenty of others, including someone you know, and there's no legal contract that says what he did was wrong. If you go into a sexual encounter



(Photo by Devon Rowland[/caption])

feeling special and unique, even knowing that it's not for the long-term, it's a huge shock to realize what a deceit that really is, even without the problematic question of children on the way.

Photo by Devon Rowland

Final Thoughts

I do believe that both the women and men involved share in the responsibility for the situation described in La Epoca's note, but I think we should ask ourselves we are ascribing a fair portion of the outcry to the role men play. We should think about what influences us to have such a different standard for sex, when we value honesty and accountability in friendships and business in the world of social dance.

Furthermore, we have the opportunity to develop a healthier, safer attitude towards sex in our communities. Let's encourage each other to be honest, to communicate openly, and to have equal accountability in our encounters. We can reduce the stigma and risk women face in our supposedly sex-positive society, rather than encouraging machismo values. Dancers of all genders will benefit from a culture that celebrates sincerity and respect, regardless of whether you choose to have sex at your next dance congress.

Want to read more?

Check out a [set of resources](http://www.kizombacommunity.com/service-category/resources)(<http://www.kizombacommunity.com/service-category/resources>) for creating a more respectful dance scene.

Read more [stories of sexual misfortune](http://www.kizombacommunity.com/service-category/stories)(<http://www.kizombacommunity.com/service-category/stories>) from both women and men in the dance scene.

Special thanks to David Hendershot for his invaluable assistance in editing my language.
