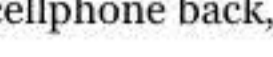




Juan Pablo Galavis, considered one of the worst Bachelors ever, did not propose to his final choice, Nikki Ferrell, but said he didn't want to let her go. The two eventually split. (Rick Rowel / ABC)

By MARY MCNAMARA | CULTURE COLUMNIST AND CRITIC JULY 19, 2019 | 12:29 PM

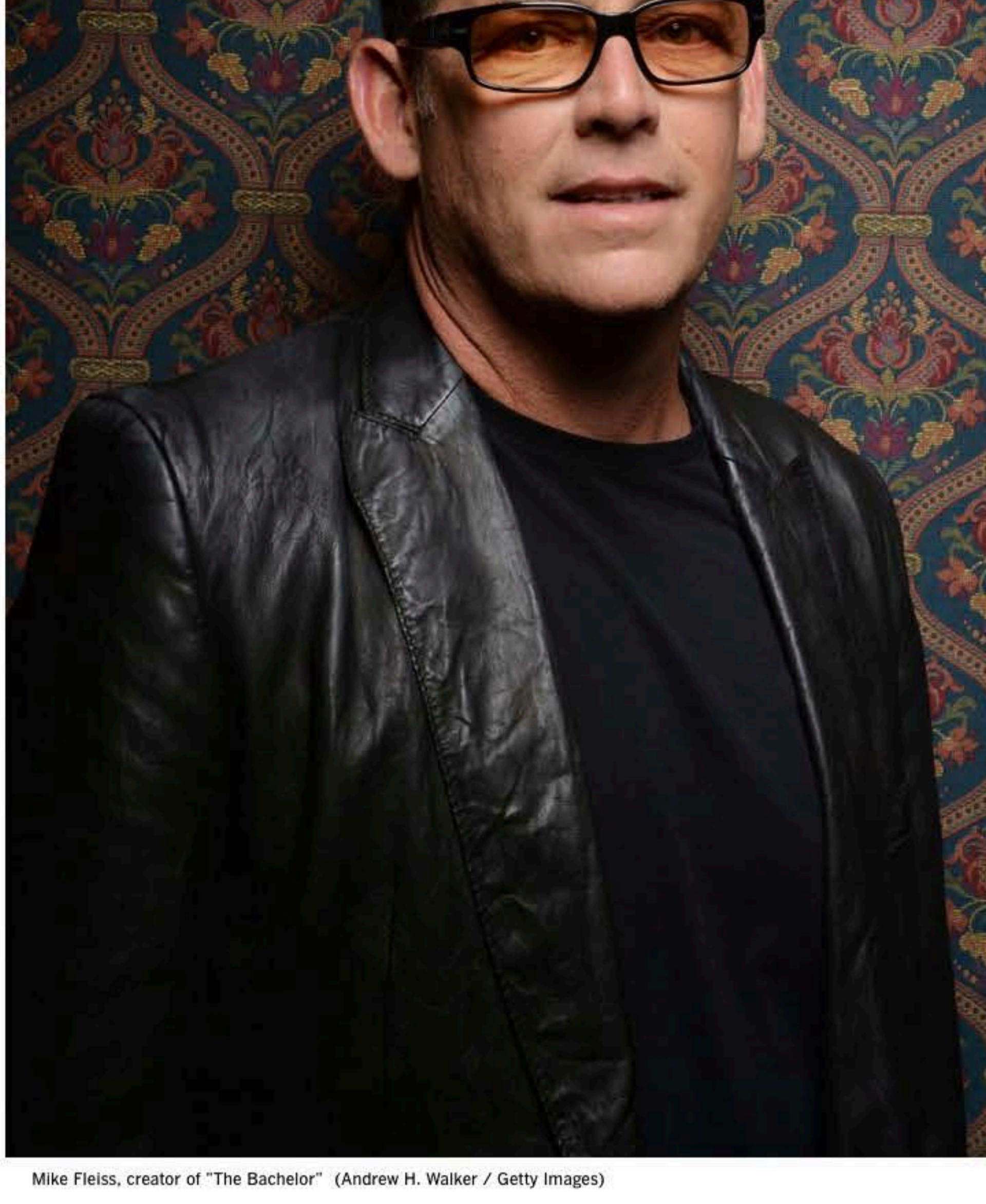


Here's an important tip regarding human reproduction: If you really don't want to have another child with a woman with whom you are having sex, then provide your own birth control.

And here's one regarding relationships: When your wife tells you she wants her cellphone back, just give it to her.

Even if you created that "you please me, you do not" monument to male supremacy, "The Bachelor."

In yet another creepy moment involving ABC's "The Bachelor" franchise, creator Mike Fleiss was [recently accused of domestic assault](#) by his estranged wife, Laura, who by all accounts displeased him very much.



Mike Fleiss, creator of "The Bachelor" (Andrew H. Walker / Getty Images)

After an altercation outside their Hawaii home (once owned by Julia Roberts!) over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, she sought and received a restraining order. She claims he threatened to divorce her after she refused to abort a pregnancy that occurred after he had made it clear he did not want a second child and later became physically abusive after grabbing her cellphone.

He denies the abuse, stating that he became angry after learning that, according to him, she had lied when she said she was on birth control and took her cellphone to see if there was anything else she was hiding. His wife, he says, then attacked him in an effort to retrieve the phone, following him to his truck and jumping on the running board.



Mike Fleiss and his wife, Laura, at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. (Desiree Navarro/WireImage)

The two are now each suing for custody of their 4-year old son.

Whether or not this is a case of criminal domestic abuse will be determined by the Hawaiian authorities currently investigating the case; but it is clearly a case of a man who wants control but no responsibility.

And certainly no responsibility for birth control.

But then, this is the man who created "The Bachelor," which, no matter how much fans may enjoy it, is an exercise in dominance, a competition in which women attempt, through all sorts of physical and emotional machinations, to win the affections of a man by pleasing him.

And, as my colleagues Amy Kaufman and Meg James recently noted, this is not the first time allegations of assaults against women have been made in connection with the franchise. Its spinoff "[Bachelor in Paradise](#)" was [shut down](#) after allegations of sexual misconduct, and last year, a contestant on "The Bachelorette" made it through the casting process despite previous charges of indecent assault and battery.

All of which makes the fact that "The Bachelor" is the No. 2 show among women 18 to 34 more than a bit troubling. Yes, it is just *television*, cast and scripted, with the over-the-top campy drama of a soap opera, but still it revolves around a bunch of women doing whatever they can to win the attention of a complete stranger. Even with the "they knew what they were getting into" safety switch, "The Bachelor" has always been fueled more by female pain than heterosexual romance.

And the pain of being forced to, say, get dressed up and pick your way down a steep hill studded with llamas to get dumped is real; that is one reason the show became a hit. Someone may actually find "love" or even — it can happen — love, but most do not, despite all their "pick me, pick me" efforts.



Colton, America's new Bachelor, receives a rose from Becca on last season of "The Bachelorette." (Paul Hebert/ABC)

In case it isn't clear, I have never been a fan of the show; my ideal season of "The Bachelor" would last about three episodes and end with all the women agreeing that no one wants to marry this guy before forming their own band or cosmetics start-up.

So despite "The Bachelor's" search-for-true-love pitch line, the revelation that its creator is currently embroiled in a sordid scandal involving allegations of emotional and physical abuse, and an inarguable struggle for marital dominance, seems more on-brand than off.

I have no idea what sort of marriage the Fleisses had, but I do know that the decision to have or not have a child should be a mutual one, as should the steps taken to ensure either outcome.

Men who want to have consensual sex but no children have options: A vasectomy is a simple outpatient surgery (unlike tubal ligation), and condoms are available at any 7-Eleven.

Obviously, it would be upsetting for any man to learn that his wife had become pregnant after agreeing with his wish to have no more children, infuriating to discover it had been intentional. That's what divorce courts are for, and Mike Fleiss filed for divorce shortly after the altercation.

However, if you really don't want to physically harm your wife and unborn child after she has demanded you return her cellphone, as Mike Fleiss has said, then just give her back the damn cellphone and get a paternity test.

You act like an adult, not one of your own emotionally amped-up, "I bestow the rose"-entitled Bachelors.

Strikingly, the Fleiss story broke just as this year's "Bachelorette," Hannah Brown, finally gave master manipulator and self-described devout Christian Luke P. a "come to Jesus" speech of her own. While many in Bachelor Nation had expressed outrage throughout the season over Luke's attempts to gaslight Hannah often by criticizing her and then saying he hadn't or that she had "misunderstood," Hannah accepted his pledges of devotion until he told her he would expect her to wait until marriage to have sex.

Apparently that was too much for Hannah, also a self-described Christian. She let him know that she is a grown woman with control over her own body, that she didn't like him judging her, that she had already had sex with one of the other contestants (which is common in the "Bachelor" universe) and that "Jesus still loves me."

The speech, and Luke P.'s subsequent eviction from the show, did well with the "Bachelorette" audience; perhaps the actual reality of Fleiss's own marriage will force audiences to question the "gaslight" aspect to "The Bachelor" — courtship is not a competition and there are no victors when marriage is built on the notion of a man deigning to bestow a prize. Or return his wife's cellphone.

ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS TELEVISION



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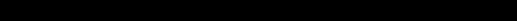
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