Will Peace Ever Get a Chance in Colombia?

A Warrior’s Return • South African Men’s Gender Justice Chorus
The Long and Winding Road to Women’s Equality
Beyond “Absent” and “Deadbeat” Dads
Donald Trump and the Crisis in Masculinity

BY ROB OKUN

The crisis in masculinity and the presidential election got hitched in an October surprise unintentionally engineered by Donald Trump. While a vast majority of men—the 2016 election season’s silent majority—reject Mr. Trump’s “locker room” ideas about manhood, many are reluctant to publicly say so. That may be changing.

Mr. Trump’s vile description of how he treats women, and his subsequent disingenuous “apologies” may have encouraged men to speak out as the question of American masculinity took center stage in the campaign. Ironically, the Republican candidate’s attempt to downplay his behavior as locker room banter had the opposite effect, highlighting a culture of sexual assault that men need to play a greater role in uprooting.

I have been part of a movement committed to transforming masculinity for three decades. The kind of manhood I want to pass on to my son and grandsons, and the hopes and dreams I have for my daughters and granddaughter, could not be more different from Mr. Trump’s, a man who is on tape admitting to sexually assaulting women. Ironically, through his vulgar remarks, he may have advanced our cause.


One organization, the global MenEngage Alliance and its 650-members in 66 countries, (including Voice Male), is committed to help develop a social vaccine to protect against poisonous masculinity—as well as continuing to develop positive programs to raise healthy boys.

When men hear a man degrade women the way Mr. Trump did on the NBC tape, too often we walk away rather than confront the misogynist head on. Mr. Trump does not represent what most men think manhood is—or, more accurately—what humanness is. All of us were born of mothers; none of us would want them, our daughters, our sisters to ever hear such revolting language, let alone be groped, or worse. I am ashamed to share the same gender with Mr. Trump. And as a father, it is unfathomable to me how he spoke about his daughter. How can any other father or grandfather stand silently by when a presidential candidate describes his daughter as “hot”, saying he’d consider dating her if she weren’t of his own flesh and blood?

I am four years younger than Mr. Trump; like him I am a husband, father, and grandfather. A lot of men believe that if they speak out against Mr. Trump and his ilk—men who contend they can sexually assault women with impunity—that they’ll be bullied, ostracized, labeled “weak.” Is Mr. Trump unwittingly inviting them to speak up?

When it comes to sexual assault, political affiliations are irrelevant. As men we must challenge each other about what we expect of one another—beginning with ourselves. We have to declare unambiguously that denigrating and assaulting women as just “guy talk” or “boys being boys,” is indefensible, inexcusable, unforgivable. Mr. Trump was 59 years old, newly married, and a father of three when he spoke so cruelly, not some college frat boy.

By running for president, Mr. Trump gave citizens an unexpected opportunity to begin a serious discussion about contemporary masculinity. Imagine a curriculum developed in classrooms in all 50 states; dialogues on our sports fields; heart to heart talks among faith communities—a nationwide, multigenerational summit about manhood, about boys becoming men. Donald Trump’s ultimate contribution to the 2016 election may turn out to be the teachable moment before us. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, we can ill afford not to begin the conversation. We need not wait until a new president is inaugurated. We can start now.

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8 Men's Voices in South Africa's Gender Justice Chorus
   By Amanda Pickett

10 A Warrior’s Return
   By Adam Pattantyus

12 Will Peace Ever Get a Chance in Colombia?
   By Sebastián Molano

18 Mary of Kivu: Forgiveness in the Worst Place in the World to Be a Woman
   By Gary Barker

20 Nigerian Men Begin Marching to End Men’s Violence Against Women
   By Chris Onuoha

21 The Long and Winding Road to Women’s Equality
   By James A. Haught

24 What’s the Sex Binary Got to Do with Rape?
   By John Stoltenberg

26 What’s Missing in the Way We Look at Rampage Killings?
   By Michael Kimmel

28 A Black Lives Matter Booklist for Teens
   By Kiera Parrott

Columns

2 From the Editor
4 Letters
5 Men @ Work

15 Colorlines - A Brutal Truth Every Black Male Needs to Hear About Masculinity
   By Aaron Morrison

16 Fathering - Beyond “Deadbeat” and Absent Fathers
   By Gary Barker and Michael Kimmel

22 Men in the Kitchen - Equal Partners in Care Work?
   By Bayano Valy

23 Will Women Resist More Caregiving by Men?
   By Oswaldo Montoya

30 Theater - Mary V vs. Henry V? When Gender Struggles Are Center Stage

31 Books - Making Out Like a Virgin: Sex, Desire & Intimacy After Sexual Trauma

32 Resources

34 Film - Toxic Masculinity Unmasked in Six Minutes
   By Alim Kheraj

Cover Photos: Associated Press
Mail Bonding

A New Boys Magazine Anyone?

I found *Voice Male* when I was initially looking for a magazine for my young son—a magazine that gives young boys positive examples of male and female leadership; age-appropriate social and environmental justice; and that presents positive ways of being a male beyond being tough, sporty, violent, or into cars. There are some great kids magazines out there such as *Chirp*, but I have yet to find one that directly or indirectly deals with gender issues and social/enviro justice from a feminist perspective directed at and to support young boys, or even both boys and girls. I have not yet had such luck. I was pleased, however, to find your publication and book and thought that my spouse would appreciate it; I’m interested in reading it too. I would like to see it in our local library.

Melinda Zytaruk
Baysville, Ont., Canada

Editor’s note: Melinda is interested in learning if readers are aware of a publication for young boys. One that covers, she says, topics like “skateboarding and crafts, stories about animals learning about consent or cooperation, female protagonists teaching fun science, male protagonists showing how to make your own pink tie dye t-shirt, water quality test kit, or protest placards…” If *Voice Male* readers have ideas or suggestions for Melinda, they are encouraged to write her at mzytaruk@gmail.com.

An Intersectional Approach to Equality

I’m grateful for the work you all do and I always look forward to the next issue of *Voice Male*. For several years my work has been with young folks as a gender-based violence prevention educator. To do this requires that I continually seek out fresh perspectives and approaches to renovate attitudes about gender, especially for young men, to embrace healing, compassion and nurturance. *Voice Male* has proven to be a valuable resource in this regard. Specifically, I welcome the consistent recognition that so many struggles for equality and freedom are inextricably linked. The Summer issue was a perfect example of this intersectional approach, with writings that challenge sexism as an element (if not a foundation) of racism, body shaming, transphobia, xenophobia, homophobia and even Islamophobia. It is so refreshing and inspiring to see these reminders of how we’re all connected.

It’s also crucial for me as I work with young people in so many different settings with vastly different life experiences. Trust is built when we can see that trauma is trauma, no matter what form it takes, and that healing isn’t a zero-sum game.

Dan Pearson
Prevention Educator
Safe Connections
St. Louis, Mo.

Holding up a Mirror to Black Men

I was particularly moved by the article “Black Men as Anti-Rape Activists” in the Summer issue. I, too, find myself in spaces with other black men and we often ask ourselves: are we providing emotional and physical safety to black women? What can we do? We realize that we do have the power to change our environment, but feel like something deep is holding us back from showing black women that we will protect them from all harm (even if it is from us). Is it shame? Lack of self-esteem? What? I think the article did a great job of holding up the mirror to black men and asking them to take a look and decide if they like what they see. Are we involved in our communities? Are we providing a positive example to young boys of color? Are we just a passive observer? My hope is that this article disrupts spectatorship.

Albert Pless, Jr.
Men’s Health League
Public Health Department
Cambridge, Mass.

Letters may be sent via email to www.voicemalemagazine.org or mailed to Editors: *Voice Male*, PO Box 1246, Amherst, MA 01004
Schools should be a place that you go to learn, not a place to fear.” —Corey Maison, 14-year-old trans girl

The Michigan State Board of Education has taken a major step toward protecting the rights and safety of LGBT students. In September, the board voted 6-2 to approve a new set of statewide policy recommendations for the inclusion and support of LGBT students at K-12 public schools, including a slate of recommendations focused specifically on transgender students.

The document covers a wide range of topics, including supporting inclusion of LGBT content in classrooms, encouraging faculty to engage in learning and training on LGBT students, protecting students from harassment, and collecting data on LGBT students’ achievement. More controversially, the document also makes clear recommendations that transgender students be allowed access to bathrooms and locker rooms congruent with their gender identity.

It also includes provisions for protecting the identities of transgender students by classifying their birth name and transgender status as protected information, strongly encouraging staff to respect students’ choice of names and pronouns, and protecting students who are not yet out in their home environment.

The measure was approved after the board heard testimony from members of the public, including several opposed to the measure as well as a number of transgender K-12 students who would be potentially affected by the recommendations.

Emily Dievendorf, interim president of the Lansing Association for Human Rights and former executive director of Equality Michigan, who attended the hearing, said it was painful to hear a parade of vitriolic speakers attacking the measure. “We endured hours of the same vile hate speech today that we have in past meetings of the Michigan State Board of Education, and from a multitude of speakers claiming to represent faith, love, and acceptance. It was painful for the LGBTQ in attendance, many of whom were youth, and those allies who came to support us.” Dievendorf also spoke of how important the vote is for transgender students in Michigan. “The guidance this document offers our schools is one big step toward stronger, safer kids who are better able to learn and toward a more equal future.”

“At a time when far too many of our leaders in Michigan and across the country are focused on scoring political points at the expense of the health and safety of transgender students, our State Board of Education put the needs of students first,” said Equality Michigan executive director Stephanie White.

While adopting the recommendations is voluntary for school districts, the vote represents one of the first major state-level policy victories for LGBT advocates in Michigan. The move has been widely opposed by conservative state legislators. In fact, Michigan attorney general Bill Schuette was among the officials from more than 20 states currently suing the Obama administration over federal Department of Education interpretations of Title IX, the federal law banning sex discrimination in education, recommending that schools allow transgender students access to bathrooms and locker rooms corresponding to their expressed gender identity.

—Mari Brighet
“I think Trump has given closeted bigots a sense of empowerment and they now feel the freedom to express their hate,” Melinda said. The Persons do not have any political signage anywhere on their property.

“I’m sad that my kids have to grow up next to this hate,” said Kelly.

Men Supporting Men: The Movie

Men need men. They need more than just drinking buddies and acquaintances to go to the game with. Men need to be in community with other men. Men need a place where they can feel vulnerable, supported, and authentic—a place where they can seek advice, give advice, and work through the deep emotions that all men (like all people) have, but that all too often they are forced to hide.

That’s the premise behind the new film Welcome to the Men’s Group, a dramedy that follows the men in a group that meets once a month for breakfast and deep conversation. When a new man considering joining the groups arrives for a test drive, emotions run high. The result is a rare film all men would benefit from seeing—humorous, touching, and at times over-the-top ridiculous. Welcome to the Men’s Group is an enlightening experience.

The film hopes to “inspire millions of men to start untangling their inner lives so that they may live happier, more fulfilling lives, resulting in a better world for everyone,” according to writer-actor Joseph Culp. Welcome to the Men’s Group has completed production and is in the final stages before distribution. Culp and producer Scott Ben-Yashar are actively crowdfunding in order to cover pre-distribution and marketing costs. To view the trailer, or to support distributing the film, visit: http://www.themensgroupmovie.com/supporters.

Ride Safety Takes Off In South Africa

Sonke Gender Justice and the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) took a giant step toward gender justice in August, launching the Safe Ride program, a year-long pilot program to provide taxi drivers and other personnel with training on sexual assault prevention, and offering women and children information about reporting harassment and abuse.

Recognizing that the “[taxi business] is a male-dominated industry,” SANTACO president Phillip Taaibosch said, “We believe the campaign is going to contribute immensely to advocacy for the respect of women and children and for other citizens of the country.”

Trine Rask Thygesen, the Danish ambassador to South Africa, announced that his country was supporting the initiative. “Fighting gender-based violence is a human right and the Safe Ride campaign gives hope that the scourge of gender-based violence in South Africa will be eradicated,” the ambassador said.

Sonke programs reach some 25,000 men and women a year. Sonke’s community mobilization manager Nonhlanhla Skosana describes the organization “as a platform where we can talk to men about these issues and also to say to those who aren’t perpetrators that they can’t turn a blind eye; their silence means they are taking part in violence against women.”

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**Frat Boys Shut Down**

A Virginia fraternity was suspended after an email sent by one of its members was released by the campus newspaper, *The Collegian* at the University of Richmond obtained an email about an upcoming party that was sent by members of the campus Kappa Alpha Order to nearly 100 students. “Lodge season has finally arrived…” it read in part. “[O]ur theme for the night is AmeriKA. Roll through in your best red, white, and blue (or be naked for all I care just make sure your ass makes it out tonight)...This is gonna be one for the books. Both [of us] have the night off so we’re looking forward to watching that lodge virginity be gobbled up for all y’all. See you boys tonight. If you haven’t started drinking already, catch up. Tonight’s the type of night that makes fathers afraid to send their daughters away to school. Let’s get it.”

After *The Collegian* published the email, university administration immediately announced they had “suspended all chapter operations, activities, and events pending a thorough investigation. We have also contacted the national Kappa Alpha Headquarters, which promptly suspended the chapter while it conducts its own membership review and investigation.”

The email was published just days after two UR students wrote on *Huffington Post* about having been sexually assaulted on campus and the university’s mishandling of their cases (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eby9a57b7a565?timestamp=1473429730217). The university is also being investigated for a Title IX violation aligned with a survey conducted last spring by *The Collegian* that revealed more than 12 percent of female students at UR have experienced sexual violence (http://www.thecollegianur.com/article/2015/10/university-of-richmond-title-ix-sexual-assault-survey).

**Guns Don’t Kill People: Usually Men Do**

Are women who carry firearms safer than those who don’t? Of course not. If you listen to the National Rifle Association, though, every woman in America should carry a gun so she can protect herself from domestic abusers, dangerous strangers and potential rapists (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eby9a57b7a565?timestamp=1473429730217). Despite research clearly showing that women toting firearms are actually more at risk than those who don’t, the NRA clings to its propaganda as tightly as Donald Trump once clung to Barack Obama’s Kenyan birth certificate.

A new study from the Violence Policy Center should expose that the NRA is in LaLa land once and for all. In September, the center released “When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2014 Homicide Data,” an annual report that analyzes incidents in which one man kills one woman (often a sign of domestic violence homicide), and ranks states on the rate of women murdered by men http://news.vpc.org/blog/more-than-1600-women-murdered-by-men-in-one-year-new-study-finds-2).

More than 1,600 women were killed by men in 2014, according to the report—and a gun was the most common weapon used. During that same time period, there were only 15 instances of women using firearms to kill a man in self-defense. Fifteen vs. 1,600!

“Women are almost always killed by someone they know, and the majority are victims of domestic homicide. Local, state, and national policymakers must make preventing domestic violence a priority,” the Violence Policy Center’s legislative director, Kristen Rand, reported. “Guns in the hands of abusers can escalate domestic violence to homicide in the blink of an eye. Removing guns from a domestic violence situation is crucial.”

The report concludes that “women face the greatest threat from someone they know, most often a spouse or intimate acquaintance, who is armed with a gun. For women in America, guns are not used to save lives, but to take them.”

For more information, contact Julia Wyman at States United to Prevent Gun Violence, julia@ceasefireusa.org; 401-644-9040.

**Obama: I’m a Feminist**

“Growing up without a dad, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out who I was, how the world perceived me, and what kind of man I wanted to be. It’s easy to absorb all kinds of messages from society about masculinity and come to believe that there’s a right way and a wrong way to be a man. But as I got older, I realized that my ideas about being a tough guy or cool guy just weren’t me. They were a manifestation of my youth and insecurity. Life became a lot easier when I simply started being myself….

“(W)e need to break through these limitations. We need to keep changing the attitude that raises our girls to be demure and our boys to be assertive, that criticizes our daughters for speaking out and our sons for shedding a tear. We need to keep changing the attitude that punishes women for their sexuality and rewards men for theirs.

“We need to keep changing the attitude that teaches men to feel threatened by the presence and success of women… It is absolutely men’s responsibility to fight sexism….”

Excerpted from an article by President Obama in the September issue of Glamour.
In South Africa, every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner. To say that gender-based violence is a problem in the country is a gross understatement. Its roots are woven into the country’s historical struggle to end apartheid, its ongoing economic insecurity, and the global system of patriarchy. And, to make matters worse, the men who commit gender-based violence, especially men of influence, are rarely held accountable.

Two recent examples: a protest in August over remarks by President Jacob Zuma, and the ongoing femicide trial of former community leader Patrick Wisani.

On August 6, during a report on the 2016 municipal election results, four young women staged a silent protest directly in front of Zuma, head of the African National Congress (ANC). Their statement? A call of remembrance for the courage and injustice endured by a woman called “Khwezi” by the media, who accused Zuma of raping her in 2005. Zuma was acquitted at trial, staunchly claiming that what happened was a mutual encounter. Despite her vehement objection—and her identity as a lesbian—Khwezi, fearing for her safety, went into exile in the Netherlands where she was granted asylum. While there, she wrote and performed a powerful poem (see sidebar).

Among the signs protesters displayed were ones reading, “I am 1 in 3” (statistically, one in three women globally will experience physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner, www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures); “10 years Later,” “Khanga” (A khanga is a wrap-around dress, a garment Zuma claimed he interpreted as an invitation for sex), and “Remember Khwezi.” After the forceful removal of the protesters, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) issued a formal apology, not for the abuse suffered by the student activists, but for the disturbance to the president and to the audience.

Then there’s the murder case of political leader Patrick Wisani. The former ANC Youth League official allegedly beat to death his girlfriend, 24-year-old Nosipho Mandleleni, in September 2015. He was released on bail 16 days after his arrest. Earlier this year, the bail was revoked after he was charged with two counts of assault: he allegedly intimidated two witnesses, including Mandleleni’s twin sister. The judge appointed to the trial struggled to take the case seriously, confused about facts, witnesses, and the sequence of events. Wisani’s scheduled court date in September was pushed back to later in the fall when he was taken to the wrong court and his lawyer never appeared. Activists who came to court to protest against Wisani are expected to return when the case resumes.

WHERE IS POWER LOCATED?

It can seem that men’s abuse of women, especially that of high-profile men, casually comes and goes, something communities seem to resign themselves to, perhaps in hopeless frustration and in some cases in support. It might appear hopeless to challenge this system, considering that South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world.

However, research conducted by South Africa’s Sonke Gender Justice, which works to prevent gender-based violence and HIV, shows a growing number of men are concerned about gender-based violence in their communities and want to be part of positive change (preventgbvafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Introduction_and_Overview.pdf).

Volunteers for the Sonke Gender Justice Network, Cape Town, South Africa. A growing number of men are concerned about gender-based violence in their communities.
Sonke responded to these findings with programs such as the UN-sponsored One Man Can (OMC), which supports men’s convictions that a more equitable world is possible, and the recent Safe Ride Campaign (see Men@Work, page 6), which strives to prevent abuse of women and girls at the hands of taxi drivers and queue marshals.

“It is exciting to see the number of young men who have stepped forward recently as active allies,” said one of Sonke’s founders, Dean Peacock, addressing men’s engagement. “They are making clear their dissatisfaction with traditional gender roles and their opposition to sexual violence.”

One Man Can was established in 2006, the same year that Zuma was acquitted of rape. The program conducts workshops, produces videos, and uses drama, song, sport, art, marches and other forms of activism to reach men. Denise Robinson, Democratic Alliance Women’s Network leader, advocates that while empowering women to move beyond barriers of sexism is crucial, “male entitlement is something we need to work on, and it needs to involve men and not just women.” OMC creates space not only for prioritizing the voices of those victimized or silenced by violence, but also for calling into question—and transforming—disastrous gender-based expectations and the men who sustain them.

With its One Man Can Tool Kit (commimit.com/global/content/one-man-can-campaign), OMC provides information and strategies on how to “support a survivor; use the law to demand justice; educate children; and challenge other men to take action,” just to name a few.

Sonke’s research revealed that in the weeks following participation in One Man Can activities, 25 percent of respondents sought voluntary counseling, 50 percent reported an act of gender-based violence, and more than 80 percent talked to friends or family members about gender issues.

According to Global Health Action, South African health policies formulated over the last 20 years are addressing violence; however, such policies often fail to be effectively implemented. Reinforcing the problem are men of influence, such as Zuma and Wisani, who prioritize patriarchal entitlement over women’s right to their lives and freedom. Campaigns like One Man Can and Safe Ride are crucial in disrupting and transforming masculine norms that so often lead to violence. What is needed now are development and marketing efforts for these programs to move toward a critical mass of gender justice advocates.

The effect? Voices of political leaders clinging to male entitlement arguments would be drowned out by a chorus of One Man Can campaigners, reformed taxi drivers, and peaceful anti-violence protesters raising their voices for gender justice.

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Africa National Congress head Jacob Zuma, current president of South–Africa, was acquitted of rape (when he was deputy president) a decade ago. After the verdict his accuser responded with a poem, “I am Khanga,” published in ZAM magazine under her own name, Fezeka Khuzwayo. Dressed in a khanga (a traditional article of dress), she performed the poem at the opening of the exhibition “Identity, Power and Connection” on the eve of the biannual Afrovibes Festival in Holland in 2008.

I Am Khanga

I wrap myself around the curvaceous bodies of women all over Africa
I am the perfect nightdress on those hot African nights
The ideal attire for household chores
I secure babies happily on their mother’s backs
Am the perfect gift for new bride and new mother alike
Armed with proverbs, I am vehicle for communication between women
I exist for the comfort and convenience of a woman
But no no make no mistake...
I am not here to please a man
And I certainly am not a seductress
Please don’t use me as an excuse to rape
Don’t hide behind me when you choose to abuse
You see
That’s what he said—my Malume
The man who called himself my daddy’s best friend
Shared a cell with him on Robben Island for ten whole years
He said I wanted it
That my khanga said it
That with it I lured him to my bed
That with it I want you is what I said
But what about the NO I uttered with my mouth
Not once but twice
And the please, no I said with my body
What about the tear that ran down my face as I lay stiff with shock
In what sick world is that sex
In what sick world is that consent
The same world where the rapist becomes the victim
The same world where I become the bitch that must burn
The same world where I am forced into exile because I spoke out?
This is NOT my world
I reject that world
My world is a world where fathers protect and don’t rape
My world is a world where a woman can speak out
Without fear for her safety
My world is a world where no one, but no one is above the law
My world is a world where sex is pleasurable not painful

—Fezeka Khuzwayo
After completing four years as a nuclear weapons officer in West Germany during the height of the Cold War, Adam Pattantyus was, in his words, “toast.” Depleted, empty, worn out. In 1987, he returned to the U.S. completely drained—physically, emotionally and spiritually. He says he had lost some core human qualities, including optimism, empathy, and the ability to relate. “I returned less human and had a mechanical approach to life.” Recovering his humanity—his ability to relate with warmth and sensitivity to himself and others—became a lifelong task.

When I was back in the world, my wife and family wondered what had happened to the Adam they used to know. Though I was “back” I looked like hell. All I wanted to do was sleep. I knew what everyone was thinking: “Why can’t he just get over it and enjoy life?” I had the same questions but no answers. I returned home changed; I had no framework to process and move through my experience. I was flying blind.

My job as a nuclear weapons officer had taken quite a toll on me. The job ranks number two on the list of the most intense, rigorous, and stressful of all jobs in the military. It is second only to direct combat. For almost four years, I was responsible for stewarding our country’s defensive weapons of mass destruction. I worked 70-to-80 hour weeks in a “no-mistakes” environment and went through dozens of external inspections every year. The pressure and stress were relentless.

In addition to my full-time operational job, I had to meet all US Army and NATO training standards, a full-time job in itself. To prepare, I had five years of leadership training including ROTC, continual on-the-job training, a training community (my unit), and a manual for every military task. By contrast, preparing for my return to civilian life, I had no training, no guides, no community, and no manual. There was no map. As a result, my “return” took more than 25 years. But I’m one of the lucky ones—I made it.

Although I made it, my 25-year marriage didn’t, and I think my service was a significant contributor to my divorce. I saw around 75 percent of the officers who had the same role as me getting divorced—a sad statistic. I can’t speak for how others coped, but I emotionally dissociated in order to fulfill my duty. I became emotionally distant from my wife and had trouble telling her what was going on with me. It eroded my marriage at its very start, and created some rifts we were never able to heal.

When I think back to that difficult time, I realize how valuable Dr. Edward Tick’s book Warrior’s Return: Restoring the Soul After War...
(Sounds True, 2014) would have been for me, my family and my fellow soldiers. It could have reduced my suffering and my loved ones’ sufferings and helped me to achieve a healthy return. 

Warrior’s Return explores the warrior archetype throughout history and examines how war wounds the soul. It challenges us to view healing in the context of how our nation handles its conflicts and veterans. The book breaks down the journey home—what Tick calls the “Necessary Steps of Warrior’s Return”—into six distinct phases. Because I didn’t have any knowledge or understanding of the steps, I muddled through my own return, guided only by my own intuition. As difficult as it was, I was fortunate enough to have my loving family and numerous friends by my side.

What follows are Dr. Tick’s six steps, his explanation of them, and my own personal experience with each of them:

• ISOLATION AND TENDING

When warriors return from war emotionally polluted, they are isolated from the community and are tended to by elder warriors and holy people.

After returning, I had a year of graduate school which allowed me to work on my own and sleep for twelve hours a day for the first six months. I had a vague sense of longing to be in the presence of elders and holy people, but they weren’t in my realm. During this year, even though I was with my wife and young daughter, my daily experience was one of profound emptiness and dissatisfaction. This strained my marriage to its core.

• AFFIRMATION AND DESTINY

Returnees remain separated until they can accept their destiny as warriors on a lifelong path.

After finishing graduate school, I had a growing family and a successful corporate career. Yet there was an emptiness at the center of my life. My “mission” felt hollow. In 2000, after a decade of intensive seeking, my purpose and destiny started slowly coming into focus. Elders and holy people started showing up in my life, and I began studying the spiritual warriorship teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. His teachings about creating an “enlightened society” from our basic goodness deeply resonated with me.

• PURIFICATION AND CLEANSING

Warrior cultures had intensive means for purifying the warrior of emotional toxins accumulated during war.

The work with nuclear weapons was poison to my being. It made me question my fundamental goodness. I also felt I had betrayed my extended family because I had relatives living behind the Iron Curtain during my assignment. A deep, existential cynicism took root in my being and cast a pall over my life. It took many years of Buddhist practice and body work (cranial-sacral therapy, Reiki, etc.) to rewire myself into my true, good me.

• STORYTELLING

Through storytelling, we transform the narratives of our experience, allowing the poison to be released and redemption to enter.

For me, this has been a lifelong challenge. My voice has been “locked up” since childhood. I’m just recently finding it and becoming able to express myself emotionally and with sensitivity. Because I wasn’t allowed to speak about my military assignment, I could not tell my family and community what I did in the service. This caused problems in my marriage because there was a significant part of my life I wasn’t able to share with my wife. I became more shut down, dissociated, and emotionally “mute” during my service, and long afterward. I held this “emotional poison” inside for the majority of my adult life with the attendant consequences to me, my family and relations. Only in the past five years have I begun to articulate my experiences.

• RESTITUTION IN COMMUNITY

After war, the broken social contract must be healed and the damage to the world addressed.

I am a very mission-focused person, which is one of the reasons I chose to serve in the military. Yet I had to face the reality that my service was connected with such existential ugliness—namely mass destruction. Since 2000, I’ve been able to shift my work to more purposeful, meaningful work. This has been deeply healing.

• INITIATION

The book quotes combat veteran John Fisher: “A veteran does not become a warrior simply by going to war. A veteran becomes a warrior when he or she has been set right with life.” I had the great privilege to be able to set my life right. Now, I am the man and warrior who I want to be: a loving father to my three children; a loving family member; a sought-out friend; and a valuable contributor in work and positive force in society.

I feel deep gratitude to Dr. Tick for expertly articulating this complex process and for providing me with a map, and a framework, through which to hold my warrior experience. Although my life has been existentially challenging at times, I’m grateful for the journey and the help I have received along the way.

Adam Pattantyus is committed to his ongoing self-renewal and healing. He works as an entrepreneur and engineering consultant. He enjoys his children, family and friends, and recreates through cycling, hiking and painting. He can be reached at adam0036@comcast.net.
What is the first memory you have about living in a country at war? Every time I asked this question to my fellow Colombians, there is always a long pause. Then, memories begin to emerge, as if pieces of a chess game are being placed on the board. The magnitude and scope of decades of conflict have affected each of us in different, profound ways, shaping how we experience and understand the world. Sadly, the conflict has become the primary fabric that threads our stories together as a nation.

Today, this question is more relevant than ever. On August 24, the Colombian government and the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a peace agreement, a remarkable achievement in the face of a bloody and brutal conflict. After 60 years of war, with more than eight million victims recorded on the government’s official register, 260,000 dead, and the highest number of internally displaced people in the world.

My first memory of war was in August 1989. The television in my grandmother’s house brought the news. Luis Carlos Galán, a progressive presidential candidate, had been assassinated while delivering a speech. My mom and aunts started to cry. My grandma remained in silence, letting the words of the news broadcaster sink in. I was seven years old. But by that time, I already had been warned that “boys (and men) don’t cry” so I didn’t. I swallowed my tears. I displayed this trait—my brand of a “new masculinity”—as a peacock proudly displays its feathers.

More than a quarter century later, as I write these words in my home in Boston, I still feel the bitter taste of war. For the past 11 years, living a self-imposed exile, I have reflected critically about the way in which the protracted Colombian conflict has shaped me as a person, and especially as a man.

Historically, Colombia has led Latin America with the highest levels of inequality, and continues to be plagued by poverty and with scant public services offered by the state. Throughout the vast geography of my country, where roads end and there is no electricity or water, these are the places armed actors wielded their greatest power. They have imposed a notion that men have power because they are willing and ready to use violence. For those men, masculinity and violence are perceived as two wings of the same bird.

The last significant attempt at peace in Colombia with FARC took place in 1985, under an agreement that opened the door for several leftist armed forces—led by the FARC—to participate in politics under the Patriotic Union Party. When more than 3,500 party members were systematically assassinated, it was clear that the agreement had been a colossal failure. As such, the new agreement signed in August marks a country trying, again, to redeem itself from the demons of its past.

In previous decades, armed right-wing paramilitary groups, leftist guerrilla groups, drug lords and shady politicians emerged to challenge power, each vying to advance their own agenda. In the 1990s, the paramilitary groups grew larger in power and influence, creating dark alliances with politicians and state forces.
fighting FARC. It became very hard to differentiate the weeds from the garden.

On the surface, I was one of those Colombians who navigated the 1980s, ‘90s and early 2000s in relatively safe waters. Because I was an only child, I was exempt from mandatory military service. I have never held a gun. My family was not affected by kidnappings, extortions or landmines. The internal war did not displace me and it did not take the lives of any of my relatives or friends. I had the unearned benefit of experiencing the conflict from the comfortable seat of privilege in a country where war was both the rule and the ruler.

However, those years left an indelible imprint on me. I became wary, suspicious of others, defensive. The ongoing experiences of violence stole my ability to experiencing the conflict from the comfortable seat of privilege in a country where war was both the rule and the ruler.

However, those years left an indelible imprint on me. I became wary, suspicious of others, defensive. The ongoing experiences of violence stole my ability to experience the conflict from the comfortable seat of privilege in a country where war was both the rule and the ruler.

I became hardened to the growing number of people asking for money at traffic lights. I got used to the stories of killings and blood in remote areas of a vast geography. War slowly dehumanized me. Only distance and the passage of time have allowed me to regain, little by little, an urgency to rekindle my sense of empathy, to invite kindness to grow stronger within me.

In 2005, when I was a senior in college, then-President Álvaro Uribe led a massive paramilitary demobilization campaign, and stepped up the military offensive against the FARC. Uribe tried to polarize the FARC and to focus the public’s attention on a single choice: you were either with the government or against it. (This might sound familiar to many Americans who faced a similar situation during the Bush years.) However, the Colombian people’s trust in the Uribe government plummeted in the wake of the 2008 falsos-positivos scandal, which uncovered the extrajudicial killing of more than 3,000 poor young men by state forces.

In 2010, Uribe left office, leaving behind a horrific record of human rights violations and a powerful precedent: the means are less important than the end result.

It should come as no surprise that because we were living in a perpetual state of war, Colombian men came to see violence as a common instrument in their survival toolbox. Perpetrating violence was seen as valid; its use justified to prove your manhood. It included killing, torture and extreme violence by state forces, guerrilla and paramilitary groups and criminal bands, as well as “normalized” day-to-day violence—cat-calling, violence against women, and discrimination against LGTBI communities. It also manifested in subtle yet powerful ways: emasculating boys and men by insulting each other, comparing other boys and men to women or gay men. It usually worked.

Violence has become central to our understanding of what it means to be a man. It manifests in fist fights on the playground and the soccer field. It erupts on highways and city boulevards where men’s road rage is a constant menace. It is part of what it is expected of us as men to be men; no one wants to be the guy...
who lets others take advantage of him. Men are not necessarily inherently violent, but we have normalized violence to the point that we no longer notice its presence as part of our landscape.

The notion of what it means to be a man in Colombia has been linked to the ability to survive, to take advantage of any opportunity, even if it means bending the rules. We glorify avispados, clever, quick-witted individuals. We glorify men who find ways to take advantage of others, sometimes as drug dealers, sometimes as businessmen or politicians. We love those who make “justice” their own cause using their fists, their bullets or their words. But we also hate them. We despise them. These men represent the worst in us. Their individuality prevails over the collective and the costs of their actions are imposed on all of us. They take lives; they destroy dreams; and they foster more violence.

Our traditional notion of masculinity is also linked to our ability to protect ourselves and others. In Colombia, every 13 minutes a woman is a victim of violence. Physical, verbal and psychological violence manifests in multiple, yet telling ways. We raise men to be tough and in control; they are not expected to change diapers, clean bathrooms or care for their children. We see as normal that men openly express their feelings only when alcohol is involved. What does this mean? That intoxicating your body is an acceptable way to detoxify your soul? We tend to be more accepting of violence than “weakness” without realizing that violence is its ultimate expression.

Class is central in Latin America and Colombia is no exception. For men, this means experiencing strong social pressure to be financially successful, to provide for your family. In a war economy, the means are less important than the objectives. As a result, money flows from drugs, illegal industries, corruption, and kickbacks on state contracts. Illegal resources comingle with legal ones, and ethical lines become blurry. In such a context of rampant inequality—exacerbated by armed conflict—social mobility is rarely achieved. Men are left behind, feeling the pressure to fulfill a model of masculinity impossible to reach in a society where “anything goes” has become a national mantra.

These factors contribute to the prototypical Colombian man. However, these characteristics are not exclusive to my country. They can be found in Central America as well, where countries also have been greatly affected by onging violence. Resourcefulness does not come only out of deprivation—it becomes a way of life in countries where the rule of law is weak and exerting force is the modus operandi to impose your will. Women and gender minorities tend to be the victims of a hypermachismo culture. Men, including young men, are seen as the menace. It is becoming clear that in many cases, the manly thing to do is to not act out traditional masculinity and possibly die, but to leave, to head north, to begin again.

In 2010, a new opportunity emerged for Colombia with the election of current president Juan Manuel Santos. Once a loyal squire of President Uribe, Santos decided to give peace a chance and engaged in peace talks with FARC. After four years of intense negotiations in Cuba, the Colombian government and the guerrilla group reached a final agreement. Uribe, a man known for his inclinations to militaristic options to achieve peace, is the main opponent of the agreement.

Colombians had the last word, voting to reject the agreement in a plebiscite held on October 2. With only 37 percent of potential voters participating, by a razor thin margin—50.2 to 49.8 percent—the agreement was rejected. Now Colombia is confronted with a sobering, uncertain new reality. For the moment, anyway, it appears voters are reluctant to give peace a chance.

Beyond the vote, men have a key role to play in the wonderful, complex process of building peace in Colombia. It will not be easy. It demands that we have an open, sincere conversation about who we are as men, that we rethink what notions and traits of manhood we need to foster, and the traits we need to eradicate. In building peace, the end result is as important as the process, as it is in becoming a man. Each of us can start today, right now, by transforming ourselves and giving peace a chance, one man at a time.

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A Brutal Truth Every Black Man Needs to Hear About Masculinity

By Aaron Morrison

It can take a lot of courage for a young black man to make this admission: “I was never really a tough guy, I don’t like sports, I have some feminine mannerisms.”

Those are the words of rapper Tyler, the Creator, who recently talked to *Fader* magazine about fashion and masculinity in the black community.

“The black community is very fixated on that hard masculinity, they always gotta be hard and fucking tough,” he said. “It’s kids who’re probably growing up and don’t know themselves yet or have the strongest self esteem so they’re trying to fit [in].”

With that said, here’s what black men everywhere need to know about masculinity: Teaching young black males to “man up” through relentless policing of candid expression does more harm than good for a child’s identity.

For many black men, so much of their self-worth can be wrapped up in “being a real man.” Often, parents play a major role in these early tests of a boy’s “manhood,” going to great lengths to prod their sons into masculinity. They are often hinged on a tendency to equate masculinity with heterosexuality. Davis said that when he got older he recognized that the adults who raised him often parented out of fear that he would face hardships if he was gay or effeminate.

“At the root of it, they are trying to keep us safe,” he said recently. “But oftentimes it shows up in a very non-loving way.”

Conversations about masculinity are often hinged on a tendency to equate masculinity with heterosexuality. Davis said that for many black men, so much of their self-worth can be wrapped up in “being a real man.” Often, parents play a major role in these early tests of a boy’s “manhood,” going to great lengths to prod their sons into masculinity. They are often hinged on a tendency to equate masculinity with heterosexuality.

“Growing up I understood that I must wear this mask of masculinity every hour, every minute, every second of every day.”

Davis added, “There’s a cost to teaching masculinity—it’s emotional, physical and psychological. When you are performing these ideas of masculinity and femininity, you’re the one who is losing out and others are losing out on knowing who you really are.”

At its extreme, the “man up” trope is a response to abuse that was prevalent in U.S. slavery. Scholars have said that the origins of black male masculinity derived from the horrendously inhumane treatment and rape of enslaved men. Post-slavery, white supremacists used contemporary media to recast freed male slaves as either docile, emasculated buffoons incapable of dominance, or brutes destined to rape and ravage the civilized population. Fast-forward to today and these depictions still pervade the definition of black manhood.

To be sure, tearing down a black boy for his effeminate mannerisms and telling him to “man up” is an ineffective response to centuries of racism, Samuels said. “It’s just over-the-top masculinity,” he said. “You can take it too far.”

Aaron Morrison is a senior staff writer on the Identities team at Mic, where this piece first appeared.
Continuing to follow a story we published last issue, “The State of Fatherhood in the U.S.,” is this further examination of the different realities fathers in the United States experience depending on class and privilege. The writers were major contributors to the report State of America’s Fathers.

Earlier this year, several major corporations sponsored a night in one of the Smithsonian’s flagship museums in Washington, D.C., for more than 400 “daddy bloggers.” Their motivation? Fathers are now as likely as mothers to be deciding what food, toys, children’s books and clothing to buy.

And these dad bloggers know just how to reach other fathers. Some of the corporations on hand were bragging about their newly expanded paid parental leave for mothers and fathers—an increasingly necessary benefit to offer as they compete for highly qualified talent among 20-somethings.

But just a few short miles away from the Smithsonian, in southeast Washington, fathers face a different reality: They are absent in 73 percent of households, and nearly one in 10 is currently incarcerated. Here, fathers struggle with having a steady job with a living wage and being able to pay child support.

Call this the tale of two fatherhoods. Before another Father’s Day rolls around, we need to see a clearer picture of all the ways men are taking on fatherhood in America.

Much has been written recently about the rapid increase in men’s participation in families and as fathers. Research we compiled for the recently launched State of America’s Fathers report finds that involved and engaged fatherhood has become the norm for some families in the United States. The study, the first of its kind, combined existing studies with new findings from the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NCSW) completed by the Families and Work Institute, a sample of nearly 2,000 employed women and men over 18 years of age. According to our data, 50 percent of currently partnered American fathers now self-identify as either sharing responsibility with their female partners or as their children’s primary caregiver.

Then there are the forgotten fathers. All told, there are between eight and 10 million nonresident fathers in America, including both divorced and never-married dads. The vast majority of these are lower-income and less-educated men. Indeed, because of the challenges of finding stable employment, the majority of men who lack a four-year college degree will become nonresident fathers.

Included in these figures as well are the dramatically high numbers of incarcerated fathers. More than 2.5 million children in the United States have a parent in prison, a Pew Trust study has found: 92 percent of these incarcerated parents are fathers, and due to racial biases and other factors, more than 60 percent of those in prison are people of color.

The issue of immigration also impacts American fatherhood. The number of unauthorized immigrant parents living with their U.S. citizen children has more than doubled in less than two decades: from 1.3 million in 1995 to 3.3 million in 2012. These mothers and fathers may be present in the household but live under the shadow of deportation. In addition, in 2013 there were 17.6 million children of immigrants living in the United States. Add to this the fathers who immigrate to the United States
for work without their families and become nonresidential fathers in order to send needed remittances home.

There are some important things we should know about these forgotten fathers. First and foremost, “nonresident” is not the same as “absent.” A nationally representative sample from 2010 found that the largest proportions of nonresident fathers are consistently very active in the lives of their children. And for those who think being a low-income, nonresident father of color is synonymous with absent fatherhood, research finds the opposite. As compared to poor nonresident white fathers, many poor nonresident black fathers are more likely to see their children on a regular basis than white nonresident fathers, not less.

For years, the policy response to the rise of nonresidential fathers has been mostly to chastise them if they don’t pay child support—the “deadbeat dad” narrative. Of course, nonresident fathers’ financial support—via court-ordered child support payments or other informal contributions—does meaningfully benefit the health and development of both children and their mothers.

But the research of Ron Mincy and his colleagues at Columbia University, who analyzed the largest data set on nonresidential fathers for the State of America’s Fathers report, finds that the informal support low-income fathers provide—which includes informal financial contributions as well as care—makes nearly as big a difference in their children’s lives as their formal financial contributions do.

The point is this: The “deadbeat dad” narrative doesn’t tell the full story. Fathers earning less than $20,000 per year comprise the overwhelming majority of those in arrears on child support—they’re not deadbeats, they’re dead broke. Furthermore, studies find that while mothers value and want the financial support from nonresident fathers, a great many single mothers in low-income families report that they want their children’s nonresident fathers to be involved in their children’s lives first and foremost as co-caregivers.

When a low-income father fails to make child support payments, billions of dollars of federal and state mechanisms to enforce these payments snap into action. Yet investing such resources into ensuring timely payments of child support misses the point, since such mechanisms do nothing to shift the underlying causal factors of stagnant earnings, unemployment, incarceration and economic disadvantage.

The prevalent image of the absent and deadbeat dad needs to be changed once and for all. The majority of nonresident fathers are not absent, and of those who are absent, it is rarely of their own choosing. Indeed, for the most part, it’s not that nonresident fathers are failing their children. It’s that our policies and our economy are failing fathers and children alike.

We don’t have to wait for Father’s Day to acknowledge that fathers are doing a greater share of hands-on caregiving than ever before and that many highly visible corporations, and a few leading states, are stepping up and offering paid leave for fathers and mothers.

But there’s more. Let’s not lose sight of the country’s poorest fathers. What they desire is exactly the same as those daddy bloggers in the Smithsonian: to be engaged in the daily lives of their children.

To learn more about the state of America’s fathers, go to http://www.men-care.org/soaf/.

Gary Barker is president and CEO of Promundo, an international organization that works to advance gender equality, in part by engaging men as full and equal caregivers. Voice Male contributing editor Michael Kimmel is the executive director of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities at Stony Brook University, where he is professor of sociology.
Gary Barker’s new novel, Mary of Kivu, takes place mainly on the shores of Lake Kivu, near the Rwandan-Congolese border where amidst the ongoing conflicts and horrendous sexual violence against women, there are reports of a local woman performing miracles. Every day, hundreds of people from nearby villages line up outside the home of Mary of Kivu hoping to be cured. The Vatican sends someone to investigate, as do international women’s rights NGOs. Mary shares her story with no one—until she meets Keith Masterson, an American journalist looking to add color to his dispatches on the region’s wars. Against all odds, Mary interrupts her daily healings to tell Keith the beginning of her story. The novel weaves together the interviews with Keith’s own troubled past. What follows is an excerpt from the novel, published in the Summer of 2016 by World Editions in the UK.

INTERVIEW 1 — MARY OF KIVU

[Note to reader: I have rendered Mary’s account as translated to me from Swahili with minimal editing.]

I will start at the beginning so you know it all, so you know my story.

You know Kivu, eh? You will know what I mean then.

The nights there, they are soft. There may be the cackling of bugs, maybe music in the background if someone is having a party, or maybe it is coming from a bar.

And there is always a breeze. We have lightning, but most of the time even our thunder is soft. Soft rumbles beyond the mountains.

We are lucky. Blessed. If not for the wars. If not for those men. If not for the hearts of men turned sour and angry and full of hate that they do not even understand. Men following the orders of other men. Lost men. Very lost men.

If not for them, Kivu is where God would come to rest.

I was raised here—a sister, a daughter, a schoolgirl, a wife, and now a mother. Three sisters like me. My father always said he was blessed to have four daughters, a marvelous one, a fantastic one, a wonderful one, and a beautiful one. I am the one he called beautiful. Many fathers were not happy to have daughters but my father was.

I dreamed from when I was a little girl of a man who would protect me, love me. Because a girl loved by her father will only have a man who loves her so.

I adored my school uniform. I was so proud of it—that pink blouse and the skirt. I would wash it and iron it a second time if my mother or the housegirl didn’t do a good job. And I studied. I was so serious.

The older women told us how to stretch ourselves.

[The translator stopped for a moment when Mary started to tell the part. I could tell there was something about it that bothered her.]

How to stretch our vaginas and showed us which plants to rub there so it wouldn’t hurt. This would give our husbands more pleasure, they told us. We had heard from the other girls that it would make us more sensitive too, give us pleasure.

[Mary smiled as she said this and looked away from me in shyness.]

Although it didn’t seem to me that you needed to do much more to that part to make it more sensitive.

School was the most important thing to me. I would stay awake worried sick the night before a test. I would cry if I did not get the best marks.

“Mary, Mary, she only studies. So serious. When you gonna smile, Mary? When you gonna come out and play, Mary? So much more to life than your books, Miss Mary the schoolgirl.”

That’s what they said to me. The boys and the men. My father would chase them away like you might a stray dog. He didn’t take them seriously. Or maybe he did. Shoo, shoo, he said to them. And then he said to me: Come inside, Mary.

It was a teacher at school. Miss Unygire. She introduced me to poetry. And it was all I wanted to read. Do you like poetry? We had classes in English and in French.

And you must know about my dear Joseph.

He was from a nearby village, closer to the city by the lake. He went to the boys’ school that was across the way from ours, from the girls’ school.

I had seen him as a little boy because we went to the same church. I thought of him as a small, small boy. He was quiet and had a proud face. But he was a small, small boy who liked to read like me. I wondered if he had the same strong thoughts I had about what I read. But he was too small, too frail for me to take him seriously, eh. He could not be the one I was waiting for, the one I was stretching myself for, the one I would give pleasure and who would give pleasure to me.

Then one day, just like that, from one day to the next it seemed, he was all filled out. This book boy, a small boy like me who kept to himself, had become a strong young man. His arms, they did shine. I remember looking at the way he bent his arms and watching that muscle move, on the back of his arm. This was a new kind of poetry to me.

[As she said this M. laughed the same free-spirited laugh as that woman in the wheelchair, and looked momentarily at the floor.]

I sat under the tree between our two schools. It was the yard where we played. I sat under that tree hoping he would see me; that he would look at me. But he looked right through me. He did not see me. I looked at myself and thought it must be the same for him.
I was a small, small girl with nothing to attract him. No breasts, no hips, nothing to show the outside world, to show him, that I was becoming a woman.

I could not make him look into my eyes. I thought if he saw them, if he truly saw them, he would see how I felt and he would know me and he would feel like I did.

So I would sit under that tree, reading my poetry and stories and studying. When other boys tried to talk to me, I would ignore them. They did not exist, just as I did not exist for Joseph.

The boys’ school only went up to year eight, so Joseph and the boys who stayed in school, whose parents could keep them in school, had to go away to the city by the lake for secondary school. So Joseph stopped coming every day. I would see him sometimes in church, but always far from away. And then he stopped coming to church.

I imagined that he was with a girl—no, with a woman. I imagined that she had big hips and large breasts and the straightest hair or maybe she had beautiful braids and beautiful clothes and that she came from the city. I imagined that she had stretched herself well and would be very desirable for a man.

I imagined that he was walking with her along the lake, that he was taking her on a boat ride. That he hired a fisherman to take them across the lake to one of the islands. And I imagined that he was taking this girl to sit on the shore of the island and look at the sky, and that he was telling her how beautiful she was.

Eh, the silly things in girls’ heads.

“My silly Mary,” he told me later when I told him this. “I was walking with the cows and I was not reading poetry to anyone. Not even to myself. I was reading for mathematics.”

My dear Joseph studied and studied. His family was working to save money so they could send him to the university. He passed his entrance exams and his family and other families in the church put together the money to send him there. My family was not close to his so we didn’t help, but we knew some who did.

A boy from a nearby village going to university! This was reason for celebration.

But I was not part of the celebration. I was just the little girl with no breasts and no hips sitting under the tree reading her books and dreaming of a man who would take her on a boat to see the islands in Lake Kivu.

That was when we began to hear the stories. There had always been stories. About the lost men. The men who would drink their magic drinks to keep the bullets away, men who they said could see in the dark. Men who had a magic potion that made bullets turn into water when they hit their bodies. Men who could come at any time and attack those who didn’t help them, or who might attack even if you did help them. Men who did horrible things to women and girls, who took girls away to be their bush wives. But it always seemed so far away from us, so many mountains away, so many lakes and volcanoes away.

Now the stories were coming from closer. Then there were stories of the men, eh, the boys too, who had formed new armies that would attack anyone who was not from their group. We heard of things in villages nearby. Now it was only one mountain away. My parents would tell of these things in quiet voices in their bedroom when they thought we could not hear them, just as they thought we did not hear them when they made love.

I remember I heard my father say that he was glad that he did not have any sons, because these men, or the government soldiers, would come and take away his sons and turn them into killers.

These stories frightened me. I read more and more, read from my books about places far away, books that told stories that had nothing to do with the fighting and killing that was now just a village away. And when I was scared for our village, I would keep myself calm by thinking that it was good that Joseph would be going away to university in Uganda.

I believed that his books and all his studying would keep him safe. That would be his shield.

But at university, I thought, he would also be away from me. He would not see me turn into a woman.

And you know what happened? I was reading poetry and stories every day after school, every book I could find. I thought every book, every poem was written just for me, about me. I was amazed at these feelings put into words that these writers and poets wrote.

And then one day I felt the blood, the monthly blood. An auntie had told me about it. I knew something about it. But I was convinced at first that it was the poetry that brought it on. I like to think that poetry made me become a woman, eh. I like that thought.

I was happy when that happened. It meant that I was becoming a woman. I thought I could get my Joseph’s attention.

I could not stop worrying about what would happen when he left. Away at university, he would be around all those other girls, those city girls. They knew things we did not. They did things we did not. They were not like us respectable girls from Kivu—us plain, respectable girls.

I was sure that once he left our village and met those girls, he would not like us respectable girls from Kivu—us plain, respectable girls. I was sure that once he left our village and met those girls, he would never come back. And he would never be mine.

Gary Barker is author of the novels Luisa’s Last Words and The Afghan Vampires Book Club (with Michael Kaufman), and the non-fiction work Dying to Be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social Exclusion. He is founder of Promundo, an international organization that works to prevent violence, and cofounder of the global MenEngage Alliance. More information about the book can be found at www.garytbarker.com. He can be reached at g.barker@promundo.org.br.
In Lagos, largest city in Nigeria, domestic violence and sexual assault cases have been on the rise. Perpetrators often seem undeterred. Responding to the menace, in September the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team held a walk in both Ikeja and Festac Town, Lagos, as part of events marking Domestic Violence Month 2016.

The monthlong campaign had the themes, “Promoting positive masculinity” and “Men as flag bearers in the fight against sexual and gender based violence.”

Marchers walked from Ikeja down busy Awolowo Road to the governor’s office in Alausa Secretariat. Participants included students, workers, youth, business people and market leaders. Governor Akinwunmi Ambode addressed the marchers in his office and participated in the walk.

Governor Ambode said he was pleased with the initiative and commended the response team for organizing the walk, especially for “thinking differently” in its call to sensitize people to the issue, especially awakening men to promote masculinity in a positive way instead of using their homes to bully and perpetrate evil against women.

While emphasizing the rise of domestic violence, child trafficking, rape, and other heinous crimes against women, Governor Ambode challenged the public to be proactive and especially for men to be involved. He charged the Lagos State Task Force to track down offenders. The governor was said to have ordered the task force to apply necessary means available to track down offenders and also, in strong terms, mandated them to go all out and produce 11 culprits who will serve as scapegoats and a deterrent to others in the state.

(Editor’s Note: Efforts to reach the governor’s office seeking additional information about what to many appears to be a shaming approach to addressing the issue were unsuccessful.)

Previously, awareness and sensitivity drives have focused on women knowing their rights, standing firm, and protecting themselves. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team is pursuing a change in direction to effectively actualize and foster compliance toward women’s rights in the society. The head of the Directorate of Citizens’ Rights, Lagos State Ministry of Justice, and alternate chair of the response team, Omotilewa Ibirogba, emphasized the need for a change in direction.

“We have been fighting this criminality against children and women alone, although with visible results,” Ms. Ibirogba said. “Domestic violence, rape cases, sexual harassment including minors and aged women are on the increase. We can’t do it alone. That’s why we deemed it necessary now to involve men,” she said. “This year’s theme is focused on men to utilize their position to promote positive masculinity. We want men to be flag bearers in the fight against sexual and gender based violence in the society.” She urged anyone involved in perpetrating domestic or sexual abuse “to come to us for counseling.”

The month of awareness activities included a symposium on sexual and gender-based violence, a panel addressing Islamic perspectives on the issue, and ones on legal aspects, home and values.

A version of this article first appeared in Nigeria Today (http://www.nigeriatoday.ng/2016/09/produce-11-scapegoats-ambode-tasks-task-force-unit/).
The Long and Winding Road to Women’s Equality

By James A. Haught

With the possibility of America’s first woman president looming, it’s appropriate to consider the monumental struggle for gender equality.

For millennia, female inferiority was presumed, and mandated, in virtually every human culture. Through most of history, the brawn of heavier males gave them dominance, leaving women in lesser status—often mere possessions of men, confined to the home, rarely educated, with few rights.

Many were forced to wear veils or shrouds when outdoors, and they couldn’t go outside without a male relative escort. Fathers kept their daughters restricted, then chose husbands who became their new masters.

Sometimes the husbands also had several other wives. In a few cultures, unwanted baby girls were left on trash dumps to die.

In ancient Greece, women were kept indoors, rarely seen, while men performed all public functions. Women couldn’t attend schools or own property. A wife couldn’t attend male social events, even when her husband staged one at home. Aristotle believed in “natural slaves” and wrote that females are lesser creatures who must be cared for, as a farmer tends his livestock.

Up through medieval times, daughters were secondary, and inheritances went to firstborn sons. Male rule prevailed. Anthropologists have searched for exceptions, with little success—except possibly some Iroquois tribes in Canada, where women reportedly had some rights.

In the 1930s, the famed Margaret Mead thought she found a female-led group in New Guinea, but she later reversed her conclusion and wrote: “All the claims so glibly made about societies ruled by women are nonsense. We have no reason to believe that they ever existed…. Men everywhere have been in charge of running the show.”

As the Enlightenment blossomed in the 1700s, calls for women’s rights emerged. France’s Talleyrand wrote that only men required serious education—“Men are destined to live on the stage of the world”—and women should learn just to manage “the paternal home.” This infuriated England’s rebellious Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), who wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, contending that females have potential for full public life. (Her daughter married poet Percy Shelley and wrote Frankenstein.)

Reformer John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) wrote The Subjugation of Women in 1869 after his wife had written The Enfranchisement of Women, calling for a female right to vote. The husband protested: “There remain no legal slaves, save the mistress of every house.” As a member of England’s Parliament, Mill sought voting by women and became president of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage.

“The legal subordination of one sex to another is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement,” Mill wrote.

The Western world wrestled nearly a century before women finally won the right to vote.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) was the bright daughter of a New York state judge. Few schools admitted girls, so her father arranged for her to attend male-only Johnstown Academy.

The daughter grew outraged by laws forbidding women to own property or control their lives. She married an abolitionist lawyer and accompanied him to London for a world conference against slavery. Women weren’t allowed to talk; they sat silent behind a curtain while men spoke.

Back in America, she joined the Quakers to organize an 1848 assembly at Seneca Falls, New York, that launched the modern women’s equality movement. Frederick Douglass urged delegates to demand female suffrage. Stanton later joined Unitarians Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Ralph Waldo Emerson in a lifelong struggle for female rights.

The Civil War temporarily suppressed those efforts, but they flared anew when the Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, allowed black males to vote, but not females of any color. Demands snowballed for decades. Mark Twain gave a speech calling for female voting. Various suffrage groups took to the streets, some more militant than others. The National Woman’s Party led by Alice Paul was toughest, picketing outside the White House, enduring male jeers and physical assaults.

President Woodrow Wilson tried to ignore the clamor. When a Russian delegation visited the White House, pickets held banners saying, “America is not a democracy. Twenty million women are denied the right to vote.”

The protesters staged Washington parades that were attacked by mobs, sending some beaten victims to hospitals. Women pickets on sidewalks were hauled to jail on absurd charges of “obstructing traffic.” When they refused to pay fines, they were locked up with criminals. Paul was sentenced to seven months. She went on a hunger strike and was force-fed.

Finally, Wilson reversed position in 1918 and supported women’s right to vote. The next year Congress approved the Nineteenth Amendment, and it was ratified in 1920.

Around the world, various other nations followed, some more slowly than others. In Switzerland, women didn’t gain full ballot rights in all districts until 1991. Saudi Arabian women finally gained partial voting rights in December 2015.

Social struggles never really end. Western women still haven’t gained full equality. Their pay remains below the average for male workers. In some places, American women couldn’t serve on juries until the 1950s. Some Muslim and African cultures remain medieval, with women subjugated, with girls less educated, with so-called “honor killings” of daughters who besmirch a family’s puritanical standards, and with genital mutilation of girls to subdue their sex drive and keep them “pure” for husbands.

An Amnesty International report said:

“In the United States, a woman is raped every six minutes; a woman is battered every 15 seconds. In North Africa, 6,000 women are genetically mutilated each day. This year, more than 15,000 women will be sold into sexual slavery in China. Two hundred women in Bangladesh will be horribly disfigured when their spurned husbands or suitors burn them with acid. More than 7,000 women in India will be murdered by their families and in-laws in disputes over dowries. Violence against women is rooted in a global culture of discrimination which denies women equal rights with men and which legitimizes the appropriation of women’s bodies for individual gratification or political ends. Every year, violence in the home and the community devastates the lives of millions of women.”

Obviously, even with the possibility of a female U.S. president, the battle for full equality is far from over.
Aneecdotal evidence in Mozambique shows that there are men who perform care and household work believing they are helping their partners—this is grounded in evidence from pre- and post-evaluation courses of the programme “Men in the Kitchen.”

“Men in the Kitchen” is a program designed and implemented by Mozambique’s Men for Change organization Rede HOPE M (http://www.hopem.org.mz/) which seeks to challenge power relations by getting men to question hegemonic masculinities using a gender transformative approach. The course has trained more than 200 men since its inception in 2014. Alongside “Men in the Kitchen,” the men are trained in childcare through the organization’s efforts on behalf of sexual reproductive and health rights.

The men who participate in the courses say they are more than interested in gender-progressive activities within the household but are not exactly comfortable expressing such behavior publicly due to societal pressure.

Incidentally, when the men come in to hone their skills, they believe they are doing so in order to better “help” their partners. It is after going through the theoretical component of the programs that they realize that as men doing care and household work, they are not helping but sharing the house care workload.

This notion is dispelled in the courses. Rather, they should in fact increase their workload within the household in order to promote gender equality. The courses also encourage them to develop their abilities in the household and make choices to continue doing the work without regard to societal pressure, stereotypes and prejudices, as well as lead them to realize that it is their responsibility to work in the household as full partners.

Perhaps the most appealing feature of male involvement in gender promotion is that men themselves stand to gain much from a gender-equal society. However, this is still a tough sell for most men brought up in a society in which patriarchy still reigns supreme—not only is swimming against the patriarchal tide socially costly but it also requires a support network which is still incipient.

Paradoxically, the people who should really be the happier from the toils of their menfolk in care and household work seem to be ambivalent. When consulted months after taking part in the courses, a larger group of men said that their partners saw their newfound enthusiasm for engaging in care work as an invasion of their private space. A smaller group reported that their womenfolk were happy to see the transformation.

But worryingly, a third group said that their partners were questioning their manhood, and rather than welcoming the change, they started displaying hegemonic masculinity traits—maybe this is because the only reference women have of “leadership” are men who are constrained by the ossified edifice of patriarchy.

What the evaluations suggest is that there is a need for the implementation of gender-synchronized approaches in order to ensure that their partners encourage them to share the workload rather than question their manhood or even belittle them.

It is crucial to put in place strategies for the creation of an enabling environment for men who seek to break away from the yoke of patriarchy. Such spaces could simply be clubhouses where men could go and mingle with other like-minded men, as well as share their experiences.

That is likely to ensure that more and more not only men perform care and household work but do so in the knowledge that their work is appreciated by their partners and society, and that they are not helpers but partners who want to achieve gender equality in all aspects of the concept.

Bayano Valy is the Advocacy, Research and Network Program Manager for Rede HOPEM and a proudly avowed feminist. In his previous life he worked as a journalist tackling a plethora of issues with a focus on politics, economics, gender and development.
Will Women Resist More Caregiving by Men?

By Oswaldo Montoya

Working with men to transform patriarchal relations with women is complex, as Bayano Valy’s article on the facing page reveals. In its intervention, “Men in the Kitchen,” Rede HOPEM (http://www.hopem.org.mz/) of Mozambique combines skill building related to domestic chores and attitudinal change, in turn related to gender and masculinity, so that doing care work is not seen by men merely as supporting women but as a joint responsibility. HOPEM is enabling men to move from a “helping out” mentality to equal sharing of caregiving work in an effort to challenge power relations among genders.

Bayano points out the apparent contradictory responses from most women when their male partners engaged in care work. Some women felt “an invasion of their private space,” he reports; others even questioned their partners’ manhood as a result of their performing domestic work.

The solution proposed is to engage women in gender work as well, using gender-synchronized approaches. I agree but think we need to dig deeper about why men encounter resistance from women when they increase their involvement in house care work. Are we really challenging power relations when we support men assuming 50 percent of care work? Is it really gender transformative when men discard the helping-out mentality and fully embrace care work? My hypothesis is we may be both challenging and not challenging these power relations.

Patriarchy has a tremendous capacity to re-accommodate in times of gender-roles change. In some contexts, the fact that men do care work in similar amounts as women may not necessarily equalize power among them. Actually, it may exacerbate power differentials, with men gaining more legitimacy and self-sufficiency. Men’s egos can become further inflated by such an “I can do it all by myself” mentality, thus relegating women to more marginalized positions.

We not only have to think about sensitizing women to the need to appreciate, and not feel threatened by, men’s involvement in care work, we also need to keep raising awareness among men in relation to the meanings attached to their new domestic practices. Men should not be in competition with women about who is more capable or who does more care work. We needn’t engage in a patriarchal sense of rivalry. If we do, there is a greater chance that women will resist our efforts, and will regard them as an invasion.

In addition to working with men on these deeper meanings, it is important that our work with men also enables them to support women’s economic empowerment and other forms of empowerment that expands their horizons. If projects focused on changing men lack efforts to empower women, then women may indeed resist changes to the domestic gender order, seeing in the kitchen one of their few spaces of sovereignty.
This is a story about storytelling. In particular it’s about the story you are told if it is determined at the time of your birth—on the basis of visual inspection of your baby groin—that you should grow up to be a boy and then someday a man.

Now, I know that not everyone is told this story as their story. But what I’m going to say is for the sake of everyone, because everyone has a stake in understanding the story.

If you are someone who was told this story, you were not only told it; you were taught to tell it to yourself, and you were taught to tell it to others. And if you learned the story the way it is supposed to be learned, in your body and brain, you will need to tell it somehow to yourself and to others over and over for the rest of your life.

The story doesn’t happen in a vacuum; it’s not yours alone to tell. It’s being told all around you almost everywhere almost all the time. Hard to avoid it, actually. But it’s just a story. And as such it can be revised or rewritten or retold another way or replaced by a different story altogether.

I’m talking about the story that says you can only be who you are supposed to be by always making certain that you’re not who you are not supposed to be.

By “making certain,” I mean: so there’s absolutely no confusion, in your mind or anyone else’s. And by “who you’re not supposed to be,” I mean—well, you might think it’s everyone whose baby groin inspection didn’t entitle them to tell the story that you get to tell. And you might think that your story—the story you were taught to tell yourself all the time so there’s no mistaking it—is all about letting everyone know how your baby groin inspection turned out. Simple as that.

Except that’s not what the story is about. That’s not the reason your story gets told.

Because your story is about who you must be and must not be in an either/or identity system. You’re supposed to grow up to be a man, a real man, a man who knows he’s a man and a man everybody takes to be a man. That’s your job in life. Your story says so. Stories told all around you say so. And if you don’t cut it, if you don’t measure up, if you fail to leave absolutely no doubt in your own mind and in the mind of everyone else, then you’re not only not a real man. You’re not just a wannabe man. You’re not even someone who’s having an off
If you’re not a real man, you’re less than nobody.

There may be names you will be called. There may be bullying done to you. There may be lots and lots of bad consequences that will befall you if you fail at being a real man. But the worst, the very worst, is what the story promises will happen. The story that everyone who mocks you is telling you by mocking you. The story everyone who beats up on you is telling you by beating up on you. The story you’ve been taught to believe deep down inside: If you’re not a real man, you’re less than nobody.

Now, you may have noticed there’s a lot of anxiety in the world about that little plot twist in the story. Panicky people trying to tell the story convincingly to themselves and others, asserting it by any means necessary. Rage, aggression, violence—those are some common methods. Sexual assault is right up there, too; and the reason it’s so popular is that sexual assault tells the story unmistakably, incontrovertibly, flesh to flesh, victor to victim. Nothing unclear or vague about it. Story told. Identity decisively and definitionally declared and defended. End of story.

Except of course it’s not the end of the story. Belief in the either/or identity system persists, requiring that the story be told, again and again. And so the story lives on, claiming and maiming life after life.

I grew up learning to tell that story. I tried telling it by teasing and provoking my younger sister. Meanwhile older bigger boys in the neighborhood were telling it by teasing and tormenting me. I didn’t make the connection then between my storytelling and theirs. All I knew was that compared with others I saw telling the story, I was never really good at it, which made me feel really bad about myself: Like yikes, “I’m not a real-enough boy!”, then later “I’m not a real-enough man!” Oh, sure, I had interests and achievements, friends and family who liked and supported and accepted me. But I always knew deep inside that my identity, the core of my being, was riding on how well I could tell that story.

This is not, by the way, merely one special snowflake’s identity anxiety. As you may have noticed, it goes on around the globe, like a snowfall everywhere.

Near the end of my twenties, two things happened that made me think about that story differently from the way I learned to think about it growing up. One is that I became aware of the battering and raping that others were doing to make that story true, to make it feel real, to make it seem to themselves and others to be an actual fact about who they were: real men, not less than nobody. And becoming aware of all that human harm really troubled me. I knew exactly what story they were telling. I recognized it. I knew I had tried to tell it too—not with physical violence but in other ways, and there are plenty of other ways. Now for the first time I realized I did not want that story to be mine.

And the other thing that happened in my life is that I began to understand that the story I thought I needed to tell is not true. The either/or identity system is itself a made-up story. Our species is actually multisexed, meaning that there are as many sexes as there are people. The sex binary is BS. Besides, guess what? Belief in the sex binary is not about baby groin inspections or anything else biological. It’s about a culturally transmitted hierarchical sociopolitical class system driven by a vast collective identity panic induced by...a story. The same story that billions have been taught to tell well or else: To not be less than nobody, treat someone else as nobody instead.

A lot of good people have been trying very conscientiously to tell that story differently. Trying to modify it, tweak it, trying to tell the story so that they can make it be true about themselves, feel real to themselves, make it seem to themselves and others to be an actual fact about who they are—just with not hurting anyone, or putting anyone down, or harassing anyone, or insulting anyone, or laughing at anyone’s expense, or bullying anyone, or impoverishing anyone, or sexually assaulting anyone, or offering anyone. Any hey, let’s say these people figure out a way for themselves to tell the story that’s perfectly victim-free. No one ever has to pay a penalty so these people can have their identity. It’s simply never ever in doubt. Like, if their identity is ever impugned, they don’t get humiliated; they don’t sulk. Or if their identity is ever challenged, they shrug it off, they don’t snap back. These perfectly conscientious storytelling people may truly be special snowflakes, but for argument’s sake let’s say it’s theoretically possible to tell the story and do no harm doing so and be totally okay with that all the time. Well, so what then? Really, so what?

Does that supplant the story that gazillions of people are still driven to tell? Does that even edit or redact it such that the story gets better, bit by bit, one storyteller at a time? How would that work, exactly? Some perfect storytellers going around saying, “I can tell the story better than you other guys”? How is that a different story? It’s still the same story inside an insidious either/or identity system. It might seem superficially new and improved, and it might make you appear to be a quite nice guy. But sometimes, sometimes, it doesn’t quell the identity anxiety that the story has imprinted onto your autonomic nervous system and burned into your brain and that can be triggered in an instant and erupt in rage or whatever so someone has to pay the penalty to rescue your identity from ignominy. You know those times when nice guys turn out to be not nice? That’s the story still being told.

Here’s what I think. The story won’t stop being told in damaging ways until we give up the story altogether. It’s a story that exists solely so that the binary sex hierarchy will persist. The binary sex hierarchy has got to go. The story that keeps us believing in it has got to go.

We have to go beyond the binary, and live outside it in our lives, and raise children untrapped by it. And if we do sexual assault prevention and education work we must do so without reifying it, and honor in solidarity those survivors who are not bound by it, and stop enabling the binary-based identity anxiety of bystanders, like for gosh sakes stop saying,“real men don’t rape,” because raping is exactly what the story says will assert that one is a real man.

We need to tell a completely different story. A story about multiplicity and individuality. A story about community and conscience. A story about being a good human. A story about how nobody is a nobody and everybody is somebody. As an evolving, progressing species, we must.

(This article was adapted from a panel presentation the author gave, “Binary Assumptions About Gender in Sexual Violence,” at the International Summit to End Sexual Violence at Fordham University in New York. Copyright © 2016 by John Stoltenberg.)
It’s been four years since James Holmes murdered 12 people and injured 70 more in a mass shooting on July 20, 2012, in a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. Acting alone, he was immediately declared by pundits and public alike to be mentally ill. A year earlier, in January 2011, Jared Lee Loughner opened fire at a political rally in a parking lot in suburban Tucson, killing six and wounding, among others, then U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. Again, acting alone. Again, clearly mentally ill. On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza murdered 20 first graders and six adults (and his mother) in Newtown, Connecticut, before taking his own life. Again, acting alone, he was also assumed to have been mentally ill. The next year, in September 2013, military contractor Aaron Alexis killed 12 and injured four at the Washington Navy Yard. Again acting alone, he was said to have been delusional, and heard voices from aliens (the extraterrestrial kind). Even when Dylann Roof murdered nine African-American churchgoers at a prayer meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, 2015, and proclaimed his actions as a call to political revolution, commentators worried about his mental health and wondered why no one had intervened.

This begs a somewhat different question: why are there so many mentally ill people walking around our nation armed with assault weapons in the first place? Hint: one reason is that since the Reagan-era policy to deinstitutionalize the mentally ill, our prisons have become our new mental hospitals. Another reason might be our national allergy toward sensible gun control—for which the National Rifle Association is the chief pollinator.

But it also begs for comparison. In November 2009, Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist, murdered 13 and wounded 32 in Fort Hood, Texas. Although he acted alone, commentators worried that this was the act of a terrorist. And in June 2016 when Omar Mateen, acting alone, murdered 49 and wounded 53 more in the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, media quickly declared it a terrorist attack before they backpedaled furiously when they realized that it was an anti-gay hate crime with religious overtones and more than a hint of closeted self-loathing. And a month later, when Micah Xavier Thompson, acting alone, murdered five police officers in Dallas, commentators went as far as to announce a coming race war. (Indeed, the New York Post, never a beacon of measured restraint, blared “Civil War!” as its headline the next day.)

This is how racism works. It’s not intentional; it’s just how we are taught to see. When white people, acting alone, commit mass murder, we disaggregate, assuming individual pathology. They must have been crazy. When people of color, acting alone, commit mass murder, we aggregate, assuming that it is part of a larger
pattern among “those people.” Those people are declaring war. (Of course, just the fact that we even have so many mass murderers that we are able to see such patterns, surely the only country in the world, should alone be enough to inspire legislators to actually do something.) Micah Johnson’s murderous rampage was disturbed, tragic, horrifying—but it was less a part of a larger pattern than Dylann Roof’s deliberate efforts to ignite a race war.

Even the “pattern” of police officers’ murders of unarmed black men is attributed not to some systematic pattern of a ruthless occupying army, but rather to the bad actions of rogue cops who behaved badly (and have yet to be convicted of any crime). Consider: in 2015, 990 people were shot dead by the police in the United States—nearly double the entire homicide count in Britain (573).

Sometimes, the deranged actions of lone gunman are correctly perceived as both mental instability and distorted political vision, as in Nidal Hasan’s drift toward jihadism before the Fort Hood massacre. But most often, we see patterns among the marginalized, and random individual psychopathology among the majority.

Whatever their motivations—real or imagined—it is necessary to see these terrible crimes as the product of mental illness. But there are two other commonalities among all these cases, and they may also contribute to the carnage we must confront every week.

First, access to assault weapons. Nowhere on earth are there more weapons of mass assault in so many hands as in the United States. And nowhere is the rate of mass shootings higher. You think there’s a relationship? These aren’t hunting rifles as in Finland or military issue rifles as in Switzerland (where you keep your gun after military service). It’s more that America is increasingly looking like a military installation. The militarization of American culture is more than a bunch of insecure men driving Hummers and dreaming in testosterone; it’s the fact that our local domestic police forces are hard to distinguish from armies, either those attacking or defending our communities. Seeing these militarized police gives the impression that there are enemies within as well as without.

But it cannot just be guns. Guns don’t kill people; men with guns kill people. After all, women have just as much access to those weapons as men do, but they just don’t seem to take out their grievances in the same way that men do. And there are just as many mentally ill women out there, but they don’t seem to become mass murderers, do they? We have to pay attention to gender—to masculinity. White or black, self-professed political revolutionaries or deranged mentally ill (or both), they are all male. All the shooters and virtually all the police. About nine in 10 murderers are men and about 98 percent of mass murderers are men. And when the police murder someone—it’s close to 100 percent male. Black men’s lives matter.

What does masculinity have to do with these horrific events? Some part might be that violence is the way men are taught to deal with grievances, injuries and humiliation. From boys on a playground, taunting each other, daring the other to “start something” so that we can “finish it,” we are taught that violence is the way to right a wrong, to redress an injury. Real men don’t get mad—or ashamed or humiliated—they get even.

In my study of men who murdered their spouses or those men who “went postal” and opened fire in their workplaces, I found that most experienced what I called “aggrieved entitlement.” Being fired, or being disrespected by their spouses was so humiliating that they felt they needed to restore their position by violence.

Some of the mass murderers who have splashed their rage on America’s consciousness may well have felt aggrieved, denied something to which they felt entitled: a job, respect, something else. And perhaps even those rogue police officers may have overreacted when they murdered unarmed black men who dared to disrespect their authority. This toxic brew of entitlement and humiliation is what legitimated redress through violence, and access to guns certainly contributes to our nation’s near-constant state of grieving. This is not to say, of course, that by understanding gender we can “explain” these rampage murders. But along with our reckoning on other crucial factors, we most assuredly cannot fully explain these horrific events without considering it.

**Voice Male** contributing editor Michael Kimmel is executive director of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities and Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University in New York and the author or editor of a number of books on men and masculinities, including Angry White Men.
In the wake of the tragic killings of two black men by police in July, Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, librarians around the country have been looking for ways to support and educate their communities. Chelsea Couillard-Smith, a librarian for Hennepin County (Minnesota) Library, created a #BlackLivesMatter booklist for teens.

The idea for the booklist began as Couillard-Smith, who shares a juvenile title on Twitter every week for #FridayReads, thought about recent events and which books might provide a starting point for reflection and conversation. “I really wanted to promote both How It Went Down by Kekla Magoon and All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely. It quickly evolved into this list. I selected a small number of titles that I thought would be good conversation starters for teens engaged in discussions about race and justice,” she explained.

Couillard-Smith was inspired by several other library resource lists and guides. “There are many great resources that I drew on for ideas including the Oakland Public Library’s Black Lives Matter Resource series,” she says (http://oaklandlibrary.org/blogs/from-main-library/listen-learn-participate-blacklivesmatter-resource-series).

As for the impact of the #BlackLivesMatter booklist? Couillard-Smith says, “If it gets these books into the hands of a few more teen or adult readers…I’ll be happy.”

Teens are naturally curious about current events and their roles as emerging citizens. Including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry titles, the list offers a great starting point for discussions of race, justice, and privilege. The list is reprinted with permission of Hennepin County Library.

**How It Went Down**
*By Kekla Magoon*
Told through multiple perspectives, this teen novel examines the shooting of an African American teen by a white man. Complex and thought provoking, it highlights the weaknesses inherent in eyewitness accounts.

**All American Boys**
*By Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely*
Jointly written by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely, this teen novel follows the experiences of Rashad, an African American teen savagely beaten by a police officer, and Quinn, a white teen who witnessed the attack. As lines are drawn in the community and at school, both teens struggle to make sense of the larger societal forces shaping their lives.

**Monster**
*By Walter Dean Myers*
In this teen novel, an African American 16-year-old on trial as an accessory to murder recounts the path that led him into trouble. As small moral decisions become gateways to larger problems, readers will wrestle with questions of innocence and culpability that are never clearly answered.
A WREATH FOR EMMETT TILL

BY MARILYN NELSON
In this heroic crown of sonnets, Nelson asks readers to bear witness to the brutal murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, lynched in 1955 for allegedly whistling at a white woman. The questions raised about our country’s racial history still resonate, and provide much for readers to discuss in the context of current events.

WE TROUBLED THE WATERS
Poems by Ntozake Shange, illus. by Rod Brown
This collection of poems about the civil rights movement examines both well-known historical figures and the everyday folks living under racial oppression. While often uplifting and triumphant, Shange is nonetheless honest about the strides yet to be made.

BLACK LIVES MATTER
BY SUE BRADFORD EDWARDS
This nonfiction book for teens examines a number of recent high-profile cases of police brutality and racial profiling, placing them in historical context and analyzing a wide range of viewpoints.

CLAUDETTE COLVIN: TWICE TOWARD JUSTICE
BY PHILLIP M. HOOSE
This juvenile biography of African American teen Claudette Colvin examines the role she played in helping to integrate Montgomery’s bus system during the civil rights movement. An inspiring role model of activism for teens, Colvin’s story also highlights the machinery behind political movements and the interconnected communities that create and sustain change.

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER: THE TRUE STORY OF THE EMMETT TILL CASE
BY CHRIS CROWE
A juvenile nonfiction account of the horrific murder of 14-year-old Till in 1955 and the way it galvanized the civil rights movement in America. Full of primary source material, including haunting images of the victim and his killers, it will resonate with teens eager to discuss contemporary parallels.

NO CHOIRBOY: MURDER, VIOLENCE, AND TEENAGERS ON DEATH ROW
BY SUSAN KUKLIN
This nonfiction collection for teens features the real experiences of teenage convicts on death row. Incorporating the voices of their families, victims, and those involved in their cases, it provides a complex view of the legal system and raises important questions about justice and racial equality in America.

MARCH: BOOK ONE
BY JOHN LEWIS AND ANDREW AYDIN, illus. by NATE POWELL
This memoir for teens and adults in graphic novel format begins the inspiring story of Congressman John Lewis, who was on the front lines of the civil rights movement, beginning as a teenager.

A GOOD TIME FOR THE TRUTH: RACE IN MINNESOTA
EDITED BY SUN YUNG SHIN
A diverse collection of authors, educators, and artists share essays on their experiences of being “other” in Minnesota, and the current state of race in an increasingly diverse midwestern landscape. Written for adults, it’s sure to spark discussions among teen readers, too.

BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME
BY TA-NEHISI COATES
Accessible to both teen and adult readers, Coates’s letter to his son highlights the long history of brutality against African Americans in the United States, and reveals the hopes and fears a father of color feels for his child.

Kiera Parrott is the reviews director for School Library Journal and Library Journal and a former children’s librarian. Her favorite books are ones that make her cry—or snort—on public transportation.
**Theater**

**Mary V vs. Henry V? When Gender Struggles Are Center Stage**

In *Mary V*, a feminist exploration of Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, women battle for control of a production of *Henry V*. Led by their hero Mary, the play explores the ways in which the division between femininity and masculinity ultimately yields destruction for both sexes, and argues that peace and understanding of gender are preferable to bias and conflict. Nietzsche’s concept of “the abyss gaze[ing] back” and faithfulness to one’s ideals is a prominent theme. Written by Rebekah Carrow and co-directed by Pati Amoroso and Yonatan Weinstein, *Mary V* has been described as a genderbending exploration of Shakespeare’s *Henry V*.

The plot revolves around a production of *Henry V*, being performed by a traditional male cast. They are challenged by an all-female cast, led by Mary. Neither side is willing to give up their rights to perform the play. The result is a gender tug of war—or cast warfare.

Mary finds herself becoming more like her rival Henry, sacrificing her feminine qualities to assure victory. When a battle erupts and her friends are put in mortal danger, Mary has to decide whether she will allow power to corrupt who she is. Examining burning moral questions is key if Mary's troupe is to prove triumphant.

The looming moral question at the core of the play is inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s observation that “Whoever fights a monster should see to it that in the process [s/]he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.”

Mary and her band of sisters initially stand firm in their belief that a more genderdiverse rendition of Shakespeare’s play is essential. However, under the scrutiny of the remote, eerily dominant director, Mary finds herself becoming more masculine and aggressive, and the role of king begins to alter her sense of morality and her very being.

The male characters find themselves falling into similar traps as their dedication to defeating women whom they view as threatening leads them down a dark path.

The feminist-inspired play was performed in New York in late August and September as part of the Theatre for the New City’s Dream Up Festival.

*Mary V* is a commentary on the danger of the masculine/feminine binary. Both sides are separated by a wall erected in the center of the stage, an overly obvious symbol of the artificial constraints society erects between people who identify as male and female. It is only after the wall is broken down and the battle fought that true peace can be realized. The result yields a production of an invigorated version of Shakespeare’s classic with both men and women in the lead roles.

The role of Mary was played by the playwright, Rebekah Carrow. Carrow, a recent graduate of the Atlantic Acting Studio Evening Conservatory, spent the past year writing *Mary V*. Carrow's goal is to expand “femininity on the American stage” and she is particularly interested in exploring themes of gender roles and feminism in her work.

Her past acting credits include the roles of Mercutio in *Juliet & Her Romeo*, Nurse/Teacher in *B in Oblivion*, and Gigi in *231*. *Mary V* is Carrow’s first play.
Every two minutes a U.S. resident is sexually assaulted. One out of every six women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. Ages 12–34 are the highest risk years for rape and sexual assault. Ninety percent of all rape victims are female. Approximately 70 percent of rape and sexual assault victims experience moderate to severe distress, a larger percentage than for any other violent crime.

—Statistics supplied by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

There are many helpful resources available to victims of sexual trauma, but there is little information about how to move beyond the act of survival. Animal Mineral Press—a new publishing company focusing on books promoting healthy aspects of sex, sexuality and relationships—hopes to change that with the release of its premiere title, Making Out Like a Virgin: Sex, Desire & Intimacy After Sexual Trauma.

Editors Catriona McHardy and Cathy Plourde provide an inspiring, moving collection of personal essays that detail how writers from six countries have moved beyond merely surviving sexual trauma to unapologetically discovering sexually and emotionally thriving lives. These survivors don’t recount their individual traumas. Instead, they reveal how they reclaimed their bodies and their sexual desire. By telling their stories, they share their strength and the successes found in between the seismic shifts and intimate moments, hopefully inspiring others while furthering their own healing. Making Out Like a Virgin reflects the idea of a rich and full life after trauma—something that for some can be difficult to imagine. Reclaiming life after trauma means relearning to think about sexuality in ways that are affirming and safe.

McHardy and Plourde looked for contributors who explore their sexuality as exciting and lustful, with desire and intimacy that is open and mutual. The narratives are an invitation for survivors who have been wounded to try again—to love your body, and to say it is possible to get back to a joyful sensual self. The anthology features 17 contributors: female, male, and transgender, ranging from their mid-20s to late 60s. They come from Dubai, Cairo, Dublin, Toronto, Melbourne, and across the United States.

Expect no “ten secrets” or “best tips” because there aren’t any. There are, though, common threads that unite the contributors as people who have retrieved and embraced feelings for lustful sex, desire, and intimacy. Each challenges the notion that survivors of sexual violence are no longer “supposed” to be sexual beings. They refuse to be shamed or pitied; reject being treated as damaged goods. Instead, they define what is expected and acceptable for survivors after trauma on their own terms.

Simultaneously published as a paperback, audio and eBook, Making Out Like a Virgin is for anyone who has been affected by sexual violence: survivors, their loved ones, health practitioners, educators, and social scientists. The book breaks through walls of silence and myth so readers can see and hear from those who have found a way through.
Resources for Changing Men

A wide-ranging (but by no means exhaustive) listing of organizations engaged in profeminist men’s work. Know of an organization that should be listed here? Email relevant information to us at info@voicemalemagazine.org.

For Young Men

Advocates for Youth
Helps young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. www.advocatesforyouth.org

Amplify Your Voice
A youth-driven community working for social change. www.amplifyyourvoice.org

Boys to Men
Initiation weekends and follow-up mentoring for boys 12-17 to guide them on their journey to manhood. www.boys2men.org

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
Provides comprehensive, holistic and long-term support and rites of passage programming to youth ages 8-22. www.brotherhood-sistersol.org

Men As Peacemakers
Engages individuals/communities in strategies to prevent violence against women and children. menaspeacemakers.org

YCteen Magazine
A magazine written by New York City teens that helps marginalized youth reach their full potential through reading and writing. www.ycteenmag.org

On Masculinity

A Men’s Project
Extensive database of resources related to Men and Boys in N. America seeking gender justice and a more just world. www.amensproject.com/

American Men’s Studies Association
Advancing the critical study of men and masculinities. mensstudies.org

Mankind Project
New Warrior training weekends. www.mkp.org

Masculinidades
Pro-feminist blog about the anthropology of masculinity. In Spanish. masculinidades.wordpress.com

The Men’s Story Project
Resources for creating public dialogue about masculinities through local storytelling and arts. www.mensstoryproject.org

Menstuff: The National Men’s Resource
National clearinghouse of information and resources for men. www.menstuff.org

XY
www.xyonline.net
Profeminist men’s web links (over 500 links): www.xyonline.net/links.shtml
Profeminist men’s politics, frequently asked questions: www.xyonline.net/misc/pfaqm.html
Profeminist e-mail list: www.xyonline.net/misc/profm.html
Homophobia and masculinities among young men: www.xyonline.net/misc/homophobia.html

For Men of Color

100 Black Men of America, Inc.
Chapters around the U.S. working on youth development and economic empowerment in the African American community. www.100blackmen.org

Concerned Black Men
A national organization providing mentors and programs that fill the void of positive black role models and provide opportunities for academic and career enrichment. www.cbmnational.org

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
Working to enhance society’s understanding of and ability to end violence in the African-American community. www.idvac.org

National Compadres Network
Reinforcing the positive involvement of Latino males in their lives, families, communities, and society. www.nationalcompadresnetwork.com

National Latino Network for Healthy Families and Communities
A project of Casa de Esperanza and a national institute on domestic violence focusing on Latin communities. www.nationallatinonetwork.org

For Fathers

Collaborative Divorce
www.collaborativealternatives.com
www.collaboratedivorce.com
www.collaborativepractice.com
www.nocourtdivorce.com

Dad Man
Consulting, training, speaking about fathers and father figures as a vital family resource. www.thedadman.com

Dads and Daughters
A blog of thoughts and reflections on father-daughter relationships by Joe Kelly. dadsanddaughters.blogspot.com

Feminist Fathers
Resources for dads seeking to fully realize human beings aware of how gender socialization affects parenting and children. www.feministfatherhood.com

National Fatherhood Initiative
Organization improve the well-being of children through the promotion of responsible, engaged fatherhood. www.fatherhood.org

National Latino Fatherhood & Family Institute
Addresses the needs of Latino communities by focusing on positive Latino identity while addressing issues faced by Latino fathers, families, and communities. www.nlffi.org

Men’s Health

American Journal of Men’s Health
A peer-reviewed quarterly resource for information regarding men’s health and illness. jmh.sagepub.com

International Society for Men’s Health
Prevention campaigns and health initiatives promoting men’s health. www.ismhm.org

Malecare
Volunteer men’s cancer support group and advocacy national nonprofit organization providing resources in multiple languages. malecare.org

Men’s Health Network
National organization promoting men’s health. www.menshealthnetwork.org

Prostate Health Guide
Offers a guide to the prostate and various conditions that can affect men’s health. www.prostatehealthguide.com

World Health Organization HIV/AIDS
Provides evidence-based, technical support for comprehensive and sustainable responses to HIV/AIDS. www.who.int/hiv/en/

Male Survivors of Sexual Assault

1in6
Provides resources for male sexual abuse survivors and their family members, friends, and partners. 1in6.org

Black Sexual Abuse Survivors
A national online support system for African-Americans. www.blacksurvivors.org/home.html

MaleSurvivor
National organization overcoming sexual victimization of boys and men. www.malesurvivor.org

Men Thriving
A peer-resource offered to male survivors by male survivors. www.mentriving.org/forum

Overcoming Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

1in4: The Men’s Program
Offers workshops that educate men in women’s recovery and lowers men’s rape myth acceptance and self-reported likelihood of raping. www.1in4nourusa.org/themensprogram.php

A Call to Men
Trainings and conferences on ending violence against women. www.acalltomen.org

EMERGE
Counseling and education to stop domestic violence; comprehensive batterers’ services. www.emergedv.com

Futures Without Violence
Working to end violence against women globally; programs for boys, men and fathers. www.futureswithoutviolence.org

Healthy Dating
Sexual Assault Prevention. www.canikissyou.com

Hollaback
A movement to end street harassment powered by a network of local activists around the world. Uses smartphones to document, map and share incidents of street harassment. www.hollaback.org

Men Against Sexual Violence
Men working in the struggle to end sexual violence. www.menagainstsexualviolence.org

Men Against Violence
Yahoo email list. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/menagainstviolence

Men Can Stop Rape
Washington, D.C.-based national advocacy and training organization mobilizing male youth to prevent violence against women. www.mencanstoprape.org
Mending the Sacred Hoop
Works to end violence against Native American women and to strengthen the voice and vision of Native peoples
www.mshoop.com

MenEngage Alliance
An international alliance promoting boys’ and men’s support for gender equality
www.menengage.org

Men’s Initiative for Jane Doe, Inc.
Statewide Massachusetts effort coordinating men’s anti-violence activities
www.mijd.org

Men’s Nonviolence Project
Texas Council on Family Violence
http://www.tcfv.org/education/mnp.html

Men Stopping Violence
Atlanta-based organization working to end violence against women, focusing on stopping battering, and ending rape and incest
www.menstoppingviolence.org

Mentors in Violence Prevention
Gender violence prevention education and training by Jackson Katz
www.mvnational.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Provides a coordinated community response to domestic violence
www.ncadv.org

National Resource Center on Violence Against Women
An online collection of searchable materials and resources on domestic violence, sexual violence, and related issues
www.ncadv.org

National Resource Center on Violence Against Women (NSVRC)
A national information and resource hub relating to all aspects of sexual violence
www.nsve.org

PreventConnect
Uses online media to build community among people engaged in efforts to prevent sexual assault and relationship violence
http://preventconnect.org/

Promundo
Brazilian NGO seeking to promote gender equality and end violence against women, children, and youth
www.promundo.org.br/en

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
A national anti-sexual assault organization
www.rainn.org

Sexual Violence Research Initiative
Works to raise awareness of sexual violence and promotes research on sexual violence as a public health issue.
http://www.svi.org/about.htm

Stop Porn Culture
A group for those willing to question and fight against pornography and porn culture
stoppornculture.org/home/

Students Active For Ending Rape
Organization dedicated to fighting sexual violence and rape culture by empowering student-led campaigns to reform college sexual assault policies
www.safercampus.org

V Day
Global movement to end violence against women and girls, including V-men, male activists in the movement
www.vday.org

White Ribbon Campaign
International men’s campaigns decrying violence against women
www.whiteribbon.ca

LGBTQIA Resources

Ambiente Joven
An advocacy project and LGBTQ community for Spanish-speaking LGBTQ youth
www.ambientejoven.org

Beyond Masculinity
Collection of essays by queer men on gender and politics
http://beyondmasculinity.com

COLAGE
National movement of people with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer parent working toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy
www.colage.org

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)
Works to combat homophobia and discrimination in television, film, music and all media outlets
www.glaad.org

GLBTQ Domestic Violence Project
Resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer men and women who are survivors of sexual or domestic violence through direct services, education, and advocacy
http://www.glbtqdv.org

Hear My Voice
Educates and engages young people in the LGBTQ community to create safe and healthy relationships, and connect victims of dating abuse to help and legal services.
hearmyvoice.breakthecycle.org

Human Rights Campaign
Largest GLBT political group in the country
www.hrc.org

Interpride
Clearinghouse for information on pride events worldwide
www.interpride.net

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
National progressive political and advocacy group
www.ngltf.org

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
Resource center aimed at improving the quality of service and support offered to LGBT older adults
www.lgbtagingcenter.org

Oasis Magazine
A writing community for queer and questioning youth
www.oasisjournals.com/magazine

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Promotes the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ persons and their parents, friends, and families
www.pflag.org

Straight Spouse Network
Provides counseling, psychotherapy, couples and families on domestic violence and anger management, and explorations of gender and sexuality
http://www.straightspousenetwork.org

Transgender Resources
Dedicated to educating those unfamiliar with or curious to learn more about the transgender community
www.transgender.org

MEN’S CENTERS

Austin Men’s Center – Austin, TX
Provides counseling, psychotherapy, and classes helping men with their lives, relationships, health, and careers
austinmenscenter.com

Males Advocating for Change
– Worcester, MA
Center with groups and services supporting men and challenging men’s violence
www.menscenter.org

Texas Council on Family Violence
http://www.tcfv.org/education/mnp.html

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austinmenscenter.com

Males Advocating for Change
– Worcester, MA
Center with groups and services supporting men and challenging men’s violence
www.menscenter.org

http://www.malesadvocatingchange.org/

Men’s Resource Center of Philadelphia
Workshops to help men address anger management, domestic violence, and intimacy issues.
http://www.themensresourcecenter.org

Men’s Resource Center of West Michigan – West Michigan Consultations and training in helping men develop their full humanity, create respectful and loving relationships, and caring and safe communities
www.menscenter.org

MERGE for Equality (Men Embracing their Role in Gender Equality) – Northampton, MA
Advances the beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors that allow men and boys to be their authentic selves and embrace their role in ensuring gender equality. Works with individuals, groups, and communities across the globe in alliance with girls, women, and all marginalized people
www.mergedforequality.org

National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS)
Pro-feminist, gay-affirmative, anti-racist activist organization supporting positive changes for men
www.nomas.org

Portland Men’s Resource Center – Portland, OR
Counseling for men, women, teens, couples and families on domestic violence and anger management, and explorations of gender and sexism.
http://www.portlandmrc.com

Redwood Men’s Center – Santa Rosa, CA
A mythopoetic gathering dedicated to filling the need for men to come together in community healing
redwoodmen.org

Saskatoon Men’s Center – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Pro-feminist, male-positive, gay-affirmative center dedicated to offering a safe environment where men may explore their true natures and improve their health
www.saskatoomenscenter.com

Twin Cities Men’s Center – Minneapolis, MN
Provides resources for men seeking to grow in mind, body, and spirit and advocates for healthy family and community relationships
www.tcmn.org
**Film**

Toxic Masculinity Unmasked in Six Minutes

American Male looks at the effects hypermasculinity—including attitudes toward women, minority groups, and LGBTQ+ people—has on men, particularly young men. For them, it’s clear there’s a real crisis in contemporary masculinity, and the battle of identity politics has flared up again.

The powerful six-minute film examines the toxic masculinity often pervasive among groups of young men in the U.S. and the disturbing interplay found between same-sex desire and violent homophobia within that group. Filmmaker Michael Rohrbaugh said in an interview with The Huffington Post that he wanted to showcase the ways in which younger males navigate a culture of overcompensation to “prove their manhood,” resulting in a heavy psychological toll.

American Male engages in a discussion of what’s considered masculine in society, while highlighting how extreme masculinity and homophobia often go hand in hand. The film helps to lift the lid on—and to challenge—the racial, gender, and LGBTQ+ biases and privilege that many people take for granted.

“Order beer, not wine. And beef, not chicken. Never light beer, though. And tofu—can’t get more gay than tofu,” the narrator of the film says. “Steer clear of the arts unless you live on the coasts. That means no theater, dancing, painting, poetry, or prose. Too much reading is also risky because it makes you look soft and bookish…What can I say, better safe than sorry.”

Rohrbaugh says he made the film so viewers can “gain a better understanding of what life feels like in the closet. I also hope they’ll reflect upon their own lives and think about falsehoods that might be holding them back. So many of the social norms we’ve been taught are rooted in discrimination, and so many young people are taught to feel ashamed of who they are, raised to believe that ‘there’s something wrong with them,’ that ‘they’re not normal’ or ‘not who they should be.’ Those types of lies are really destructive, which is why they must be exposed and debunked.”

American Male was the winner of MTV’s Look Different Creator Competition, which invites up-and-coming filmmakers to create work addressing the topic of privilege. For more information on MTV’s Look Different campaign, visit www.lookdifferent.org.

—Alim Khera

[Image of american male film poster]
Subscribe to the magazine, get the book, or do both

Purchase both the VM book $30 (includes shipping, $40, overseas) and a 4 issue subscription $28 for just $50

SAVE MORE THAN 15%
(8 issue sub = $45)

Voice Male is a superb, groundbreaking publication offering a powerful way to engage men in working towards gender justice and to encourage younger men to learn new ways to become a man. Every individual and institution interested in gender equality and violence prevention should subscribe and spread the word!

—Judy Norsigian, coauthor and former executive director, Our Bodies, Ourselves

“Rob Okun’s brave book chronicles a movement of men standing with women in the struggle to end violence against women and reveals an emerging new man culture where men are reclaiming their tears and their hearts.”

—Eve Ensler, playwright of The Vagina Monologues, founder of Vday

“A very worthwhile introduction to the profeminist movement among men. It will reward both casual readers and serious students of the subject.”

—Library Journal

“Readers interested in gender issues will appreciate the strength of the individual articles and the book’s powerful message.”

—Publishers Weekly

To subscribe—or to make a tax-deductible gift—please use the enclosed envelope or go to: vocemalemagazine.org
MenEngage Alliance

WHO WE ARE

MenEngage Alliance is a diverse alliance of more than 630 organizations around the world working with men and boys for gender equality, human rights and social justice in order to achieve a world in which all can enjoy healthy, fulfilling and equitable relationships and realize their full potential.

MenEngage Alliance started as an informal network of leaders from organizations working in the emerging field of engaging men and boys; its work was born of a feminist tradition and became part of a growing solidarity movement for gender equality and transforming masculinities.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

That manhood is NOT defined by how many sexual partners you have; by using violence against women, children, or men; by how much power you can exert over others; or by your sexual orientation.

Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

That manhood IS defined by building relationships based on respect and equality; by speaking out against violence in your society; by sharing decision-making and power; and by your ability to respect the diversity and rights of those around you.

Preventing gender-based violence

OUR ISSUES

Supporting men's positive involvement in maternal and child health, as fathers or caregivers

JOIN US

Join MenEngage Alliance: as a member you'll stay informed about what is happening in the world, connect with others active in the field, exchange ideas and resources, start new collaborations, lobby and advocate together, and much more.

Register at: www.menengage.org/register

www.menengage.org  @menengage