White Men's Uncharted New World

A Journey from Male Privilege
Remembering Harry Brod
Challenging India's Marital Rape Law
Ten Must-Read Books About White Masculinity
AFTER AN OP-ED I WROTE FOLLOWING THE VIOLENT CHARLOTTESVILLE WHITE SUPREMACIST MARCH WAS PUBLISHED (SEE PAGE 17), I RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM A MAN WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A "WHITE HETEROSEXUAL AND MALE CONSERVATIVE WITH STRONG CHRISTIAN BELIEFS," WHO ADDED, "I LIVE IN A WORLD...THAT IS FORCING ME OUT." STRUCK BY HIS CANDOR, I HAVE ENGAGED IN A WIDE-RANGING, RESPECTFUL EMAIL DIALOGUE WITH DAN, A SMALL BUSINESS OWNER FROM SOUTH DAKOTA, EDITED EXCERPTS OF WHICH BEGIN BELOW.

Rob,

I am not sure you will ever read this but I have to lay this out there. I just read your article in the Dallas Morning News from August 19, 2017. First, I will say I am not a white supremacist. I may be a dis-enfranchised white male of 47 years of age. I easily could be a part of a hate group but am not. I have too much respect for myself and the many good hardworking citizens of other ethnicities than my own. I don't fit most stereotypes.

I am a white heterosexual and male conservative with strong Christian beliefs. I am married for 19 years with no children. I am educated. I live in a world and occupation that is forcing me out.

All the trade magazines espouse the need to have greater diversity—we need more women, we need more minorities, we need more LGBT; we do not need white heterosexual males.

I take offense to your new world masculine manhood. I tried being a man in touch with my feelings. Where did it get me? Angry. I am tired of individuals erasing history in the foolish belief that it makes things better. Fools that erase history are doomed to repeat it.

Unlike the mold of the supremacist, I do not begrudge anyone. I am happy for them; they have support, I have none. I am isolated. I am not the perpetrator of the sins I am being asked to confess and repent for.

I have never owned a slave and what my ancestors did or did not do I cannot speak to. I cannot embrace my culture as that labels me a bigot, a racist, a homophobe, a misogynist—you name it.

I grew up in the South and now live in the North. I do not pretend to know what it is to be Black or Native American, or Asian or Hispanic or a woman, for that matter. I am none of those things. I don't know what it is to be gay.

I do know what it is to be me and to watch the diversity train always belittle me for being a straight white male. This, I thought, was supposed to be a nation of equals, not a nation in which one group who may have held power gets totally destroyed and decimated so others can advance. If you are more educated, more qualified than I am, then you should get the job; but don't just hire people because they are not white and male.

Stop labeling me. I just want to be left alone to live my life in peace lest one day I will be that person who you see on the news. I am in counseling and hate every minute of it as [the counselor], like you, tells me I need to become a woman!

Regards,

Dan

Dear Dan,

I was very moved reading your email. There is much in your message to consider, especially for those of us who are white males.

I know it is confusing, upsetting—infuriating—to think you are being pushed away, marginalized, made to feel "less than." What you describe is the tip of the iceberg of the reality the marginalized groups you referred to in your letter have long experienced. Perhaps your real and valid feelings can serve as a gateway to better understanding theirs.

You wrote that you “tried being a man in touch with my feelings.” I am interested to know more about that. For many of us men, it is hard to get in touch with our feelings, let alone being able to express them; most of us were raised to stuff our feelings down. We were taught that even to acknowledge that we had feelings—especially feeling sad, lonely, scared—was not permitted, was a sign of weakness. I found in my life that was a lie—that denying my feelings kept me from being fully human.

Individual white men are not the problem; a system that we have benefitted from—as white males—is. That system has advantaged us: in jobs, housing, health care, educational opportunities, you name it. It has only been a short while since efforts to make life more just for women and the other groups you cite have been undertaken. Not all of those efforts have been perfect, but are necessary if we want a level playing field. I understand that it feels like now it is men—particularly white men—who are the ones on a playing field that's tilted against us.

I will welcome hearing back from you.

Rob

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Holding the Line Against the NFL

The NFL Players Association, the union that represents players in the National Football League, is engaging in victim blaming tactics. They are fighting the league’s six game suspension of Ezekiel Elliott for domestic violence. The union is appealing that suspension and they have every right to do so. They do not have the right to blame, shame and attack the victim in the process. If you see any articles related to this in your local media, or national feeds, please speak out about this strategy. My fear is that if we don’t call out the behavior this kind of deflection and attack will continue. We demanded that sports groups respond differently, and the NFL is making progress. We can help shift the culture faster if we address these kind of public attacks on those who report abuse.

Rita Smith
Denver, Colo.

The writer is a senior advisor to the NFL on domestic violence issues, and the former executive director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Engaged Fathers: More than a Dream

Last year I was an intern at the NGO Sonke Gender Justice in Cape Town, South Africa. My research was with children whose fathers had attended the international MenCare program. It opened my eyes; I saw how important the subject of fatherhood was. I saw how important to them, important to the rest of the world. I was excited that my research was included in the Fathering column, “Daddy, Where Are You,” in the Summer issue. It helped me dream again—dream of all the possibilities in the fatherhood sector, dream of the things we still can achieve, and all we have already reached over the years together. I feel inspired to play my part in working for gender equality.

Scrolling through Voice Male I felt very proud to see all the stories on fatherhood and gender equality combined in one magazine. I learned much about gender equality issues around the globe which is why I think a magazine like this can contribute to a better understanding of gender justice issues around the world.

Sjanna Westerhof
Meppel, Netherlands

What I Need to Say to Women in Russia

I’m so grateful for your recent article on the poison of white supremacist masculinity. Voice Male helps my sanity as a woman! It really does. I returned to St. Petersburg in September to teach about women’s sacred circles. This will be the third trip this year. Your writing about men and men’s suffering helps me think about what I need to say to women. I’m so grateful.

Anne Yeomans
Colrain, Mass.

Letters may be sent via email to www.voicemalemagazine.org or mailed to Editors: Voice Male, PO Box 1246, Amherst, MA 01004

VOICE MALE is published quarterly by the Alliance for Changing Men, an affiliate of Family Diversity Projects, PO Box 1246, Amherst, MA 01004. It is mailed to subscribers in the U.S., Canada, and overseas and is distributed at select locations around the country and to conferences, universities, colleges and secondary schools, and among non-profit and non-governmental organizations. The opinions expressed in Voice Male are those of its writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the advisors or staff of the magazine, or its sponsor, Family Diversity Projects. Copyright © 2017 Alliance for Changing Men/ Voice Male magazine.

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Institutions: $45 and $65. For bulk orders, go to voicemalemagazine.org or call Voice Male at 413.687-8171.
Advertising: For rates and deadlines, go to voicemalemagazine.org or call Voice Male 413.687-8171.
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Men @ Work

Transgender Leadership Initiative

Eight organizations in six states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were awarded AIDS United’s demonstration grants to increase transgender leadership within organizations, in community planning bodies, and in local networks to aid the response to HIV.

Transgender women—especially transgender women of color—are more heavily affected by HIV than any other group in the US relative to population. Many barriers to good health face the transgender community, including violence and discrimination in housing, education and accessing health care. Often community leaders and policymakers are unaware of their plight.

Supported by Janssen Therapeutics, the Transgender Leadership Initiative builds grassroots leadership within transgender communities across the country.

Using as a guide principles of Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MIPA), transgender individuals are involved at all levels of decision-making of this project. The initiative is designed to increase transgender leadership within organizations, community planning bodies, and networks. Specifically, it will:

• Develop leaders in the transgender community to improve HIV service delivery to peers
• Increase transgender leadership presence in HIV policy arenas
• Create a cohort of connected transgender leaders who support each other and network to improve their communities’ HIV outcomes.

[continued on page 6]

How Alt-Right Women Live in a Misogynistic Movement

Days before the white nationalist rampage in Charlottesville, Va., Harper’s published a cover story about prominent women of the alt-right, including how they are working to recruit others into a movement that is misogynist at its very core.

In the piece, “The Rise of the Valkyries,” Seyward Darby, executive editor of The Atavist magazine, profiled Lana Lokteff, the “queen bee” of the alt-right, a woman David Duke described as a “harder-hitting” Ann Coulter with a “movie-star quality.” Lokteff finds like-minded women online and promotes them via Red Ice, a white nationalist media company she runs with her husband.

She told Darby how alt-right women detest feminism. “Many of them came to the alt-right as anti-feminists first,” Darby said. “Their reasons were myriad, but at base I think a lot of them felt ostracized by, angry with, or otherwise disappointed in feminism, which they would define in caricature: an ideology that celebrates man-hating, racially diverse, fat, ugly women demanding whatever they want from the world.”

The women Darby examined believe that “the progressive, feminist agenda castigates traditional wives and mothers and depicts the white man as public enemy number one. (They would call that real racism.” They argue that feminism, which they see as “the spawn of washed-up, Marxist, lesbian, and/or Jewish women in the early 1900s, has perverted the natural gender order by convincing women to be more like men and men to be more like women.”

The alt-right believes it’s fighting a war for the soul of Western civilization, Darby reported—“a grand sociopolitical battle to save the white race from destruction. All hands are needed on the frontlines promoting the cause and recruiting acolytes—including women.”

YouTube, Twitter, Gab, and other platforms are places to try and “harvest” more female voices and then promote them through Red Ice. “The alt-right is concerned with showing that it has strength and numbers,” Darby said. “Its shrewdest leaders realize that a critical piece of the project is proving that they aren’t just a bunch of slovenly white guys on their computers in their moms’ basements. They want to seem like smart, virile white men and smart, beautiful white women who’ve finally realized what’s in their best interests.”

While not highly organized like the Nazi party or the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s—the moniker “alt-right” is an umbrella term for “a motley cluster of hate groups, Internet personalities, quasi-intellectuals, and trolls” who share a belief in the cause of white nationalism.

Where do men’s rights activists (MRAs) and men going their own way (MGTOW), the most virulent of Internet misogynists, fit in? They aren’t really alt-right, according to Lokteff. She told Darby that “to be alt-right, a man cannot disdain women; he must love and cherish them, because otherwise how will the white race reproduce and thrive?” Such an assertion raises all kinds of questions about who gets to claim the alt-right mantle, a term “forged in the depths of the Internet with minimal organization and maximum self-amplification,” Darby said she was sure that “men who identify as MGTOW and alt-right would not be thrilled to hear a woman tell them, “You’re not one of us!”

—Michelle Legro, excerpted from her article in Longreads.com
The transgender community faces unique challenges in HIV care, compounded by racial and ethnic health disparities and a lack of culturally competent providers. Transgender leadership is essential to address the dire HIV epidemic in transgender communities, improve transgender health outcomes, and solidify transgender power in our society. To learn more, go to: www.aidsunited.org.

Converging Voices: Gender and Identity

How do visual artists from different cultures depict gender roles? That’s the theme of “Converging Voices: Gender and Identity,” an art exhibit at Hofstra University Museum, Hempstead, N.Y.

The exhibit, curated by the museum’s Karen T. Albert, deputy director and chief curator, features international artists including Ghada Amer, Mariam Ghani, Martine Gutierrez, Guerrilla Girls, Yee I-Lann, Zanele Muholi, Pinarie Sanpitak, Carrie Mae Weems, and Philemona Williamson.

Their works examine cultural and personal identity, question stereotypes and social norms, and criticize the traditional relationship between gender and society.

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Still from the video “Afro-Chic” (2009–2010) by Carrie Mae Weems; courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.
The exhibit was created in association with the 17th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Genders, and Sexualities at Hofstra University last June. The show is displayed through December 15. For more information call (516) 463-5672 or go to hofstra.edu/museum.

Transgender Military Troops and Mad Dog

Leading by tweeting is not working well for Donald Trump. The pushback against his Twitter-announced transgender military ban was so fierce that he soon started backpedaling, shirking responsibility for his reckless bigotry. He put the fate of transgender troops in the hands of Secretary of Defense Jim (Mad Dog) Mattis.

Trump’s direct assault on transgender people was, like most of his hateful decisions, haphazard and impulsive. In his unhinged Twitter announcement of the ban, Trump claimed that he arrived at his decision after “consultation with my generals and military experts,” even though the Pentagon press office reportedly “didn’t know anything about” his decision.

After Trump issued his ban against trans service members, Mattis said that transgender troops would continue to be allowed to serve in the military while the Pentagon completed a six-month study on the issue. Surprisingly, the White House gave Mattis wide discretion, including room to convince Trump to let transgender troops continue to serve.

Mattis has assembled a panel of experts to assess Trump’s claim that transgender troops might negatively affect readiness, cohesion or military spending. The panel wouldn’t be the first to look at the issue; last year the Pentagon commissioned a nonpartisan report that found that letting transgender troops serve would “cost little and have no significant impact on unit readiness.” The estimated cost to provide transgender troops with health services is about 0.0014 percent of Trump’s total defense budget proposal, significantly less than the cost to taxpayers of his trips to Mar-a-Lago this year.

Overdue Apology Set for Canada’s LGBTQ Community

Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau will publicly apologize to the LGBTQ community by the end of the year for the government’s past treatment of gays and lesbians. The first step: creating an advisory council to craft the apology.

Calling for a wide-ranging, comprehensive “official state apology,” Prof. Gary Kinsman, who has been asked to appear before the council, said the Canadian government must take “responsibility for what they did and the problems they created in people’s lives.”

For more than four decades—from after World War II until the late 1980s—federal officials were trying “to identify [gay and lesbians] in public service and military who were seen as untrustworthy and at risk of blackmail by foreign powers,” according to reporter John Ibbitson, writing in Canada’s Globe and Mail.

Subject to interrogation, harassment, and dismissal, some of those targeted resigned from their positions rather than submit themselves, family, and friends to government repression.

In addition to the apology for more than 40 years of discriminating against gays and lesbians in public service, gay rights advocates are also calling for the government to expunge all records of any of their investigations to prevent them from being made public in the future. They also say the government must make public any documents that mandated purging gays and lesbians who were working in the public sector.

Among its other responsibilities, the advisory council will likely wrestle with the question of whether those whose careers in the military and public service were derailed because of their sexual orientation should receive financial redress for lost income and pensions.

The Trudeau government has made a high priority advancing the rights of sexual orientation minorities. It previously spearheaded successful legislation that protected from discrimination Canada’s transgender population. Additional laws are in the works to abolish outdated statutes and language that sanctions discrimination against the country’s LGBTQ population.

While some Canadians have complained they are suffering from apology fatigue from “a government that seems to be forever saying it’s sorry for its past treatment of minorities,” it is “never wrong to say you’re sorry,” says Kristopher Wells, a director of the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies at the University of Alberta. To ensure a healthy future, Wells says, “we have to remember and acknowledge the past.”

Men @ Work

Donald Trump lives and breathes cable news, wrote The Nation’s Eric Alterman in early September. “Like so many ill-informed, emotionally immature, and insecure older white men, the guy who has the most powerful and sensitive job on earth reportedly wastes five hours a day watching [the cable news network] Fox.” Alterman added that because Trump “possesses little actual knowledge about the real world outside his family and paid fluffers,” to him, “the lunatic conspiracy theories” at Fox “are the equivalent of Scripture.” For those who are not believers, it’s long past time to treat the questionably elected president like any other legitimate leader and Fox like an actual news network. “They are,”Alterman says, “respectively and collectively a metastasizing cancer on our body politic.”
or three decades, Tom Weiner has been part of a western Massachusetts men’s group (that’s been meeting for even longer). He is currently writing a book about men’s and women’s support groups, emphasizing the purposes they serve for their members and their role in society. When his son Stefan told a friend about his father’s book idea, Ben Blackshear shared that he, too, is in a men’s group that has been together for two years. Intrigued, Tom began a relationship with the Brooklyn, N.Y.–based group, interviewing two members and attending one of their groups. The older man and younger men peppered each other with so many questions that Tom suggested the younger men come north to meet with his group, formed in 1978. Its nine members spend one Sunday a month together, from brunch through supper. They also hold a five-day annual retreat on an island in the St. Lawrence River’s Thousand Island region.

The younger men’s group, ranging in age from 26 to 40, has six members, and includes Ben Blackshear, Kevin Quirolo, Joshua Latour, and Ben Fuller-Googins. (Two new members have joined their group since the weekend.) Members participating from the older men’s group, who are 58 to 67, include the author, Steve Trudel, Paul Richmond, Alan Surprenant, Steve Bannasch, Robbie Leppzer, and Dick McLeester. (Two of its members were unable to attend the weekend.) What follows is an edited conversation among members of the younger and older men’s groups.

What purposes does your men’s group serve in your life?

Josh (Younger Men’s Group): I see the group helping me with my own needs as a man and with being a better ally as well as with managing my relationships with women by being emotionally more aware. The group encourages me to be more emotionally available, to be a better listener, and to be more informed about how to be with other men.

Ben B. (YMG): Our group offers the opportunity for structured reflection. We also come for the camaraderie. There are times when we offer one another advice. I have also received—and offered—emotional support.

Kevin (YMG): I see our group as a space to develop emotional intimacy with other men based on a shared commitment to anti-oppression politics. It also offers me opportunities to practice patience with myself and others.

Ben F-G (YMG): The practice of sharing has been critical. One of the features of patriarchy and toxic masculinity is the feeling that a lot of the traits and habits are my own—thoughts about sex or about women or the inability to be in relationship. Then I pathologize my own issues, so coming together and sharing in group lets me know there are others who have similar feelings and tensions, which is very healing.

Steve T. (Older Men’s Group): The group reduces my individuality. It has created a collective identity as a result of the maturation of our men, which is a joy, because it is so different from what I usually experience in relationships with men. I see the group as having expanded our sense of being human. The area where it has been the most important has been to be able to feel trust in other men—the trust to be challenged and to challenge each other’s limitations within a context of the ocean of trust we’ve co-created.
Paul (OMG): Making a commitment and being able to have much deeper relationships—the group has fostered that in my life. I learn that a lot of similar things go on for all of us. Whatever ways in which I might have thought I was unique I find out I’m not so unique.

Dick (OMG): Being in the group means I’m thinking on an ongoing basis, “This is something I could bring to group—something to put out to the group as a whole.” Or, it’s something I want to ask. A lot of other times it’s just about hearing what other people are wrestling with that will be an occasion for me to think about that aspect in my own life. I’ve learned ways to share, to listen and to challenge other people and particularly other men.

Robbie (OMG): Having this support group going through life has been priceless. I feel very grateful. I was 20 when I joined; the youngest member of the group. As a teenager, I had long considered myself not macho, having grown up and witnessed the ravages of patriarchy, domestic abuse and violence in my own family. This group gave me validation and support to continue on my path as a profeminist man. As the men’s group became my chosen family over time, it has provided a continual grounding and support for me on my evolving journey as a man.

How do you see men’s groups being beneficial to men?

Ben B. (YMG): Our group has encouraged me to feel more vulnerable. We have been getting better at helping each other look at our lives and our pasts through different and more critical lenses, such as reflecting on the balance of emotional labor in our relationships.

Ben F-G (YMG): I see in white men, in the older generations of my family, that patriarchy is still the prevailing frame of masculinity and it is individualized. So the concept of being in connection with other men is in direct contradiction to how we’re conditioned to be in this world—alone. Having a group structure invites the possibility that there are other ways of being that are rooted in sharing and being visible.

Josh (YMG): I need to issue a disclaimer. I wrestle with the idea that our men’s group isn’t challenging enough or isn’t inclusive enough or whether it’s really needed since women’s voices are not heard enough already. People can criticize us for being together with only men and not being open to women, but I feel our group is just getting its toes wet in terms of what to do to be more effective.

Steve T. (OMG): All the female partners I’ve talked to like the idea that their men are having other ways to explore their needs—not just in their marriage/partnership—because men tend to not do that. They traditionally do that kind of exploration with their wives and then think that’s the only place they have to do it. In my work with men who are abusive and controlling, it’s pretty characteristic that men are isolated without networks of support. Men’s groups like ours work to undo the isolation.

Tom Weiner (OMG): Men’s groups can greatly help men to experience a much wider range of emotions and cultivate nurturing and intimacy understandings and skills that serve in other arenas, including romantic relationships, friendships and child rearing, a topic our men’s group has discussed regularly as some of us have become fathers.

Describe how your men’s group fills your need for connection with other men.

Ben B. (YMG): I think it demonstrates to us the truth that we need each other. It clearly shows that peer support and realizing our interconnectedness are important in a culture that is so built on individualism.

Ben F-G (YMG): It fills the need for connection because it’s explicitly rooted in wanting to both outwardly confront and challenge patriarchal violence and inwardly deal with how patriarchy shapes our relationship to ourselves. Since it was the intention of our group from the start it changes how I show up for it compared to how I am with other men. Right from the start we were talking about pornography or violence or how we objectify women or how we can’t cultivate a relationship with our fathers. It’s been a consistent invitation for me to reveal more, and there’s nowhere else in my life where that happens.

Josh (YMG): It’s about being more intentional and talking about different things—like what it was like growing up as a boy and all the pressures society sets to be tough or being talked down to if you showed emotion; talking about sexuality and how to be a better lover. Many of us have been affected by the phallocentric view and it was all about penetration and not how to pleasure a woman. We grew up hearing phrases like, “Did you get your dick wet?” No, we don’t want to be that way. Also being in group with other men.

Describe how your men’s group has discussed regularly as some of the rearing, a topic our men’s group shows that peer support and we need each other. It clearly demonstrates to us the truth that we need each other. It clearly shows that peer support and realizing our interconnectedness are important in a culture that is so built on individualism.

Alan (OMG): I would add the size of the group—not one-on-one or a threesome. There’s a certain energy that comes from seven, eight, or nine of us being together. It’s unique. I don’t experience that any other place in my life.

Paul (OMG): It’s about being in a safe place to explore and be challenged to help me grow. It’s people who know you for a long period of time that can reflect along with you about what’s happening, what you’ve gone through. Are you still telling us the same story that you were when we met you? Now we’re all tied up in it, too, so what do you want to change? Plus there’s the commitment we share to really show up and to go deeper, to ask those questions.
What are some specific things you’ve learned about yourself from being in a men’s group?

Ben B. (YMG): It’s helped me learn how to be more vulnerable with people in my life who are not my romantic partner. I’ve learned that sharing ways I am working on improving myself or things that I am struggling with helps me do the work I need to do to make the changes I want and need to make. Being in the group makes me more accountable to myself—and the group.

Kevin (YMG): I tend to avoid connecting with men outside our group because having to confront the sexism I encounter is stressful. By facing and dealing with our own sexism in a controlled environment it’s made me more confident I can deal with it outside the group.

Ben F-G (YMG): I want to touch on sex. I think I have a lot of shame around sex and my body—particularly about male violence in sexual dynamics. It’s hard for me to bring my full self in sexual romantic partnerships because I censor and police myself so I don’t express violence. One hundred percent of my female partners have experienced this and it impacts our relationship, because if I’m putting a lot of energy into policing and censoring my behavior, partners can’t experience my whole self. So I’m seeking a balance between feeling my full self, but not replicating patterns of violence and dominance that is still the norm. Even as I hear myself talk about this it’s such a release to have a space to talk about with other guys saying it’s hard for them, too.

Steve T. (OMG): In our group, I’m more interested in finding out where everyone is at with a bigger discussion, not one where one person talks and the rest of us listen. The group gives me a place to explore things I know about myself and get feedback. I like being able to feel safe and trusting, to challenge the other men in the group, but I feel a certain amount of judgment and a sense of an accompanying irritability when we don’t change.

Alan (OMG): Any time the idea of men’s group comes up, the person I’m talking to thinks I’m talking about drumming and walking on coals. Sometimes I get a reaction just because of the years we’ve been a group. You have a group of people you’ve known for 38 years? Do you still actually meet with them? That is actually a source of amazement—that we even get together.

Kevin (YMG): A friend of mine, who I thought would be interested because he is a feminist, isn’t interested. I think there are two points here. First there’s a suspicion of a group of men focused on themselves, and second there’s a sense of urgency to organize outwardly. The first point, the suspicion, is crucial to this work because sexism is so insidious it can (and often does) corrupt seemingly earnest efforts by men to support feminism. Any men’s group of this kind has to directly address how patriarchy shapes who we are and how we relate to other men. The second point, the urgency, is understandable, but could be counterproductive. Getting out in the world and working against oppression can be transformative. But urgency could be an excuse to ignore your own sexism.

Ben F-G (YMG): I invited someone I knew and he’s now an awesome part of our group. There are a lot of men in my world that are politicized and have a lot of awareness. But I notice hesitancy—’Do I deserve, as a man, to spend time in a group setting like this rather than an outward organizing project?’

Josh (YMG): It’s been hard to follow through with people. Our group is still in its infancy so it’s hard to know what we’re inviting people to. I’ll say, ‘Come to our men’s group,’ and someone will ask, ‘What are you doing?’ I’ll say: ‘We’re talking,’ but they want concrete examples. This kind of organizing takes time. Two new people have joined since our weekend together. New York is a rough city to do this kind of work, because everyone is so busy earning a living and negotiating their lives.

Steve T. (OMG): Our group has enabled us to develop a sense of confidence—not just having an idea about it but practicing it.

How has being in a men’s group resulted in you being more vulnerable and talking honestly with other men about your life?

Ben F-G (YMG): With my dad there’s been a major shift in our relationship. I’ve noticed in the past couple of years being able to talk more than we have historically, particularly around family issues and relationship stuff. I don’t think that would have been possible without the practice and support around being vulnerable that I’ve taken from our men’s group. I’ve just seen the joy of that. It’s totally deepened our relationship.

Josh (YMG): I’ve been finding more ways to be vulnerable and communicating that vulnerability. A specific example would be with my sexual partner where I’ve been communicating my needs and wants and intentions. We talk about it together and it helps me be more aware of what’s going on. I have a better understanding of consent culture—not just having an idea about it but practicing it.

Steve T. (OMG): Our group has enabled us to develop a sense of confidence in intimately exploring one another’s paths. It allows and encourages me to see through men’s defensiveness in the world at large and seek out and invite men to experience their own exploration of vulnerability. It also enables me to be in the moment with another person as they are rather than trying to change them or make something different happen, which is probably the best way to experience mutual vulnerability.

Steve B. (OMG): Many years ago I was walking with one of my daughters. She was about three years old so I was holding her hand. We were about to cross the road at a crosswalk when somebody drove past really fast. I yelled loudly. The car, which had passed us by then, slammed on its brakes, screeched to a stop.
stop, and backed up really fast. A much younger, muscular guy said, “What the fuck is your problem?” I said, “I made that loud sound, because I was afraid. I’m walking with my daughter.” That completely disrupted his narrative, because he wasn’t expecting that. It was so out of the narrative that he gruffly responded, “I’m sorry…” and then drove off more slowly. I think that is something that came from my life experience, and my life and men’s group are totally linked up.

Steve T. (OMG): The only feeling that can commonly be shared between men is anger. We can share being pissed off. That guy in Steve’s story expected to be met at the level of anger and so anger is up here (gestures with his hand) and beneath it is often some other kind of feeling, like confusion or another feeling that’s related to anger. Then, beneath that level of being confused is sadness and grief. You could notice that’s also in there when you initially feel anger—if you have the opportunity to be able to pay attention and if you’re listened to. We’re a group that is committed to nonviolence, so anger isn’t going to be the currency that we use, but still it is possible it could show up. We’ve added more complexity to the story.

Paul (OMG): I appreciate our willingness to let each of us experience the pain that we might be having in our lives and to realize that there’s nothing else anybody can do besides letting us have a safe space to experience that pain and witness it. If you need to be held that’s available. Nobody is putting you down, telling you to suck it up. That vulnerability makes it possible to get through some really difficult stuff.

Tom (OMG): I think of my vulnerability numerous times when something really difficult has happened in my life and my first thought is I can’t wait until I can talk about that in group. I’m thinking of my friend’s tragic death, of my son’s innumerable brain operations—of lying on the bed at Steve’s house and having the whole group give me a loving back rub so I could just cry out my fear and my sadness.

What do you see as a takeaway from being with an older and younger men’s group?

Ben F.-G (YMG): I went into the weekend having some skepticism based on not having very positive relationships with older white men. It was such a joy to see your group’s friendships with each other. On one level, “Wow, it’s possible to have these friendships that are expanding, challenging and deepening over decades.” The level of curiosity I experienced you showing about us—that was fantastic. I so appreciated that because it is not what I experience a lot in relationships with older men. I left very joyful and hopeful having seen that if you commit to such a group it can be rich in lasting joy and transformation.

Ben B. (YMG): The biggest takeaway for me was an affirmation that this work is valuable and the “project” of men’s groups is worthwhile. Seeing the deep bonds the older men have, their happiness, their political astuteness, their willingness to challenge each other, and the shared memories they’ve built over the years was powerful. It made me feel that the benefits of this work are ongoing and get even richer with continued time and emotional investment.

Steve T. (OMG): I felt like I got to experience my wisdom and our collective wisdom from having been part of our group for so many years. I also felt a great sense of relief knowing that there are young men who are finding value in being with each other, supporting each other in the same way that we’ve had the opportunity to experience—that sense that, “Oh, good, our men’s group wasn’t just a blip on the radar screen that went away.”

Paul (OMG): It felt like they are a younger version of ourselves. In this time and place they are political guys who are questioning and working on issues that they think are important—whether it be about issues of race or climate change or the environment. They are being confronted with how they are being men in the various organizations to which they belong. They are being supportive of each other and trying to be different from traditional masculinity in what they’re doing.

Robbie (OMG): I was so delighted and amazed that men’s groups like ours are still forming in the 2010s because it’s a very different era than when we started our group. To know that there’s a lifetime of consciousness about men’s groups and that young men are aware and feel the need and see the importance of forming a men’s group is heartening because I’m generally somewhat disheartened that the consciousness we helped to develop has experienced a backlash against it.

Tom (OMG): I found the younger men to be incredibly open and honest with men they don’t know. They sought that in their group and you could tell that we welcomed and invited intimate interactions. I was gratified that it happened so quickly.

Tom Weiner taught third through sixth grade and mentored many student teachers for 40 years at the Smith College Campus School in Northampton, Mass. In addition to his book-in-progress on men’s and women’s groups, he is the author of Called to Serve: Stories of Men and Women Confronted by the Vietnam War Draft (adapted into The Draft, a play by Peter Snoad), and Letters on Wings: How Microfilmed V-Mail Helped Win World War II. He is currently establishing a mediation practice and offering editing services for authors. He can be reached at tweiner909@comcast.net.
Men's rights advocates (MRAs) complain that war is an important example of male disadvantage. They describe the higher rates of sex-selective conscription and the large numbers of deaths and injuries among male soldiers as a powerful example of how men are disadvantaged relative to women. This claim is flawed.

Yes, large numbers of men and boys are killed and injured in war. But they are sent to war largely by other men, in wars supported more by men than women, and where traditional masculinity has been central to justifications for war. It is men, not women, who have excluded women from joining men in military and combat roles. Feminist women and women's movements have played key roles in challenging war and militarism. Finally, the overall impacts of war and conflict and their aftermath are greater for women than men.

Consider: Men and boys overwhelmingly are sent off to war by other men, not by women, particularly as the vast majority of heads of state, political leaders, and military leaders are male. While female heads of state have not been statistically less likely than male heads of state to go to war, societies that have had women's suffrage for twice as long are almost five times more likely to resolve international disputes peacefully, according to Mary Caprioli, author of Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict. At the same time her research shows that states with a lower percentage of women in parliament are significantly more likely to resolve international disputes through war (a decrease of 5 percent in women's participation in parliament makes a state almost five times as likely to resolve disputes using military violence).

More generally, men are more enthusiastic supporters of war and militarism than women. There is a gender gap in attitudes about war: women's support for war is consistently lower than men's, particularly when comparing women's and men's attitudes toward particular wars or military involvements, as a host of research has shown. However, women are more likely to approve of wars when they are UN-approved or humanitarian.

Traditional masculinity is implicated in political support for and involvements in war and conflict. Those leaders and groups...
that are most enthusiastic about sending men off to war also are the most strongly supportive of traditional, patriarchal masculinity. Pro-war political leaders are more likely than other leaders also to subscribe to traditional gender ideologies, in which men’s “natural” roles are seen as in part to dominate and defend using aggression, research has shown.

Male political leaders draw explicitly on themes of masculinity in justifying and framing military involvement or their work more generally, as can be seen for such figures as George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin. More widely, there are intimate links between the histories of war and militarism and the histories of masculinity.

Military organizations consistently and intentionally draw on patriarchal notions of masculinity to convince men to fight and take risks in conflict. Within military organizations the valorization of risk-taking as a masculine behavior is a cause of significant harm for recruits. Feminists have consistently challenged societal attitudes that demand young men’s military service to prove they are “real men.”

Societies that are statistically less gender equitable are significantly more likely to be affected by civil war and to resolve international disagreements with violence. Traditional patriarchal notions of masculinity that support other forms of violence (such as intimate partner violence) are causally implicated in the most destructive practices of war which cause the most harm to men and women.

MRAs claim that men’s over-representation in combat roles is a symptom of discrimination against men. Yet it is men, not women, who have done most to exclude women from military roles. Historically, women have been excluded from military and combat roles by the male-dominated hierarchies of military institutions and political leaders. Male soldiers and military personnel themselves often have been hostile to women’s participation in the military. Indeed, feminists often have pushed for women to be allowed to participate in combat. In the wake of four decades of feminism, there is growing momentum to foster women’s inclusion and participation in the military, including in combat roles.

Feminist women and women’s movements have played key roles in challenging war and militarism in general. Yes, large numbers of men and boys are killed and injured in war, and feminists have been at the forefront of efforts to lessen or prevent the horrors of war. For example, contemporary feminist groups play important roles in supporting male conscientious objectors.

Data from the U.S. shows that war is an important setting for male injury and death. But it is also an important setting for injuries and deaths among women—and children. According to researcher Golie Jansen, author of Gender and War: The Effects of Armed Conflict on Women’s Health and Mental Health, women are much more vulnerable today than in the past because recent wars have had a higher rate of civilian casualties; for example, in World War I, 15 percent of the casualties were suffered by civilians, compared with 65 percent in World War II and 90 percent in recent wars, which have mainly affected women and children. Women are not just caught in crossfires but are increasingly victims of violence in war situations. There are widespread atrocities; in war, women’s bodies become a battleground—rapes, forced pregnancies, kidnappings, and sexual servitude are common.

Because most combatants in armed conflicts are men, males are also the major direct victims of military operations. However, there is evidence that the overall impacts of war and conflict and their aftermath are greater for women than for men. Three recent studies suggest that the impacts on health and wellbeing (in terms of both illness and death) of war and civil conflict are greater for women than men:

- An analysis of the effects of civil conflict on postwar public health finds that they are greater for women and children than for men.
- Armed conflict has a greater impact on female life expectancy than male life expectancy, with interstate and civil wars affecting women more adversely than men over the entire conflict period.

There is a gender gap in attitudes about war: women’s support for war is consistently lower than men’s and there are intimate links between the histories of war and militarism and the histories of masculinity.

- A recent global analysis of war-related casualties finds men are more likely to die during conflicts, whereas women die more often of indirect causes after the conflict is over.

War is hell, there is no doubt. And deaths and injuries among male combatants are a tragedy. Yet it is false to claim that war and militarism are simple sites of male disadvantage and female privilege. Genuine efforts to address the harms to men and boys posed by war and conflict should start with accurate assessments of wars’ workings and impact, and should ally with feminist and women’s movement efforts aimed at peace and gender justice.

Dr. Michael Flood is an associate professor in sociology at the Queensland University of Technology (Brisbane, Australia), involved in research and profeminist advocacy on men, gender, and interpersonal violence.

Dr. David Duriesmith is a UQ Development Fellow at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, researching the intersections of militarism, masculinities, and patriarchal violence. References for the studies described in this article are available at xyonline.net/content/gender-war-and-male-disadvantage.
After leading my students, all high school seniors, on a field trip to a local domestic violence (DV) organization to get a better understanding of intimate partner violence, I didn't expect to be the one to leave with an epiphany.

On the bus ride back to school, I messaged my ex, who had been with me through many of those thrashing years of high school and college: “Whenever I hear about methods of control in DV situations, I hear echoes of a younger, way-more-insecure me. I am so sorry you had to deal with that me. Sorry also that it has taken this many years to apologize.”

She was “floored.” I responded that I hoped that the floor was clean. My past certainly has not been. What’s more, I spent much of my life never fully understanding how dirty I was.

Like many people when they joined Facebook, I began reconnecting with childhood folks who knew the younger me. One woman, whom I had never been particularly nice to in my adolescence, praised an article I wrote on male privileg

The Power and Control Wheel

Because most cisgender, straight men like me don’t formally study issues of gender, when we think of intimate partner violence, we usually think of illegal acts—physical and sexual violence. Many DV organizations refute these misconceptions using the Power and Control Wheel.

Notice that only the outside of the wheel consists of those illegal acts. The spokes, however, are full of perfectly legal—and abusive—behaviors.

During that field trip, when I looked at a few of those spokes, it was like I was looking into a mirror—or through a window at a younger me. While I had always been a good kid in most ways, my goodness didn’t mean I was exempt from many of those spokes.

For example, during the years with my ex, when I was feeling particularly hurt or vulnerable, it was not uncommon to unleash a fury of punching directed at the nearest wall, windshield, or sometimes myself—leaving me with dents in bedroom walls, cracked skin and windshields, headaches—and a very scared partner.

When I discuss the Power and Control Wheel with my students, they confirm that such behaviors are alarmingly common. A therapist I once worked with—one whom I sought out because of my inability to access my emotions—taught me that those fits were a consequence of masculinity. My emotions would spill out as rage because I, as a cis man, was trained to suppress them until they consumed me.

According to her, I was a victim of masculinity. Liking that narrative, I wrote that interpretation in ink for many years.
I now interpret those fits of rage as a means of control, a textbook case of “Using Intimidation” on the Wheel. If my partner answered a loaded question with the answer that hurt me, she risked a punching storm. It was far safer to tell me what I wanted to hear. Other behaviors of mine that permeate the Wheel might better be described today as gaslighting, which Shea Emma Fett describes as “an attempt to overwrite another person’s reality.” I remember on numerous occasions actually blaming my ex when men came on to her—as if I had somehow become the victim. Instead of viewing these unwelcome advances by others as harassment against her, I viewed them as threats against me that could lure away my primary source of validation—my girlfriend. Even without the Wheel, it’s obvious how problematic these behaviors are, and I cringe rehashing them in writing. But the Wheel gave me a framework to reflect on behaviors I had not thought about in years. It spurred a wave of nostalgia—except that they were shitty memories, not sentimental ones, flooding my consciousness.

**Toxic Masculinity**

Of course, I didn’t develop these behaviors in a vacuum. I had help—like an entire society training me not just how to gain control over my partner but also that I was entitled to do so. Tony Hoagland describes some of this training in his poem “The Replacement”:

It is a kind of cooking
the male child undergoes:
to toughen him, he is dipped repeatedly
in insult—peckerwood, shitbag, faggot,
pussy, dicksucker—until spear points
will break against his epidermis,
until his is impossible to disappoint.

I bring up this training not to pass the buck or let me off the hook. After all, I embraced much of it. I chose to enroll in weight training classes for more aesthetic than health reasons. I chose
to watch those shows full of gratuitous objectification. I chose to cannonball into the waters of superficiality.

But it’s important to more deeply understand the source of one’s actions. Harris O’Malley defines toxic masculinity as a “narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status, and aggression.”

I was playing out a script of toxic masculinity that I didn’t necessarily author, and realizing this fact helped me find a new script—even if I couldn’t forget many of the lines from the old one.

Toxic masculinity is the mainstream school that too many of us attend to learn abusive behaviors. And while anyone can exhibit abusive behaviors, if we look at IPV, cis straight men are far more likely to be the perpetrators.

According to PolitiFact, there were 71 deaths due to extremist attacks on U.S. soil between 2005 and 2015. Compare that to the drumbeat of women killed by their intimate partners, which number three every day. In California alone, there were 118 domestic violence–related homicides in 2015. On average, there are nearly 11 murder-suicides nationally each week. Most involve a man killing his wife or girlfriend using a gun. But they get little sustained media attention.

Recent years have been “banner years” for toxic masculinity, but the seventies and eighties contained enough toxic masculinity to require that the rest of my life be spent unlearning and deprogramming.

**True vs. False Self**

In my message to my ex, I mentioned that my youth had been marked by extreme insecurity. I was a skinny white kid whose only remarkable quality was how thoroughly unremarkable I was. I lived directly atop the bell curve.

Having my love returned by a remarkable person was validating. But also problematic as I found self-worth not from myself, which is where you’d expect to find self-worth, but from my relationship.

Mary Pipher—author of *Reviving Ophelia*, the classic (white) feminist text from the 1990s—frames this type of validation as symptomatic of the “false self,” which is socially scripted, most often by unhealthy sources like the market-driven media. Pipher writes, “With the false self in charge, all validation came from outside the person. If the false self failed to gain approval, the person was devastated.”

She wrote this with adolescent girls in mind, but other genders can also find the framing useful. After all, we can all relate—at some level—to the pain involved when we can’t own all of our “emotions and thoughts that are not socially acceptable.”

In contrast, people honoring their “true selves” accept themselves, rather than waiting for others to accept them. Not having fully accepted myself, I drew an unhealthy amount of value from my relationship.

And if my ex had power over my self-worth, I consciously and unconsciously did what I could to get control over her. And toxic masculinity normalized my behaviors so I could act without self-examination.

Exploring my true self, however, led to some really heavy questions—like who the fuck am I, really?

What truly feeds and nurtures me? The answers to those questions, for me, and most folks, don’t include hurting the ones we care about. In fact, I wonder how many abusive people are abusive because they have denied themselves their true selves.

In the end, we all lose when we play out someone else’s script.

**Good/Bad Binary**

We also lose using the good/bad binary. In my experience, the good/bad binary is a counterproductive mindset more commonly applied to racism. If we believe that only bad people can be racist, then we’re far less likely to explore and own our racism. But such a binary ignores the complexity of our world. In a racist world, as a white American, I can internalize racist thoughts even as I try to be a good person.

The same is true with gender discrimination, as Maisha Z. Johnson argues. The good/bad binary is a setup to ensure that problematic behaviors go unchecked.

Yes, I was a good kid—a good student, a good employee, and a good athlete. But all of that goodness didn’t mean I was a good boyfriend. My résumé of goodness didn’t negate all of the damage I’ve caused.

It didn’t negate the time I shouted at my girlfriend so loudly during an argument that a neighbor called the cops. It didn’t negate all the times I policed the clothing choices of my partners. And it doesn’t negate that I continue to struggle to find better outlets for my anger than yelling.

And just like I need to face my privilege and racist thoughts, I need to face these behaviors. I need to own that damage, not avoid it.

Understanding the setup of the good/bad binary has helped me do so.

So how did I go from that embarrassing mess of a young person to a less messy 44-year-old who spends so many of his waking hours challenging systems of oppression?

The non-memoir answer is intersectional feminism—the framework of all frameworks.

Maybe it was antiracist work that led me to feminism, but feminism deepened my understanding of the powerful systems that cause so much pain, systems of which I no longer wanted to be part. And feminism led me closer to my true self and brought me to that DV organization, which was created by feminism. And while I wish I had learned these insights sooner, I’m grateful to feminism.

In a post in *Everyday Feminism*, an anonymous contributor wrote, “I am forever thankful to have stumbled upon this brilliant ideology that names my realities and shows me how the culture is to blame, for giving me a framework to understand why what’s happened to me has happened to me, and why the world is so painful to so many.”

But don’t get me wrong: I’m not done learning. And this piece is by no means an exhaustive list of the shit—present and past—that I need to own. And I didn’t write this so I can pat myself on the back.

I wrote this so that more cis men can better understand their toxic behaviors.

And then they can free themselves of them so that they are not messaging apologies 20 years too late.
The Poison of White Male Supremacist Masculinity

By Rob Okun

ike our first president—not our current one—I cannot tell a lie: We must chop down the poisonous tree of white supremacist masculinity.

I teared up when I heard about the white nationalist/alt-right’s violence unleashed in Charlottesville, Va., on August 12. Some of my tears, though, were in frustration. After all the years colleagues and I have been writing and speaking about the gender of the killers—from Columbine to Orlando—how is it possible that coverage of murder suspect James Fields Jr. failed to point out the obvious: He was a disaffected, alienated 20-year-old male. Sound familiar? Recognize the profile?

If we were to speak to the 20- and 30-something men such as Fields who chanted the Nazi “Blood and Soil” slogan while marching with lighted torches across the University of Virginia campus to make America hate again, we’d find many shared a similar profile. It is outrageous that our so-called president stands with them.

Of course we have to vigorously confront—in the strongest words and deeds—the vile attacks on African-Americans and other people of color, Muslims, Jews, the LGBTQ community, immigrants—anyone—by white supremacists and neo-Nazis. And we have to call out our leaders if they hesitate even for a moment before condemning toxic assaults on a free, inclusive society.

Hear me, please. While there are white female supremacists, the vast majority are white males. We ignore that fact at our peril.

In our long-term strategy to subvert domestic terrorism, we must prioritize raising emotionally intelligent boys, dismantling bullying masculinity and demanding the CDC conduct a study of the mental health of boys and young men. While there is never any excuse for bigotry, disconnected, rudderless young males are vulnerable prey for older, angry white male bullies who promote ideologies of hate. We must prevent their recruitment, or we will continue to experience violence like what happened in Charlottesville. Or worse.

The warning signs about James Fields were in plain sight long before he plowed his Dodge Challenger into a crowd, killing activist and paralegal Heather Heyer and injuring 19 others. His family and acquaintances along with his Internet posts suggest he had mostly “gone unnoticed by the authorities and researchers, even as he trafficked in radical views and unnerving behavior long before the outbreak of violence,” wrote Alan Blinder in The New York Times. In his teenage years some who knew him said “his demeanor and opinions had troubled them for years.”

Did his family reach out to his doctor or school guidance counselor? Engage a therapist? Was anyone paying attention when, as a young man in Kentucky, he touted Nazi ideology? “On many occasions ... he would scream obscenities, whether it be about Hitler or racial slurs,” a former middle school classmate told The Times. He was “exceptionally odd and an outcast to be sure.”

Who among us doesn’t remember a boy in middle school and high school who was “exceptionally odd” and an “outcast”? Such young men need to be helped, not hounded; supported, not shunned. I’m not suggesting hate-spewing bad actors aren’t totally responsible for their actions; they are. Rather, let’s prevent them from becoming hate-mongers in the first place.

In white America’s ongoing work to unflinchingly take responsibility for our country’s shameful slaveholding origins, we must also examine how we socialize boys to become men. The kissin’ cousin of our white supremacist history is our patriarchal legacy.

Since symbols of the Confederacy have begun to be removed—from lowering flags in Southern state capitals to toppling Civil War statues—we must not forget the role toxic masculinity plays in the conversation about confronting white nationalism.

The George Washington cherry tree story reminds us, “I cannot tell a lie.” So, let’s not. Let’s acknowledge that we must chop down the tree of violent, hate-filled white masculinity to get at the root of our malaise. Then, together, we can plant seedlings for a new forest of American manhood deeply rooted in accountibility, compassion and self-reflection.

We cannot afford to wait another moment.

Rob Okun is the editor of Voice Male. Versions of this commentary appeared in numerous newspaper and websites, including The Dallas Morning News.
“As a student, I remember being struck by how deeply Harry cared about what he taught. It was obvious that being a teacher and scholar was more than a job to him; it was a way to create a more just world. It truly mattered to him that you walked away from a class not only with more knowledge about topics like consent, racism, or masculinity, but that you also left with a greater commitment to doing something with that knowledge. He challenged us not just to learn, but to use what we learned to fight for a better world.”

—Ryan McGeough, former student of the late professor Harry Brod; assistant professor of communication studies at the University of Northern Iowa

Harry Brod taught what he lived and lived what he taught. One of the founding fathers of the academic study of men and masculinities, he died on June 16, 2017. A professor of sociology and humanities at the University of Northern Iowa, Brod was at home in Cedar Falls, Iowa, when he was stricken and died in the arms of his life partner, Karen Mitchell. He was 66.

Harry Brod’s personal and professional career overlapped in many ways. His works and writings on feminism, social justice, race and ethnicity went far beyond the lectures themselves.

I first met Harry in 2009 in Cedar Falls, where he and colleagues were hosting the conference “Engaging Men in Prevention: Taking a Stand Against Gender Violence,” at the University of Northern Iowa. I had been invited to speak about men’s engagement work being conducted by the Sioux City, Iowa–based Waitt Institute for Violence Prevention.

Harry’s stature and strong intellectual prowess stood out immediately. He was kind and humble, displaying a quiet confidence mixed with gratitude and humility. Being relatively new to the field of engaging men in preventing gender violence, I knew of Harry Brod, but wasn’t fully aware of his prominence and reputation in the field of men and masculinities. That quickly changed and soon I was referring to him as treasured colleague.

Harry was deeply involved in a national and international scholarship and discourse within the interdisciplinary field of feminist studies of men and masculinities. University of Southern California colleague and friend, the sociology professor Mike Messner wrote, “It is difficult to overstate the importance and depth of Harry Brod’s foundational contributions to men’s engagements with feminism, both academic and movement-based. He was a deeply thoughtful and sophisticated scholar, a pioneer in feminist analyses of men and masculinities. I learned much from Harry’s writings, and I always received a fresh nugget of insight from him every time I met with him, or heard him deliver a talk. His ethical commitment to feminism and social justice was expressed in a lifetime of work as a scholar-activist. Harry’s impact is wide and deep.”

Harry was born in Berlin, Germany, and grew up in New York City. He said his core identity was that of a child of Holocaust survivors. Interviewed this past May by the Des Moines Register, he said, “If I see a documentary about other children of Holocaust survivors, I can finish their sentences before they get there...it permeates how I see and view the world.”

Harry dedicated his life to teaching and to causes of social justice. A Media Education Foundation film was made of his influential lecture Asking for It: The Ethics and Erotics of Sexual Consent. It has been incorporated internationally into sexual assault prevention education programs by colleges, universities and other institutions, including the U.S. Air Force. 

It is difficult to overstate the importance and depth of Harry Brod’s contributions to men’s engagements with feminism, both academic and movement-based.”
—Prof. Michael Messner

Harry Brod was a huge figure in the field of Masculinity Studies. And I don’t mean that just physically, although his size and girth ensured that at every conference, every meeting, he would be noticed.

Harry was among the few scholars who managed to fuse his academic interests with his activist sensibilities. He resisted the arbitrary separation of research and activism, and as a result he was both mentor and teacher, colleague and comrade, to so many over the years.

The child of Holocaust survivors, Harry was trained as a philosopher. After receiving his B.A. from New York University in 1972, he went to UC San Diego, where he was among the last cohorts of graduate students to work with Herbert Marcuse. Under Marcuse’s direction, he wrote his Ph.D. dissertation about Hegel's Philosophy of Right, a dense tome that sets notions of freedom in larger social and moral contexts.

Even then, however, Harry became active in California anti-sexist men’s politics, attending some of the first California Men’s Gatherings, and thinking about how to engage men around men’s violence against women.

With a doctorate in Hegelian philosophy and an activist streak a mile wide, Harry found a permanent academic home hard to come by. After a couple of years at Cal State, San Bernardino, he was among the founding instructors in the Study of Women and Men in Society (SWMS) program at USC, and then held positions at Kenyon College, Harvard Law School, University of Delaware, Penn, and Temple before finally settling in 1999 at the University of Northern Iowa.

Along the way, he wrote or edited eight books, delivered hundreds of lectures, and also served on the National Council of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism. His first collection, The Making of Masculinities, was among the first efforts to define the new field of Masculinity Studies. His edited book A Mensch Among Men delineated a specific place for Jewish men in profeminist activism and thought. And his co-edited (with Michael Kaufman) volume Theorizing Masculinities brought forth what was, at the time, the most sophisticated thinking in Masculinity Studies defined by its accountable relationship to Women's Studies. And, he was one of the founding editors of Men and Masculinities.

It was, ironically, in the middle of Iowa that Harry found support for both his engaged teaching and his activist work (not coincidentally connected to his change in departments from Philosophy to Sociology, and meeting Karen Mitchell, his partner of 18 years). It was here that he wrote his most well-known crossover book, Superman Was Jewish?, which located the origins of superhero comics in the experiences of Jewish immigrants; where he developed the filmed lecture Asking for It: The Ethics and Erotics of Sexual Consent, which offers the most careful exposition of “consent” around sexuality and sexual assault prevention; and where he worked with activist groups on campuses and in the community to address men's violence against women.

Such a recitation of Harry’s accomplishments do an injustice to his dazzling wit, creative theorizing, erudition, and playful approach to ideas. His off-the-cuff feminist history of Valentine’s Day, the sexism of St. Patrick’s Day, the mind-body dualism of the necktie, or how to think, really think, about “consent,” were indelible. By turns Talmudic and funny, Harry was the essence of the public intellectual.

Harry Brod was also a huge presence in my life. Both politically and intellectually, Harry was a mentor, collaborator, political ally and dear friend. I will miss him greatly.

—Michael Kimmel
differences among his students, colleagues, family members and associates of all kind. “Listen others into change,” he would say. Really hearing what the other person has to say—or does not say—was foundational for Harry in his approach to building relationships where difference occurred. Harry also believed in being a withstander for others in times of crisis, discrimination, rejection or harm. Standing with someone communicates love and support without diminishing their agency or self-determination, he believed, two practices he said were desperately needed in our country today.

For many of us on the University of Northern Iowa campus it has been disorienting not seeing this bigger-than-life figure ambling across campus or casually visiting with students and colleagues in the student union. Harry Brod epitomized the idea of a scholar-activist. He will be missed.

Alan Heisterkamp, Ed.D., is the director of the Center for Violence Prevention at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, and a member of the steering committee of North American MenEngage network. He can be reached at alan.heisterkamp@uni.ed. Anyone wishing to make a contribution in Harry’s memory can do so to either the Harry Brod Masculinities Studies Collection at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, or the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

Teaching to Heal the Wounds of the World

I saw Harry Brod for the last time in November 2016. We were in Green Bay, Wisconsin, together with Michael Kimmel, for a two-day event honoring Harry at St. Norbert College. In the evening, the three of us spoke in the auditorium where we reminisced like the old codgers we were. We spoke about the early days of profeminist men’s scholarship and activism in the 1980s and its evolution since. We shared our thoughts on issues facing us all today. Here was our usual pattern: Michael or I would speak for several minutes and then, in about ten seconds, Harry would make the most obliteratingly cogent, synthesizing and stunningly perceptive and perfectly articulated comment. And then, it was on to the next question.

Although we were honoring Harry, he deflected praise. He was clearly happy, happy as I’ve ever seen him, but things never were just about him.

Who knows what’s in the cauldron of our personalities, but being a Jew born in Berlin six years after the defeat of the Nazis would have to loom large. He was an intellectual’s intellectual. I never heard him being defensive when challenged. I never heard him spout dogma. To Harry, the question was always as important as the answer. He dug deep and then dug deeper again.

I remember when around 1990 I was developing my notion of men’s contradictory experiences of power. I wrote something about the ways that men experienced both power and pain and about how these were the flip sides of the same coin—the coin being men’s lives in a male-dominated society. The problem, Harry said, was that my two sides of a coin formulation suggested a false equivalency. What’s more, he said, it was at odds with my own analysis. First of all, not only has the power traditionally outweighed any pain, but as I was arguing, the source of the pain lies in the paradoxes emerging from the ways we have constructed societies of men’s power and personal identities shaped within that. That was Harry. Listening to another person more deeply than one might listen to oneself. He nailed down for me what I was trying to say. He made those around him so much better as thinkers and as people.

He was a gentle man who had an incredible mind. He had trained with the great Marxist-Freudian philosopher Herbert Marcuse. It was a tough time not only to get a job as a philosopher but almost impossible in those days for a man doing critical gender studies. He understood that priority needed to go to hiring women who were utterly underrepresented in the professoriate. I know it was tough on him, but I never heard him complain. Things, as he had learned from his parents, could always be so much worse.

His greatest strength was as a teacher. Perhaps his great legacy lies not so much in his writings—although I do recommend those to all—but with his students and the colleagues he has taught. For Harry, to teach was to heal the wounds of the world.

We need you more than ever, Harry. But, this time, the rest of us will just have to do it ourselves.

Thanks, my friend, forever.

—Michael Kaufman
I first encountered Harry Brod’s writing in 1988, when he published A Mensch Among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity. I was still in my twenties, and hadn’t yet fully grappled with questions about my Jewish identity, and how and where that factored into my profeminist consciousness and activism.

Then I read Harry, and some of the authors whose writing he had assembled, and it started to make sense. I could find meaning and insight into my own personal struggles about being not only a “white” man looking critically at gender, but a white Jewish man, because he and others had already laid some of the foundations—autobiographical and intellectual—for this challenging work.

I cherished many things about Harry, whom I came to know as a mentor and friend. But for me (and many others), his larger-than-life Jewishness had a special pull. He was an east coast Jewish intellectual out of central casting—a philosopher, no less!—whose cerebralism and seriousness of purpose seemed to coexist seamlessly with a sensual and playful side. And he made no attempt to submerge his Jewishness, not even when he took a position on the faculty at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, one of the least-Jewish places in North America.

Michael Lerner has written that out of the Holocaust, two distinct forms of Jewish identity emerged, representing what might be thought of (by theists) as the right and left hands of God. If I might gender his thesis, the right hand of God is exemplified by Jewish men, in the United States and Israel, who responded to unspeakable Jewish victimization with the vow never to be vulnerable again: in a dangerous world you have to be tough and sometimes ruthless, or one day they’ll try to kill us all again. You mess with Jews; we mess with you. In a nutshell, this describes one of the driving forces in the worldview of Republican Jews (men and women).

By contrast, the left hand of God is represented by Jewish men—and women—whose response to Jewish victimization was to work for social justice and against violence. It is hardly coincidental that Jews are overrepresented in every major progressive struggle of the past 75 years: civil rights, feminism, the LGBT movements, etc. Jewish men are also disproportionately involved in the profeminist men’s movement, which Harry—the son of Holocaust survivors—served as a kind of secular rabbi.

It is cruelly ironic that Harry passed just as anti-Semitism was crawling out of the shadows as Donald Trump’s grotesque presidency empowers a new generation of neo-Nazis and assorted other bigots on the far right. Harry Brod was always a committed and vocal ally of people who suffered under the weight of oppression and bigotry: African Americans and other people of color, women, the LGBT community. The special gift he gave to those of us who are Jewish and men is that in word and deed, he modeled what it meant to be a mensch among men.

—Jackson Katz
How is it that there is an exception in India’s rape laws that allows sex without consent—rape—if a wife is older than 15?

The Delhi High Court is currently examining this law and considering a legal challenge by NGOs opposing marital rape. Complainants include the RIT Foundation, the All India Progressive Women’s Association (AIPWA), as well as the Forum to Engage Men (FEM), a group of men fighting for gender equality, and against marital rape.

While many progressive voices fight to establish marital rape as an offense, the Indian government has taken an altogether more medieval position. The central government made its understanding of marital rape known in response to the challenges. In its affidavit to the High Court, the government stated that “what may appear to be marital rape [to the wife] may not appear so to others."

A marital rape law “may destabilize the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing the husbands,” the government said, adding, “As to what constitutes marital rape and what would constitute marital non-rape needs to be defined precisely before a view on its criminalization is taken.”

Marriage = Equality

Understandably, the government’s stance has raised the hackles of various parties fighting for the recognition of marital rape as a criminal offense.

FEM’s application, filed by Abhijit Das, executive director of the Centre for Health and Social Justice, and cochair of the global MenEngage Alliance, reads in part, “We believe that in Indian society, a wife will only bring about such a complaint [of marital rape] against her husband when there is actual non-consent and she is desperate.”

In an interview with Catch, an English-language daily news website, Das explained that FEM’s “basic contention is that gender equality is a joint aspiration for men and women, and not a women’s issue alone. We’ve been working with men for 10 years now.”

Refuting the argument that the law would be widely misused, Das said, “Basically we’re saying that marriage as an institution is threatened because men are frightened their wives will cry ‘rape’ every time they want to have sex. So what are you treating women as?” Das added, “What we are going to affirm is that marriage [in India] is a relationship of equality between a man and a woman, and it is predicated on mutual respect. Yes, sex is an important part of marriage, but that important part, for pleasure or procreation, is a negotiated agreement between two people.”

Asked about men’s rights activists, like the Men’s Welfare Trust, who oppose their petition, Das says, “There are men who are threatened about their privileges. People ask us if we engage with them. We want to create a general understanding in people about gender equality, [and if] somebody is against gender equality, what can we do?” he said.

“Studies show that up to 10 percent of women face sexual violence in their marriage and 30 percent face domestic violence. That’s about 100 million women in India alone. Even if one woman faces violence, there needs to be a law to protect her.”
An Affront to All Women

Kavita Krishnan, secretary of one of the petitioning organizations, the All India Progressive Women’s Association (AIPWA), said the government's stand on marital rape “is an affront to all women.” She said the affidavit “suggests that, what a wife may perceive as rape may not be perceived as such by others. Rape — whether within or without marriage is immaterial — it is a violation of a woman’s consent.”

The government sees rape “as a violation of consent,” she said, suggesting “that patriarchal social perception must decide whether or not rape is rape! So the notion that a wife is a husband’s sexual property and her consent is immaterial, is one that a government is actually backing! I’d like to remind [everyone] that the Justice Verma Committee (established after the infamous Delhi rape case in 2012) also recommended scrapping of the marital exception,” Krishnan added.

Interestingly, a day after the affidavit to the Delhi High Court was released to the media, Supreme Court lawyer and former Mizoram governor Swaraj Kaushal took to Twitter to announce that there’s no such thing as marital rape.

“There will be more husbands in the jail, than in the house,” wrote Swaraj Kaushal the senior lawyer, who is married to minister of external affairs Sushma Swaraj. Questioned about his remark on Twitter, Swaraj Kaushal added, “There is nothing like marital rape. Our homes should not become police stations.”

The State’s Responsibility

Advocate Karuna Nundy, who is leading the arguments for the petitioners demanding a marital rape law, couldn’t officially comment on the matter. However, her written submission to the court concludes with a strongly worded comment on how the state must act to protect victims of marital rape, and provide them the fundamental right to dignity.

“By refusing to recognize and criminalize rape within marriage the state continues to violate the dignity and liberty to millions of married rape victims, guaranteed to them as a basic fundamental right under the Constitution,” she wrote.

Her submission also says that the lack of a law “delegates married women to the status of legal objects and second class citizens by nullifying their right to withhold or to give consent to sexual intercourse with the husband.”

On the issue of women being seen as property, she wrote, “The history of gender equality has been a move against that, towards the full recognition of women’s independent personality. The marital rape provision is the last vestige of the paterfamilias idea.”

Men’s Rights Activists Oppose Amending Rape Law

In response to the Delhi High Court’s review of a challenge to a law allowing marital rape as long as the wife is over 15, the Court agreed to hear a petition against amending the marital rape law filed by men’s rights activists (MRA) from the group Men’s Welfare Trust (MWT).

I contacted Amit Lakhani, MWT president, to ask why anyone would want to undermine a possible marital rape law. His prima facie argument is that consent to sex is a natural part of the agreement that is marriage. “When a man and a woman are getting married with their free will, whether in India or anywhere else in the world, they lose their right to have even consensual sex outside their marriage [because it would be adultery]. This means that there’s no room to withdraw consent in a marital alliance.” Or so Lakhani believes.

“A marriage is solemnized fully by choice and enthusiastic agreement between a man and a woman, with full knowledge of everyone [around them]. It’s not by accident or force. Even going by conjugal rights, wife and husband are making a conscious decision to keep sexual relations with the spouse.”

Asked if this means there’s no rape in marriage, Lakhani backtracked.

“No, we’re not saying that there cannot be suffering, or there cannot be sexual abuse of either spouse in a matrimonial relationship. It can happen to a man, it can happen to a woman. Although, the petitioners are completely ignoring the fact that globally these laws are gender-neutral.” Lakhani’s statement suggests that there’s rape, but it should be recognized only if both men and women can be implicated.

Challenged, he said, “No, no. I am not saying that I’m asking for a gender-neutral law. I’m just telling you that the [pro-criminalization] petitioners are also twisting their own judgments that they’re relying on. You cannot pick one line of the judgment and ask the judge to completely amend the law.”

Lakhani insists that men’s rights activists care for women and respect them. Commenting on the pro-feminist men’s organization, FEM, a group supporting the criminalization of marital rape, Lakhani says, “There are men working for women’s rights. The feminist men. The irony in India is that if you say you’re a man working for women’s rights you’re applauded and rewarded. But the moment you say you’re working for men’s rights, people see you as anti-woman.”

He sees “spousal violence” too as a gender-neutral, but that it shouldn’t be called rape. “Globally, it’s called spousal violence, and when it comes to spousal violence against women, well, it’s already criminalized in India.”

That’s right. The men’s rights activists’ argument against criminalizing marital rape is that there are enough and more laws that protect women, and therefore, removing the marital rape exemption only leaves married men more vulnerable.

—Durga M. Sengupta

Kavita Krishnan of the All India Progressive Women’s Association.

Durga M. Sengupta is an Indian journalist who keenly follows gender issues, culture, and intersectionality in the sub-continent. A version of this article—and the sidebar—first appeared in www.catchnews.com.
How is it possible that the African National Congress (ANC) still thinks the battles for women's rights and feminism are somehow different?

Separating women's rights from feminism is the reason the ANC claims to be a “nonracist, nonsexist” organization, but patriarchy is rife in the party, according to a gender rights expert.

The ruling party and the ANC Women’s League recently came under fire after ANC Women’s League president Bathabile Dlamini supported former higher education deputy minister Mduduzi Manana after he was accused of assaulting women at a nightclub.

Police confirmed they had opened a case of assault against Manana. One of the victims told the eNCA television channel, “As we were leaving we were assaulted by Deputy Minister Manana and his group of friends. They kicked me, they punched me, as well as my cousin.” A journalist who witnessed the incident, Lumko Jimlongo, said on South Africa Broadcasting, “She fell on the floor… then he proceeded to trample [her]… he kicked her, his foot was on her head.”

The ANC Women’s League president claimed the incident was being used as a political tool and that “others” were worse, suggesting she was aware of men in government or politicians who had committed even more serious crimes against women.

Lisa Vetten, senior researcher and political analyst for the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, said it was unrealistic to expect the ruling party or the league to be a leading voice against injustices against women, given the party’s strong leaning toward conservatism.

“You can’t really expect more from the ANC or the women’s league, whose leaders are still very conservative. It’s never going to happen,” Vetten said. “I think the ANC has a very ambivalent attitude towards the issue. There are those who do care and there are those who don’t, like those who would like to reinstate traditionalism as rapidly as possible. So when you have that sort of ideological divide, the leaders are not going to do terribly much.”

She said some leaders were better off saying nothing about gender politics because the cognitive dissonance in their statements was often detrimental to the cause of gender justice.

In 2012, former ANCWLS leader Angie Motshekga famously said, “The ANCWLS is not a feminist organization, it is a women’s rights organization.” Nevertheless, the ANC insisted it was the leading organization in the struggle for gender justice.

ANC spokesperson Zizi Kodwa said the party had more equal gender representation than opposition parties, adding that speaking out against patriarchy and misogyny, and interrogating the attitudes of men toward women, was not helpful.

“The issue about gender-based violence is that we should not be dealing with stereotypes and attitudes, because that is looking for an explanation. There is no explanation for such violence against women; there can be no explanation. Regardless of the history of violence against women, we are not looking for explanations, we want to condemn it regardless of everybody’s location in society.”

Minister of Women in the Presidency Susan Shabangu recently intimated that her feminist ideals were often not welcome in the party but refused to say whether patriarchy was still an issue in the ANC.

“In 2014, when I said you cannot fight violence against women by organizing women alone, I was under attack and was told to focus on women’s rights,” Shabangu recalled. “I understood exactly what the problems are and what I need to respond to. Hence, today, I am happy we are seeing more men’s organizations fighting gender-based violence in our society. The perpetrators are men, so I’m satisfied we are moving in the right direction.”

Simnikiwe Hlatshaneni is a print, television and radio journalist from Johannesburg. In 2016, she was one of two reporters from the South African newspaper The Citizen who was attacked, along with two community activists, in a village in the country’s Eastern Cape, following the funeral of an antimining activist. She can be reached at simnikiweh@citizen.co.za. A version of this article appeared in The Citizen, http://citizen.co.za.
When it comes to AIDS in Africa, there’s a simultaneous truth: men are far more likely to die from an HIV-related illness than women, while women are becoming infected with HIV at a much faster rate.

In East and Southern Africa, more than half (54 percent) of people dying of AIDS-related illnesses were men and boys, although they represent only 46 percent of those infected with HIV in the region, according to UNAID’s 2017 Global AIDS update.

Why? Because fewer men than women get tested for HIV. Studies show that in East and Southern African countries, men are significantly less likely than women to have been tested for HIV and therefore do not know their HIV status. As a result, fewer men than women are taking antiretroviral medicine, and many who receive treatment do so at a later stage of HIV infection when the virus has had a significant amount of time to deplete their immune systems. In such cases, treatment is sometimes less effective.

In 2016, 60 percent of women living with HIV who were 15 or older were receiving treatment, compared to 47 percent of men, according to the UNAIDS report. In South Africa, the figures are 51 percent for women and 37 percent for men. As a result, globally 27 percent fewer women and girls had HIV-related illnesses than men and boys.

This situation is even more pronounced among young men 15 to 24. From 2000 to 2015, deaths declined by 18 percent among girls and young women in this age group, but increased by 14 percent for their male peers. Still, women in this age group are getting infected at a much faster rate than their male peers: in 2016, new HIV infections among women ages 15 to 24 were 44 percent higher than among men in the same age group.

When men do not know their HIV status, they are less likely to change their sexual practices or to use condoms, and are therefore also much more likely to transmit HIV to their partners. Studies show that men’s low use of health services is not merely a consequence of their poor choices in seeking health services, or their attitudes about manhood. Health services are often not designed to attract men. Our organization, Sonke Gender Justice, analyzed health policies in Africa and found that most of them don’t integrate men’s health needs into broader policy frameworks. Governments therefore need to rethink and redesign how they deliver HIV-related health services.

Some African governments have made progress in this regard. Rwanda has made involving men in HIV services a priority. The country’s prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV stipulates that not only pregnant women but also their partners are offered HIV testing and counseling at their first visit to an prenatal clinic.

A campaign called “Going for the Gold” encourages male partners of pregnant women to accompany them to prenatal clinic visits. It has resulted in a significant increase in men’s HIV testing: Rwandan health ministry data from 2003 shows that when the PMTCT policy was introduced, only 16 percent of men tested for HIV along with their pregnant partners; a decade later, in 2013, the figure increased to 85 percent. During the same period, HIV infection rates fell dramatically among pregnant women and their male partners—from about 10 percent to about 1 percent for both sexes.

In Uganda, the Optimizing HIV Treatment for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women Initiative encourages couples to test for HIV together, according to a 2016 UNICEF report. This has resulted in couples’ HIV counseling and testing increasing from 13 to 97 percent in one district between 2013 and 2014.

In Kenya, Nairobi County Health Services has started offering mobile HIV testing and other health services to bodaboda (motorbike taxi) riders.

UNAIDS and Sonke Gender Justice have produced a documentary on how to get men to use HIV services. In the film, which will be released by the end of the year, a Kenyan local health promotion officer makes it clear: “If we want male involvement in health services, inclusive of the HIV programming, then it is most appropriate for us to reach the men at their workplaces, be it in their offices, be it in their companies, in institutions where they are engaged over the daytime. In their social places where they socialize as men; or even those who are self-employed:”

We need to replicate these examples. In December 2015, UNAIDS co-convened a high-level meeting in Geneva. A global platform for action on men and HIV was developed and launched at the International AIDS Conference in Durban in 2016. The program is gaining traction: this year’s UNAIDS report pays unprecedented attention to the plight of men and their disproportionately poor access to services.

Bottom line: we will not end AIDS if we don’t ensure our health strategies focus on encouraging men to use health services and work with men to foster greater gender equality.

Jonathan Hopkins is a consultant on men and HIV. Dean Peacock is cofounder and coexecutive director of Sonke Gender Justice, and a cofounder and former cochair of the global MenEngage Alliance.
It is impossible to talk about Donald Trump—his election victory, his personal brand, his public persona—without also discussing toxic masculinity. This is a man who brought up the size of his penis during a political debate, who bragged about using his fame in the service of sexual assault, who recently interrupted a call with another world leader to hit on a nearby female reporter. Trump rode toxic masculinity and racial demagoguery to the White House, and he continues to embody and inflame both as a key strategy of his presidency.

But Trump is more than just a case study in male posturing and fragility; he’s a reflection of the culture that elevated and embraced him. As a society, how are we planting the roots of toxic masculinity, and how can we root it out? How do we force boys and men to perform manliness, and what are the consequences? What does the denigration of femininity—a genuine emotional component of every human being—do to men? Now, more than ever, is the time to grapple with these questions.

Toxic Masculinity

If we are being honest with ourselves, we have long known that masculinity kills men, in ways both myriad and measurable. While social constructions of femininity demand that women be thin, beautiful, accommodating, and some unattainable balance of virginal and f**kable, social constructions of masculinity demand that men constantly prove and reprove the very fact that they are, well, men.

Both ideas are poisonous and potentially destructive, but statistically speaking, the number of addicted and afflicted men and their comparatively shorter lifespans proves that masculinity is actually the more effective killer, getting the job done faster and in greater numbers. The death toll of masculinity is attributed to its more specific manifestations: alcoholism, workaholism and violence. Even when it does not literally kill, masculinity causes a sort of spiritual death, leaving many men traumatized, dissociated and often depressed. (These consequences are heightened by marginalizing factors such as queerness, nonwhiteness and socio-
economic inequality.) To quote Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “tis not in death that men die most.” And for many men, the process begins long before manhood.

The emotionally damaging “masculinization” of boys starts even before boyhood, in infancy. Psychologist Terry Real, in his 1998 book I Don’t Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression, highlights numerous studies that find parents often unconsciously begin projecting a kind of innate “manliness”—and thus, a diminished need for comfort, protection and affection—onto babies as young as newborns. This, despite the fact that gendered behaviors are absent in babies; male infants actually behave in ways our society defines as “feminine.” As Real explains, “[l]ittle boys and little girls start off... equally emotional, expressive, and dependent, equally desirous of physical affection. At the youngest ages, both boys and girls are more like a stereotypical girl. If any differences exist, little boys are, in fact, slightly more sensitive and expressive than little girls. They cry more easily, seem more easily frustrated, appear more upset when a caregiver leaves the room.” Yet both mothers and fathers imagine inherent sex-related differences between baby girls and boys. Even when researchers controlled for babies’ “weight, length, alertness, and strength,” parents overwhelmingly reported that girls were more delicate and “softer” than boys; they imagined baby boys to be bigger and generally “stronger.” When a group of 204 adults was shown video of the same baby crying and given differing information about the baby’s sex, they judged the “female” baby to be scared, while the “male” baby was described as “angry.”

Intuitively, these differences in perception create correlating differences in the kind of parental caregiving newborn boys receive. In the words of the researchers, “it would seem reasonable to assume that a child who is thought to be afraid is held and cuddled more than a child who is thought to be angry.” That theory is bolstered by other studies Real cites, which consistently find that “from the moment of birth, boys are spoken to less than girls, comforted less, nurtured less.” We begin emotionally shortchanging boys right out of the gate, at the most vulnerable point in their lives.

It’s a pattern that continues throughout childhood and into adolescence. Real cites a study that found both mothers and fathers emphasized “achievement and competition in their sons,” and taught them to “control their emotions”—another way of saying boys are tacitly instructed to ignore or downplay their emotional needs and wants. Similarly, parents of both sexes are more punitive toward their sons, presumably working under the assumption that boys “can take it.”

Beverly I. Fagot, the late researcher and author of The Influence of Sex of Child on Parental Reactions to Toddler Children, found that parents gave positive reinforcement to all children when they exhibited “same-sex preferred” behaviors (as opposed to “cross-sex preferred”). Parents who said they “accepted sex equity” nonetheless offered more positive responses to little boys when they played with blocks, and gave negative feedback to girls when they engaged in sporty behavior. And while independent play—away from parents—and “independent accomplishments” were encouraged in boys, girls received more positive feedback when they asked for help. As a rule, these parents were unaware of the active role they played in socializing their children in accordance with gender norms. Fagot notes that all stated they treated sons and daughters the same, without regard to sex, a claim sharply contradicted by study findings.

Undeniably, these kinds of lessons impart deeply damaging messages to both girls and boys, and have lifelong and observable consequences. But whereas, as Terry Real says, “girls are allowed to maintain emotional expressiveness and cultivate connection,” boys are told not only to suppress their emotions, but that their manliness essentially depends on their doing so. Despite its logic-empty premise, our society has fully bought into the notion that the relationship between maleness and masculinity is somehow incidental and precarious, and embraced the myth that “boys must be turned into men... that boys, unlike girls, must achieve masculinity.”

Little boys internalize this concept early; when I spoke to Real, he indicated that research suggests they begin to hide their feelings from as young as three to five years old. “It doesn’t mean that they have fewer emotions. But they’re already learning the game—that it’s not a good idea to express them,” Real says. Boys, conventional wisdom holds, are made men not by merely aging into manhood, but through the crushing effects of socialization. Still, Real points out what should be obvious: that boys “do not need to be turned into males. They are males. Boys do not need to develop their masculinity.”

It is impossible to downplay the concurrent influence of images and messages about masculinity embedded in our media. TV shows and movies inform kids—and all of us, really—not so much about who men (and women) are, but who they should be. While much of the scholarship about gender depictions in media has come from feminists deconstructing the endless damaging representations of women, there’s been far less research specifically about media-perpetuated constructions of masculinity. But certainly, we all recognize the male traits that are valued in film, television, video games, comic books, and more: strength, valor, independence, the ability to provide and protect.

While depictions of men have grown more complicated, nuanced and human over time (we’re long past the days of Father Knows Best and Superman archetypes), certain “masculine” qualities remain valued over others. As Amanda D. Lotz writes in her 2014 book, Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century, though depictions of men in media have become more diverse, “storytelling has nevertheless performed significant ideological work by consistently supporting... male characters it constructs as heroic or admirable, while denigrating others. So although television series may have displayed a range of men and masculinities, they also circumscribed a ‘preferred’ or ‘best’ masculinity through attributes that were consistently idealized.”

We are all familiar with these recurring characters: the fearless action heroes; the prostitute-f**king psychopaths of Grand Theft Auto; the shubby, housework-averse sitcom dads with inexplicably beautiful wives; the bumbling stone the who must still manage to nail the hot girl in the end; and still, the invincible Superman. Even lovable everyguy Paul Rudd somehow “mans up” before the credits roll in his films. Here, it seems important to mention a National Coalition on Television Violence study that finds on average, 18-year-old American males have already witnessed some 26,000 murders on television, “almost all of them
committed by men." Couple those numbers with violence in film and other media, and the figures are likely astronomical.

The result of all this—the early denial of boys' feelings, and our collective insistence that they follow suit—is that boys are effectively cut off from their emotions, and thus, their deepest and most vulnerable selves. Historian Stephanie Coontz has labeled this effect the "masculine mystique." It leaves little boys, and later, men, emotionally disembodied, afraid to show weakness and often unable to fully access, recognize or cope with their feelings.

In his book Why Men Can't Feel: Angry Men, Passive Men: Understanding the Roots of Men's Anger and How to Move Beyond It, Marvin Allen states, "[T]hese messages encourage boys to be competitive, focus on external success, rely on their intellect, withstand physical pain, and repress their vulnerable emotions. When boys violate the code, it is not uncommon for them to be teased, shamed, or ridiculed."

The cliché about men not being in touch with their emotions says nothing about inherent markers of maleness, but instead identifies behavioral outcomes that have been rigorously taught, often by well-meaning parents and society at large. As Terry Real told me, this process of disconnecting boys from their feminine—or more accurately, human—emotional selves is deeply harmful. "Every step... is injurious," says Real. "It's traumatic. It's traumatic to be forced to abdicate half of your own humanity."

That trauma makes itself plain in the ways men attempt to sublimate feelings of emotional need and vulnerability. While women tend to internalize pain, men act it out, against themselves and others. Real said that women "blame themselves, they feel bad, they know they feel bad, they'd like to get out of it. Boys and men tend to externalize stress. We act it out and often don't see our part in it. It's the opposite of self-blame; it's more like feeling like an angry victim." The National Alliance on Mental Illness states that across race and ethnicity, women are twice as likely to experience depression as men. But Real believes men's acting-out behaviors primarily serve to mask their depression, which goes largely unrecognized and undiagnosed.

Examples of these destructive behaviors range from the societally approved, such as workaholism, to the criminally punishable, such as drug addiction and violence. Men are twice as likely as women to suffer from rage disorders. According to the Centers for Disease Control, men are more likely to drink to excess than women, leading to "higher rates of alcohol-related deaths and hospitalizations." (Possibly because men under the influence are also more likely to engage in other risky behaviors, such as "driving fast or without a safety belt.") Boys are more likely to have used drugs by the age of 12 than girls, which leads to a higher likelihood of drug abuse in men later in life. American men are more likely to kill (committing 90.5 percent of all murders) and be killed (comprising 76.8 percent of murder victims). This extends to themselves, according to studies: "males take their own lives at nearly four times the rate of females and comprise approximately 80 percent of all suicides." (Interestingly, suicide attempts among women are estimated to be three to four times higher than that of their male counterparts.) And according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, men make up more than 93 percent of prisoners.

The damaging effects of emotional severing even play a role in the lifespan gender gap. As Terry Real explains: "Men's willing-

On average, by the time they turn 18 American males have already witnessed some 26,000 murders on television, almost all of them committed by men.

Masculinity is both difficult to achieve and impossible to maintain, a fact Real notes is evident in the phrase "fragile male ego." Because men's self-esteem often rests on such a shaky construct, the effort to preserve it can be all-consuming. Avoiding the shame that's left when it is peeled away can drive some men to dangerous ends. This is not to absolve people of responsibility for their actions, but it does drive home the forces that inform behaviors we often attribute solely to individual issues, ignoring their root causes.

James Gilligan, former director of the Center for the Study of Violence at Harvard Medical School, has written numerous books on the subject of male violence and its source. In a 2013 interview with MenAlive, a men's health blog, Gilligan spoke of his study findings, stating, "I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo that 'loss of face'—no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death."

Too often, men suffer alone, believing that revealing their personal pain is tantamount to failing at being a man. "As a society, we have more respect for the walking wounded," Terry Real writes, "those who deny their difficulties, than we have for those who 'let' their conditions 'get to them.'" Yet the cost, both human and in real dollars, of not recognizing men's trauma is far greater than attending to those wounds, or avoiding creating them in the first place. It's critical that we begin taking more seriously what we do to little boys, how we do it, and the high emotional cost of masculinity, which turns emotionally whole little boys into emotionally debilitated adults.

When masculinity is defined by absence, when it sits on the absurd and fallacious idea that the only way to be a man is not to acknowledge a key part of oneself, the consequences are both vicious and soul-crushing. The resulting displacement and disassociation leaves men yet more vulnerable and in need of crutches to help allay the pain created by our demands of manliness. As Terry Real writes, "A depressed woman's internalization of pain weakens her and hampers her capacity for direct communication. A depressed man's tendency to extrude pain... may render him psychologically dangerous."

Society has set an unfair and unachievable standard, and in trying to live up to it, many men are slowly killing themselves. It's time to move beyond these outdated ideas of masculinity and start seeing men as innately human, with no need to prove who they are, to themselves or anyone else.

Kali Holloway is a senior writer and the associate editor of media and culture at AlterNet, where this article first appeared.
Richard Hoffman

Poetry

The Road

Mothers with newborns in knotted slings,
on their heads impossible towers of things,
the old in carts, the children by the hand,
these people crossing a cratered land
are more than metaphor;
but they are also metaphor.
We are the truth to one another. Look:
don’t wait for some historian’s book
to understand this (then it will be too late).
This is the unchecked power of the State,
the end of empathy, the rise of Mars,
the avarice that in the end mars
all our laws and medicine and art.
Show me one fleeing person’s heart
and I will show you a thousand griefs
for loves, hopes, memories, beliefs
that war has undermined.
Corpses plowed under, mined
roads and fields, the groves and orchards
poisoned, fathers and brothers tortured,
hope abandoned with the other heavy
furniture —
it isn’t much of a road, the future,
if you don’t know where
it goes or it goes nowhere.

Richard Hoffman is a poet, memoirist, essayist,
and fiction writer. His latest poetry collection
is Noon Until Night.

Books

Healing My Life from Incest to Joy
By Donna Jenson
2017, 383 pages
Leveller’s Press
Review by Lea Grover

With a title like Healing My Life from Incest to Joy, you might think Donna Jenson’s new book would be a heavy, difficult read. But though she is honest and deeply human as she tells her story of childhood incest, what is most striking about this book is the joy.

Jenson, a successful community builder and playwright, focuses not on the details of her abuse, but on the steps she took to build a life of meaning and beauty. Through her, we learn techniques of storytelling, therapy, and relationship building. She does not ask the reader to suffer with her, rather inviting the reader to heal with her. With a conversational tone and genuine friendliness, she invites the reader into her life, getting to know and love the friends who support her, the daughter who encourages her, and the diverse and compassionate “Family of Choice” surrounding her.

This book is not prescriptive, not a “how-to” guide to overcoming trauma, but it is a detailed account of what helped Jenson, how and why she came to learn new tools for introspection and growth, and where any person could find them, should they have an interest. It’s the kindness of this storytelling that is so striking. Jenson does not pretend to speak on behalf of all survivors, but she clearly speaks to all survivors of incest. This book firmly says, “If I can do it, so can you,” and reading her words, she compels you to believe them.

Scattered throughout the book are excerpts from letters, diary entries, and notes for her play, giving a rare insight into Jenson’s vulnerable process of becoming the best version of herself. It offers a guide for survivors of childhood sexual abuse to see themselves as whole, and validated in their choices to build an adult life outside the structures of their abuse.

The joy Jenson has for the life she has built is apparent on every page, and with every new page that joy transforms into hope, and gratitude. Healing My Life from Incest to Joy will speak to anyone who has tried to heal, who wants to heal, or who has begun to heal their own lives. Jenson not only offers readers the understanding of a friend, but helps them to understand themselves.

Lea Grover works with The Voices and Faces Project (voicesandfaces.org).
Ten Must-Read Books About White Masculinity and the Rise of Trump

By Jackson Katz

With the first anniversary of Donald Trump's improbable election at hand, a torrent of books are being published that purport to analyze Trump's political success and what it signifies and portends for the present and future of American politics. Many of these books appropriately address the "blue-collar billionaire's" appeal to the ethnic bigotry and white nationalism that has long hidden in the shadows of American politics. But to date, precious few have correctly identified the central role played by gender—specifically white masculinity—in Trump's rise as a political icon.

This exclusion started early. The day after the 2016 election, The New York Times published a list of books to help voters understand Trump's win. Not one title on the list foregrounded gender; only one, Strangers in Their Own Land (see below), discussed it in any depth whatsoever.

If current trends persist, it seems safe to predict that many of the 2016 election books either will fail to discuss gender—outside of reflexive references to the misogyny surrounding Hillary Clinton's bid to become the first woman president—or will minimize its importance.

As a corrective to this systematic exclusion, I have compiled a list that attempts to steer discussions of Trumpism back to a critical analysis not just of whiteness, but of white masculinity. The books briefly summarized here offer an introductory roadmap for anyone—journalists, academics, political science students, armchair analysts—who wants to understand the racial and gendered nature of Trump's ascension. Some of them are recent releases; others date back a decade or more.

Obviously, the list is not even close to being comprehensive. (The new edition of the anthology drawn from the pages of this magazine, Voice Male: The Untold Story of the Profeminist Men's Movement, includes observations about Trump and masculinity.) Countless books published over the past half-century offer a wealth of insight into the myriad historical, social, economic, psychological, and relational forces at work in the construction of white American masculinity in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. But these books are a good place to start.

Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era
By Michael Kimmel

Kimmel, an eminent sociologist and indispensable scholar of masculinity, powerfully lays out the historical and cultural currents in white American masculinity that have fed the rise of Trump. One of these is "aggrieved entitlement," or the belief many white men hold that if they're not achieving the American Dream, someone (e.g. Latino immigrants, Black Lives Matter activists, liberals, feminists) must be to blame. Essential reading for any journalist or scholar who seeks to understand the class, race and gender/sexual politics of heterosexual white American men's rightward shift in a society that is increasingly accepting of ethnic, racial, gender and sexual diversity. The paperback version released this spring contains an updated preface by the author that includes a discussion of Trump.

The Neglected Voter: White Men and the Democratic Dilemma
By David Paul Kuhn

Kuhn uses exceptionally insightful first-person interviews with leading political figures and campaign operatives, as well as polling data, to explain the male side of the gender gap. He makes a convincing case that the Democratic Party's failure to address directly the material and emotional needs and concerns of white male voters—traditionally a pillar of the Democratic New Deal coalition—has contributed to its decline, and not just in the South. This book was published prior to the 2008 election but contains a multitude of insights that Democrats seemingly—and disastrously—ignored in 2016. Like many of the titles on this list, Democratic strategists should have kept a copy of this book on their desks as they tried to comprehend and counteract the rise of the faux-populist "blue-collar billionaire."

The Wimp Factor: Gender Gaps, Holy Wars and the Politics of Anxious Masculinity
By Stephen Ducat

Landmark analysis of the subtextual influence of male anxiety on American politics. This brilliant but unfortunately semi-obscure volume is teeming with stunning insights about the political implications of men's psychological needs and desires in the context of patriarchal culture. Ducat pays special attention to men's fears—especially their fear of being perceived as "feminine"—and how "phallic" insecurity plays out in myriad ways in political struggles around guns, foreign policy, terrorism, the death penalty, and a range of other contemporary hot-button issues. Published in 2004, this study concluded during George W. Bush's presidency but its explanatory power remains remarkably undiminished.

What's the Matter with White People?: Finding Our Way in the Next America
By Joan Walsh

Through an engaging and highly readable amalgam of memoir and social history, Walsh tells a story of how cultural and political changes over the past half-century have shaped the lives and political ideologies of white people, specifically the ethnic white working class. Notably the book does not explicitly discuss white men; when gender is mentioned it is mostly to describe the author's experiences as a woman amidst the broader feminist transformations of the era. Nonetheless Walsh's personal reflections and political insights provide a useful lens with which to examine many white people's resentment and alienation in the face of epochal racial/ethnic changes, sparking an electoral backlash that has decimated the Democratic Party at the state level and resulted in the election of a president beloved by white nationalists and sundry other racists.
Any serious discussion of the many gendered forces at work in contemporary American politics has to include the central role of Fox News in pushing the national discourse to the right, in part by its relentless ridicule of any challenge to traditional patriarchal authority as part of feminism’s effort to “wussify” men. From its inception, Fox has offered a megawatt platform for some of the most aggressive and bullying conservative white male personalities, e.g. Bill O’Reilly and Sean Hannity, both of whom became rich and famous by confidently and angrily reasserting (white) men’s cultural centrality. This invaluable book tells the story of how the deeply cynical, conflict-ridden and pathologically misogynous founding chief, the late Roger Ailes, forced out last summer by Fox for allegations of serial sexual harassment, made a network in his own image.

Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think
By George Lakoff

Lakoff is a groundbreaking cognitive scientist and linguist who advanced the idea that frames and metaphor structure the way we think about politics, and that only by examining these underlying mental processes can we fully understand why people vote a certain way. This book includes a thorough analysis of Lakoff’s famous thesis that ideologies of the family shape political ideologies. In this view, the Republican Party represents the “daddy party,” the provider and protector who lays down the rules and expects them to be followed. By contrast the Democratic Party is seen as the “mommy party,” which nurtures and supports children and is more warm and fuzzy—and thus less masculine.

Angry White Male: How the Donald Trump Phenomenon Is Changing America — and What We Can All Do to Save the Middle Class
By Wayne Allan Root

In terms of its depth of insight, this book does not meet the lofty standards of the other books on this list. Nonetheless, the author, a conservative television and radio personality, has usefully written what Trump’s long time advisor Roger Stone called the “Handbook of the Trump Revolution.” Root forcefully argues that the Democratic Party and Obama in particular have been out to attack and destroy the American dream, and Trump is his hero because he has the guts and charisma to defend that dream. The rhetoric in this book is over-the-top and filled with hypermasculine language and imagery, such as when Root compares Trump to William Wallace of Braveheart fame. But for Democrats, progressives and feminists who see Trumpism as a threat not only to Democratic rule but to democracy itself, it is important to engage directly with the arguments and understand the sources of the white male (and female) anger Trump channels every day on TV, Twitter, and in public rales.

Rethinking Madam President: Are We Ready for a Woman in the White House?
Edited by Lori Cox Han and Caroline Heldman

This must-read collection focuses on the barriers and obstacles facing women presidential candidates. But thoughtful analyses of women’s continued subordinate political status by definition contain invaluable insight about the myriad ways in which (white) men retain cultural and political power and control. This book was published before Hillary Clinton’s first run for the Democratic nomination in 2008, but most of its content was relevant through the 2016 election. Any serious examination of Donald Trump’s victory must include analysis not only of his pugilistic performance of white masculinity, but also of the deeply misogynous aggression he and his supporters directed toward Hillary Clinton. The editors just published a new volume that updates much of the analysis contained in Madam President. It is entitled Women, Power, and Politics: The Fight for Gender Equality in the United States, and will surely be required reading for all political science scholars and students, as well as for any journalist who covers U.S. presidential politics.

Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right
By Arlie Russell Hochschild

The influential sociologist’s aim in researching and writing this engrossing book was to climb over the “empathy wall” and try to understand why so many white working-class people over the past generation have voted for conservative Republicans, in a way that appears to many liberals and progressives to be patently against their own interests. Hochschild interviewed dozens of white people in the pollution-ravaged region of southwest Louisiana—a major Tea Party stronghold that went overwhelmingly for Trump—and by bringing to life the “deep stories” that inform their worldviews, sheds light on how resentment about their stalled path to the American Dream shapes their political loyalties. Read this book for deeper and more personal insight into why so many white people are attracted to Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again,” including white men who have experienced the loss of well-paying jobs, the rise of the women’s movement and the election of the first African-American president as profoundly decentering andemasculating.

Finally, I too wrote a book about this subject. If you’ve read this far, chances are you’ll find it interesting and most certainly relevant:

Man Enough? Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and the Politics of Presidential Masculinity
By Jackson Katz

The animating theme here is the highly masculine nature of the American presidency: the president is not just chief executive, but (he) also occupies a powerfully symbolic role as head of the First Family, commander in chief, and literal representative of the nation’s “manhood” on the international stage. Presidential campaigns thus amount to contests between competing versions of masculinity—often boiling down to more progressive/feminist versus retro versions —played out under the blinding glare of the media spotlight. (This) author analyzes key elections from 1972 to 2016, through the rise of Trumpism, which is described as a defiant reassertion of white male identity—especially white working-class male identity—after four decades of economic stagnation and social change. Includes discussion of the critical role that Rush Limbaugh, talk radio and Fox News play in critiquing and defining presidential masculinity, and a highly topical analysis of the gendered features of the Trump-Clinton race up to the summer of 2016.

RESOURCES FOR CHANGING MEN

A wide-ranging (but by no means exhaustive) listing of organizations engaged in pro-feminist men's work. Know of an organization that should be listed here? E-mail relevant information to us at info@voicemademagazine.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.boystomen.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. menspeacemakers.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 www.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.menstoryproject.org

Menstuff: The National Men’s Resource
National clearinghouse of information and resources for men www.mensstuff.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/pfaq.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.idvaac.org

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

National Latin@ 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.collaborativedivorce.com
www.collaborativepractice.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 raise fully realized 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.nlfii.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.ismh.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 malesurvivors. www.menthriving.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.1infourusa.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/me-nagainstviolence

Men Can Stop Rape
Washington, D.C.-based national advocacy and training organization mobilizing male youth to prevent violence against women www.mencanstoprape.org
RESOURCES FOR CHANGING MEN

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.tcvf.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

MVP Strategies
Gender violence prevention education and training
www.mvpstrat.com

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
vawnet.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)
A national information and resource hub relating to all aspects of sexual violence
www.nsvrc.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.svr.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 campaign 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.cologne.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.gltqdv.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

Interprise
Clearinghouse for information on pride events worldwide
www.interprise.net

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

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
Resource center aimed at improving the quality of service and supports offered to LGBT older adults
www.lgbtagincingcenter.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 well-being of LGBTQ persons and their parents, friends and families
www.pflag.org

Straight Spouse Network
Provides personal, confidential support and information to heterosexual spouses/partners, current or former, of GLBT individuals
www.straightspouse.org/home.php

Survivor Project
A non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans* survivors of domestic and sexual violence
www.survivoproject.org

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

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.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.mergetoequality.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
www.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.saskatoonmenscenter.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.tcmc.org
FROM THE EDITOR
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“I DO NOT PRETEND TO KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE BLACK OR NATIVE AMERICAN, OR ASIAN OR HISPANIC OR A WOMAN, FOR THAT MATTER. I AM NONE OF THOSE THINGS. I DON’T KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE GAY.”

Rob,

Thank you for your reply. I understand that minorities have been disenfranchised for generations. I do not deny that. The reality is we as white men live in a world that tried to do good by evening the playing field but militant HR personnel are hostile to white males; many even have forced guilt on white males. As the owner of my own company, I have clawed and scratched for everything I have. So, yes, it torques me off to hear that I only have it due to my “White Privilege.” I know many minority and female business owners who work hard every day for their families and employees.

I live in a part of the world where we do not have many black individuals except refugees from Sudan. Many of the other blacks have come from the relocation of Hurricane Katrina victims and their families; others through adoption. These are decent, hard-working people. We have a lot of Hispanic immigrants, many who are here legally, and are great hardworking individuals. We also have many illegals here. We also have many Native Americans as I live in the middle of the Great Sioux Nation within an hour or two of most of the Seven Council Fires. I have worked with many Sioux tribe members over the years.

I agree with your statement the system is broken. We live in a system that the government pits Us against Them all the time—whether on race or on poverty. As for your question on getting in touch with my feelings, I too grew up in a time when the only acceptable emotion was anger. I grew up in a military family and it was boiler-room justice. Today, we would call that child abuse. In the late 1990s I was trying to discover myself. I started reading all kinds of books on getting in touch with your emotions and how to be the man every woman wants. After all, I was single...I learned to be empathetic. This does not come naturally for me. I also found that the more I tried to follow the principles I was being fed I was being mistaken by many for being gay! Others mistook my softer approach for weakness and many women dominated the relationship. I finally had enough after a couple of years of trying and went down the path of manhood I have followed for the last 22 years. Has it been perfect? No, but no one walks all over me anymore. I have been blessed with an amazing wife and I wholeheartedly support her and the job she does as a social worker.

Many of the emotions that caused me to write you have come up in the last year—the hate cheered on and championed by the media. The race wars; the police assassinations. The disregard for court decisions; the praise of criminals. What happened to the strong minority leaders who led by example and protested with peace? I am by no means saying whites have gotten it right. We have propagated our fair share of sin in this world. Many, out of ignorance. We will never truly be able to resolve the racial divide unless we are willing to sit down with one another, and have honest discussions. Burning businesses and looting, along with violent expressions, will do nothing to bring whites and blacks together. Hate is not a color issue; it is a heart issue.

I have to get back to work. I look forward to continuing this dialog with you, Rob.

Dan

I am glad to be continuing our conversation.

We are living through a period of intense social transformation. Many traditional power structures and social arrangements are becoming increasingly obsolete. One way to think about things is not to look back (as many white men do)—trying to recapture some sense of lost glory—but to look ahead and work together to find common solutions. White men have a lot to contribute to the new directions required to make society work better. It doesn’t have to be lose-lose, where if people of color and women and gays advance, heterosexual white men must retreat. For example, the coal mining jobs being touted are not coming back, but the need for solar installers and windmill technicians is increasing—good-paying and far less dangerous jobs. We all need to lobby for job retraining.

Some people think white men in our country shouldn’t be so angry. As Americans, we have so many privileges already. Consider: While the U.S. is only 5 percent of the world’s population, we use nearly 40 percent of the planet’s resources. Ouch.

I know the anger a lot of white men feel is real—and is deeply held and sincere. But I’m not sure it’s “true.” What I mean is that anger doesn’t explain the situation. Women and men of color and other minorities aren’t the “enemy.” A friend and colleague of mine, Michael Kimmel, wrote a book about all this, Angry White Men. He met with hundreds of men all over the country talking about all of these topics. Many individual men never wanted to discriminate against others; we inherited what he calls an “ideology of masculinity” from our fathers and grandfathers and great grandfathers. That’s where the blame lies—with this inherited belief system. We all expected we’d always have everything we wanted, that we were entitled to be on top.

I get that a lot of men who are doing okay, and even some doing more than okay, feel an unease as society changes—as more of society’s minority members demand a place at the table. It’s like all those private (white) “male only” clubs that have had to open their doors so others could join. If the response is to “circle the wagons” and advocate for a return to the good old days of male supremacy, where’s that going to get us?

We’re at a crossroads. We have to understand men’s feelings today and the history that led to those feelings—what my friend says means fusing a psychological and sociological analysis.

Let’s keep talking, okay?

Rob

Both Dan and I pledged to continue our dialogue, recognizing there are many more questions to delve more deeply into. When Dan wrote that the U.S. “was supposed to be a nation of equals, not a nation in which one group may have held power gets totally destroyed and decimated so others can advance,” my antennae went up. “If you are more educated, more qualified than I am, then you should get the job,” Dan wrote, “but don’t just hire people because they are not white and male,” he asserted. Left for us to wrestle with is just exactly who has access to become “more educated;” thus becoming “more qualified.” And for Dan, the question of living in a “world that is forcing me out,” of watching a “diversity train always belittles me for being a straight white male,” is a message I must take seriously, that demands my full attention.

In the days ahead look in this space—and on voicemalemagazine.org—to follow this important conversation.

Rob Okun is editor of Voice Male.
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
MenEngage Alliance

WHO WE ARE
MenEngage Alliance is a diverse alliance of more than 700 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.

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.

OUR ISSUES

Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights
Preventing gender-based violence
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

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