Dear Donald,

I have been troubled for some time knowing you don’t feel a need to ask Me for forgiveness for doing something wrong.

Last July you said, “I love God and I love my church.” How was it that in practically the same breath you said you don’t ask Me for forgiveness for any of your transgressions? You told a CNN reporter, “If I do something wrong… I just try and make it right. I don’t bring God into that picture; I don’t.”

Don’t bring Me into the picture? Really? And then—talking about Holy Communion—you said, “When I drink my little wine (which is about the only wine I drink) and have my little cracker, I guess that’s a form of asking for forgiveness, and I do that as often as possible because I feel cleansed.”

Drink your little wine? Have your little cracker? That’s how you “feel cleansed?”

Why do you need to ask Me for forgiveness? To start with, how about your remark about Mexicans as rapists? Or calling Muslims terrorists? Or saying if Ivanka wasn’t your daughter you might be dating her?

Inciting people’s fallen angels is not the road to a principled life, Don. Calling for a ban of Muslims entering your country? Advocating spying on mosques? Considering establishing a database of all Muslims living in the U.S.? That’s your idea of how to “Make America Great Again”?

You want people of faith to support you, yet you keep making divisive, mean-spirited remarks. Two of my senior people—archangels Michael and Gabriel—think I’ve been too soft on you. I disagree. I believe you understand where I’m coming from without having to lash out at you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; with great terror and with signs and wonders.

Sexist comments about women? Racist remarks about people of color? Building a wall on the southern border of your country to keep non-U.S.-born people out? Humiliating and denigrating Muslims, immigrants, and minorities? Oy.

Don, one of my angels showed up for a staff meeting on Monday sporting a T-shirt with the words “Love” and “Fear” printed chest high and spaced far apart. The arrows beneath each of the words pointed to the same two words at the bottom of the shirt: “You Choose.” A real WWJD moment, don’t you think?

A few months ago I wrote to Kim Davis, the county clerk in Kentucky who refused to issue marriage licenses. I said the essence of all I do can be boiled down to two words: “Love wins.” Now, I’m adding two more: “Forgiveness counts.”

If you want to feel cleansed, Don, it’s going to take more than having a little wine… and a little cracker. It’s going to take asking for forgiveness.

Be in touch, Don, when you’re ready to ask.

—Rob Okun

While I was working on my column for this issue, I received an email with the subject line: “Can you publish this for Me?” I was contemplating deleting it as spam, when my editorial eye caught the capital “M” in Me. First, I thought if was a typo. Then I recalled another email I’d received last October with a similar subject line. When I opened the new email, there were only two words: “See attached.” After reading the attachment—and seeing who it was from, the Lord Almighty—I decided to cede this page to a very special Guest Editor.

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Male Positive • Pro-Feminist • Open-Minded
THE VOICE

Thanks so much for being “the voice” for all the men who are part of a men’s movement (by virtue of how they live their lives) but may not know it. Voice Male helps connect us all.

Jim Hafner
Hadley, Mass.

THIRD WAVE MEETS SECOND WAVE

The latest issue of Voice Male was on my kitchen counter when my daughter-in-law visited. She looked at the tagline on the cover and said, “‘Changing men?’ Is this about how to get men to change?” I told her a little about the magazine and how my husband had said he thought it was about how to change your man—as in exchanging something in a store you don’t want. We had a good laugh. Then she read the article about men who use violence and told me later, “This magazine is good!” As a third wave feminist, she has some ideas that I, as a second waver, don’t always agree with and we have some very “warm” debates. I was pleased to find some common ground. It is so rare to read something by men, about men, that does not disappoint on some level. I am glad to find something that validates women’s experience. To share this precious magazine with a dear sister in her thirties is priceless.

Emmy Rainwalker
Dorchester, Mass.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

After reading the well-considered articles that addressed the concept of masculinity, and masculinity and violence in the Fall 2015 issue, I was dismayed at the inclusion of the poem “In the Cave of Teenagers” by Freya Manfred on the final page of the magazine (Editor’s note: See poem at right). The poem had the effect of undoing the messages of the previous articles through its gender polarization and stereotyping, and by perpetuating the popular assumption of a natural link between aggression/violence and men. I could not detect that the poem was written ironically and therefore it reinforces the social tolerance of male misbehavior, including uncontrolled aggression. What is a reader to conclude about the mission of Voice Male if an issue concludes with a piece that seems to be saying, “Boys [Men] will be boys [men]”? If we are to believe that our concepts of gender can be changed, how does a poem like this one support that endeavor?

Language is important. It filters in to our consciousness and creates our perceptions of the world. We know this from how language is consciously spun in advertisements and political campaigns to create the feelings and attitudes that will direct specific results. We also know it from reactiveness over the use of pejoratives and slurs, as well as from controversy over the use of appropriate language for marginalized populations previously named by those in power. I don’t believe for one second that men commit violent acts because they are male, but because it is what is expected of them. As Allan Johnson says in his article in the same issue (“Can a Man Be a Human Being?”), “Manhood, unlike the body, is only an idea, which means that, outside our imagination, it does not exist.” Manhood, like womanhood, is a concept, and therefore subject to change. I can’t see how Ms. Manfred’s poem could achieve that. I care about the mission of Voice Male and I believe in our shared power to create a different world. I hope my words help.

Jean Ballantyne
Santa Barbara, Calif.

FREYA MANFRED RESPONDS:

I’m a watcher. Often, in any poem, I’m simply reporting on what I see in the world around me. My mother’s hard death. My father’s easier death. My young sons’ love of beauty. My teen sons’ sometimes-dopey preferences. My adult son’s enlightening passion for art and peace and fairness. In my poem I wasn’t making a philosophical or political point, I was just describing a single incident in a single day. It’s not always my job as a poet or as a human being to proscribe—but to describe. A poem is just as valid if it reports what Jean Ballantyne wants to see as it is if it reports what she does not want to see. I might add that she seems to think that instincts don’t exist, that we are only victims and pawns of social pressures and cultural identities. (Is her point that men commit violent acts because it’s what’s expected of them? What about male biology? Testosterone? Nature? I believe she weights too heavily on the nurture side, when the answer may be: it’s both!) Her response seems to me to be too simplistic, and doesn’t embrace the wonderful paradoxical complexities of what it means to be human, boy or girl, woman or man, or combinations in-between. I was just describing a narrow but real aspect of human nature, an aspect which is not entirely forced upon us, but which also can emerge—in men or women!—from within. I feel we are both natural and created from external forces. Poems which try to change the world to make it look the way you wish it to look usually end up being polemics.

In the Cave of the Teenagers

In the cave of the teenagers
our sons screech and caw
in crow-harsh cadences
until I thrust my head inside
to beg for quiet:
“What for?” they ask,
narrowing their eyes at me
as if they’d just sighted prey.
I spy their father slouched between them,
watching a movie with no women in it:
twelve natives chase a daring naked hunter
across the African desert,
while he outwits and kills them, one by one.
I retreat, closing one door after the next
on the echo of tribal drums.
I am curious how the hunter will fare,
but all these male bodies smell
like the musky hole I found on our hill
when I was a girl of twelve:
I probed deep inside with a long stick
until a fox charged, snarling, into my startled face,
and vanished forever into the woods
behind a beautiful, blazing red tail.

—Freya Manfred

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

Chinese feminists are among those advocating for domestic violence laws in China.

**FINALLY—DV LAWS IN CHINA**

China’s largely rubber stamp parliament passed the country’s first law against domestic violence at the end of 2015.

The new law prohibits any form of domestic violence, including psychological abuse, and helps streamline the process for obtaining restraining orders, according to a recent report in *Global Post*.

According to the Communist Party-run All–China Women’s Federation, about one quarter of women have suffered violence in their marriage, though only some 40,000 to 50,000 complaints are registered each year.

Of the cases reported last year, almost 90 percent involved abuse by husbands of their wives. The law covers unmarried people who cohabit but does not protect gay couples, a senior lawmaker said.

China previously did not have any specific law covering violence in the family, an issue often ignored to avoid bringing shame upon the family in traditional Chinese culture.

**WHAT ABOUT MEN?**


Organizers say that because of the social pressure and the rewards promised for supporting a patriarchal system, “it is difficult for both men and women to stand up to and change these values and practices.” Collaborating with Judy Chicago in recent teaching projects, Woodman has provided a role model for other men of how to act in a supportive/ cooperative/inclusive manner in an effort to both challenge and change the dominant patriarchal model of studio art education. For more, go to: https://youtu.be/d3L5Qedn_eI.

**MEN’S ROLE IN ENDING AIDS**

More than 70 participants—including the ministers of health in Botswana, Malawi and Guyana, and the deputy minister of health for Ghana—gathered late last year to reframe the response to the AIDS epidemic among men and adolescent boys.

Organized by UNAIDS, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and South Africa’s Sonke Gender Justice, the meeting December 10–11 in Geneva, Switzerland, focused on men’s roles and responsibilities in ending AIDS.

A growing body of evidence shows that access to HIV services for men and boys is typically worse than for women

[continued on page 6]
and girls. This poor access leads to higher viral loads, higher numbers of deaths of men and more infections among their female partners. “If we don’t reach men and boys, we won’t break the cycle of HIV transmission,” said Michel Sidibe, executive director of UNAIDS. “Engaging with the education sector is critical for influencing positive gender norms.”

Participants noted that the structure of health services and existing gender norms and perceptions of masculinity increase vulnerability to HIV and affect how men and adolescent boys seek access to healthcare services.

In addition, those at the meeting pointed to successful programs that address these issues and agreed to reject efforts that blame men. Delegates also acknowledged that work with men must be done in conjunction with ongoing efforts to advance gender equality. Another meeting on HIV and AIDS is scheduled for June.

**PLANNED PARENTHOOD SUES OVER VIDEOS**

Planned Parenthood has filed a federal lawsuit against the anti-choice group Center for Medical Progress, which targeted Planned Parenthood with undercover videos of Planned Parenthood staff members discussing fetal tissue donation. The organization’s executive vice president Dawn Laguens alleges that the Center for Medical Progress has “colluded with right-wing state legislators and members of Congress” in their attack. Although Planned Parenthood officials have not yet decided how much money to seek in damages, the organization said in its complaint that it is seeking “compensatory, statutory and punitive damages.” For more, visit thehill.com/policy/healthcare/265905-planned-parenthood-files-suit-against-group-behind-videos.

**OLDER MEN AND UNSAFE SEX**

Older American men who pay for heterosexual sex are more likely to engage in unprotected intercourse with the prostitutes they frequent, according to a new study in the American Journal of Men’s Health.

“Medical and mental health clinicians should not assume that old age is a barrier to paying for sex, particularly among the generations that began engaging in sexual activity prior to the epidemic emergence of the HIV virus,” the researchers said.

**IN SYNCH WITH GENDER**

Just 20 years ago, if a program was “gender aware” it was considered forward thinking. Since then, ideas about gender inequities and their impact on health have advanced considerably. Standards for gender interventions are now more ambitious, and health and development programs are contributing to both transforming gender norms and achieving health and gender equality.

A new concept paper describes the transformation as “gender synchronization.” Written for the Interagency Gender Working Group, “Synchronizing Gender Strategies: A Cooperative Model for Improving Reproductive Health and Transforming Gender Relations” (PDF: 532KB), explains that the term means working with men and women, boys and girls in an intentional and mutually reinforcing way that challenges gender norms, catalyzes gender equality achievements, and improves health. The paper is intended for reproductive health and development practitioners and program planners—many of whom are already integrating gender into their programming and are looking for effective approaches to achieving better reproductive health and long-term change.

Written by development and gender experts with diverse philosophical and programmatic approaches to gender work, “Synchronizing Gender Strategies” is the result of more than a year of work. Some had been at the forefront of early efforts to empower women through health and development efforts, while others had been pioneers in involving men in gender work.

In addition to providing a definition for “gender synchronization,” the publication provides examples of synchronized
approaches that have worked with women and girls, or men and boys. To learn more, go to: http://www.igwg.org/igwg_media/synchronizing-gender-strategies.pdf.

**Vast Difference, Vas Deferens**

A German carpenter turned inventor is hoping to offer men and their partners a new form of male contraception that’s more permanent than a condom but less permanent than a vasectomy. The invention is called the “sperm switch” or Bimek SLV. When turned on, Bimek SLV, a tiny scrotum implant that prevents sperm from passing through the vas deferens and mixing with ejaculatory fluid, redirects the sperm back into the testicles. Once implanted, the device can be switched on or off (turning it off requires pressing an additional safety button) through the skin.

The inventor, Clemens Bimek, is the only person to have one implanted so far, but he’s hoping to begin a 25-person trial soon. The surgery to install the switch only takes around 30 minutes, and it can be turned on immediately after the operation. It would, however, still take at least a month—or 30 ejaculations—to clear the seminal ducts of live sperm, after which the man would be completely infertile until he turns the switch off. Once the switch is turned off, the man immediately becomes fertile again, according to Bimek.

Some medical experts have tempered expectations by pointing out a number of risks that could prevent the device from ever being approved for public use, including unwanted scarring to the vas deferens and complications with other body implants made from the same material, but Bimek is hopeful that he will attract enough attention from investors and crowdfunders to move forward with human trials.

**White House Dialogue on Men’s Health**

The White House is working with a range of stakeholders on advancing men’s health, including how it can better collaborate with those working to improve the health care needs of males in the U.S. Among those at a meeting in January was the Partnership for Male Youth, a national organization committed to addressing the unique and unmet health care needs of adolescent and young adult males. The event drew nearly 250 participants from a range of disciplines.

Participants shared personal stories about men’s healthy and unhealthy choices, learned about best practices, and committed to being active during Men’s Week of Action on Health Care and Health Insurance. Organizers also began work on Men’s Health Week (June 13–19). Speakers at the White House dialogue included Broderick Johnson White House cabinet secretary & chair of the My Brother’s Keeper Task Force; Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy, MD, U.S. surgeon general; and Michael P. Botticelli, director, White House Office on National Drug Control Policy.

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HIV Treatment: Where Are the Men?

By Dean Peacock

On World AIDS Day, I found myself thinking, as I often do on December 1st, of two remarkable men, both of whom died unnecessarily of AIDS-related illnesses: Reuben Mokae and Sonwabo Qathula.

Like the hundreds of thousands of men who die of AIDS each year in Africa, Reuben, and Sonwabo’s lives and early deaths remind us of the urgent need to address an enduring blind spot in our collective response to HIV and AIDS—our failure to adequately reach men with gender equality education and life-saving HIV services, especially testing and treatment.

Remarkable for the lives they lived, their deaths conform to a now predictable pattern: nearly two-thirds of AIDS mortality globally is among men. Not enough is being done to address this. Our failure to act on the evidence before us is not only bad for men, but it’s also bad for women and it severely undermines our ability to reach the ambitious goals set by activists to end AIDS by 2030.

Reuben Mokae was part of a remarkable group of Johannesburg-based men involved in the now defunct Men as Partners Network, a coalition of grassroots organizations that educated men about the impact of gender inequalities and supported them in taking action to prevent gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS.

The father of three young boys, the son of a priest, and active in the anti-apartheid struggle, Reuben was invited to join the Men as Partners Network through the HIV support group he and his wife attended after both tested HIV positive in 1998.

I remember being inspired by Reuben as he conducted workshops with men across Soweto, encouraging them to understand the impact of domestic violence and rape, use condoms, get tested for HIV and access treatment. At community meetings, Reuben spoke often, and always with enormous pain, about his own use of violence against his wife and how deeply he regretted it. He urged men in hall after hall across Johannesburg to question definitions of manhood that equated being a man with asserting dominance over women, pursuing multiple sexual partners and being reluctant to use health services.

Reuben bravely used his own life story to help men understand the devastating effects these gender stereotypes have on women—and on men like himself. He always talked proudly about how he had rejected gender stereotypes in caring for his wife as she struggled with AIDS-related opportunistic infections and finally died in 2003 at a time when anti-retroviral treatment was still not easily available in South Africa.

Tragically, Reuben was seduced by an AIDS denial syndrome that characterized the South African government’s response to AIDS at that time. He stopped taking his medication after he heard the minister of health describe ARTs as toxic. His health slowly deteriorated until he died in June 2005. I still remember the anguish and confusion on the faces of his young sons at his funeral. Their father need not have died.

Like so many men from South Africa’s rural Eastern Cape province, Sonwabo Qathula left home as a young adult to work in the mines in Johannesburg where he eventually contracted HIV. Fortunately, when he returned home sick, he became active in another initiative like the Men as Partners Network that Reuben had been active in. The One Man Can Campaign mobilized men in rural villages across the Eastern Cape province to respond to the twin and interlinked epidemics of gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS ravaging those communities. Concerned about children orphaned by AIDS, Sonwabo established a community garden and started an after-school feeding scheme through which he promoted gender equality and educated community members about HIV prevention. A wonderful picture of him remains imprinted in my memory. He’s standing, preparing food for children in a frilly, floral cooking apron as though deliberately defying the gender stereotypes deeply embedded in his rural community.

During that time, Sonwabo also began attending a support group for people living with HIV. He even produced a short film chronicling his experiences as a man living with HIV. But as remains typical of such groups and the treatment adherence groups that they have often evolved into, the group had no other men. Sonwabo found it lonely there and struggled to find people who could relate to his living openly as a man with HIV in a society that still stigmatized men who sought health services as weak.

We were shocked to hear of Sonwabo’s death in 2011. Tragically, like Reuben, he had also stopped taking his treatment. We later learned that he stopped attending the support group regularly and began to default on treatment, ultimately succumbing to AIDS-related illnesses. Reuben’s and Sonwabo’s lives convey a simple truth: it is possible to get men to recognize the harm rigid gender norms cause to both women and men, and it is necessary to then support them in taking action to promote equality and address HIV and AIDS.
Indeed, many evaluations have shown that programs like the Men as Partners Network, One Man Can, and many others can reduce men’s violence against women, increase their support for gender equality and improve their use of condoms and other HIV prevention strategies. Tragically, very few of those programs are currently being implemented. To stop AIDS, we will have to recommit to rolling such programs out across Africa.

Reuben and Sonwabo need not have died. However, like far too many men, they fell through the gaps of an HIV and AIDS response that is oriented primarily toward reaching women during their reproductive years and doesn’t do a very good job of engaging men. While HIV prevalence is more or less equal between women and men, men constitute almost 60 percent of AIDS-related deaths globally, and make up the majority of AIDS-related deaths in every region of the world. In most of Africa men make up only about a third of those getting tested and treated, but are nearly two-thirds of those who die of AIDS. Not only do we have a responsibility to address this situation, we won’t succeed in our efforts to stop AIDS if we don’t.

When we fail to develop policies and programs that increase men’s access to and use of HIV services, the outcomes are predictable. Men get sick and die unnecessarly. This is bad for men, of course; it is also bad for their sexual partners, their families, their communities, and the health systems that serve them. When men do not know their HIV status, they are less likely to use condoms, and much more likely to transmit HIV to their partners. They are also less likely to access treatment and decrease their viral load—which we now know makes it extremely difficult to transmit the virus. Not adhering to their treatment also decreases their viral load—which we now know makes it extremely difficult to transmit the virus. Not adhering to their treatment also decreases their viral load—which we now know makes it extremely difficult to transmit the virus.

Our failure to adequately engage men with health services drastically reduces the effectiveness of the many impressive, new HIV prevention breakthroughs which could break the back of the epidemic if adopted widely. Without a doubt, the success of approaches like treatment as prevention, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, will be dramatically undermined if we don’t do a better job of reaching men and supporting them to access and stay in HIV care.

Over the last decade a growing number of studies have raised the alarm about men’s low involvement in HIV services and urged action on two fronts: challenging the norms about manhood that encourage men to view healthseeking behaviors as a sign of weakness, and developing improved health system policies, programs and service delivery strategies to ensure better provision of HIV services to men.

At the end of 2015, UNAIDS and my organization, Sonke Gender Justice, convened a meeting on men, gender and HIV in Geneva. It brought together experts to advise the UN and its member states on how to roll out campaigns that engage men to transform harmful gender norms and promote gender equality, and it proposed strategies to improve men’s access to HIV services. Doing so will attempt to honor the memories of Reuben Mokae and Sonwabo Qathula, two men who bravely advocated for gender equality but did not receive the health services they needed to outlast HIV.

Dean Peacock is executive director of Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa (www.genderjustice.org.za), and cofounder of the MenEngage Alliance (www.menengage.org). A version of this article appeared in the Mail and Guardian, Africa’s first online newspaper, and one of the first online newspapers in the world, founded in 1994.

No Coverup

Editor’s Note: Last fall, after we posted on Voice Male’s Facebook page that the Fall issue was available to read online, activist-colleague Jonathan Grove commented: “So this mag is a VERY important one... AND, this cover... I don’t know who or why it was chosen, but we can’t be doing anti-sexiism work while implicitly endorsing white-savior ideology. This isn’t ‘just a picture.’ It’s the cover.”

Voice Male is committed to ongoing self-evaluation and appreciates the challenges and support our colleagues offer us. As I wrote at the time on Facebook, “It would have been better had we chosen the cover photo after more scrutiny and thought. (The magazine was already at the printer’s.) The question Jonathan raised is part of a larger conversation about media images, race, and white privilege...”

As Voice Male strongly encourages robust debate that promotes enlightened dialogue and greater understanding, I invited a range of people across gender, race and age to have a look and respond. Comments ranged from “I would suggest, if you can, to use another image that’s not gonna generate those feelings of white men coming to the rescue and saving communities of color.” to “The response has nothing to do with the cover or articles inside the journal. It has to do with reading race into everything. Too many of us succumb to race fever.” To read all the comments—and weigh in with yours—go to www.facebook.com/notes/voice-male-magazine/voice-male-fall-cover/935446003189106.
A recent headline wants to know, “Can We Save Cliff Huxtable from Bill Cosby?” In other words, can we find a way to separate in our minds the “bad” man who rapes from the “good” man who never would?

The question has some urgency because for so long it seemed that Bill Cosby was Cliff Huxtable, the lovable all-American sitcom dad, and now it turns out that we may have gone all those years not knowing who he really was. Cosby was only pretending to be the friendly face behind Jell-O pudding pops, the wonderful father, the playful observer of children and parents and married life, and now, old age. It has to be so, we think, because it isn’t possible for both to be true. A good man, by definition, does not rape. And so, the good man who was embraced is now the bad man to be shunned.

But how can this happen? How could we be so mistaken? And if it can be true of Bill Cosby, recipient of so much public affection and prestigious awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for whom could it not be true? Is there a public figure widely regarded as a “good man” for whom such accusations would simply be impossible to believe? I have tried to think of one, but cannot.

Which is why, I think, there is a lack of surprise alongside the shock whenever a man is outed in this way. It doesn’t seem to take us long to adopt a very different view of him, because, I think, somewhere in ourselves we expect these things to happen—not about this one in particular, but some man, sooner or later—and part of our chagrin is having that expectation borne out yet again.

What does Bill Cosby’s story have to tell us about ourselves that we would rather not know?

And then there is the rush to put it all behind us, which makes me want to pause and ask what that’s about, what Cosby’s story might have to tell us about ourselves that we would rather not know.

One clue is that most rapes are committed by a man who knows the woman he is raping, which means at some point she feels safe enough to be with him in the first place. He hasn’t broken into her apartment wielding a knife. He is already with her doing something else—on a date, maybe, or at work or a party—before he crosses the line from presumed good guy to not. And when he does, I doubt that he thinks of himself as that—a rapist, a criminal, a felon—even though he must be aware that he is doing something that if he were to ask her in the cold light of day, she would refuse, which is why he has to think of clandestine ways to overcome her resistance, to turn a no into a yes, if only in his mind, and, failing that, a silence that he can interpret any way he wants.

In himself he sees no rapist, but a man like so many men he knows or can imagine, just doing what a man—a real man—would do if it came down to that, finding a way to have sex with a woman who, to all appearances, does not want to have sex with him. The only question is, what means are acceptable to overcome her resistance?

Note that it isn’t whether to overcome, does he have the right, but how, reflecting a culture of deep ambivalence about a woman’s sovereignty and her right to live unmolested in the integrity of her own body; to not be stalked, harassed, pawed, or preyed upon, turned into an object of a man’s intention and desire; to be considered, listened to, and believed; to not know what she wants and yet still be allowed the freedom and solitude of her ambivalence, uncertainty, confusion, and doubt.
**How Men Benefit from Rape**

By Christopher Kilmartin

In the days of state-sponsored slavery in the U.S., physical and psychological violence was used to justify and maintain the system of economic and social inequality that allowed whites as a group to exploit the labor of slaves and dominate public and private life. Although few participated in the violence—the most extreme of which was lynching—all members of the dominant group (whites, especially white slave owners) benefitted from the intimidation of the subordinated group (slaves), who feared becoming victims should they challenge what was considered “legitimate” authority (for example, male slaves could be beaten or lynched for merely looking at a white woman). Slaves learned to be servile to survive; “uppity” slaves were in much greater danger.

Considering patriarchy as an economic and social system by which men as a group dominate women as a group, sexual assault and the threat of it serves the same purpose as lynching—it causes women to be fearful of challenging men’s dominance. Hence, women whom men sexually harass in the workplace, rather than being those whom many men find attractive, are more often those who challenge men’s dominance and are thus seen as a threat. The film *North Country* depicts the extreme harassment and assault against women iron miners in Northern Minnesota, who are seen as invading men’s workplace and taking “their” jobs in an impoverished economy. As one of the characters points out, when the miners were all men, nobody mistreated the wives and daughters at the company picnic. Thus, it is not the mere presence of women that threatens male dominance; it is their presence in a specific context—one in which men feel entitled to exclude them. Although most men did not participate directly, all stood by passively rather than become allies to those who were being mistreated.

So it is not surprising that military and higher education settings are rife with sexual assault, as they are largely male-dominated spaces (as are many universities with their athletic and fraternity cultures). Women in these environments learn to be subordinate or pay the price for their resistance. Institutional power structures often intimidate sexual assault victims to inhibit them from coming forward or violate their rights and re-victimize them.

Military and higher education settings are rife with sexual assault, as they are largely male-dominated spaces.

Extreme, perhaps because vocal profeminist men are seen as a small, ineffectual minority, in sharp contrast to feminist women, who are a large force to be reckoned with. Most of the intimidation of these men seems to take the form of masculine shaming, much as boys’ groups perform, calling them sissies, pussies, fags, or “manginas” as a way of threatening to relegate them to subordinate groups—women and gay men—to police the boundaries of acceptable masculinity and ensure the dominance of men as a group. The psychic damage of this practice—that it distances men from one another and increases male-on-male physical and psychological damage—is largely unexamined in public discourse.

As a result of violence or the threat of it, similar to slaves who were servile as a survival strategy, many women are reluctant to adopt feminist identities, as they have been convinced that feminists hate men, when in reality they (as a group) have a higher opinion of men than women who do not identify as feminists. Many men are even more hesitant to adopt feminist ideologies because doing so would require accepting the idea that they benefit (although they also suffer) from the violence of other men and that they have unearned privilege for which they must then become accountable. Nevertheless, if there was ever a time for nonviolent, egalitarian men to find their collective voice and speak out, it is now.

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The ambivalence is reflected in the reluctance of women to tell anyone they’ve been raped, knowing all too well how quickly they may be challenged and disbelieved, discredited and trashed, even blamed for what was done to them. Witness the now 20 women who claim to have been raped by Bill Cosby, who have lived for decades in silence. There are laws against rape, but whether and how they are enforced is another thing altogether, from college administrators who take no action and prosecutors and police who look the other way rather than confront the rich and famous, to defense attorneys skilled at arguing the varieties of “consent” and the nuances of “force.”

Once a culture normalizes the idea of men coercing women into sex they do not want, we are in a land where men can justify to themselves getting a woman drunk or giving her drugs or pinning her to the floor or the bed, perhaps with the help of some friends, which, he will tell himself, is what she really wants anyway, to be overwhelmed, to surrender to his need and desire.

In such a world it can be difficult to pick out the men who rape from the men who don’t. I read about the epidemic of rape in college dorms and fraternities, for example, where sexual assault often takes the form of manly sport, and the federal government having to go after colleges to compel them to take it seriously. And I think, if I tried to identify which young men would rape and which would not just from the kind of person they appear to be, how well would I do? Not well at all, it turns out, since half a century of research has yet to produce a psychological profile that would allow us to distinguish men who rape from men who don’t.

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Not to mention trying to pick them out 30 years later when they are married and have children and a place in the community, coaching youth soccer or Little League, professionals, perhaps, doctors and lawyers, or successful in business or politics or the arts, or just the hardworking friendly neighbor next door. Imagine all those college boys who rape, imagine them in middle age and then mix them in with all the men who don’t. Could we separate the “good” men from the “bad”? Could the people who know them best—their wives, siblings, and friends—tell us if this is the sort of man who would rape?

We would get it wrong most of the time, because when a society normalizes violence against women, the line between raping and not is a line you don’t have to be recognizably “bad” to cross. “Good” men do it all the time, supported by all those other “good” men who are too afraid or too ambivalent to go out of their way to stop it, like the fraternity brothers who stand by and watch or take pictures on their cell phones or turn away and pretend it isn’t happening.

Not only did we not know the real Bill Cosby, but, if it’s true that only bad men can rape, then apparently we also don’t know a bad man—or a good one—when we see him. And that would include, for all we know, the Cliff Huxtable we want to save from Bill Cosby.

We want to save him because we think we know him, and it’s important that he be who we think he is, who we need him to be, the man—the father—who is unimpeachably good. But of course, we know only what’s been shown to us, he being a television character, after all, just as we thought we knew Bill Cosby until the moment we did not. In fact, we will never know if Cliff Huxtable—in college, perhaps, or during his medical training—ever got a woman drunk or stoned or otherwise unable to say no to having sex with him.

And if he did, it’s a good bet that Clair Huxtable never knew.

A new edition of Voice Male contributing editor Allan Johnson’s classic work, The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy, was published last year. He is also the author of a novel, The First Thing and the Last. Visit his website at agjohnson.wordpress.com where this article first appeared.
Report from Planet Nine

By Richard Hoffman

Recently it was announced that a new planet had been discovered in our solar system. It was given the inelegant but sensible name Planet 9. Among its characteristics was its atypical orbit. A large part of the reason it had gone undetected was the inability of scientists to see the limitations of their assumptions about the forces at work holding the system together. I believe that, with all the best intentions, our mapping of the dynamics of sexual violence has ignored what our assumptions blinded us to, and with the same need now to reassess our understanding.

Which brings me to my real subject, R.M. Douglas’s book On Being Raped. (Beacon Press, April, 2016.) This is not really a book review, however; let’s call it a recommendation because my endorsement is already on the book jacket:

“With great courage and honesty, R. M. Douglas recounts and interrogates the most intimate and devastating violation a human being, man or woman, can suffer. His beautifully written inquiry faces down all the questions, one by one, and in doing so challenges the reader’s assumptions about gender, violence, masculinity, and recovery. On Being Raped is a profoundly moving memoir that will press you to think hard about your gendered response to sexual violence, especially when the person victimized suffers in a body the prevailing attitude deems somehow less worthy of sympathy, support, and justice. Douglas has gone into the darkness and brought us back a great gift. May we be wise enough to receive it.”

At the very heart of all of our thinking about men and women and power, about vulnerability and violence, lies the ugly fact of rape. It is by now widely understood that rape is a crime of power and control, a savagery just short of cannibalism. As such, it is not an expression of sexuality, but the most elemental instance of cruelty, with utter disregard for its victim. Its aim is degradation and humiliation. No matter the gender of the persons involved. For some, that last sentence is the sticking point.

In their groundbreaking (and disruptive) 2014 article, “The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions,” in The American Journal of Public Health, feminist researchers Lara Stemple and Ilan Meyer examine and debunk the “common wisdom” that men seldom experience sexual violence. Pointing to the regressive and heterosexist assumptions about gender that have shaped much of the research, the exclusion of entire vulnerable populations such as men in prison, and restrictive and narrow definitions of rape and “gender-based violence,” they conclude that “a vast cohort” of male victims have been invisible to the research.

Stemple and Meyer write, “ Sexual victimization can be a stigmatizing experience for both men and women. However, through decades of feminist-led struggle, fallacies described as “rape myths” have been largely discredited in American society, and an alternative narrative concerning female victimization has emerged. This narrative teaches that, contrary to timeworn tropes, the victimization of a woman is not her fault, that it is not caused by her prior sexual history or her choice of attire, and that for survivors of rape and other abuse, speaking out against victimization can be politically important and personally redemptive. For men, a similar discourse has not been developed.”

Then there is the definition of rape. After explaining that in the country of his birth, his assault would rightly be termed rape, Douglas writes:

“The statute in my current state of residence reserves that term for the forcible insertion of a penis into a vagina—a definition that allows me, other similarly situated men, and immeasurable women whose attacks did not conform to that particular model, to experience the perverse charm of switching between the ranks of the raped and the unraped merely by stepping on board an aeroplane for a few hours.”

One of the chief ways the cognitive structure of patriarchy preserves itself is through homophobia and other kinds of shaming and implied violence aimed at silencing victims. Disclosure is made more difficult, especially for young men, by the absence of an alternative version of masculinity that would counter the rapist’s implicit message of emasculation (a message reinforced by the view that only women can be victims of sexual violence.) Add to that the complete absence of any context for disclosure, along with the lack of any conversation among men about their own vulnerability to sexual violence, and it is a wonder that even here and there a man speaks up about his experience. Douglas concludes his book by saying, “A start has to be made somewhere. This is my attempt at one.”

It turns out that the rape of men is not the exception that proves the rule, not an outlier. Not, after all, a speck on the lens, but a planet, one that has been there all along, one that requires rethinking many, many things we thought we knew for certain. “A start has to be made somewhere.” Indeed. And, as a start, one could read Douglas’s fine book, his report from Planet 9.

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Gender has always been a crucial factor in presidential politics. In Man Enough? Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and the Politics of Presidential Masculinity (Interlink Books, forthcoming 2016), longtime Voice Male contributing editor Jackson Katz argues that in recent decades presidential campaigns have become the center stage for an ongoing national debate about manhood, a quadrennial referendum on what type of man—or one day, woman—embodies not only our ideological beliefs, but our very identity as a nation. In the excerpt below from his new book, Katz offers a fresh approach to understanding the role of identity politics in presidential campaigns. Whether examining right-wing talk radio’s relentless attacks on the masculinity of Democratic candidates, how fears of appearing weak and vulnerable end up shaping candidates’ actual policy positions, how the ISIS attacks on Paris and elsewhere have pushed candidates to assume an increasingly hypermasculine posture, or the historic quality of Hillary Clinton’s runs for the presidency in 2008 and 2016, Man Enough? offers a paradigm shift in how we understand the very nature of the American presidency.

The big story about gender in the 2016 presidential year was supposed to be about Hillary Clinton, and her quest to become the first woman president of the United States. Then Donald Trump’s candidacy for the Republican nomination took off, and the narrative took an unexpected turn. Gender was still a central force to be reckoned with, but contrary to the popular understanding of “gender” as synonymous with “women,” the gender issue at the heart of the Trump phenomenon had less to do with women and more to do with men.

Many political pundits described Trump as a reality TV show personality whose popularity had its roots in a blend of populist disgust with the establishment and the toxic white racism that still animates a significant portion of the Republican base. But make no mistake. What drew people to Trump was his over-the-top performance of a kind of can-do white masculinity that had been in decline in recent decades; it was the source of some of the comparisons the real estate developer drew to Ronald Reagan. Trump might not have had Reagan’s political skills or ideological fervor, but like the former Hollywood actor he understood implicitly that the desire for a strong, virile man in the White House runs deep in the American DNA.

The gendered aspect of Trumpmania might not be the first thing commentators mentioned, but in conversations about the New Yorker’s appeal, it was always just beneath the surface. Listen to Trump supporters interviewed at political rallies or on the streets, and you heard the same sentiments echoed repeatedly: He tells it like it is. He’s his own man. He’s not politically correct. He’s got balls. It didn’t matter whether his political beliefs were coherent, or that he had few things to say about how he would go about enacting his vision through public policy. Donald Trump touched a nerve and rode a giant wave of support because his supporters believed him to be a strong man who would say what needed to be said, and get things done. Many of those supporters were downwardly mobile white men who were
alienated and disaffected from the political elite in both major parties, who they felt ignored and dismissed their concerns. These men were drawn to the tough-talking Trump much in the way that millions of white men (and women) a half century ago were drawn to the belligerent manner and ugly rhetoric of the segregationist Alabama governor George Wallace, who ran as an independent in the presidential election of 1968.

As a very rich and successful New York City businessman, Trump might have been an unlikely vehicle for populist sentiments in a time of growing income inequality. But despite his privileged class background, Trump’s unrestrained verbal aggression and macho posturing transcended class in its defiant reassertion of the centrality and necessity of good old-fashioned white male authority in an era when white men’s control had been weakened. A significant percentage of the electorate—especially on the right—mourns that weakening, and is deeply resentful and angry about it.

In fact, Trump’s march through the early days and months of the 2016 Republican primary season provided strong evidence for my central thesis—issues matter when it comes to presidential politics, but voter choice boils down to something much simpler: “It’s the masculinity, stupid.” Every four years, voters decide not only which party best represents their worldview or interests; they vote for the type of man they want to see as the chief executive, commander in chief, and symbolic head of the nation.

A powerful illustration of this came after the ISIS attacks on Paris on November 13, 2015. All the candidates in both parties issued statements about the need to respond forcefully to that atrocity. But no one played the role of manly leader-in-waiting better than Donald Trump, who vowed to “Bomb the shit out of ISIS...and rebuild our military and make it so strong no one—and I mean, no one—will mess with us. We will make America great again.” Trump’s poll numbers jumped five points, clear and I mean, no one—will mess with us. We will make America great again.” Trump’s poll numbers jumped five points, clear and I mean, no one—will mess with us. We will make America great again.” Trump’s poll numbers jumped five points, clear

The 2016 presidential election promises to feature the most far-reaching and consequential public discussion about gender and power in American history. But contrary to conventional wisdom, this is not because a woman candidate introduces gender into a realm in which it was previously irrelevant. Rather, the candidacy of a woman with a realistic shot at being elected the first woman president of the United States. Despite efforts by her political opponents to downplay the significance of that possibility—and notwithstanding all the deadly serious and consequential issues at stake—the central narrative of the general election campaign will turn to her gender, and the historical implications of her election in this country and around the world.

The problem then for conservatives is they will have to figure out how to attack her without risking an angry and energized backlash—especially from women voters—if they are seen to be overtly sexist in their criticism. They will have to step very lightly around literally everything they say about her, because millions of people on social media will be looking for the slightest indication that she is being judged differently from her (presumably) male opponent. If the central election story becomes “first woman major party nominee for president staves down sexism in bid to make history” she might, depending on her opponent, win in a landslide. Of course the “vast right-wing conspiracy” that Clinton first decried in the 1990s is well aware of all this, which is why they began flooding the airwaves with deliberately gender-neutral lines of attack about her trustworthiness and authenticity long before she formally announced her candidacy. Donald Trump, however, has sought to turn her gender against her, charging her husband as a sexist abuser and her as an enabler.

It’s a logical strategy to utilize in this populist moment, when Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump attract huge crowds with their searing critiques of politics as usual, and candidates associated with the establishment of both major parties struggle to inspire voters. Nonetheless the gender-neutrality imperative presents a serious conundrum for the right, because it prevents them from employing one of their favored campaign tactics over the past four decades. Since 1972, conservatives have reaped incalculable political rewards from launching gendered attacks on one Democratic candidate after another. But those attacks have not been seen as particularly offensive, and more like “politics as usual,” because their targets were always men. The presence of a female candidate changes everything.

The 2016 presidential election promises to feature the most far-reaching and consequential public discussion about gender and power in American history. But contrary to conventional wisdom, this is not because a woman candidate introduces gender into a realm in which it was previously irrelevant. Rather, the candidacy of a woman with a realistic shot at being elected president merely makes visible what has been hiding in plain sight all along: contests for the presidency have always been about gender. But until now this has not been recognized or acknowledged, because the overwhelming majority of candidates have represented the gender that occupies the dominant posi-
tion, and hence largely escapes critical scrutiny.

One of the most important things to understand about what is derisively termed “identity politics” is that whenever members of subordinated or historically marginalized groups—e.g., women, African Americans—succeed in calling attention to the dynamics of social or political inequality, they are criticized for injecting issues of identity into the discourse, as if this is a distraction from the real issues at hand. What goes largely unmentioned is that the political mainstream has always featured its own version of identity politics—the politics of white manhood.

This politics has played itself out on the conservative side in the meteoric rise of a bombastic real estate tycoon in the race for the 2016 Republican nomination. Can there be any doubt that a crucial part of Trump’s appeal to the populist base of the party is his defiant reassertion of white male authority not only during the presidency of the first African American president, but in an era of growing gender and sexual equality?

Long before Hillary Clinton came along, cultural ideas about gender played a central role in presidential campaigns. But the gender dynamics were largely subtextual, in the sense that they were rarely identified as gender dynamics. For example, when right-wing pundits openly mocked Democratic male candidates as “soft on crime,” or “weak on defense,” this was understood to be “going negative,” or the normal give and take in modern politics. It was not regarded as a slightly more sophisticated version of “you’re a sissy,” and other shaming (and sexist) language traditionally deployed on the playground against boys who didn’t measure up to rigidly defined notions of masculinity.

Similarly, race was a major subtextual force in presidential campaigns long before Barack Obama emerged in 2008 as the Democratic nominee. One of the many ways it manifested itself was in the choices available at the ballot box. For centuries, every four years voters had the chance to vote for one or another version not only of manhood, but of white manhood. The whiteness of the candidates was rarely a topic of discussion; it was merely assumed and expected. It was only when an African-American man got his party’s nomination that race emerged in the foreground of consciousness and political debate.

So it is with gender and the election of 2016. What was once invisible has now surfaced and is seen not only as relevant to discuss, but as a central force in the election. This in turn presents conservatives with a roughly analogous challenge to the one they faced in 2008. For a brief moment during that campaign, strategists on the right were perplexed about how to criticize Obama. They worried that if they attacked the first African American presidential nominee from a major party, they would open themselves up to accusations of racism. Conservative columnists and pundits wondered aloud about the propriety of challenging Obama’s background, his affiliations, his credentials. As Rush Limbaugh put it, “You can’t criticize the little black man-child. You just can’t do it, ’cause it’s just not right. It’s not fair. He’s such a victim.”

They quickly found a way out of their predicament. Mindful of their need to secure a large majority of white male voters in order to win—and led once again by the shock troops of right-wing talk radio—conservative Republicans settled on the same strategy they had employed so successfully in presidential elections for nearly forty years: they attacked the Democratic candidate’s manhood. Rolling out a strategy they went on to utilize throughout his presidency, they ridiculed Obama. They called him a lightweight and a wimp. They warned that electing him would weaken America. Limbaugh summed up the line of attack on the senator from Illinois: “He can’t take a punch, he’s weak, and he whines,” he said. “I’m sure some women find that attractive because they would look at him as a little boy and would want to protect him. But it embarrasses me as a man.”

In other words, even though Obama’s blackness presented a political problem for the right, his gender remained fair game. But if Clinton becomes the Democratic nominee in 2016, the time-honored practice of mocking the male candidate’s manhood—regardless of his race—simply won’t work. The very fact of Clinton’s gender will insulate her from that type of ridicule—not to mention her hawkish stance and record on many touchstone issues of military and foreign policy. (Some of which—it must fairly be acknowledged—might have been strategic on her part in order to overcome the notion that women can’t be the father-protector the nation yearns for as president.) Gender will still be a central force in the rhetoric and substance of presidential politics on the campaign trail—it always is. And the ISIS attacks on Paris and the terrorist massacre in San Bernardino make it even more certain that viable nominees for either major party will be subjected to endless scrutiny about their “toughness,” and thus about their ability to perform as commander in chief. But if one of the two final competitors for the presidency is a woman, the way this conversation plays out will be historically unprecedented.

Can there be any doubt that a crucial part of Trump’s appeal to the populist base of the party is his defiant reassertion of white male authority?

Voice Male contributing editor Jackson Katz is the creator of the Media Education Foundation’s award-winning educational documentaries Tough Guise and Tough Guise 2, and author of The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help. He speaks widely in the U.S. and around the world on violence, media and masculinities.
At first glance, Vermont senator and Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders does not project the kind of masculine persona that so many men—white men in particular—seem to be looking for in their would-be presidents. He’s not physically imposing, he’s not a military veteran, and he wouldn’t look remotely convincing in cowboy clothing or accessories. On top of that, he was running for the nomination of a party that has failed to attract a majority of white male voters for decades. And yet despite all of these obstacles, Sanders attracted a passionate following among millions of white middle- and working-class men. What accounts for this putative paradox?

First, what matters most about the kind of masculinity a presidential candidate projects is not a set of objective physical qualities that can be measured easily; sometimes the narrative about who he/she is and stands for is more important. Sometimes it’s about ideology. Take former Republican congressman Ron Paul, who unsuccessfully ran for president three times. The diminutive Paul was not remotely “presidential” in physical stature. But his unapologetic espousal of a radical rugged individualism and his fearlessness in arguing for extreme libertarian positions endeared him to millions of white men, including many gun-toting, pickup-driving good ol’ boys, who respected not only his views but also his sincerity in pressing for them, even in the face of impossibly long odds.

Similarly, one of the sources of Bernie Sanders’s appeal was his authenticity at an especially populist moment in American history. He was not a politician pandering for votes; he’d been advocating and agitating for democratic socialist priorities and policies for decades. What is noteworthy is the masculinity politics of his appeal, as well as the downsides of his persona. Let’s start with the downsides. It’s hardly news that Sanders does not fit the central casting definition of an American president. He’s a 74-year-old, white-haired, Jewish politician with glasses who, despite decades of representing rural Vermont, retains his Brooklyn accent. Even though he is intellectually sharp and physically vigorous, his walk and posture make him appear a bit slumped over.

What accounts for his popularity with a significant segment of the Democratic Party electorate? Some of it has to do with the righteous anger he conveys when he talks about income inequality. More than any contemporary Democratic politician, and certainly more than any serious Democratic presidential contender in memory, Sanders communicates not just criticism but also moral outrage about the lack of universal health care, the struggles of workers to make ends meet as wages decline, the increasing shortage of affordable public higher education, and a range of other economic woes. And he does it fearlessly and relentlessly, providing a stark contrast to the cautious corporate centrist that for more than a generation has held such a grip on Democratic Party elites. If, as former Democratic congressmen Barney Frank maintains, millions of blue-collar and middle-class white men have abandoned the Democratic Party in recent decades not because of divisive “social issues” like abortion and gay marriage, but because the party has been insufficiently responsive to their economic plight, Sanders gives them a reason to come back inside the tent. A key part of Sanders’s appeal to men is that he conveys the rough edges of an urban street-brawler who was willing and eager to take on the powers-that-be, especially the “billionaire class” and their representatives in Congress.

Sanders’s candidacy—regardless of how it turns out—might have the effect of helping to remasculinize the Democratic Party by reminding voters that authentic “progressives” are not elitists, as right-wing propaganda maintains, but are the political persuasion—in or outside of the Democratic Party—that actually sticks up for the little person.

—Jackson Katz
1. **Eating Too Much Meat Is Bad for You.**

Dr. David Bell, medical director of the Young Men's Clinic in New York City, says, “As males we are taught to eat a lot, eat meat; not eat vegetables.” And if you take a look at food advertising targeted at men (whether overtly ironic or more subtle), he’s right. It comes as no surprise, then, that men experience higher rates of diet-related health conditions, like heart disease and diabetes, both of which have been linked to eating processed red meat.

2. **Playing Violent Sports Is Bad for You**

Violent sports are a central part of how our society constructs masculinity. Take American football, for example, which can cause broken bones, serious head injuries, and long-term brain trauma. This is also true of rugby, where the second-most frequent injury is concussion, and mixed martial arts, in which 3 percent of all fights end in severe concussions. By participating in these combative “manly” sports, many men are causing themselves substantial injuries.

3. **Taking Physical Risks Is Bad for You**

Men, especially young men, tend to do more dangerous stuff (clinically known as “risk-taking behavior”) than women. “The successful navigation of intense physical danger is a route to demonstrating competent masculinity, whether it’s cliff-diving or skiing drunk while wearing a Go-Pro so you can show your friends the awesome videos,” says Dr. Jennifer Hirsch, co-director of the Gender, Sexuality, Health and HIV Research Group at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health. “There’s a reason that insurance rates are higher for young men than for young women.”

4. **Driving Recklessly Is Bad for You**

Research supports the theory that men may demonstrate their masculinity through dangerous driving. At a price: 14,000 more men than women were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2012.

5. **Not Using Sexual Protection Is Bad for You**

Risk-taking can involve sexual behaviors as well. According to Cliff Leek, program director at the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities at Stony Brook University, men who believe in so-called “traditional masculinity” (characterized by being tough, holding back their emotions, and being in charge) “are less likely to use protection [and] are more likely to have multiple partners,” which increases their chances of contracting a sexually transmitted infection. More specifically, research has found that men who feel this way about masculinity have more than twice the odds of having unprotected vaginal sex and have specific attitudes about using condoms that lead them to use condoms less often.

6. **Not Wearing Sunscreen Is Bad for You**

Stereotypically manly men aren’t supposed to care about health or be vulnerable to disease, which makes putting on sunscreen basically out of the question. Plus, a paper in *Science Directs* puts it, “The application of lotions to the body is a feminine pastime; masculine men don’t ‘pamper’ or ‘fuss’ over their bodies.” According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, men spend more time in the sun than women, but are less likely to wear sunscreen. In 2012, more than 11,500 men were diagnosed with skin cancer than were women.
7. Using (and Abusing) Alcohol Is Bad for You
A large body of research has found that men whose beliefs about masculinity include being physically and emotionally tough and avoiding anything stereotypically feminine tend to drink more. Such a finding is a big issue when you consider that approximately 62,000 men die from alcohol-related causes each year, more than twice as many as the number of women.

8. Smoking Is Bad for You
Columbia University’s Dr. Hirsch says smoking has been connected to masculinity in a variety of ways, from the Marlboro man to the U.S. government providing cigarettes to soldiers in World War II, “which promoted smoking in a job category that was at the time entirely filled by men.” Smoking is so strongly associated with being a man that the World Health Organization says, “In most of the world, being born male is the greatest predictor for tobacco use, with overall prevalence about four times higher among men than women globally.”

9. Being Lonely Is Bad for You
The Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities’ Leek says that men are less likely to be emotionally open with their peers, which can lead to loneliness, especially later in life. “Just think of how often men on TV or in movies are compared to women when they express their feelings, or how often young men are told to ‘man up’ if they cry,” Leek says. “It is no wonder [men] are often so reluctant to be seen as anything other than stoic and emotionless automatons.” This is pretty dangerous for men, for two reasons. First, “social support,” or the support you get from hanging out with friends and family, is vital to good health. Second, loneliness has been linked to earlier death among older men.

10. Doing Dangerous Jobs Is Bad for You
Ninety three percent of people killed in fatal workplace accidents in 2013 were men. “Men overwhelmingly participate in the jobs that are more dangerous. Soldiers, miners, workers on an oil platform tend to be men,” says Hirsch, adding that social forces “preferentially slot men into these dangerous jobs. Do you need a penis to be a coal miner? No, but most coal miners have penises.”

11. Avoiding the Doctor Is Bad for You
Part of our cultural agreement about masculine behavior is that it includes ignoring pain. Avoiding pain is part of that. According to Hirsch, showing off your masculinity includes the things you don’t do, “notably (not) going to the doctor.” She adds that there are pretty steep consequences: “One example is concurrent diagnosis for HIV—because men don’t go to the doctor, they are much more likely to have developed AIDS by the time they are diagnosed as HIV-positive.”

12. Not Talking About Your Feelings Is Bad for You
Mental health problems, including depression, are a particular problem for men. Leek, of the Center for Men and Masculinities, says, “Not seeking help is a huge barrier to men’s mental health. Men who are experiencing depression or considering suicide are much less likely than their female peers to seek help, to go talk to folks and get the help they need.” Research shows that, in the month before their death by suicide, about half as many men have contact with some form of mental health services as women in the same situation. This is such a problem for men that Dr. Brendan Gough of Leeds Beckett University in England says that if he could change one thing about masculinity, he would make emotional expression a bigger part of being masculine, which would allow “more healthy psychological development in men overall.”

Benjamin Spoer is a PhD student in public health at New York University studying the social and structural production of obesity. He can be reached @BenjaminSpoer. This article first appeared in BuzzFeed, where links are provided for many of the author’s assertions (http://www.buzzfeed.com/ueikazoo/masculinity-is-actually-killing-men#.rjjyr0oAMw).
Men and Societies

The Militarization of Men and Societies

By Rashme Sehgal

Watching boys playing a game in northern Lebanon, close to Syria, Anthony Keedi, a psychologist working with the ABAAD Resource Centre for Gender Equality in Lebanon, heard the boys use the Arabic name of the fundamentalist group ISIL for one of their groups in play, and realized that all conflict resolution by these kids was done through violence. (ABAAD, which means “dimension” in Arabic, was chosen because ABAAD believes ending violence against women, poverty and inequalities in the Middle East and North Africa region requires working across many dimensions.)

“The violence is internalized as boys are given guns to play with; when they grow up, they are given guns to kill,” says Keedi.

“Using a gun is not foreign to these boys. The centrality of violence in our societies is the key to our upbringing. We need to see how men and women are being socialized. There is nothing surprising about the levels of violence that exist in our society.”

Keedi says, “These children were merely following what is being practiced in their societies where in order to win the game, you must learn to become powerful, and resort to dominance in order to win. Being vulnerable and caring is not going to help you win in a conflict. Those not willing to play this game are called emasculated and become outcasts.”

Speaking at a session on men’s participation in violent conflicts and peace building at a global symposium in New Delhi, Keedi and others explored whether militarized masculine identities contribute to conflict and if it was possible for these identities to be transformed into non-violent identities.

Keedi said his group, along with the Arab Foundation for Freedom and Equality, has launched a nationwide campaign to change individual men and boys’ understanding of “acceptable” behavior as an essential component in ending violence against women and children.

ABAAD established a men’s center as a space for men to relieve stress. There they learn both how to manage anger and how to behave in a less aggressive manner. ABAAD is presently conducting a study asking women and men how gender roles have changed in the last 30 years. Keedi believes it is important to transform society’s cultural understanding of what it means to be a man into an understanding of masculinity that is beneficial to men and women and aligned with the principles of human rights.

Imperative to Involve Women in Peace Negotiations

Isabella Geuskens of the Women Peacemakers Program in the Netherlands strongly condemns the “militarization of men’s lives and the high emotional costs they have to pay in terms of high depression and suicide rates.”

Geuskens maintains that since war has an enormous impact on the lives of women, it is imperative for governments to involve women as active partners in peace negotiations and initiatives.

Along with other feminists, Geuskens has started a pilot program to promote gender equality, she says, since gender is always about power. “Our objective is to strategize and ensure that society follows non-violent solutions to achieve policy goals,” she says.

Violence only has a 26 percent success rate, Geuskens points out, noting the political scientists and sociologists who assert that nonviolence is a much more effective tool to defuse a crisis.

“We are witnessing increasing militarization around the globe and also a proliferation of weapons being used against civil society,” Geuskens says. “We need to invest in disarmament, demilitarization and conflict prevention.”

Australian Cate Buchanan, who works on the Surviving Gun Violence Project, concurred, saying, “Women have been excluded from peace making. All mediation remains male dominated, but there is weak accountability when gender is overlooked.” She supported her point by highlighting peace agreements that had taken place in the last 20 years, regretting the absence of women from these processes.

Buchanan linked the use of arms to male patriarchy. A survey of victims of small arms had found that worldwide 2.7 million people are living with gunshot injuries, a gross underestimation, said Buchanan, as the numbers of victims suffering from the global burden of gun violence were much higher than what these estimates suggested.

How do you look upon the shift in the women’s movement to engage with men in their battle for gender equality?

I look upon this issue from two perspectives. I still believe there’s need for space for women, and that there are a lot of issues which have not been resolved yet. That dialogue must continue. Meanwhile, newer challenges have come before the women’s movement. For instance, are the modes of communication that we used still relevant with younger women in the movement, how do we take the movement forward? But it is also true that we will not move forward alone; men and women have to move together. You see, men did not come from Mars. We have to make men realize that there is something in it for them [to change] and for this we have to frame the narrative differently. The broader issue is social justice for all. After all, I didn’t come into the world from a mother alone but also a father. I share a world with brothers, sons, uncles. I cannot wish them away. My past experience has shown that I can only be a whole person if everybody around is also whole. Men will move ahead with women if there is something in it for them.

Can you tell me a little about the struggle of women in Namibia and the status of the women’s movement there?

During the liberation movement when we lived in refugee camps, we all had one goal and that was to free Namibia. Patriarchy did not exist in that context. During the liberation movement both men and women faced the same challenges and there was never any doubt that our chief focus was liberation. But once we obtained liberation and our wonderful Constitution ensured gender equality and a right to vote for women, the reality emerged as far different. Women who fought side by side with men in the liberation movement just disappeared from the equation as if we were no longer human beings.

Patriarchal structures existed everywhere—in the media, political parties, you name it. The question which confronted us was, how do we dismantle these structures and mindset. We found it was much easier to fight against colonial domination than patriarchal domination. Colonial domination has come to an end but patriarchy has survived and continues to do so. What we are asking ourselves is whether we have a women’s movement and how strong is it to influence policies and issues concerning women. Because of the nature of colonialism we had a far stronger women’s voice during the liberation movement than we have today. After we got freedom, we became complacent.

What efforts are being undertaken in Namibia to remove gender discrimination?

We realized the gateway to power is through political parties which are largely male dominated. During the last five years, women in political parties insisted that quotas be provided in party structures and party lists. It took a while but the ruling party Swapo’s constitution was amended to provide for equal representation of men and women in party structures. We have adopted a zebra-style list which means that 50 percent of the candidates on lists submitted for elections will be women. We managed to push through this amendment and it’s a big achievement for us but the struggle is not over yet. But
if there is a discussion between men and women from the beginning, there will be no need for quotas.

I am sure you must be facing strong resistance from men who don’t want to relinquish their power.

Of course, there is strong resistance. Whenever there is talk about gender equality, there is talk about religion and culture which is used to reinforce and strengthen existing patriarchal structures. Questions are then asked, are we doing something which is against our culture? But even so, we have had some successes. For instance, when Namibia enacted the Married Persons’ Equality Act removing a man as the head of a household and abolishing his marital powers, it generated a lot of debate. Men accused women of breaking up families and homes. But our reply was: we did not participate in the liberation movement to be treated as second-class citizens. We lobbied hard for the passage of this law with men, women, parliamentarians, chief whips. Fortunately we had our president’s support.

What are the main issues dominating the discourse among women in Namibia? How do you reach out to men in this fight for gender equality?

The issue of violence against women is a matter of great concern in Namibia. We have laws on gender violence, rape and so on but implementing them must be made gender sensitive. The increasing number of women who were being killed by their partners led to a lot of talk to a point where the government stepped in to call for a national prayer day to end gender-based violence. This issue brought men and women on a common platform as gender-based violence also impacts men. They are seen as perpetrators of violence; they are seen as potential rapists. Efforts are being made to reach out to men. We are telling them that we would like to work with them to address this issue. I would now like to start a MenEngage movement in Namibia. How do we engage with men—where do we start?

Anita Katyal has been a journalist for more than three decades, having worked with The Times of India and The Tribune. She is a contributor to The Asian Age and the news website Scroll.in. A commentator on television news, she is a founder member of the Indian Women’s Press Corps. A version of this interview was first published in Dimensions of Change: Stories and Interviews from the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium 2014, published by the Centre for Health and Social Justice in New Delhi (www.chsf.org).
In his 10 books, writer-activist Kevin Powell has frequently written on race and masculinity, including The Black Male Handbook (excerpted in the Winter 2009 issue), Who’s Gonna Take the Weight: Manhood, Race, and Power in America, and Barack Obama, Ronald Reagan, and The Ghost of Dr. King. The excerpt below is from his new book, The Education of Kevin Powell: A Boy’s Journey into Manhood (Atria Books/Simon & Schuster, 2015). In it, he recounts the horrific poverty of his youth, his struggles to overcome a legacy of anger, violence, and self-hatred, and his journey to be a man and a voice for others.

I was 25 years old and knew I had to make a change. But I had no clue what to do other than to write. I had already done some freelance work for Essence, the Black women’s magazine, so I asked my editor, Audrey Edwards, if I could write about what had happened with my old girlfriend, Adera. Ms. Edwards was taken aback, though she supported me on it.

I called the essay “The Sexist in Me,” and Audrey Edwards pushed me hard, demanding more honesty, more rewrites. I was so afraid of writing something like this, of having it in a publication read by millions of women around the world. At the same time, I kept hearing my mother’s voice from my childhood, saying: “The truth shall set you free.” My mother also always said, “A liar is a thief,” and told me to “not be like your father.”

But this left me in a horrible situation. Throughout my life, my mother—and society in general—had told me what I should not be, but rarely did anyone tell me what I should or could be. A few older Black men—such as my boss, Sam Anderson—had served as role models here and there, and I had read Malcolm X’s autobiography several times, digging endlessly for new lessons on manhood. But I never developed any consistent or constructive means of defining—or of redefining—manhood for myself. I was ignorant, but I didn’t know that I was ignorant. I was suffering from a condition called “male privilege.” After spending all those many years screaming about racism, I had never thought about other forms of oppression and discrimination because they didn’t touch my life. Or so I thought.

I remembered the numerous kitchen conversations my mother and Aunt Cathy had had while my cousin Anthony and I were growing up. Yet it had never crossed my mind that I was contributing to the reality that men—most of us, at least—were no good.

When “The Sexist in Me” appeared in the “Brothers” section of Essence in September 1992, the response was immediate and electric. I described exactly what had happened on that day I pushed Adera into the bathroom door, and how easily I had joined the ranks of abusive men in America. For the first time I admitted that I was sexist—socialized to be so since I was a boy. I said that what I did to Adera was inevitable, given the path that I had traveled. I discussed how this confession was a necessary first step, but that I could not stop here, that I not only had to challenge myself, but also other men and boys, especially if they were using the “b” word habitually.

I was stunned by the response. Floods of mail poured into Essence about my essay, much of it supportive. I received graphic letters from women who had been battered, beaten, stabbed, even shot by a boyfriend or husband. Women told me about being sexually assaulted by their fathers, uncles, cousins, or brothers; rape survivors wrote, too. I lost some male friends and some male supporters, and there were both women and men who told me straight up that they would never forgive me “for putting my hands on a woman,” regardless of what I said or did.

My editor told me that Adera had reached out, too, wanting to write her own piece, but was politely rejected, as the magazine did not want to turn this into a back-and-forth. It surprised me that Adera did not try to write something elsewhere about what had happened, but I also imagined what it must have felt like for her, as the victim and survivor of violent and abusive behavior. I longed for the day when I could tell her in person how sorry I was, but I knew that that day was not coming any time soon.

Now fully aware of my ability to hurt others, I soldiered on toward a new and different version of myself, to challenge the cycle of pain once and for all. I did not quite know how to go about this, but I knew that I had to try. But I remained sad that this difficult life lesson had come at Adera’s expense. In time my life would become dedicated partly to writing, speaking, and organizing around the need to end violence against women and girls.

In time I would come to question and challenge images of women and girls in every form of American pop culture, including my beloved hip-hop. Feminists bell hooks and Gloria Steinem helped me through the process, and I participated in numerous workshops, conferences, and even one-on-one sessions, all focused around the need to redefine manhood toward peace, love, and a different and healthier way to handle conflict and anger. Adera would personally accept my apology a decade later, but I knew that would never be enough. I had to commit myself, as a man, to helping to rid the world of sexism and gender violence. And that I could never put my hands on a woman again. And I have not.
The international Population Institute has released its fourth annual report card on reproductive health and rights in the U.S., and the results are disturbing. Nineteen states received a failing grade and the overall U.S. grade fell from a C to a D+.

“Inflamed by heavily edited videos attacking Planned Parenthood, the hostility to reproductive health and rights has reached a fever pitch in the past year,” according to Robert Walker, the Institute’s president. “There has been an avalanche of legislation—both proposed and enacted—to restrict clinic access and reduce funding for Planned Parenthood and other family planning providers.” (See page 6 for news of Planned Parenthood’s lawsuit against the creators of a doctored video maligning the organization.)

The Population Institute is an international non-profit that educates policymakers and the public about population, and seeks to promote universal access to family planning information, education, and services. Through voluntary family planning, the Institute works to achieve a world population in balance with a healthy global environment and resource base.

In 2015 the U.S. House of Representatives voted seven times to defund Planned Parenthood, and did so again at the beginning of 2016. Millions of women would be denied access to a trusted health care provider if Planned Parenthood were defunded. In addition, the House Appropriations Committee again voted last year to eliminate all funding for Title X, an action that would prevent millions of women from having access to contraception and other vital health care services, including cancer screenings. Abortion restrictions in Texas (and other states) have forced the closures of dozens of family planning clinics. Worse still, the physical assaults on clinics—ranging from vandalism and arson to a shooting at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs—have created a climate of fear.

“The attacks on Planned Parenthood are potentially devastating,” Walker warned. “Planned Parenthood health centers make up only 10 percent of publicly funded safety-net providers, but they serve 36 percent of the clients seeking contraceptive services. In 103 counties with a Planned Parenthood health center, the Planned Parenthood facility serves all the women who are using safety-net clinics to access contraceptive services. The restricted access to reproductive health care would be particularly devastating for poor women and women living in remote areas.”

Walker expressed concern about efforts in Congress to eliminate funding for comprehensive sex education programs in the schools. “Political attacks on teen pregnancy prevention programs have received very little attention, but they endanger the progress we have been making in reducing teen pregnancy rates,” he said.
Using nine criteria, the Institute’s report card ranked each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia:

- Thirty percent of the grade is based on measures of **effectiveness**. This includes the latest available data on the teenage pregnancy rate (15 percent) and the rate of unintended pregnancies (15 percent).
- Twenty percent of the grade is based upon **prevention**. This includes mandated comprehensive sex education in the schools (15 percent) and access to emergency contraception (5 percent).
- 25 percent of the grade is based upon **affordability**. This includes if states are expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (15 percent) and Medicaid eligibility rules for family planning (10 percent).
- The final twenty-five percent of the grade is based upon **clinic access**. This includes abortion restrictions (10 percent), TRAP Laws (5 percent), and percent of women living in a county without an abortion provider (10 percent).

**Only a Third of All States Got a Good Grade**

Based upon their scores, each state received a “core” grade (A, B, C, D or F), but some states received an additional “plus” or a “minus” for factors not reflected in the core grade, such as pending changes or legislation.

Only seventeen states received a B- or higher. Just four states (California, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington) received an A.

Nineteen states received a failing grade (“F”), including: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming.

“At the state level the trend is particularly worrisome,” said Walker. “Increasingly, the reproductive health of a woman depends on the state or community where she lives. That’s wrong as a matter of both rights and health.” Walker noted that 21 states have refused to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. Walker also said that 288 new abortion restrictions have been approved since January 2011, and that several states have cut funding for family planning services.

Sex education in the schools also varies widely. Some states require no sex education, while others fail to require any instruction about the use of condoms, birth control or the prevention of HIV/AIDS. As a result, the quality of sex education can—and does—vary widely from one school district to the next. And, unfortunately, efforts to defund or restrict comprehensive sex education are gaining momentum at both the federal and state levels.

“This report card should be a wake-up call for all those worried about the status of reproductive health and rights in their state,” Walker said.

For a copy of the report, including a state-by-state breakdown, visit the Population Institute’s website (www.populationinstitute.org/reportcard. To learn more, contact Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com or Jennie Wetter at jwetter@populationinstitute.org.
Some time ago, I was in a small men’s group, the four of us meeting every few weeks over dinner to talk about our lives. I had known each of them for years. One night we stop at a liquor store to buy beer to go with dinner at a restaurant that doesn’t have it on the menu. I’m at the cooler case, looking through the glass at rows and rows of different brands, unused to buying beer, unable to make up my mind. The other men stand by the register, waiting, until I sigh and grab a bottle and approach them with a ditzy little shrug, apologizing, “Too many to choices,” and then the man behind the counter, under his breath, says, “Wrong time of the month?”

Gay vagina outed while shopping for beer

It takes a few beats to realize what just happened, still doubting he could have said what I heard. No one moves, my friends looking on, not meeting my eye, until suddenly I realize that I’m alone.

I pay for the beer and we walk out onto the sidewalk and then I ask the question and they nod, oh, yes, that’s what he said, and I remember how they stood there, my friends, while I took the hit and they remained impervious, better him than me, high school all over again. I feel shaken, not so much by the man back in the store, but my friends who were content to say nothing, knowing what he meant, what he was doing, not only to me but to all the women he was using as a form of insult, and seeing the confusion on my face, and yet leaving me there. Every man for himself.

For in that moment, it was more than some respectful assumption that I could handle it myself. No. In that moment, their silent complicity also put them on the other side, looking at the girly-man on the rag unable to pick out a bottle of beer without a fuss (and who would use a word like ‘fuss’), and the man behind the counter knowing exactly who was where. He was counting on it, in fact, a temporary solidarity among men safeguarding their claim to manhood, and they did not let him down.

And I, of course, was also silent, letting it pass rather than risk making it worse, becoming smaller than myself in the name of a temporary safety I had learned to seek out as a boy among boys.

I look out on the world and consider the destructive things men do every day in the name of manhood and masculine control, and the legions of men who stand back and watch, not wanting to draw the wrong kind of attention by daring to object, trying to position themselves in the imagined security of outward support of other men or the passive complicity of silence in the reflected glow of manhood.

What jumps out at me is how much fear and distrust there is among men, the guardedness and caution, the banter and jockeying for position and momentary advantage, even when it doesn’t seem that’s what it is. All the ways there are of trying to be safe in the company of men. Until a crack in the defensive wall creates some vulnerability and there is an awkward moment of humiliation and doubt and then fear and a scrambling to set it right.

I would like to think that if the positions were reversed, I would behave differently, that I would choose my friend over hiding in the protective shadow of manhood. But, in truth, I can also imagine that, in the moment, without giving it a thought, I would do just the same.

— Allan G. Johnson, excerpt from his memoir, Unbecoming a Man.
You and your crew are on a boys’ night out at the bar when an attractive woman passes by. Your friend says something about wanting “a piece of that.” She looks noticeably uncomfortable but continues walking, looking straight ahead as she ignores your friend’s advances.

You know your friend’s actions were inappropriate. What can you do about it?

A new initiative wants to give people a way to call out sexist remarks by their friends. The idea, called #checkyourboys, came from an episode of “That’s What He Said,” a web series by SoulPancake. The series features personal, honest, and engaging roundtable discussions among a diverse group of men on a range of topics spanning masculinity, self-esteem, sex and dating, and women. The goal of the conversations, as series creator Anabella Casanova says, is “to foster understanding and compassion within genders and across the gender gap.”

For this particular episode, the participants discussed the role men play in sexism — much of it systemic and related to upbringing and culture. They opened the conversation with a reference to the viral video about catcalling, “Ten Hours of Walking in New York as a Woman” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1XGPvbWn0A), and relayed the physical and vocal harassment they’ve heard their female counterparts regularly endure.

As one participant pointed out, the catcalling he participated in growing up was not about the woman being addressed—it was about proving your manliness. This also ties into the concept of privilege. As another man noted, he can go for a run at night in a public park and not feel endangered. Women are forced to take greater precautions, including what they wear while doing so.

Men need to break the cycle. This is where #checkyourboys comes into play. We’ve all witnessed a friend addressing a stranger on the street, saying something inappropriate. For most, the solution is to ignore it or laugh it off. It’s just guys being guys, right? But by not calling out our friend, we enable the behavior and continue to make it acceptable.

What we really should be asking is: These moments of harassment are unwanted and can feel threatening to the recipient, especially when those comments are ignored. Instead of allowing the behavior to continue—check your boys! #checkyourboys.

As these men point out, sexism may be women’s problem to deal with, but it stems from men’s actions. Women’s circumstances won’t get better unless men change the way they act.

It’s the recipient of the privilege who needs to take action. I’m talking to you, guys. “It’s not only supporting women—it’s about stopping sexism and misogyny when you see it,” says 42-year-old Joshua Bitton, who participated in the discussion. “We let so much slide because we’re afraid that our protest will be met with aggression or judgment. It’s time we cut it out at the root.”

As we work toward greater equality between men and women, the most important thing we can do is continue to communicate and educate one another. The next time you’re in a situation where a friend makes a sexist comment or gesture toward another person, #checkyourboys. It’s an opportunity to help instill change while provoking insightful conversation among friends—maybe even an honest “That’s What He Said”—inspired moment.

Stephanie Leke is a writer in New York. To see the entire discussion, watch the full video at: http://www.upworthy.com/this-movement-wants-guys-to-take-a-stand-when-women-face-verbal-harassment?c=upw1&u=69c7619dc37d57d3a3c5e284bb2b8c. A version of this article appeared in Upworthy.com.
In a new novel that Jane Fonda described as “a marriage of American Sniper and Heart of Darkness,” The Afghan Vampires Book Club takes place in the 25th year of the US-Afghan War. Two hundred U.S. soldiers have been massacred in an event wrapped in mystery. Among the growing number of discarded veterans, rumors circulate that one soldier made it out alive. When British journalist John Fox tracks down Captain Tanner Jackson, he hears an astonishing tale of violence, cover-ups, and revenge, but also of enduring love. The book goes back and forth between John’s journal entries, which track the tightening noose around him, and Tanner’s account of the events leading up to the massacre. The excerpt below is from John’s journal and appears near the beginning of the novel, when John meets a vet named Cody who says he has information about the survivor of the Vod Am Massacre.

April 9, London

It had been Alistair’s idea to start the club—almost two years ago. We were already well into the Second Afghan War, the one that came after the Obama withdrawal and the short-lived Russian occupation that followed. I thought the club was folly, really, a desperate act of frustration over this recycled war. But I humored him.

Alistair Thomason-Thorpe, 71 years old, two decades older than I, but determined to live the life of an English gentleman from before he was born, fragrant pipe tobacco, “old boys,” and all.

Our conversation that night had drifted pleasantly to the theatre season; updates on various acquaintances, and then back again to the latest reports from our current wars.

After discussing one particularly heart-wrenching item from the States, Alistair said, “I can no longer tell which stories are true and which are pure fiction, my dear John.”

Alistair subscribed to more than 20 papers and magazines, from The Times to Tatler, The Times Literary Supplement to The Independent and The Guardian, as if he were on a one-man crusade to keep print journalism alive. Even one of the tabloids landed on his doorstep each day.
He had read me a story about a group of vets who formed an armed gang, invaded a casino on a reservation in Wisconsin, threatened to spill a “swimming pool of blood,” refused to surrender and were gunned down by a SWAT team, along with many other poor souls gambling their wages away. Thirty-three dead.

“According to this in-depth journalism”—with two fingers he held up one of the local tabloids as if he were holding someone’s used underwear—“the veterans said they hoped to cleanse themselves of all the barbarism they saw, or committed, in Afghanistan.” He had taken a thoughtful puff on his pipe and then said, “I never did understand this notion of self-cleansing violence, do you, old boy?” Alistair didn’t wait for an answer. “I do love this headline, though: ‘Vampire Vets Meet Bloody End.’” He looked up at me and then said, “Do any of you actually report anymore or do you simply repost what you find online?”

“Why bother searching online?” I said. “We simply run the press releases.”

“I’m serious,” he said. “We should start a society. A club perhaps.”

“Of…?”

He took a moment before he said, “To collect all these terrible, barbaric, and unbelievable stories.”

As he said this, I glanced at the picture of his son, mounted in an art deco frame and sitting alone in the middle of a dark oak bookshelf.

“No thanks,” I said.

“But why not?”

“I already do that for my day job. Collect all those stories.”

Two days later I received a handwritten letter. Alistair was perfectly capable of turning on his tablet and sending an email but he relished old-school style.

The letter was headed: “The Afghan Vampires Book Club: An Invitation.”

He had sent the same letter to five others: a fellow amateur historian, two journalists, a short story writer of some renown, and his favourite antiquarian book dealer.

We were to gather the most improbable, disturbing, unbelievable, and absurd stories—fiction and non-fiction—that were coming out of the two-and-a-half decades of the start-and-stop Afghan War, as well as the ongoing Syrian-Lebanese-Turkish war, the Venezuelan campaign, and the new counter-insurgency efforts in Indonesia and Argentina, and post them on a website. It was, he conceded, more of a storytellers’ club, but he preferred the sound of “book club,” just as he preferred books, especially leather-bound, to any other medium. I think he tossed “vampire” into the name as a nod to the bloodletting threats of those casino-invading veterans, although perhaps it was merely acknowledging the absurdity of the whole exercise.

He wrote that once a year we would meet at his country home near Oxford, where he would announce the winner. The prize would be a case from his wine cellar, a coveted prize ever since most of the Northern Hemisphere’s grape production had gone awry.

“The goal, my dear friends, is to figure out if the story is true or pure invention. Only then,” his message continued, “will the winner take home the wine.”

I had phoned Alistair. I’m certain he would have preferred a letter but I wouldn’t have known where to buy a stamp. Again I said no.

The next evening I was having an almost peaceful dinner with Sandra, who, at the time, hadn’t yet started her A levels. I shouldn’t have been surprised to learn that she already knew about Alistair’s idea since he was her godfather and one of her sources of after-school employment. “He asked me to register a domain and set up a website for him.” There have been years when she sees more of

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**INSPIRED BY “HEART OF DARKNESS”**

The Afghan Vampires Book Club is set ten years in the future. The U.S. and its allies had left Afghanistan and then returned to be mired again. After 20 U.S. troops are massacred by unknown combatants, one soldier, Tanner Jackson, is believed to have made it out alive. Through the underground world of neglected vets, British journalist John Fox tracks down the story. When Fox finally finds Jackson, he hears an impossible tale of war, violence, and revenge, but also a story of enduring love.

Barker and Kaufman say the book was inspired by Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow’s trip up the Congo River to find the horror is transposed to an Afghan war that hasn’t ended and apparently never can. For the authors, the “darkness isn’t with some colonial Other... It’s an anti-war story that highlights the tremendous impact of war on the soldiers who fight them and the society back home that wages the war. NATO isn’t the main victim in Afghanistan, not by a long shot, but young men (and now some women), often from poor or working class backgrounds, are trained to do something that humans really don’t do well—namely kill. All of our souls are corroded in the process.”

Governments assume men can be plugged into the war machine and return without being scarred, Barker and Kaufman say. “Our societies believe men should be able to bury their emotions and take whatever is thrown at them, that ‘war is hell’ but they get over it. As the cascade of news stories about PTSD and veterans suicides are showing us, this simply isn’t possible. These stories are in the news, but we sought to use the steroideal power of fiction, which allows us to look at Western incursions in Afghanistan from the 19th century and onward but without being a history textbook.”

The novel, the authors say, seeks to shine “a fictional light on the tragic and misguided wars of the moment; and to use a bit of the surreal to wake us up to the real.”

—RO
him than of me. I believe that would be every year since she was born.

My wonderful daughter—she would not use the same adjective for me, I know—heading, she hopes, for medical school after her gap year, that is if I can somehow save enough money working as a serious journalist to help her. This mutual desire is perhaps the one thing Sandra and I have agreed on in many years.

A few days later I had flown off again, to Delhi. But it wasn’t long before I received Sandra’s note: “Hi John. www.AfghanVampires-BookClub.com. Check it out!”

I could not say no to my oldest friend. And I would do just about anything to reduce my daughter’s animosity toward me. Who knows, she might even start calling me “Father.”

In the first year of the competition, the winning story was about a French aid worker who fell in love with an Afghan woman from a Taliban family and convinced her to flee the country with him. Anyone who knew anything about Afghanistan knew that couldn’t end well. On the way to the airport, they disappeared. Their car was found more than 200 kilometers away with the suitcases still in the boot but no blood and no sign of gunshots or struggle. Months went by before anyone heard anything else of the story. The French government sent investigators; U.S. inspectors poked around, but nothing turned up. Nearly six months later, a package arrived at the French Embassy, addressed to the French ambassador from “the people of Afghanistan.” Inside was a small box with a note that read: “After your men look at our beautiful women, they’ll never have eyes for another.”

You can imagine what was in the small box.

It was easy to figure out the truth versus fiction question on that one. Not even a crazy Frenchman would try to date an Afghan woman in Afghanistan.

By the second year, as the challenges of making a living as a journalist increased, even for one who has books, prizes, and more than a few scars from his war reporting, I started using the site to find story ideas. It had become an open (if anonymous) website with postings from one and all. The challenge was sifting through the imaginative conspiracy theories, the pedestrian conspiracy theories, the absurd rumours, paranoid fantasies, and stoned jokes concocted late at night in a barracks, in hopes of finding the hint of a real story.

In its first two years, I hadn’t even posted a story on the site let alone won the competition, though of course this didn’t bother me. It was merely a pastime for an old friend and a small source of income for my daughter.

Both Alistair and Sandra were as persistent as biting insects, intent as they were that I take this year’s competition more seriously. The hook for me came from a posting by a U.S. veteran who claimed to have the real story behind the Vod Am massacre, which had been a scoop for me just a few months before.

Cody was his name. I wrote to him. He ignored me. I wrote again and asked if I could meet him. He said, “Maybe” and three days later wrote to me again to say, yes, if I could come to Baltimore.

If an idea is hot, I can get expenses paid by Judith in Brooklyn. Though Judith’s business is thriving as one of the more successful agent-editor-management-epub houses, the enthusiasm and support of Judith and her staff is conditional on how high I happen to sit on the charts.

My social media lines were static. My world journalist rank had fallen to 482. My credibility index was still high, but my name recognition was spiraling down.

“Judith. Me.”

“Jesus, it’s only seven here.” I heard the rustle of cellophane as she unwrapped a fresh pack of her Marlboro Easy Trippers. I heard her light one and take a short toke. I waited.

“Ah,” she finally said, “nothing like the first hit of the day. So glad I live in a civilized state.”

“Listen, I think I’ve found a big story.”

“Your stories are always gonna be big. I must be time traveling.”

“Call me only when you’ve got a book.”

Gary Barker is the author of two nonfiction books and three novels, all published by De Geus/World Editions in the Netherlands. He is the founder and international director of Promundo, a global NGO promoting gender justice and violence prevention by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls (promundoglobal.org).

Michael Kaufman, a Voice Male contributing editor, is the author or editor of eight books, including the novel The Possibility of Dreaming on a Night Without Stars (Penguin Canada). He is currently writing a book about men’s leadership to help achieve gender equality and transform the lives of men. He can be reached at mk@michaelkaufman.com.
Sorry I Don’t Dance: Why Men Refuse to Move
By Maxine Leeds Craig
New York: Oxford University Press, 2014
230 pp., $99 (cloth); $24.95 (paper)

Scholarly work on the body often overlooks men’s participation in feminized practices. Maxine Leeds Craig helps close this gender gap by studying both men who dance and men who “refuse to move.” She shows masculinity to be an embodied undertaking by looking at what sorts of men dance, as well as where, how, and why they do so. She also argues that cultural scripts shaping white, heterosexual, middle-class male bodies help naturalize dominance. Her goal for the book—to remind us that how we experience and move our bodies is learned and salient in social hierarchies—makes it an excellent text for the classroom.

Craig opens her book by asking readers to consider how gender informs dance and how bodily movement positions men within contrasting racial, classed, and sexual locations. The gracefulness associated with dance often feminizes it, and so most men who dance have long emphasized their strength and athleticism. Like women, men’s bodies too are political, with instructors attempting to masculinize dance by attaching it to expressions of power. Focusing on the conditions under which white men often become “sitter-outers” and experience their bodies as stiff and uncomfortable, Craig shows that the status of men is established both on and at the margins of the dance floor.

Dedicating three chapters to a historical analysis of archival data, Craig works through the shifting meanings of dance for men from 1900 through the 1970s. She found depictions of dancing men difficult to locate, but those that do exist show how definitions of good or bad dancers depend less on men’s innate rhythm and more on sociohistorical context. The emergence of an “athletic and outspoken” 1920s woman, for example, created a need to ensure men’s dominance. And so early 20th century debates about whether boys should dance were rooted in misogynistic anxieties about the feminization of men.

Craig found that a spike in men’s dancing emerged during World War II, with soldiers’ morale supposedly bolstered by government organized dances. Women’s patriotic duties came to include being punctual and pleasant dance partners to men. Reifying the gender order, wartime dance organizers told women there were few other duties as important as “serv[ing] the state.” But by the 1960s, the jitterbug had faded from popularity and dance increasingly became a solo event that took place in the working-class, gay-associated disco or the Latino salsa club.

In later chapters, Craig draws from 50 interviews with racially diverse men of different class backgrounds and sexual orientations to explore their experiences watching, learning, and performing dance. She also spent time participating in and observing a college dance class, watching young men coordinate their bodies. While I would have liked Craig to reflect on her own dancing body in the class—and on how her gender, race, age, and professional status affected her data—she paints a nuanced picture of both men’s anxieties around and enjoyment of dance. Craig develops her main theoretical contributions to the study of gender, bodies, and inequalities in these chapters.

By deploying the concept of “dancer’s habitus,” Craig demonstrates that some men cultivate the ability to move in time with music as children. Watching their fathers dance confidently with their mothers and having sisters who teach them to dance, these men learn to move freely. Feeling self-conscious dancing—even while they are alone—however, exemplifies the extent to which white men are uncomfortable being the object of the gaze. Men of color, Craig argues, more often develop a dancer’s habitus that is important to cultural inclusion. Black men can signal racial membership through hip hop and Latino men might use salsa in traditional cotillions. Becoming a competent dancer is thus important to the development of racial identities and categories that bind men to a community.

At the same time, the racialization of the dancer’s habitus upholds beliefs about naturally expressive and uninhibited Black and Latino bodies. Craig argues that a Cartesian interpretation of movement exists, whereby white men become “nondancers” defined by mental capacity rather than corporeality. She finds that whites also exoticize and even imitate “blackbody.” Testing “racial interactionist theory,” Craig explores how the relationship between gender, bodies, and domination is exhibited through white men’s appropriation of Black style. Teen idol Justin Bieber, for example, attempts “coolness” through the sourcing of “outlaw masculinity,” which is both racialized Black and classed poor. Instead of blurring racial lines, this imitation relies on the continued subordination and criminalization of Black men.

In the final chapter, Craig asks readers to consider what a less hierarchical society would look like. She argues that it would mean reimaging everyday spaces and practices, including the dance floor and how we move our bodies. And it would mean paying attention to how white men who can’t dance engage bodily expectations that are not only cliché but also create unequal differences between people.

Kristen Barber is a professor of sociology at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Interested in the social construction of gender, her new book, Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men’s Grooming Industry, will be published by Rutgers University Press in August. She can be reached at barber@siu.edu. This review first appeared in the February 2016 issue of Gender & Society. Sage Journals (http://gas.sagepub.com/content/current).
Resources for Changing Men

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

For Young Men

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profeminist e-mail list
www.xyonline.net/misc/profem.html
Homophobia and masculinities among young men: www.xyonline.net/misc/homophobia.html

For Men of Color

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

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

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

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

For Fathers

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

Fathers with Divorce and Custody Concerns
Looking for a lawyer? Call your state bar association lawyer referral agency.
Useful websites include:
www.dadsrights.org
www.divorce.com
www.divorcecentral.com
www.collaborativealternatives.com
www.collaboratedivorce.com

Fathers and Family Law: Myths & Facts
Debunking common myths regarding fathering and family law and providing facts directly from the research
http://www.thelibrary.org/site-index/site-index-frame.html#soulhttp:// www.thelilibrary.org/liz/017.htm

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.nlff.org

Men and Feminism

Guy’s Guide to Feminism
Website companion to a book by Michael Kimmel and Michael Kaufman which illustrates how supporting feminism enriches men’s lives
http://guysguidetofeminism.com/

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

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

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

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

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

Male Survivors of Sexual Assault

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

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

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

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

Overcoming Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

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

Gloucester Men Against Domestic Abuse
Gloucester, Mass. volunteer advocacy group of men’s voices against domestic abuse and sexual assault
www.strongmendontbully.com

Healthy Dating
Sexual Assault Prevention
www.canikissyou.com

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

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

Mending the Sacred Hoop
Works to end violence against Native American women and to strengthen the voice and vision of Native peoples
www.mshoop.com
Resources for Changing Men

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

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

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

Men’s Resources International
Providing training, coaching, and technical assistance that promotes healthy, compassionate, responsible masculinity to men’s and women’s organizations
www.mensresourcesinternational.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
Resource center aimed at improving the quality of service and supports offered to LGBT older adults
www.1gbagingcenter.org

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

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

Straight Spouse Network
Provides 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.survivorproject.org

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

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

Men’s Resource Center for Change
– Amherst, MA
Pioneering men’s center spearheading creation of healthy men and boys network in western Massachusetts and beyond
www.mrcforchange.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

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

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

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

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

Lake Champlain Men’s Resource Center – Burlington, VT
Center with groups and services challenging men’s violence on both individual and societal levels
www.lcmrc.net
ARK OF WALLS  
(for J)

We will all die in small rooms maybe no larger than the ones we live in.

Space is as suffocating as despair.

If we are blessed we will live with another as if waiting for Noah to take two more.

Too many lives overwhelmed by floods of sadness and hearts of secrets.

May we never become outlaws to love.

SUCH HAPPINESS SHOULD LEAP FROM A DREAM  
(for Rebecca King)

After the storm the old trees could be found sitting in a circle telling the children about the first rain and the day the wind disappeared because it fell in love with a cloud.

They say every story remembers its beginnings and no story ever ends. If one sits by a river long enough, years of life will leap from a dream.

Each year no different from a star—a moment of glitter as if time lives just to kiss one’s lips.

Literary activist, author and poet E. Ethelbert Miller’s new book, The Collected Poems of E. Ethelbert Miller, will be published this spring by Willow Books. He is the chair of the board of the Institute for Policy Studies, and a contributing editor to 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

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Why has the U.S. never had a woman president?

The big story about gender in the 2016 presidential year was supposed to be about Hillary Clinton, and her quest to become the first woman president of the United States. Then Donald Trump’s candidacy for the Republican nomination took off, and the narrative took an unexpected turn. Gender was still a central force to be reckoned with, but contrary to the popular understanding of “gender” as synonymous with “women,” the gender issue at the heart of the Trump phenomenon had less to do with women and more to do with men.