WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: HOW MEN CAN BE ALLIES

The MenEngage Gender Equality Issue

With reports from

Brazil, Congo, India, Kenya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Sweden & Uganda
Men’s Letter to the “So-Called” President: Prove You Support Gender Equality

By Rob Okun

Will Donald Trump change his attitude toward women?

After the release of the 2005 Access Hollywood video caught him admitting to sexually assaulting women, many citizens couldn’t believe he could receive enough Electoral College votes to become president. I was one of them.

Less than two weeks after he took office, three-dozen men published a letter to Mr. Trump in Politico. We were teachers and legislators, artists and writers, entrepreneurs and clergy, fathers and husbands. We challenged Mr. Trump “to support this country’s, and the world’s, women.” And we challenged him to set a high standard, to show that he is a man who believes in women’s equality and who opposes discrimination and violence of all kinds by men against women and girls.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump often repeated, “Nobody has more respect for women than I do,” even as he said and did things women and men consider disgraceful. (No need to reiterate here his many vulgar, offensive characterizations of women.) My co–letter writers and I reminded Mr. Trump that there is nothing manly about disrespecting women, and called on him “to make amends and to set a new tone.” Nothing he has done to date suggests he will. Consider the White House plan to gut funding for Office of Violence Against Women Act grants. If that wasn’t enough add his Supreme Court nominee, and his executive order barring any international NGOs that perform or promote abortions from receiving U.S. government funding.

Because the U.S. has long been a leader in promoting women’s empowerment around the globe, we urged Mr. Trump to ensure that the U.S. strengthens that role. Will those Republicans who believe in advancing women’s rights take their case to the White House?

Women deserve equal pay, affordable, high-quality childcare and reproductive health medical leave for mothers—and fathers—so we can all care for our children. (How was it possible nearly two decades into the 21st century for Ivanka Trump to omit fathers from her family leave proposal? Is there any relationship between that omission and the role her husband, White House adviser Jared Kushner, plays in the lives of their children?)

We called for the U.S. to expand efforts at home and abroad to ensure that women and girls are not harassed, beaten, or raped. We reminded Mr. Trump why millions of women marched in this country and around the world less than 24 hours after his inaugu

guration: because women are apprehensive and fearful that their rights will no longer be seen as human rights; because they fear for their own, and for their families’ futures; because they’re disturbed his administration will roll back basic protections. We shared that as men who unequivocally believe in gender equality, we—and tens of thousands of other men—marched with them. (His dangerous, ill-advised and unconstitutional executive order barring entry into the U.S. by anyone from seven targeted Muslim-majority countries only underscores our shared concerns.)

We were speaking to all influential men when we proclaimed: Mr. Trump, use the presidency to explicitly demonstrate that “you will champion the rights of all women”—including immigrant women, women of diverse religious faiths, and diverse sexual orientations and identities, indigenous women, racial minority women, women with disabilities, women who are economically impoverished, and women who are survivors of violence.

Show us, we demanded, that you will elevate women’s voices and women’s leadership by supporting the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA), and programs and campaigns against sexual assault on campus that support initiatives that prevent men’s violence against women; that you will hold accountable men who disrespect women.

Show us by supporting pay transparency and the Paycheck Fairness Act that you believe in giving women the platform to fight discrimination in the workforce.

Show us by supporting paid family leave and affordable childcare for all parents.

As men who deeply believe in women’s rights, we unambiguously wanted Mr. Trump to know that every day we will continue to stand up for women in our personal and professional lives. We dared him to show the world that he’s a man who abhors all violence against women and girls, and who champions equality.

A president’s words and actions reverb-rate not just around the country but around the world. If “nobody has more respect for women and girls than me,” then show us, we challenged Mr. Trump. “Show us that you agree that men need to speak out and stand up against inequality and violence against women. Show us that you will #BeAModelMan.”

Rob Okun is editor of Voice Male and can be reached at rob@voicemalemagazine.org. To add your name to Be a Model Man campaign, go to http://promundoglobal.org/beamodelman/

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Cover Images: UN booklet for Innovative Approaches to Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment

Male Positive • Pro-Feminist • Open-Minded
Mail Bonding

Countering Misogyny in the White House

I learned a lot from reading the Voice Male anthology. Thank you for the important work you do to counter the misogyny that was revealed by the election campaign. I am appalled that an admitted sexual predator is now our President, and I was proud to march in Boston on January 21 with my wife and others from my Episcopal church. I’m hoping to get involved with a local organization that is working to end sexual and domestic violence. Keep fighting the good fight!

Dan Fields Framingham, Mass.

Helping My Sons Explore Privilege—and Feminism

I purchased the Voice Male book several months ago when I started looking for books about feminism for men. I have five children, my eldest daughter is almost 17 and I have four sons (two sets of twins, 15 and 10). I’ve been a feminist my whole adult life and now that my children are exploring issues of privilege and intersectionality, I’ve been looking for resources for my sons that they can connect with. They are interested, open-minded and curious, but also challenged and overwhelmed by it all. Their sister is like their mom was at her age and pretty fierce, which means I spend a lot of time helping my sons navigate mixed and challenging feelings about masculinity and feminism—which is good, but hard work. I have a lot of empathy for the place they are in and there is a dearth of resources. I was delighted to find your book because there isn’t much out there, and I feel very strongly that unless we help boys navigate these challenges, we aren’t going to see the changes we need in our society.

My sons heard a “Men’s Rights” speaker recently which led to more questions and agitation about where they fit. I pulled out the book and encouraged them to read a few pieces to hear more male voices from a profeminist perspective addressing the issues this speaker brought up but from a different angle. I encourage my husband to talk to them about these sorts of things and although he’s supportive it’s hard for him, too. When I took the book out again, I realized that there was a current magazine and I really like the idea of having that in my house for whoever wants to take a look. It’s a more digestible format and I also really want to support your work. If you have other recommendations for resources for my sons I would welcome them!

Kirsten Goa Edmonton, Alberta

The So-Called President: Male Ego on Steroids

Thank you for a glimmer of sanity, Rob Okun, couldn’t agree more with your thoughts about men needing to disavow Trump’s sickening, toxic display of psychopathic male ego on steroids—May all men everywhere take you up on the creation of healthy, real masculinity—women everywhere are literally dying for it.

Paki Wright
Editor, Bohemian Buddhist Review

Tackling Inequality in College Sports

I just discovered your website and am excited to read about your work. I am a college track coach wanting to work on tackling inequality in college sports. My interest was sparked by one of my good friends being pushed out of a coaching job because she had a baby. I recently began digging into academic research on women in coaching and have come to believe that the underlying cause of the challenges women face in achieving equity is the toxic masculinity you write about. I want to change the nature of collegiate sports! My primary interest will be creating equity for women and marginalized groups in employment in college sports.

Janine Kuestner Cleveland, Ohio

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

Thank you for picking up the latest issue of *Voice Male* magazine. We are happy to share this special issue with you as it marks a collaboration between *Voice Male* and MenEngage Alliance. *Voice Male* has a unique history in the field of working with men and masculinities for gender justice, which it has been chronicling for three decades. In *Voice Male*’s pages you will find stories of men standing with women to end gender-based violence and to transform societal ideas about manhood towards forms that are based on equality and feminist principles.

The MenEngage Alliance is a network of more than 700 civil society organizations, research institutes and activists mobilizing and engaging men and boys to advance the rights of women and girls, and gender justice for everyone. We believe that transforming masculinities is crucial. We focus on the roles and responsibilities of men and boys, including their privileges, as well as the ways in which they themselves are harmed by existing expressions of conventional manhood. We take into account how gender identity, race, class, sexual diversity and country-level realities interact with and create systems of oppression. We use a feminist-informed analysis to address power and patriarchy, and build on the achievements of—and work in partnership with—women’s rights activists and other social justice movements.

In this edition of the magazine you will read stories of MenEngage Alliance members and partner organizations from around the world. From inspiring stories of men transforming their ideas about gender equality in Uganda, where they’ve gone from exemplifying patriarchy to becoming “Role Model Men,” using rap music to teach young men about healthy masculinity in Kosovo, to using smart phone technology to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights in India, the rich collection of stories in this special issue are hopeful signs of a new direction with boys and men, for gender equality and justice. By sharing these stories from around the world, we hope not only to engage men and boys, but also to inspire leaders in civil society, researchers, and UN agencies to take action to transform masculinities. Join us!

Have a story to share? Please let us know. Write to joni@menengage.org and *Voice Male* editor Rob Okun at rob@voicemalemagazine.org.

To a gender just world,
Joni van de Sand
Global Coordinator
MenEngage Alliance Global Secretariat
Men @ Work

Kudos for Kuros!
A U.S.-based company is getting self-defense products into the hands of women around the world. Kuros! recently donated 2,000 cans of pepper spray to women in the Philippines, where females are the daily targets of violence and sexual assault.

Company founder Kuro Tawil says his business wants to give women “a fighting chance” at protecting themselves from assault and allowing them to live their lives without fear. “We are committed to changing women’s lives on a global scale,” Tawil said. For every Kuros! product sold, the company founder says, a can of pepper spray is provided to a woman who could not otherwise afford it. The firm has reached out to women in several countries, including South Africa, India, and El Salvador.

Kuros! and Willi Hahn Enterprises, a retailer of outdoor sporting goods, teamed up with Gabriela, the Alliance of Filipino Women working for freedom and democracy, to reach vulnerable women across the country. They began delivering pepper spray last November in honor of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. For more information visit kuros.com/.

Challenging Russia’s Dangerous Domestic Violence Laws

In Russia, a woman sustains injuries from domestic violence every 12 minutes. That’s 36,000 women each year, although the number may be higher since there is no official record keeping of family violence cases. So says activist Alena Popova as part of her call on Change.org for a worldwide campaign promoting legislation to protect women.

Existing Russian law allows courts to be lenient with those who commit domestic violence. The Duma—Russia’s legislative body—recently passed a law to decriminalize domestic violence. Popova says such a law will mean more women will die, and that the criminal justice system in Russia will continue to reward those who abuse their spouses.

Popova is calling for a new law that would change the way the justice system handles domestic violence cases, including a special office to prosecute abusive men who are responsible for beating 36,000 women every day in Russia, she says.

Western and Eastern Europe—as well as several other countries from Kazakhstan to Lithuania—have adopted similar laws that led to as much as a 40 percent decrease in domestic violence cases, she reported. That could happen in Russia, too.

Popova has called on the international community to “help send a powerful message to Russian lawmakers that people around the world are invested in the survival of women who are otherwise dying for the right to be safe in their homes.” https://www.change.org/p/state-duma-adopt-the-domestic-violence-law-in-russia?source_location=topic_page

Mayors for Equality

More than 150 mayors from more than 40 states and the District of Columbia have joined a new coalition, Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination, to support LGBT constituents and advance equal protections.

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Miriam Zoll
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Men @ Work

Trump’s response to allegations of sexual abuse and harassment by 13 women—their stories emerged after a leaked 2005 video showed him bragging about grabbing women “by the pussy”—was that the accusers weren’t hot enough to merit being sexually assaulted by him.

Weeks before the election he said he would sue all of his accusers after November 8. “All of these liars will be sued after the election is over,” Trump said during a campaign stop in Pennsylvania. To date he has not filed a single lawsuit.

The Dutch Join the Resistance

When Donald Trump reinstated and expanded an executive order forbidding the federal government from donating aid to family planning or medical organizations that perform abortions—or refer women to abortion providers—the Netherlands immediately stepped in to fill the humane gap left by his action.

While federal funds have never been permitted to be used to fund abortions, the so-called “global gag rule” aims to censor NGOs that provide sexual healthcare and family planning assistance to women in developing countries.

Dutch minister Lilianne Ploumen said in late January that the Netherlands was creating a “well-financed fund” to donate to family planning and sexual health NGOs that offer abortions or inform patients about the possibility of medical abortions. The Dutch-run fund is taking donations from private donors, NGOs, and other governments, providing an organized and cohesive resistance to Trump’s action. Up to 20 countries have indicated support for the Netherlands’ plan to set up an international safe abortion fund to plug the $600 million funding gap.

Response has been tremendous, Ploumen reported, including Dutch citizens asking how they can privately donate. “In the Netherlands,” Ploumen said, “there is firm support for the rights of women and girls—and [for] promoting... [and] protecting those rights.”

Fathers Reducing Malnutrition in Mozambique

Recognizing that no father wants an unhealthy or unhappy family, Concern Worldwide is tackling chronic malnutrition and extreme poverty in Mozambique by engaging men in shared caregiving and gender equality. The campaign is part of the organization’s Linking Agribusiness and Nutrition project (LAN) in the country’s Manica and Zambezia provinces.

Through participating in gender-transformative workshops called Clube de Diálogos, the fathers discuss men’s shared responsibilities at home, and their role—as actively involved fathers and caregivers—in promoting their families’ health and nutrition.

Concern, an international humanitarian organization that works to transform the lives of the world’s poorest people, decided to work with men in Mozambique because an analysis on nutrition concluded engaging fathers would be key in driving nutritional behavior change. Men were identified as most influential in ensuring women’s exclusive breastfeeding, and children’s receiving a minimally acceptable diet.

Both men and women face an immense amount of social pressure to conform to prevailing community attitudes, expectations, and practices, Concern says. Women are still expected to perform the bulk of household chores, including childcare, while men often maintain the belief that family nutrition is “women’s business” in which “real men” should not be involved. These inequitable attitudes and behaviors pose a major barrier to improved health and nutrition. The LAN project is designed to transform harmful norms and inequalities related to gender as a way to strengthen strategies that improve maternal, infant, and child nutritional outcomes and continue promoting women’s empowerment.

Sexual Assault Accuser Sues Donald Trump

Donald Trump has been sued. Summer Zervos, a former contestant on The Apprentice, filed a defamation suit in January against the former (and present -day?) reality TV star for using “his national and international bully pulpit to make false statements to denigrate and verbally attack [her] and the other women who publicly reported his sexual assaults in October 2016.”

In the suit, reported on by AlterNet senior writer Kali Holloway, Zervos says she “was ambushed by Mr. Trump on more than one occasion” over the course of filming the television show in 2007. The lawsuit also alleges: “Mr. Trump suddenly, and without her consent, kissed her on her mouth repeatedly; he touched her breast; and he pressed his genitals up against her. Ms. Zervos never consented to any of this disgusting touching. Instead, she repeatedly expressed that he should stop his inappropriate sexual behavior, including by shyng him away from her forcefully, and telling him to ‘get real.’ Mr. Trump did not care; he kept touching her anyway.”

Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination is a nonpartisan coalition made up of officials who support equal protections and fair treatment for all LGBT people. With 32 states still lacking comprehensive protections for LGBT people—and increasing uncertainty surrounding potential new discriminatory federal policies—organizers say it is more crucial than ever to maintain support at the local level. Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination was formed to provide protection and resources to advance equality and affirm the dignity of all. Cochairs include Mayor Ed Lee of San Francisco, who founded the organization; Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington, DC; Mayor Jim Kenney of Philadelphia; and Mayor Ed Murray of Seattle.

The mayoral initiative is being coordinated by Freedom for All Americans (FAA) (freedomforallamericans.org), a bipartisan campaign to secure nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people nationwide. FAA brings together Republicans and Democrats, businesses, people of faith, and allies in the fight for fair and equal treatment for all.

Recognizing that no father wants an unhealthy or unhappy family, Concern Worldwide is tackling chronic malnutrition and extreme poverty in Mozambique.
Besnik Leka promotes gender equality with CARE International’s Young Men Initiative in Kosovo. In an interview with Maike Dafeld, editor of Balkan Perspectives, he reveals why gender equality is closely linked to dealing with the past, and shares his personal motivations for working for gender equality.

Maike Dafeld: What does gender equality mean to you?

Besnik Leka: The perception of gender equality has been evolving and unfortunately sometimes it is misinterpreted and misunderstood. Many people confuse gender equality with the empowerment of one gender over another. In my opinion gender equality is nothing more and nothing less than equal opportunities and equal rights for both men and women.

MD: You are one of the few men working directly on gender equality in Kosovo. How did you get involved in this topic?

BL: Gender has been an integral part of my life since childhood. I have three sisters and growing up I never viewed any difference between us although I received more attention as the boy in the family. When I was bullied in school, instead of bringing a man to protect me—as tradition requires—I brought my sisters. My sisters were my best friends and role models growing up. I have three nieces and one nephew, and they keep me inspired to work on gender equality. In the past I have worked on projects related to gender, but mainly focused on women and girls. Today, with great joy and pleasure I work with young men and recently with fathers and fathers-to-be. It is easy for me because I believe in gender equality.

MD: You are one of the few men working directly on gender equality in Kosovo. How did you get involved in this topic?

MD: Why do you think it is important to work especially with men on gender equality?

BL: The issue of gender equality has been traditionally perceived as a women’s concern, but men are the main cause of gender inequalities. Mainly because of the way they are raised and the way society expects them to act. The rigid social norms that have shaped the way men act towards one another and women are our main concern. That is why we consider working with young men to be tackling gender inequality at the roots. If you raise boys in an environment where they are expected to show love, affection and care instead of being tough, emotionless, rude and violent, I believe that is when you have taken the biggest step towards dismantling social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and towards building an equal society.

MD: What kind of reactions did you get from men in Kosovo?

BL: Working with young men to promote gender equality was something new for Kosovan society. It was not easy to approach young men, to sit with them and to talk about gender-based violence, health and well-being....but the longer the project went on the more eager they were. The simple response often was that no one has talked to them about these topics before, as if gender was not applicable to them. Helping young men understand their role and responsibility created more interest, and they even learned how much men and boys benefit from gender equality. I can proudly say that today many of these young men are agents of change. Young people in Kosovo are more open-minded than we think. We just haven’t given them an opportunity thus far to be a part of programs like the Young Men Initiative.

MD: What kind of strategies do you use to promote gender equality and positive masculinity among young men?

BL: We use a number of creative strategies. For example, we have coordinated various formal video products which provide an opportunity for Be a Man Club members to learn performance and multimedia skills while exploring and expressing their views about gender equality and healthy masculinities. We contacted a famous Kosovan rapper called Lyrical Son to collaborate on one of these projects, realizing the huge impact that pop culture can have on young people and wanting to use this influence in a positive way.

Working with young men to promote gender equality was something new for Kosovan society. It was not easy to approach young men.
Together we made a rap music video about masculinities, dealing with problems in nonviolent ways, and how they can help young men achieve their dreams and not get into trouble. The students really enjoyed it and the video got over two million views, which is not bad for a country with a population of two million! Because of its success, another Kosovan rapper released a song shortly afterwards dealing with a similar topic, and another approached us wanting to make a video. It was a great experience and really shows the power of influencing from the bottom up.

**MD:** How do you measure the program’s success?

**BL:** As a new initiative we decided to invest a lot on research to measure the impact of our project. We implemented a baseline study before starting workshops in schools and the “Be a Man Campaign.” Because of the successful results we achieved, we managed to accredit the program with the Ministry of Education as a part of the national curriculum for schools. We started to train and prepare teachers and scale the program all over Kosovo and the region. This was one of my biggest challenges, convincing the Ministry of Education that such programs are necessary in our schools.

**MD:** How do you think gender plays a role in dealing with the past?

**BL:** Actually, this is one of the most sensitive issues when dealing with gender, especially in patriarchal societies like Kosovo. The attitudes and behaviors of the current generation of young men in Kosovo and the Balkans are influenced by the fact that they were born during or immediately after the Yugoslav wars. Young men have come of age in a time of tumultuous post-conflict rebuilding. Militarized versions of masculinities are still present, as are tensions around sociocultural and political identities. This broader backdrop plays a fundamental role in shaping young men’s ideas on masculinities. The Young Men’s Initiative enlists young men to make a change in the world they live in, and challenges them to become modern men who express masculinities in a healthy way. It is nevertheless still a great challenge to explain some of the basic ideas of gender equality to people who were raised under such rigid norms.

Advertisements in Kosovo challenge men to be active in gender equality.

*Maike Dafeld* is a project manager at ForumZFD/Forum Civil Peace Service, and editor of Balkan Perspectives, where a version of this interview first appeared.

**Besnik Leka** is a project coordinator at CARE International in Kosovo. He has been working with CARE’s Young Men Initiative since 2011.
**Changing Congo Men’s Attitudes on Gender Begins at Home**

By Odette Asha with Inge Vreeke

“I couldn’t accept my share of my father’s will if my sisters were to receive nothing,” confessed Bahati Leonard, a 23-year-old man living with his parents in Rusayo, near the town of Goma in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He was talking about his father’s gender-based decision to apportion his inheritance.

One day, Bahati’s father sold all of his fields and decided to share the money among the more than two-dozen of his children that he had with four wives. By children, though, he meant sons. When distributing his money, he did not plan to give anything to his daughters. Bahati told his father he would not accept his share if his sisters were not going to receive any money.

Bahati shared this story with staff members from CARE and its partner Congo MenEngage (COMEN) attending a group to engage men in Rusayo.

In many communities in DRC there is a tradition that allows fathers not to consider their daughters as their children. Girls are considered a loss for their families, because when they get married, they join their spouse’s family. Bahati’s father, like many others, thought that it was legal to exclude his daughters from his inheritance, even though DRC inheritance law does not discriminate against women and girls. However, particularly in rural areas custom and tradition is better known and seen as more important than statutory law.

Bahati’s refusal to accept his share of his father’s inheritance sparked long conversations with his father and brothers. In the end they all agreed with Bahati and in his will his father redistributed his money equally among all his 27 children, females as well as males. “Thanks to my participation in the MenEngage group, I was able to influence my father and brothers to share the money with our sisters too. Before joining the group, I could not imagine that [not doing so] was a form of gender-based violence,” Bahati said.

Bahati is a participant in CARE DRC’s Mawe Tatu project, one of the 10,000 men whom CARE/DRC—and its partners—will work with thanks to financial support from the Dutch embassy. Their goal is to motivate males to adopt attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the improvement of power relations and to reducing gender-based violence.

One of the project’s strategies is to facilitate groups to engage men. The men and boys discuss a range of topics in the groups including positive masculinity, gender-based violence, and upholding women’s rights. It was in one of these groups that Bahati learned about girls’ legal right to inheritance.

Beyond raising awareness about women’s legal rights, the groups provide a space for men to discuss gender equality and related topics. Members support each other to publicly adopt practices that are aligned with their beliefs and serve as activists in their societies, sharing their experiences and advice with other men. Currently, there are about 1500 members. Some members’ wives already participate in the project’s women’s empowerment component, through Village Savings and Loans Associations and training on human rights, family planning, and leadership training, among other topics. CARE and COMEN plan to engage other wives as well.

MenEngage groups in Rusayo have realized that one way to protect their wives and daughters’ rights is to legalize their marriage, and as such ensure their legal right to their inheritance. Even some religious institutions are now asking couples to go through a civil ceremony before a religious one. MenEngage groups are promoting legalization of marriages in their communities. “Due to the recurrent conflicts and war in Masisi, I was not able to legalize my marriage,” said Faustin, a 45-year-old displaced man. Now I have been sensitized on its importance and informed that I can do it when in displacement as well; I have to protect my wife and children so that they may inherit from me,” referring to his wife and seven children with whom he lives in Rusayo. To date, 22 village couples have legalized their marriages.

“Engaging men is an integral part of our gender approach and has proven essential to tackle gender-based violence in all its forms. It has tangibly increased our impact in the communities where CARE works,” said Johannes Schoors, CARE’s DRC country director.

CARE DRC’s strategies include economic empowerment of women and youth, ensuring access to basic social services and increasing social resilience to crisis and conflict. It also sees as key working to engage men to contribute to the transformation of harmful sociocultural norms.

To learn more go to www.care.org/country/democratic-republic-congo.
Sweden’s Pioneering Fathers’ Groups

By Sinéad Nolan

Matts Berggren is a pioneer in Sweden’s fathers’ group movement, and a staff member at Men for Gender Equality Sweden. He recently talked about the history of the country’s fathering groups, their expansion around the globe, and the current challenges they face.

In Sweden, PappaGrupp (fathering groups) encourage men to be more active during their partner’s pregnancy, as well as during the birth, and afterward involved in childcare. The male-only classes were started a quarter century ago by Swedish men who recognized that most men were not attending prebirth classes and decided to do something about it.

“We found that there was an information gap between men and women in terms of knowledge and preparation for parenthood,” Berggren explained, “and that men felt either excluded by traditional classes targeted at women, or were unable to freely express their concerns in the traditionally female setting of maternity centers.”

Fathers’ groups are facilitated by male psychologists in collaboration with staff at local health centers and midwives, and bring together groups of new and expectant fathers to learn about childcare, and to share their experiences of fatherhood with one another. They seek to highlight how important involved fatherhood is for children, strengthen partner relationships, reduce fathers’ feelings of exclusion, prevent fathers’ postpartum depression, and communicate to men the broader benefits of gender equality. “It’s important that these groups are male-only spaces, as they allow men to open up and speak freely. However, we give men homework assignments in which they discuss what they learned in class with their partners. This way we ensure that women’s voices are heard.”

Berggren has been working with fathering groups since the 1990s. His program Dads for Real ran in seven municipalities in Sweden between 2002 and 2007, and was the first to have broader gender equality objectives. An evaluation of the program showed positive effects on the health and well-being of fathers, mothers and children. Participants reported closer connection to their children and partners, were more likely to take parental leave, had more gender egalitarian attitudes and were less likely to engage in violence, Berggren reported. “The program is unique in the sense that we do not tell fathers-to-be how they should live, act, and build their life and relations. Instead of lectures we engage men in discussions, offering open-ended workshop topics so they can draw their own conclusions on how best to be closer to their child and improve family climate.”

Since their inception, the groups have become an integral part of parental training within Sweden’s national mother and child healthcare system. A lot has changed over the last 25 years in Sweden, thanks in part to the work of the fathering groups. New parents have come to expect there will be activities available for both women and men in health centers. Because of the demand from so many men, maternity centers around the country are approaching Berggren’s organization, Men for Gender Equality, to collaborate.

However, despite positive evaluations, and the growing demand, securing government funding remains a challenge. “Even though we have a progressive government in Sweden, it can be hard to get funding locally. In some municipalities, the work is government funded but in others we rely on volunteers. We can’t keep up with the demand.” In some regions, he said, despite operating fathering groups for years, they are closing. “We have to continue advocating for institutionalizing our approach so that it is sustainable.”

Sweden’s fathering groups have been replicated, inspiring similar programs around the world. Berggren and Men for Gender Equality Sweden have provided guidance and capacity building to emerging fathers’ groups in Russia, Belarus and Botswana, among other countries. “I’ve trained hundreds of facilitators and I’ve met over 5,000 fathers around the world,” Berggren said, noting that while “in every country the context is different, we have similar results in all cases.” The success of their approach was a major source of inspiration for the global MenCare campaign, a fatherhood initiative active in more than 40 countries across five continents that promotes men’s active, equitable and nonviolent involvement as fathers and caregivers.

“Most men know they want to take part in caregiving, but [if] their own father didn’t they have no role model at home,” Berggren explained. “Most men get confirmation for what they are thinking and feeling by meeting others in the same situation. These days, fathers can find all the information they need on the Internet but it means more coming from others who have gone through the same experience.”

He says fathering groups are “such a great way to reach men and open up a conversation not only about fatherhood but about gender equality more generally. People are talking about reaching gender equality in Sweden in 40 years,” Berggren said, “but it is still only women talking about it. We need to get more men talking about gender equality and what’s in it for them. There’s still a long journey ahead of us if we want to truly transform gender norms.”

Sweden’s PappaGrupp have inspired and trained emerging fathering groups around the world, including in Russia, Belarus and Botswana, among other countries.
Midway through writing this article, in Rio de Janeiro’s bohemian Lapa neighborhood, we heard it: the sounds of tear gas as riot police repressed mass protests against harsh austerity measures proposed by Brazil’s months-old conservative government.

The so-called “Bridge to the Future” policy, if approved, would impose a 20-year spending cap, freezing the federal budget but for inflation-based increases. From 2017 to 2037, not a centavo more for public health, education, poverty alleviation or childhood development, among other social programs.

Across-the-board cuts hurt everyone, but history shows they hit women particularly hard. Tasked with feeding and caring for their families without any government support, women face double and triple burdens on their time. Austerity regimes have also been linked to increased domestic violence.

Women at a crossroads

This threat to women’s economic, social and political well-being comes on the heels of significant gains made during the prosperous past decade, when Brazil was proud to put the “B” in the BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

In 2006, the country passed legislation protecting women against domestic violence, while the conditional cash transfer program Bolsa Familia, directed mainly to female heads of household, increased women’s economic empowerment and decision-making power.

In 2010, Brazil elected its first female president, Dilma Rousseff. She was reelected four years later. From 2014 to 2015, Brazil rose from 97th to 75th in the global gender equality rankings.

As gender researchers, we knew that true equality was still far down the road. For example, in absolute numbers, Brazil ranks fourth in the world for child marriage. But recently it’s been possible to think that we were headed in that direction, that girls and women really do matter.

As social movements in Brazil and across Latin America have forced these issues onto global agendas via street protests and hashtags, gender equality is increasingly the official message of the United Nations, governments, and the business sector.

Out with women, in with white men

Threats to Brazil’s improving gender equality are not just economic. They’re also reflected at the highest level of politics.

Just as the world was stunned that Donald Trump—a man who bragged about “grabbing women by the pussy”—had won the United States election over the supremely qualified former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, this year Brazil, too, saw its presidency turned over to a man.
In August 2016, Rousseff was ousted for incompetence and suspect accounting practices. With its obvious gender dimensions, the impeachment process was characterized by many as a “witch hunt.”

During Roussef’s congressional trial, male legislators voted against her using patronizing language (“goodbye, my dear”) and words of congratulations to the military unit that had tortured Dilma Rousseff under Brazil’s dictatorship.

Many of the male colleagues who forced Rousseff out were under investigation themselves for greater wrongdoing—including Speaker of the House Eduardo Cunha, who was arrested for corruption in October.

Rousseff’s replacement, her vice president Michel Temer, is a conservative Evangelical Christian allied with Congress’s powerful religious right. After assuming power in August 2016, he appointed an all-white, all-male cabinet—the first such government since 1979. Temer also eliminated the positions of minister of women and minister of racial equality, though public outcry forced him to backtrack.

Brazil’s mayoral elections in October and November showed a similar rightward swing. Rio de Janeiro opted for the former Pentecostal bishop Marcelo Crivella to run the famously diverse city, while São Paulo elected millionaire conservative businessman João Doria.

The past year of political events demonstrates a clear backlash against modern gains in equality and social justice. In the media and the church, in businesses as in politics, the myth of white, male, Christian entitlement persists, and it has left many citizens feeling angry and disenfranchised over the past decade.

Women’s rights and gender equality are not a priority for President Temer or Mayors Crivella and Doria. Abortion, which remains illegal in Brazil except in exceptional cases, is not up for discussion. Plans are now being made to cut paid maternity leave—and this despite the country’s having recently extended paternity leave.

The rethrenchment extends to education. Public schools in eight states have banned curricula that include lessons on gender, and the Ministry of Education’s proposed “Schools Without Political Parties” policy would prohibit open political discussions in classrooms.

Such reforms would hurt any attempt to kindle critical reflections on equality and justice among young people at a time when they are sorely needed.

**A TIME FOR NEW MASCULINITIES**

During the three years of mass protests in Brazil that ultimately led to Rousseff’s demise, it has been common to hear calls for a military-run government. Dictatorship is a not-too-distant memory here, having ended only in 1985.

Militarized models of masculinity still influence Brazil’s everyday culture, promoting aggression and violence. Nearly 60,000 people are murdered each year, the vast majority of them young black men from poor neighborhoods. Here, as in the U.S., the legacy of slavery and ongoing structural inequalities mean that young black men are disproportionately incarcerated and times more likely to be shot by armed civilians and police “in self-defense,” even when unarmed.

Militarized masculinity also contributes to mental health issues for boys and men, including elevated suicide rates, increased use of violence (such as that seen every day in Rio’s favelas) and a lack of emotionally satisfying relationships.

Women’s well-being hinges on changing perceptions of male identity. According to our research, men who hold more gender-equitable attitudes are less prone to violence and more likely to seek preventative healthcare. They’re also more likely to be engaged fathers and to have satisfying family relationships. Such positive male achievement, perhaps unsurprisingly, improves school and health outcomes for daughters and female partners.

Like millennials around the world, younger Brazilians tend to hold more progressive views on gender. As we saw in 2015’s “Feminist Spring” protests, men are willing to take a public stand against sexism, racism and xenophobia.

That’s critical. To counteract the negative dominant narrative posed by the new era of Brazilian politics, more male bosses, colleagues, friends and family members must dispute sexist (not to mention racist and xenophobic) language and actions.

The political events of 2016 have shown that Brazil still has a long way to go in challenging a culture that excludes women while conflating masculinity with domination, power, control and aggression. Ending child marriage would be one place to start.

In the medium term, Brazil’s government must ensure that its “bridges for the future” are built for women and girls, too. To quote the great American radical feminist Angela Davis, we must always try to lift others as we climb.

**Women’s rights and gender equality are not a priority in Brazil. Abortion is illegal and is not up for discussion.**

_Tatiana Moura_ is the executive director of Instituto Promundo–Brazil, and a researcher at the University of Coimbra. This article was coauthored by _Victoria Page_, an international consultant at Instituto Promundo–Brazil.
If you are lucky enough to have a genuine dialogue with a young boy, say the authors, you will notice that a young man is a gold mine of dreams, aspirations and wisdom. The Equal Community Foundation (ECF), based in the Indian city of Pune, has been that lucky—engaging with more than 4450 such young and bright minds for the past seven years. They found that working on gender equality issues with adolescent boys between 13 and 17 is both exciting and challenging.

In India, it is essential to understand the complexity of social dynamics impressed upon a child, even before s/he is born. It is no surprise then that traditions and customs, both social and religious, often take precedence over every other form of social thought. This presents a unique dilemma, often placing women in an unaccountably vulnerable situation. Beginning with the reality of child marriage, underage mothers experience additional social limitations imposed on women and girls. Almost every form of gender discrimination is inextricably woven into Indian society’s social fabric. By the time they reach adolescence, young girls and boys have witnessed so much gender discrimination that they have not just “normalized” it, but also, inevitably, internalized it. But being young also offers an opportunity to question and challenge the way youth are expected to see their world.

Engaging men and boys to consider gender equality is critical as it produces positive changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. Yet it fosters a unique two-pronged dilemma: How do we ensure that we are actually transforming attitudes and behaviors of men and boys to make them gender equitable? How do we ensure that we aren’t reinforcing the power dynamic of an already empowered group by providing them with more opportunities and social skills?

**Men as Potential Allies**

The Equal Community Foundation aims to give men and boys the opportunity to become gender equitable. To that end, ECF develops gender-transformative programs for boys, amassing convincing evidence that demonstrates why these programs are important, and providing an effective solution to the problem of violence and discrimination against women and girls. We do our work in partnership with different organizations that work on a range of gender discrimination issues such as human trafficking.

**Action for Equality: Addressing Inequality at the Roots**

Since 2009, ECF has implemented Action for Equality, a gender-transformative education program, in 20 low-income communities across Pune, a metropolitan city in western India. What do we aim for? To ensure that women and girls are free from gender-based violence and feel safe even from the threat of such violence in the communities in which we work. To do that, we mobilize adolescent boys to identify harmful gender norms and to take action to promote gender equality in their homes, schools, colleges and communities through a three-step yearlong program: Foundation Program, Action Program and Leadership Program. Program mentors are trained to create safe environments in which adolescent boys feel supported to learn and debate about these issues in their community. Through dialogue with their peers and mentors, boys go through a process of self-reflection of their own attitudes and actions regarding gender and become agents of change in their communities.

Shivraj Pudage, a 20-year-old graduate of Action for Equality program, says:

“When I think of how far I’ve come, I’m amazed. I used to be one of those boys in a group who stand on the chowk (street corner) using swear words. And the way I used to look at girls... whistling, singing songs when they passed by, they used to ignore me as they walked by because I was known as the Chhapri and Tapori (hooligan) boy in my neighborhood. I thought it was normal. However, I started questioning my attitude and behavior when I joined Action for Equality. After being a part of the program...
Get Up, Stand Up For Her Rights

Eighteen-year-old Manoj Rathore had a question: If women had rights on paper, when would these rights translate into reality? Even though every Indian has the right to education, one out of five Indian girls drops out of school because education is not considered “necessary” for her.

“I observed a seven year old girl in my community didn’t go to school, but her brother did,” Manoj noted. “In the Action for Equality Program, I learned that every person has the right to education. So why not her?” asked Manoj, a leadership program participant. He was determined to stand up for the little girl’s rights.

“I approached her mother and asked her why she wasn’t sending her daughter to school.” The mother, who worked as a housekeeper in Manoj’s neighborhood, said her daughter “was more of a help to her at work than in school,” Manoj said. He began talking to the mother. “I tried to have a dialogue to persuade her to send her daughter to school.” And he did. Not once. Not twice. But every day for several weeks.

“After a month, her mother finally agreed to send her to school. I was overjoyed by the news!” Not content with only enrolling the girl in school, Manoj also checks on her progress every day. Young men like Manoj, standing up for women’s rights, have the potential to be long-term allies in the fight to end violence and discrimination against women. One day, young men like Manoj may no longer be unique but the norm.

for more than a year, I organized gender awareness plays in my neighborhood. Today, I have an identity of my own there. While I was once considered a vaya gelela porga (good for nothing boy), today, people ask me about events and share their experiences and problems with me. Above all I feel trust.”

Does Our Approach Work?

We have evidence that our approach is working and boys are changing and challenging themselves, their peers’ and families’ inequitable customs. Here are a few findings from three cycles of intervention, which represent one year (2015–16) of program implementation in 20 low-income communities in Pune:

- 77 percent of participants talk with families and friends about gender issues and ask their support on the topic of gender equality.
- 72 percent of the graduates’ mothers and sisters recognize violence and discrimination as a community concern and have reported a positive change in their sons’ behavior.
- 76 percent of participants take initiative toward prevention of gender-based violence.

Golden Opportunities to Grow

Despite our success, working with boys on gender equality with the transformative approach remains challenging. One of the greatest challenges lies in unraveling the knot of harmful gender attitudes and norms so deeply woven into the fabric of society. Existing gender norms are so deep rooted that even when participants are able to identify them and motivated to take action, they face backlash from their family and friends. The process to create more awareness in the community, to gather support from the community to challenge existing gender norms, takes time. We have learned that creating enabling environments is key to gather support for the boys. We also focus on equipping them with skills to overcome backlash.

At the grassroots level, gender equality is not a priority. Community members usually don’t see how gender programs meet their aspirations for education, job training, a good job. That each of these issues is tied to gender discrimination often goes unnoticed by community members unaware of the connections. As a consequence, convincing boys and their parents to encourage participation is a constant challenge. Program mentors face the ongoing challenge of enrolling boys in the program; they meet it by highlighting program benefits to the parents, describing positive behavioral changes they can expect to see in their sons. Engaging parents directly has more often than not turned the situation around.

How do you retain a young man’s enthusiasm for a 15-week program? And how do you keep doing it over the course of a year? While the age group we work with—13 to 17-year-olds—is a fertile age to influence attitudes and behavior, challenges include keeping their attention and interest. Both the content of sessions and how we engage them are essential to sustaining interest. Sessions are activity based and participatory. We constantly update our curriculum, tools, and mentors’ facilitation skills. Most importantly, we have learned to create the safe space young males need but do not have access to—a space where they can express themselves without the fear of being judged, somewhere they can share their personal stories and struggles.

Have we had a long-term impact in dismantling patriarchal and other harmful social norms? Results are inconclusive to date. We employ robust monitoring and evaluation processes integrated into our programs, and indicators and replicable tools to trace change. For nearly two years we have used a self-developed monitoring and evaluation framework to collect evidence of changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and actions. We are committed to continuing to collect data and to documenting stories of change from the grassroots. We will continue to share our findings and contribute to further developing gender-transformative programs and approaches.

As Mahadevi, a participant’s mother, said: “If we can train young men to respect women, there is hope yet.”

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In Lebanon, rapists can avoid criminal prosecution provided they marry their victims. The law, originally introduced in the 1940s, was meant to salvage the “honor” of women who are raped. It was codified as part of the country’s penal code. In 2016, as part of the annual “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence,” the Lebanese gender justice organization ABAAD launched a campaign to abolish the archaic law. ABAAD, which means “dimensions” in Arabic, promotes sustainable social and economic development through equality, protection and the empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women.

Their campaign was called “A White Dress Doesn’t Cover the Rape.” In addition to agitating for a change in the law, the campaign aimed to both raise awareness that rape is a crime in any circumstance, and end stigmatizing rape victims in Lebanese society.

Central to ABAAD’s approach was creatively and holistically engaging all segments of Lebanese society. The initial step was a series of workshops with survivors of sexual violence entitled “Voice Matters.” These women determined the overall direction of the campaign, including its principal messages and slogans.

The campaign’s imagery is provocative and impactful. A video depicts a young abused woman wrapping her injuries with white gauze until the gauze eventually forms a wedding dress—a chilling representation of the campaign’s tagline. ABAAD also used a variety of strategies to wake up the Lebanese public and the media, including groups of veiled women in gauze dresses protesting outside the Lebanese parliament; a flashmob at the Beirut marathon; and a football match with prominent media figures promoting the cause. In addition, the campaign used a number of community engagement approaches to mobilize public opinion around this issue, featuring local communities writing and performing stage plays on sexual violence. Throughout the campaign, those efforts were bolstered by intensive lobbying with politicians, changemakers and religious leaders.

Last December, Lebanon’s parliamentary committee for administration and justice recommended repealing the penal code’s article, a resounding success for ABAAD. Voice Male contributing MenEngage writer Sinéad Nolan talked about the campaign with Roula Masri and Anthony Keedi of ABAAD.

Sinéad Nolan: Tell me about the timing of this campaign. Why did you decide to do it now, and why do you think you managed to have such success at this time?

Roula Masri: The timing of the campaign was really crucial. For the last two years in Lebanon, we have had no president and effectively no executive branch of the government. There has been a major movement proclaiming the parliament is not legitimate. In October we finally elected a president. This created momentum and a generally optimistic political atmosphere, across sectarian divisions. We seized the opportunity to launch the campaign. Another important factor was that is coincided with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. During this time, we generally receive a lot of attention
from the press anyway so the combination of these factors was timely.

**SN:** How did you collaborate with other organizations for this campaign, and how did that affect the result?

**RM:** Like this affect every woman in Lebanon, including the many Syrian refugees here. As part of our strategy of engaging different communities we partnered with five NGOs working with Syrian refugees, to raise awareness about the law and mobilize refugee communities. We also reached out to all of the organizations we have worked with in the past, many of whom contributed technically and financially. Another key partnership was with the media. We made sure they didn’t just cover the campaign but were actively engaged as a partner. That’s how we were able to reach not only Lebanese media but also international media.

**SN:** What kind of opposition did you face?

**Anthony Keedi:** No one was really against the campaign. We framed it in a way that ensured no one could oppose it. We focused on simplifying the message: this is rape, this is an atrocity that is being done to women in our country. It is being covered up and that is unacceptable. We made the images so provocative and made the sexual violence aspect so clear and undeniable that if anyone were to speak against it they would be endorsing rape. The timing was also ideal in terms of “16 Days.” The media and public got behind us so quickly that the opposition couldn’t come up with a strategy.

**SN:** How does this campaign tie in with ABAAD’s work on men and masculinities, and how were you able to mobilize men for this cause?

**AK:** Engaging men was pivotal to this campaign. That act of reaching out to politicians was very difficult in a political system with only 3 percent of women represented. We managed to get the support of many decision makers and religious leaders to speak up against the law on social media. While engaging men was important, the campaign wasn’t really about “masculinities” as some of our previous campaigns have been. We were shocked how quickly it became a national issue and how quickly votes were taken to repeal this law. We were planning strategies to work with young men and women in schools and communities and to involve men who have received our masculinities training using a social norms approach, but they are on hold now because of how successful the campaign was.

**SN:** What lessons did you learn from the campaign?

**RM:** One is that timing is crucial. If you have a good strategy at the right time you will be able to create momentum. Another was about partnership and participation. If we hadn’t included the main rights holders I’m not sure if it would have had the same impact. Instead of reinforcing the patriarchal idea that these women need protecting, we said, “These women have something to say. Listen to them.”

**AK:** We tend to look at a campaign as if it started and ended on a particular date, but really this was an extension of a much longer process. This was our first foray into legislative change. We just celebrated our five-year anniversary. In those five years, we have made an effort to speak to everyone: men, women survivors, politicians and religious leaders. Having these different strategies—never refusing to talk to any particular group, as many organizations have done—led us to have a much better standing with these groups. So, when the moment came for our first attempt at a campaign like this those five years really paid off. We had made a name for ourselves and many allies because of our past efforts to talk to everyone whether we agree with them or not. People were willing to sit down with us and talk about this law. Not only did they believe in what we were doing, but they believed in us and what we stand for. And, although it wasn’t a masculinities-oriented campaign, it was really a culmination of all the work we have done to engage men in the past. When the opportunity came to take a stance on legislation, all the male support we had been garnering for years, and all our male followers on social media, came into play. It is an example of how long-term engagement of men can really work.

**SN:** Do you have future plans to engage in policy or legislative change?

**RM:** The success of this campaign is still sinking in. We would love to continue working on legislation but timing is crucial so we are still unsure what our next opportunity will be.

**AK:** Part of our Theory of Change is that you need to work on the seeds of discrimination—which are gender norms—but also on creating policies and legislation that reflect the norms we would like to see in the world. It remains to be seen what we will work on next, but for the moment, this law is on its deathbed, and we are going to follow it until we bury it.

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**Sinéad Nolan** is a program assistant at MenEngage Alliance. She recently graduated with a master’s degree in international development from King’s College London, where she specialized in gender and social policy in Latin America. She coordinated MenEngage’s collaboration with Voice Male on this issue of the magazine.
because of the number of men who have died from HIV-AIDS and other illnesses, Kenya has a large population of widows. Although regarded as key members of Kenyan society, they face enormous challenges. Chief among their impediments is “widow inheritance,” a cultural practice followed by the Luo ethnic community of Nyanza and western Kenya. Its central feature compels a widow to cohabit with her brother-in-law, a male cousin or other close male relative, a policy officially sanctioned by the family of the deceased man, clan and community. The original idea of the tradition was meant to be helpful—the widow getting to choose from the family of her husband someone she would like to cohabit with. Doing so would mean the family of the deceased would continue to care for his widow and children. That way, the thinking went, the deceased man’s wealth (if he had any) would remain in the family, and the widow, in whom much has been invested, particularly through her dowry, would not leave the matrimonial home to remarry elsewhere.

Today, traditional custom still dictates that all widows must be “inherited.” If they refuse, they are forced into submission; if still adamant, they are isolated by their late husband’s family, and ostracized by the clan and community at large. They are also declared “unclean” to participate in family/community activities or enter others’ homes until such time as they are inherited and thus once again “clean.” This systematic act of gender injustice, and violence and abuse toward women, deprives them of the right to live their lives free of oppression, able to make independent decisions about their future and the futures of their children.

An “inherited” widow is more or less “married” to the “inheritor.” He is lord and master over her, including her sexuality, her children, and all of her late husband’s properties. Even if he is a ne’er-do-well, he will be able with relative impunity to enjoy—and in some cases squander—all that she and her late husband worked for. If inclined to use violence, he can beat and abuse her and her children without any fear of reprisal. He can force her to sire more children against her will and he has full control of her children’s upbringing and property.

Widow inheritance as forced on such women is dehumanizing, undignified; it is repugnant. It saps women’s energy, undermines their confidence, affects their health, and inhibits personal development. It is violence inflicted on already traumatized women solely based on their gender and circumstances—an outright abuse of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Since they are often accused of being responsible for their husbands’ deaths, violence is often meted out against widows. In addition, in some tribal communities, they are sometimes killed because widows are often branded as witches. The underlying motive is economic; the accusers tend to be the male relatives (including brothers-in-law or stepsons), who want to control their land. Rape, forced marriage, and sexual abuse are common. Widows infected by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) after being raped, and who become pregnant, often are too ashamed to seek professional help.

Many widows experience economic hardship. They are compelled to send their children to work instead of sending them to school. Some feel so trapped they resort to prostitution to earn money and are sometimes infected with STDs.
opportunities are scant, both because of their limited mobility and the discriminatory gender division of labor.

In response to their bleak prospects, I initiated a women’s empowerment program through the Rhodelias Foundation, in connection with my role as program officer of Kenya MenEngage Alliance (KEMEA). My wife Rhoda and I started the foundation to support less advantaged people, especially widows and orphans, through economic empowerment and education. I began by mobilizing 50 widows, registering them in a self-help group called “Wumiisyo wa Aka Ndiwa Mbuinzau,” which means “The Patience of the Widows of Mbuinzau.” Using local materials, the Patience of the Widows built a large chicken house. Through donations from the Rhodelias Foundation, and Bemidji State University’s Geography Club (in Minnesota), they bought 100 chickens. Today, the number has grown to more than 700 chickens. They sell some to buy food, pay school fees for their children, and for medication. The chicken and eggs provide good nutrition for the women and their children; some have become entrepreneurs, selling chickens and eggs in local markets.

“I used to misuse my sister-in-law because she had no option other than relying on me for her upkeep,” said one brother-in-law. “When she became a chicken entrepreneur and improved her economic status, she earned a lot of respect with the relatives. We consult her on every decision we make as a family. She even supports my family. I realize that women’s empowerment lays a strong foundation for the family and society.”

Despite their success, the Patience of the Widows still face challenges. These include a lack of resources to buy more equipment related to raising the fowl, and expanding and building an additional chicken house. Controlling disease is another potential hazard since a single infected chicken can spread disease to the flock if not recognized early.

Today these women feel empowered. They have earned respect and dignity. The violence and ridicule they once faced have ended. Currently, Wumiisyo wa Aka Ndiwa Mbuinzau supports 81 widows, five orphans (who are at the university), 32 students in secondary school, and 51 children in primary school.

As a gender activist involved in engaging men and boys for gender equality, I wanted to “walk my talk”—to constructively address one of the triggers sparking violence against women and to help restore women’s sense of agency. My efforts have opened other men’s eyes. Because of the success they have seen in the widows’ poultry project, they are assisting their spouses to start income-generating activities of their own.

In order to promote a just and equitable society, men need to begin by accepting the importance of women’s economic empowerment. Then they need to provide a good working environment, and resources (both human and financial) so they can replicate efforts that have worked to empower women. Men must recognize the importance of promoting women’s sense of self-worth, assisting them in accessing opportunities and resources through affirmative action and promoting their career growth. In so doing they will recognize in women’s empowerment a path to men’s sense of fulfillment.

An activist advancing gender equality and women’s health and empowerment, Elias Muindi is a program officer for Kenya’s MenEngage Alliance. He holds a BA in theology and a diploma in project management, and is a member of MenEngage Africa’s Youth Advisory Committee, and founder and patron of the Rhodelias Foundation.
A creative campaign in India uses a range of techniques—from street theater to workshops—to foster dialogue on gender justice. It has reached more than 6000 people of diverse ages and across three-dozen places in New Delhi. The Ab Baaki Charcha campaign (ABC)—which means “Now, the Remaining Dialogue”—is a project the Delhi-based organization Mittika spearheaded in collaboration with the Forum to Engage Men and Humsaa, Sadak Chaap, KlobB and Alternative Spaces Foundation. ABC’s goal is to engage Delhi’s citizens, especially men and boys, in advocating for gender justice. The ABC campaign was part of a nationwide drive launched by the Centre for Health and Justice and the global MenEngage Alliance, the two groups that organized the global symposium “Men and Boys for Gender Justice” in 2014 that attracted 1200 people from 94 countries. ABC performances there invited dialogue with a diverse audience.

Equality in India is still a dream. Years and years of patriarchy and social conditioning lead people to perceive the world through the lens of male dominance, perpetuating gender injustice. But we can interrupt its harmful effects. When we launched ABC, we wanted to literally advance “the remaining dialogue”—to engage in a conversation that would inspire people to wrestle with the issue of gender. We wanted to talk to men, but not men alone. We wanted to reach citizens across class, caste, age, and gender to build consensus around a simple idea: gender is everybody’s issue. In fact, our name, Ab Baaki Charcha, came from this focus. Since gender has so many dimensions, we adopted a range of arts-based dialogue methods to create a safe space where people could freely express themselves. Each method focused on specific aspects of gender uniquely tailored for each group. For example, we used the forum theater technique for working with large communities. In the forum technique, you stop the play in the middle and invite the

The Ab Baaki Charcha campaign uses music and performance to reach out to audiences as diverse as is Delhi—from resettlement areas to middle-class communities, from urban neighborhoods to educational institutions.

Taking Art to New Delhi’s Streets to Champion Gender Justice

By Durba Ghose

We created a situation where the community—in our case, sizable street crowds—could question masculine and feminine stereotypes and debunk myths about men and women.
audience to create solutions for the problems that came up in the scene being enacted. Here’s an example. In one play examining gender and socialization, we presented a family where twins were born—a girl and a boy—who were taught social norms, including how to conform to their gender roles. Relying on humor, we depicted the children’s grandparents “teaching” the twins how a boy and a girl should behave by pasting tags on them featuring words such as “soft,” “macho,” “resilient,” “homemaker,” “head of family,” and “tough,” among others. Then we invited the audience to question the tags and to remove and debunk each one that didn’t hold true for a particular gender.

The process of de-tagging touched a chord. People started reflecting on gender socialization and ended up deconstructing the whole process themselves. We had created a situation where the community—in our case, a sizeable street crowd—could question the stereotyped characteristics of masculinity and femininity, and debunk a range of myths about men and women. In the vignette described, when the process ended only one tag remained on the woman—“bears children.”

Other topics we highlighted included masculinity, safety in public spaces, gender-based violence, and the need for bystander intervention.

Another technique we used was dance and movement workshops that explore gender-based violence and safety. In small group workshops, participants were guided through movement exercises to identify how it feels to experience a range of feelings—violence, freedom, oppression, isolation, community, equality, among others. Through a reflective process, participants recognized how gender and violence are linked, causing one man to conclude, “If I feel this way, I shouldn’t inflict violence on anybody else.”

Magic shows were another way we related people’s personal experiences of gender. In one scenario, a magician displayed two ropes—a boy rope and a girl rope—and declared that men and women, girls and boys are the same. “So,” the magician would say, “let’s cut this rope to an equal length.” The “trick” was, of course, no matter how much of a big deal he made about cutting the rope into equal sizes, it would never happen. The facilitator/magician would ask the audience, “So why isn’t it happening?” After a few seconds, the answers would start pouring out. “Because women are not considered equal in society,” a man would say. “Because women are controlled by men,” a woman would add. Thus were sowed the seeds of reflection.

We addressed gender, power and masculinity using movies as reference points to spur discussions about patriarchy and masculinities. To let people express personal experiences and stances on gender, we employed small group discussions, polling, poster and slogan making, and bubble writing. In polling, for instance, we used a chaining activity. We’d start with a statement like “I believe that both women and men should stand for gender justice” and ask people to add a loop to the chain if they agreed with the statement.

At the heart of ABC was our team: open-minded people with whom our audiences could easily connect. Our team was bound together by their passion for the art forms they practiced and the experience of a deep, reflective process to identify gender in their own lives.

In a short span of time, our group, Ab Baaki Charcha—“Now, the Remaining Dialogue”—succeeded in reaching out to audiences as diverse as is Delhi—from resettlement areas to middle-class communities, from urban neighborhoods to educational institutions. The process remained energized because more than trying to tell people what to do, we used a campaign based in the arts to bring people along on the journey to a more equal world.

Durba Ghose is cofounder and director of Mittika, a New Delhi–based social enterprise group working to reduce the gap between social development, people's everyday experiences and the arts. Mittika consults and collaborates with diverse stakeholders in order to build a society free of discrimination. It focuses on gender justice and young people’s rights to development and participation. It works with organizations, institutions and communities in India and elsewhere in South Asia. www.mittika.co.in.
In the Fall 2016 issue, we explored women’s resistance to their male partners, assuming greater responsibility at home in the articles “Men: Equal Partners in Care Work?” and “Will Women Resist More Caregiving by Men?” To recap: in Mozambique, the organization Rede HOPEM developed an innovative training program, “Men in the Kitchen,” focusing on skill development and expanding the role of fathers. They found that men engaging in childcare and home management were met, in many cases, by anger and derision rather than appreciation and support. Men’s wives and partners regarded their help as an intrusion into women’s private space. In her consulting and research with highly educated professional women in the U.S., author Lisa Levey found similar pushback, including from mothers espousing gender equality.

Women’s negative reactions to their spouses and partners sharing the load at home puzzles me. In my professional work conducting employee climate studies, I have heard endless stories—in focus group discussions and interviews—of working women’s anger and frustration with having to do it all at home. Research bears out that professional women identify with the concept of gender equality—enabling them to pursue their work aspirations while simultaneously raising a family.

In her book *The Unfinished Revolution*, sociologist Kathleen Gerson reports the vast majority of women—and men—identified an egalitarian approach to child rearing as their preference regardless of the family structure in which they were raised. In their study *Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home*, the Families & Work Institute highlighted the converging desires of women and men for active engagement both in the workforce and at home. Nearly two-thirds of adults aged 18 to 49 reported that sharing household chores was very important to a successful marriage, surpassed only by having shared interests and a satisfying sexual life, according to a 2015 Pew Research survey.

From my perspective, women’s resistance to their husbands’ involvement in domestic life seemed illogical. I have always felt that caring for children needed to be a shared endeavor; I am enormously grateful to be in the childcare trenches with my husband, both of us carrying parenting’s joyous, unpredictable, heavy load. As one of six children growing up in a divorced family, I saw and felt the intensity of caring for children without much support. I knew in my own life that I wanted to create a new model—a shared approach with my partner—that took into account both our care work and our professional lives.

What I’ve learned about women’s resistance leads me to believe that the women living and working in rural villages in Mozambique share more in common with their corporate sisters in the U.S. than one might think.

My curiosity about how new parents can make gender equality less aspiration and more reality led me to write *The Libra Solution*, which profiles a gender-equitable approach to managing home and career. In the book I describe a self-reinforcing gender cycle in which women and men unwittingly contribute to perpetuating gender roles and the status quo. Women tend to overmanage at home and fail to allow their partners and spouses to share control of child rearing, instead dictating the terms of Dad’s involvement. At the same time, fathers often position themselves as helpers, rather than full partners, thinking and behaving as if their work lives will remain unchanged from pre-parent days. Many fail to become comfortable and competent caring for their children.
Consider the story of a woman journalist who illuminated the quandary for women sharing child and home care with men. In the vanguard of women entering the professional workforce, she relentlessly fought for credibility, facing daily uphill battles to be accepted. She felt passionately about gender equality and anticipated wanting her husband’s full contribution in caring for their new son. But something unexpected happened. She discovered that as a mother she was instantly identified as the parenting expert by virtue of nothing more than her gender. No fighting for respect, nor continually needing to prove herself. Her esteemed position as a mother was in sharp contrast to her diminished one in her professional life. The automatic credibility and the associated power were heady and she found it difficult to give up control. Add to the challenge of sharing responsibilities her husband’s awkwardness comforting their son—he had never spent much time developing his nurturing skills—and it was easy to see how the gender skew takes hold.

I see gender inequality—women and men operating in the work sphere versus the home sphere—as a mirror image. While women fight for their rightful place at the worktable, including pay equity and equal access to opportunity, many men fight for their rightful place at the kitchen table, including equitable custody arrangements and commensurate parental leave at work. The true definition of gender equality is supporting women to be full participants in the economic sphere and supporting men to be full contributors in the domestic sphere. Such an approach allows women and men to develop as breadwinners and caregivers, and to share in these critically important spheres of their lives.

Knowing that so many women and men want to share caregiving more equally yet struggle mightily to achieve that goal, I sought to learn from couples who were substantially succeeding in creating gender equality in their homes and in their lives. I wanted to understand:

- what helps women and men to become full partners in sharing all aspects of caring for a family
- what supports them to envision the full scope of parenting responsibilities—from earning money to managing childcare, to providing care directly
- what characterizes couples who find greater success in making gender equality a reality

Many of the answers I discovered are as applicable to women in Mozambique as to those in California or Arkansas or Hawaii. Key themes that emerged in my conversations included:

- Their perception that sharing home care provided many benefits for their families; greater financial security by allowing both parents to be wage earners; greater flexibility for both parents to be breadwinners and caretakers. It provided benefits for their children—who had more parental resources to draw on, e.g. one parent being good helping with homework, while the other is skilled at working with his or her hands. Finally, it could strengthen the couple’s relationship since they could walk in each other’s shoes.
- They developed stronger communication skills and learned to negotiate around the demands of raising a family.
- They shared an intention to work with and learn from one another and were able to use what they learned to be better parents and more effective workers.
- At some point they moved from feeling competitive with one another (my meeting today is more important than yours so you should stay home with our sick child) to seeing themselves on the “same team” in the work of raising a family. The sense of shared responsibility strengthened their sense of partnership and pride in what they were building together.
- Often they identified a shared vision for their life and used that vision as a compass through the ups and downs of supporting gender equality in a world that remains highly gendered.

What does it say that we lack a vocabulary for describing gender equality within a couple’s relationship? In the U.S., the terms “dual-career” or “dual earner” sometimes are used as a proxy for gender equality but they are inadequate. I remember interviewing a woman in a dual career marriage. While she was one of the foremost cardiologists in the world, she was the one who managed everything related to caring for their three children—and the home. She explained that her husband was a surgeon who “didn’t have a lot of flexibility in his work.” Clearly, the link between dualcareer and gender equality remains tenuous.

I use the word “Libra”—the zodiac sign denoting justice, balance and harmony—as a metaphor for gender equality. It symbolizes a balance of power and responsibility for women and men in integrating their work and home lives. When women are more empowered in the workforce to support their families, when they are paid commensurate with men doing similar work, when the care work they do (as teachers, health care workers, social service workers, etc.) is more highly valued in the marketplace, when they are able to pursue their professional aspirations and reach their professional goals, and when their male partner’s support derives from his responsibility as a coparent sharing fully in the huge endeavor of raising children (instead of representing women’s loss of power and voice)—then, I believe, women from Mozambique, the U.S., and beyond will be ready to open their hearts to receive their partner’s helping hand.

The true definition of gender equality is supporting women to be full participants in the economic sphere and supporting men to be full contributors in the domestic sphere.

Lisa D’Annolfo Levey is an expert in diversity, women’s leadership, and gender and has consulted to organizations ranging from Fortune 10 corporations to leading universities to create work environments where women (and men) can thrive. She is passionate about partnering with and engaging men to help realize gender equality in our workplaces and in our lives.
Ojok Mark, 31 years old, spent his early life in a displaced persons camp in the Gulu District of Uganda. With limited mobility and scant opportunity to work, he and other young men resorted to drinking. To compound matters, he got a woman pregnant and started a family while young. When he started his family, he thought that they “belonged” to him; that his wife should do everything for him. After harvesting their crops, he would sell them without telling his wife and spend the money drinking and buying gifts for another woman. “I had all the power to sell anything in the house whenever I wanted, without even asking anyone,” Ojok admits.

“I used to think that sending children to school was a waste of resources,” he says. Family planning was something he never wanted to hear about. “Each time my wife would talk about going for family planning services, I would just be rude and cruel to her.” He threatened to leave her if she continued to bring the topic up. At the time he was drinking heavily, and the family was living in poverty.

One day, a man named Oloya Ben asked Ojok to attend a meeting. “I agreed quickly because I knew they were going to give us a little money after the meeting which I could use to buy alcohol... When I reached the place, I found some men calling themselves Coo Makwiri (Role Model Men), talking about gender based violence, alcohol, etc. They said that it is important for men to accompany their wives to the health center. I left when I realized they weren’t going to give us any money...”

Oloya Ben, who had invited him to the meeting, followed up, asking Ojok to go to another meeting, but Ojok refused. He asked again and again Ojok refused. The man was persistent and Ojok finally agreed. The Role Model Man talked about family planning, alcohol and its effects, gender-based violence and parenting. Hesitant about his wife using family planning methods, after several conversations with Oloya Ben he agreed to go to the health center with his wife for family planning.

“The hardest thing was the alcohol: it took me time to start reducing my level of drinking. It wasn’t easy at first to tell my friends that I drank with, and most times, I would find myself going back to them. But with the effort put out by Oloya Ben, I slowly left the drinking group and even the other woman that I was dating.”

He started regularly going with his wife to the health center for family planning. “We agreed together when to have our next child... my children are healthy and have completed their immunizations... My wife has time to participate in other community activities with other women. I am able to pay school fees for my children, provide for their basic needs.”

Ojok is a changed man. He can discuss plans for the family with his wife and they jointly decide how to make the best use of the crops they harvested and the income they earn from selling them. His wife is very proud of him now, and she has testified to other women how her life has changed and how she is enjoying her home because of how Role Model Men helped her husband and saved their marriage.
Engaging Men and Boys in Uganda

Ojok is a beneficiary of the work of CARE International, the global confederation of 14 members working together to fight poverty in 94 countries. CARE sees gender equality as fundamental to achieving social justice and reducing poverty. It is the area in which the organization sees the most pressing need for social change. CARE’s experience in Northern Uganda demonstrates that achieving real and lasting progress toward gender equality requires proactive work with men and boys alongside work with women and girls.

Recognizing that men play an important role in ending gender-based violence and promoting gender equality, CARE Uganda started a pilot initiative with its engaging men approach in Northern Uganda in July 2010. The strategy with men promotes women’s empowerment and ending gender-based violence. Engaging men as social change agents is part of the strategy to reduce structural barriers women and girls face, while also addressing the negative consequences that men trapped in rigid gender norms experience.

Supported by Austrian and Norwegian CARE partners and funded by the Austrian Development Agency and the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-Operation, CARE engages “Role Model Men” from all levels of society to support gender equality.

Each Role Model Man works with 10 households through peer-to-peer relations and mentoring. Role Model Men regularly convene members in dialogue and reflection on issues such as shared care giving, sexual and reproductive health decision making, nonviolent communication, alcoholism, and reducing gender-based violence.

Working with Men as Clients

CARE Uganda recognizes that men are also suffering from psychosocial distress and gender inequality. Conforming to the image of the “ideal man” according to Ugandan gender norms—e.g. being the sole decision-maker and provider in the household, dealing with peer pressure to drink and dominate women, and coping with insecurity or trauma without showing any sign of vulnerability or accepting any help—results in a lot of stress for men. In addition, men who do not conform to gender norms experience discrimination and violence themselves. Men are socialized to not acknowledge pain and to believe that talking about personal problems is a sign of weakness. As a result, men who experience violence rarely discuss their problems with others, contributing to depression and even suicide.

Targeted men can benefit from various psychosocial support services. At one level, men in dialogue groups often engage in peer-to-peer support, encouraging one another to open up and share personal problems. At another level, some men have social support needs that require referral to external social support mechanisms—which may be facilitated by the Role Model Men or their supervisors.

Men’s Experiences

CARE found that initially Role Model Men found it difficult to implement gender equality work. Men feared negative reactions from family, peers and others in society. Many fears were true. Some wives were unsupportive and suspicious. Within the community, there were fears that Role Model Men wanted to erase the local culture or that they intended to make other men’s wives fall in love with them. Others felt jealous of the men’s improved livelihoods. Role Model Men also shared that some local leaders felt threatened by the work, fearing that they would lose their income through settling quarrels or gender-based violence cases, or not wanting existing cultural practices to be changed.

Positive changes eventually started to take place. Wives better understood their husbands, appreciated their support, and became proud of them. Many Role Model Men saw improvements in their family relationships and livelihoods. As a result, some community members now come to them for advice; community appreciation is growing, as is cooperation with local leaders.

“Before he became a Role Model Man, he used to come home very late,” says Akello Doreen, a wife of a Role Model Man, “but nowadays he comes home early. Every evening he sets a camp fire and has the children sit around it as he tells them stories and teaches them how to live a better life.”

Charles Olango

“People look at me and think, ‘It is never too late to change.’ Just a couple of years ago I was an unpredictable, violent drunk, feared by my wife and children. Looking back, I think much of my frustration came from having been a child soldier. I have seen and done things that can never be forgiven. One day, after a fight with a neighbor, I realized that my life was a mess and I decided to change. When CARE’s Role Model Men program started, I was chosen because of my background and ability to change. I was trained in understanding the effects of gender-based violence, ways of preventing it and looking at sexual and reproductive health. My life has improved and I am very grateful for that. My family is thriving and my story has been an inspiration for the entire community. People come here for advice. I counsel couples in family life and planning and I always try to set a good example.”

Ojok Robert

Ojok Robert, 41, says, “I would wake up early in the morning and go to the drinking joints. I used to sell most of our food to drink and I never listened to my wife. When I went to another town to work in a sugarcane plantation, I continued beating my wife and I would even fight with my neighbors.

“One day, I met a Role Model Man. He advised me to reduce my level of drinking and to stop beating my wife. He started visiting me regularly and at times he would come with other Role Model Men. He continued advising me. After interacting with him and other Role Model Men several times, I started to reflect and realize that what I was doing was very wrong. I started reducing the amount I was drinking. It was tough... I also started to learn to stop using violence. I learned how to deal with anger differently, to identify when it was coming up and take it out in different ways. After some time, I stopped drinking completely and got saved. I became closer to my wife and we started planting tomatoes together on a large scale... Right now we are so happy because we plan for our family together, there is understanding between us. I respect her now. Deep in her heart, however [I wonder], will she ever really forgive me?”

Several people from CARE Uganda contributed to the article about Role Model Men, including CARE partners Sophie Akongo from Women’s Economic Development and Globalization; Kristina Just, a CARE Uganda communications consultant; Samuel Omony from the Gulu Women’s Economic Development and Globalization; and CARE documentation intern Julia Weekend, who compiled the stories.
In advance of the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, “Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work” and its concurrent theme addressing the challenges and achievements in implementing the millennium development goals for women and girls, the MenEngage Alliance, with support from Rutgers University's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, wrote a statement of support with recommendations for governments to follow. Among the contributors to drafting the statement was MenEngage Alliance global coordinator Joni van de Sand, who contributed this edited excerpt.

Women's economic empowerment has to be about women- and girl-led initiatives to transform the systemic factors underlying women and girls’ disempowerment, and it also must be about advancing women and girls’ autonomy and leadership. Although today more women than ever are in the workforce, around the world women are often in precarious, informal jobs, receive less pay than men for equal work, and are underrepresented in leadership positions. Women face a wide array of systemic barriers to full economic empowerment, including rigid gender norms around men’s and women’s roles in society. Furthermore, women continue to spend two to 10 times more of their time on unpaid care work than men and boys, including child care, elder care, and domestic activities. As a result, women's time for other pursuits such as paid work, education, or political participation is limited.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls requires a shift in underlying rigid norms and the transformation of patriarchal power structures. Rigid gender norms and harmful perceptions of what it means to be a man or woman often encourage men's discrimination and violence against women, granting men the power to dictate the terms of sex and relationships, as well as control over resources. As a result, women and girls are still too often in a subordinate position, without sexual, reproductive, political and economic power.

We call on governments to utilize gender-transformative approaches, including those that seek to transform masculinities, by working with men and boys, alongside women and girls, and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. A growing body of evidence shows that gender-transformative approaches—which transform gender roles and promote gender-equitable relationships between men and women—effectively engage men for gender equality and have significant benefits for women, young people, children, men themselves and society as a whole.

The MenEngage Alliance sees the roles of men and boys as crucial to achieving full gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Its importance is also recognized in paragraph 20 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is the follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals. As husbands, fathers, brothers, business and community leaders—and fellow human beings—men and boys have a key role in challenging norms related to the gendered division of labor, and in co-creating an environment that supports the economic empowerment of women and girls. Engaging men and boys is essential in contributing to eliminating gender stereotypes around how care work is divided, preventing gender-based violence (including violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression), and in ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The result would ensure everyone having equal access to decent work and participation on an equal footing in one's economic life. Work with individual men must also be accompanied by efforts to address systemic barriers to more equitable divisions of caregiving and policies that recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.

Empowering women is essential to eliminating violence against women. Studies have revealed that when programs only empower women, they can actually lead to harm or backlash. Research has uncovered positive changes in couples in conflict as a result of efforts to engage men to support women's economic empowerment. Few efforts, however, have been made to engage men as allies in women's economic and social empowerment, or to explore and promote cooperation between couples.

Finally, to achieve women's economic empowerment, it is essential that women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. This includes increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education. In order to effectively and sustainably realize universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, men and adolescent boys need to be as much a part of such programs as are women and adolescent girls.
On September 25, 2015, governments around the world adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Major goals included:

- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. For the goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private sector, civil society and everyday citizens. The MenEngage Alliance recommends a gender-transformative framework on women's economic empowerment, gender equality and sustainable development that includes transforming masculinities and engaging men and boys:

- Scale up and institutionalize evidence-based gender-transformative interventions with men and boys. Such interventions can challenge the social and cultural norms that define the division of labor between men and women and act as a barrier to women's economic empowerment. Interventions should examine stereotypical ideas of masculinities and encourage men to take on more caregiving roles. Governments should provide training to health, education and social assistance professionals on the importance of engaging men and boys in care work at home so as to support economic participation of women outside the home.

- Develop and implement policies to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work. Parental leave should be enshrined and enforced as national law. It should be equal for men and women, nontransferable and paid according to each parent’s salary. It should be offered to all caregivers, including same-sex, opposite-sex, adoptive and single partners. Parental leave should be combined with other policies, on the part of both government and employers, to ensure equity in caregiving such as subsidized high-quality childcare, flexible working arrangements, adequate sick leave and social protection policies.

- Engage men and boys in women's economic empowerment programs. When men are involved as allies, partners and secondary beneficiaries in women's economic empowerment programs, positive impact of these initiatives in women's lives can increase. They can better understand and support women's economic activity, and can see the benefits for themselves and the household as a whole as they are relieved of the pressure to be the sole breadwinner.

- Scale up gender-transformative initiatives to engage men and boys in gender-based violence prevention. Such initiatives challenge the underlying social norms around harmful masculinity that are at the root of gender-based violence and promote positive, nonviolent forms of masculinities. Strategies for the prevention of gender-based violence should include national-level public education and awareness-raising efforts, bystander intervention approaches, universal education on gender equality, mass media campaigns, secondary prevention approaches targeting men who have experienced violence and programs that target gender-based violence perpetrators.

- Engage men as supportive partners, allies and targets in respecting, protecting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, particularly in improving access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education. Comprehensive sexuality education is fundamental in addressing root causes in gender inequality, by addressing gender norms and stereotypes, and by providing complete and human rights–based information about sexuality and sexual diversity. A meta-evaluation by the World Health Organization (2007) shows that sexual and reproductive health programs that engage men and boys have a positive effect on the well-being of girls, women, boys and men.

- Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, and gender equality. This includes challenging harmful stereotypes about men's and women's role in society, by adapting school curricula to promote healthy notions of masculinity and femininity, the economic participation of women and girls, and the participation of men and boys in caregiving and domestic work.

- Develop public information campaigns on the need to redistribute unpaid care work. Such campaigns can help challenge gender stereotypes around caregiving by raising awareness of the benefits of redistributing care work and providing positive male role models.
Nelson Mandela’s Evolving Masculinity

By Raymond Suttner

In these times of widespread violence perpetrated by men, we may learn from Nelson Mandela’s model of masculinity.

The main biographies of Nelson Mandela do not consider him as a gendered subject. Yet Mandela’s evolving masculinity shows the type of man he represented.

He changed a lot over the years—he changed as a man and as a human being. His identity as a man cannot be reduced to one single, enduring quality.

Men have always dominated the African National Congress (ANC) at a formal political level. The discourse of the organization has reflected masculine idioms. Mandela was part of the rebellious youth league tradition, which attacked the ANC leadership at the time while embracing the same masculinist imagery of overcoming the “emasculating” of African men and “recovering manhood.”

Mandela came to embody a heroic, martial tradition in the underground and military activities of the ANC, an image he shared later with younger people such as Chris Hani, the South African Communist Party leader and fierce opponent of the apartheid government who was assassinated in 1993. This fighting image is foreshadowed in the notion of Mandela being a boxer, a role with wide township appeal, in some ways akin to the admiration shown the tsotsis (youth gangs). And Mandela was a flashy dresser, like those tsotsis and the musicians of the 1950s.

At one of his most heroic moments, as he faced the possibility of the death sentence, Mandela directly related the willingness to die to his manhood: “If I must die, let me declare for all to know that I will meet my fate like a man.” What did he mean?

We can’t take the use of “man” here only literally. In the context of apartheid subjugation, which made “boys” of men, such a reference to manhood is also a statement of personhood, of someone with dignity and agency otherwise denied by the white rulers, who saw Africans as children in relation to “adult” whites. Mandela acted out what has been called a “heroic masculine project.” This refers to men leaving home to embark on courageous deeds, leaving their womenfolk behind to care for the children and undertake domestic tasks.

At the same time, however, his then-wife, Nomzamo Winnie Mandela—along with many other women— refused to conform to the conventional image of the wife waving her husband goodbye. Whatever the ambivalences and controversy attached to her activities, she carved out an independent political identity both underground and publicly. Mandela could not have fulfilled a conventional protective role because he was incarcerated from the early 1960s. He told his biographer Anthony Sampson, “It is not a nice feeling for a man to see his family struggling, without security, without the dignity of the head of the family around.” This statement reflects what the scholar John Iliffe claims are near-universal concepts of honor and manliness, demanding the “capacity to sustain and defend a household, to maintain personal autonomy, to avenge insult or violence.”

But Mandela’s notion of manhood changed over time. In the early days, he evoked the image of toughness to deal with an enemy that would not respond to reason. When it became possible to secure peace through negotiation, Mandela adapted. After his release his image was one of warmth and inclusiveness, embracing those who feared majority rule, including even his former enemies.

When Mandela danced along with others at political rallies, they were toyi-toyi (a Southern African dance originally from Zimbabwe, performed by Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army [ZIPRA] forces and long used in political protests in South Africa). Mandela’s shuffle-dance carried a very gentle, affable meaning. It is a dance that was initially performed mainly by men, by soldiers, and its words are aggressive, directed at the apartheid regime, with repeated reference to hitting and killing.

Mandela refashioned the imagery of such a dance, especially during his presidency. It evoked someone with whom you could feel safe and affirmed. The imagery was anti-militaristic.

Compare this with the way the dance and the songs of the freedom struggle were deployed by South African president Jacob Zuma, notably in the context of his rape trial. He revived the song “uMshini wam” (“Bring Me My Machine Gun”), which is obviously both militaristic and evocative of phallic imagery. In contrast to Mandela’s toyi-toyi, Zuma was advancing a discourse that created a sense of danger and projected a figure to be feared. One of its damaging undertones was directed at women, especially those who supported the rape complainant; he did not want them to have reason to feel safe.

Mandela’s qualities as a man, though, need to be studied carefully for our society’s benefit. In the first place, he demonstrated a willingness to learn and to change over time. His was a continuously evolving masculinity. There was nothing macho about the mature Mandela; we need to reflect on this truth and impress upon the youth that there is no value in trying to instill fear in others, and that courage is compatible with tenderness.

Raymond Suttner worked with Nelson Mandela after his release from prison in 1990. He was in the leadership of the ANC, the South African Communist Party and the United Democratic Front. More recently he was a professor attached to Rhodes University and Unisa. A version of this article appeared in the Globe and Mail.
Crying: A Man’s Most Courageous Act?

By Benjamin Perry

Crying is a courageous act. That might sound paradoxi-cal, but juxtaposed against the expectation of male stoicism, tears are subversive and powerful. And, at long last, more and more men are casting aside toxic masculinity’s restrictive norms to live into healthier male identities. Two recent political moments, to me, embody this movement and all its attendant challenges and triumphs. The first happened not long ago: In a speech decrying Donald Trump’s executive order banning refugees from seven nations, New York Senator Chuck Schumer—surrounded by refugees—choked up. His eyes filled with tears as he labeled the president’s action “mean spirited and un-American.” This poignant moment was not shocking, in and of itself. It shouldn’t be surprising that the Senate minority leader’s heart swelled with emotion as he spoke out against the ban, flanked by those who stand to concretely suffer from its implementation. What is notable, however, is the speed with which the president pointed out how Schumer transgressed traditional masculine bounds. As airports thronged with protesters, Trump blamed the ensuing chaos on “the tears of Senator Schumer.” Later, in an interview, Trump claimed that Schumer must have been faking the tears—ginned up emotion for the cameras—seemingly oblivious to why Schumer might be overcome with emotion. Trump’s dismissive and bullying attitude is simply a grotesque and overt iteration of the kinds of criticism men always risk by expressing their emotions.

If that exchange reveals the costs men engender by emoting openly, another moment showed exactly why men everywhere still feel the desire to appear strong and confident, it leaves those who bear it weak and brittle. Far from invulnerable, this paleo-masculinity leaves you empty and unfulfilled. Though it spared me from some verbal barbs, the price was far too great. Deep emotions are not incidental or superfluous; they represent the very best of who we are as humans. In an attempt to appear strong, I deprived myself not only of the ability to feel deeply, but also of its attendant power. Blunting my emotions damaged my ability to enjoy the best aspects of life: I was not able to feel joy and squelch deep sorrow to mere dissatisfaction. I discovered that, with a little practice, I could pretend I cared about nothing, and reap the benefits of seeming cool, aloof, detached.

What I failed to realize, however, is that emotional suppression leaves you empty and unfulfilled. Though it spared me from some verbal barbs, the price was far too great. Deep emotions are not incidental or superfluous; they represent the very best of who we are as humans. In an attempt to appear strong, I deprived myself not only of the ability to feel deeply, but also of its attendant power. Blunting my emotions damaged my ability to enjoy the best aspects of life: I was no longer able to feel deeply, and my aversion to being vulnerable diminished my capacity to love. For a while, I voluntarily capped my true potential, just to avoid possible ridicule. What a fucking mistake.

This is what Trump, and men like him, will never understand. Destroying one’s capacity to feel ought never be interpreted as a sign of strength. Shutting out refugees with callous indifference is weakness, nothing to celebrate. Treating women merely as objects to conquer makes you look pathetic, not virile. Viewing all personal interaction through a lens of dominance and submission blinds you to the fact that real fulfillment is borne from cooperation, not aggression. Trump is scared of those who look and act differently, afraid of deep personal connection, fearful of appearing vulnerable. Sad!

That’s the tragic irony of toxic masculinity: Though it develops from the desire to appear strong and confident, it leaves those who bear it weak and brittle. Far from invulnerable, this paleo-masculinity is exposed the moment it runs up against anyone courageous enough to feel. Children attempt to flee the violence of their homeland; one man says they might grow up to be terrorists and coldly turns them away, the other cries with them and offers refuge. You tell me who looks strong.

The tragic irony of toxic masculinity is that although it develops from the desire to appear strong and confident, it leaves those who bear it weak and brittle.

Benjamin Perry is a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, where he studied social ethics. He works as an associate editor for Time Inc.
Nitesh Verma, 33, a tailor in a village in Rajasthan’s Bundi district, is married and has a daughter, seven, and a son, two. Every morning when he woke up, his wife would be waiting with a steaming cup of hot tea for him, before busying herself with other household chores. He never offered any assistance. One night he heard “Dulhan ki batein,” an audio story on his mobile phone that talked about gender issues in a way that got him thinking.

It was part of the Kishor Varta education program being implemented in 30 senior and higher secondary schools of Bundi and Udaipur districts, and an additional 15–20 village clusters through youth groups and clubs. The programs can also be accessed through interactive voice response system (IVRS) on mobile phones. After hearing the stories, Verma’s life changed.

He realized he should help his wife but was embarrassed to do so. After hearing the story about eight times, he plucked up his courage, got up early one morning and made tea for the whole family. His wife was surprised, but he merely said, “Henceforth I will make the morning tea.” Later he got her to listen to the Kishor Varta stories on his mobile. She too liked them and loved receiving the morning tea from him.

There was a nagging worry about what the elders in the family would say.

“It took a while convincing other members of my family that I was only fulfilling my responsibilities,” he says. Now when he returns from work, he helps his wife collect water, chops vegetables and kneads the dough. In fact, every decision of the family is made with her input.

Nitesh is among the few thousand young men, adolescents, community leaders and older generation who, after listening and discussing the Kishor Varta stories in Hindi—prepared by the MenEngage Alliance of the Centre for Health and Social Justice, and implemented through a Rajasthan-based NGO Manjari for the state government—are bringing a change in thinking in a male-dominated, patriarchal society. Simultaneously, in an area where child marriages are still rampant, the stories tackle issues including the legal age of marriage and sexual and reproductive health issues.

Crafted for rural audiences, the four stories, “Lakhanpur ka Raju,” “Dada ka gussa,” “Haldi ki jaldi” and “Dulhan kei batein,” encourage youngsters to help in housework and support education and outdoor activities for girls; discuss male anatomy and wet dreams; the pitfalls of marrying young, and sharing responsibilities after marriage. With the help of teachers in schools and facilitators in youth groups, the stories serve as tools to spark group discussions.

Audio Stories Spark Shift in Men
By Usha Rai

Knowledge about health and harmony in the home and childrearing has improved. Groups are encouraged to oppose sexual harassment and domestic violence targeting women. Girls’ mobility in villages has increased. Boys have intervened at home on behalf of their sisters who want to continue their education.

Unfortunately, a year ago the toll-free number was suspended because of rising costs. Now the stories are disseminated directly by facilitators in schools and villages. The program has reached more than 3,000 people offline through nearly three-dozen community meetings. Kishor Varta stories have also been copied onto the memory cards of students’ mobile phones or are played on the facilitators’ laptops.

Kishor Varta’s education program is being implemented in 30 senior and higher secondary schools of Bundi and Udaipur districts, and an additional 15–20 village clusters through youth groups and clubs.
The birth of a son in Haryana, a state in northern India, is celebrated by beating a thali, a steel plate. While a son is honored, a daughter’s birth is frowned upon. The birth of a son is a matter of prestige, proudly announced to the whole community. Neem branches are hung and sweets are distributed. All traditional rituals are performed, accompanied by a huge celebration. If a girl is born, however, only the most basic rituals are performed. In fact, if a family is “blessed” with two or more girls, their birth is actually mourned. Social norms are strengthened by these rituals. Girls are regularly named Bhateri or Ram Bhateri, which means “the last one” or “the end.”

Haryana is known for having a low “sex ratio” and a lower child sex ratio. Sex ratio is the number of females per 1000 males. According to the 2011 census (the last year for which statistics are available), the sex ratio in Haryana was 879 girl children born for every 1000 boys. A low sex ratio reflects the value given girls and women in the society. In a patriarchal society, women are viewed as a burden, devalued. What results is both discrimination and violence against women.

Breakthrough—a human rights organization that works to make violence and discrimination against women and girls unacceptable—began work on gender-biased sex selection in Haryana in 2012, the year after the Indian government released its census data. It showed female sex ratio numbers across India were highly skewed. Traveling to villages and interacting with people in the communities, it became clear to Breakthrough staff that they would have to address the community’s preference for sons by focusing on a mindset that devalues girls and women.

Breakthrough’s baseline study in Jhajjar and Sonepat, districts in Haryana with sex ratios lower than the national average, revealed that community members have very low regard for the basic rights of women. Further, women internalized their subordinate status. For example, while most women know they have the right to own property, they do not exercise that right because of the social stigma attached to doing so. Women are also denied the right to education, work, mobility, and reproductive rights. To compound matters, a woman’s status within her own family decreases if she gives birth to daughters. Their conclusion? Gender-biased sex selection could not be addressed without addressing the structural discrimination that women face.

Sanjay Kumar, a Breakthrough staff member who manages gender-biased sex selection and gender-based discrimination, led the change in his village to break the long-standing gender-biased tradition of beating the thali only if a son is born. His first act was announcing the birth of his daughter by beating the thali. He organized a celebration of his daughter’s birth where he engaged with other community members, encouraging them to let go of their gender bias. However, it was not an easy path for Sanjay. When he asked his mother to organize a singing celebration, his mother recoiled. “This is only done if a boy child is born,” she said, explaining her decision not to participate. When the celebration happened, Sanjay realized there were no songs for girls; all songs had been written for boys. He faced resistance at each step, whether he hung neem branches or sang songs.

Sanjay remained firm in his belief that he had to lead the way by setting an example and it had to begin at home. He believes that change is happening and his belief stems from what he has been noticing around him in his community. Breakthrough successfully replicated Sanjay’s action in a campaign celebrating the birth of girl children. They ran it across four areas Breakthrough works in.

Changing norms is the first step in intervening against a patriarchal mindset. Breakthrough’s work focuses on bringing about normative change by countering the traditional norms—standards that perpetuate gender discrimination and restrict opportunities for girls and women. Their strategy includes engaging men as partners in bringing about change, both in families and in communities. For Breakthrough, Sanjay’s story is a reminder to always strive for the change we want.

Images from the powerful video of Sanjay Kumar’s celebration of the birth of his daughter.

To address the community’s preference for sons meant addressing a mindset that devalues girls and women.

Celebrating the Birth of a Girl

By Richa Singh

Richa Singh describes her work as being at the confluence of feminism, writing and research. To see a short video of Sanjay Kumar’s celebration of the birth of a daughter go to http://bit.ly/2JzysC.
**Resources for Changing Men**

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

**For Young Men**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**On Masculinity**

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

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

Mankind Project
New Warrior training weekends
www.mkp.org

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

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

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

XY
www.xyonline.net
Pro-feminist men’s web links (over 500 links): www.xyonline.net/links.shtml
Pro-feminist men’s politics, frequently asked questions: www.xyonline.net/misc/pfaq.html
Pro-feminist 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 Compasses Network
Reinforcing the positive involvement of Latino males in their lives, families, communities, and society
www.nationalcompassesnetwork.com

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

**For Fathers**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Men’s Health**

American Journal of Men’s Health
A peer-reviewed quarterly resource for information regarding men’s health and illness jm.2agepub.com

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

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

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

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

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

**Male Survivors of Sexual Assault**

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

**Overcoming Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

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

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

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

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

Healthy Dating
Sexual Assault Prevention
www.canikissyou.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oasis Magazine
A writing community for queer and questioning youth
www.oasijournals.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

Men’s Centers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saskatoon Men’s Center – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Pro-feminist, male-positive, gay-affirmative center dedicated to offering a safe environment where men may explore their true natures and improve their health
www.saskatoonmensencenter.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.tcmcn.org
When they were 16 and co-chairs of their high school’s White Ribbon anti-violence campaign, twin brothers Eric and Anthony McGriff began volunteering at Vera House, a domestic and sexual violence prevention and intervention agency in Syracuse, N.Y., and say they have been working to end sexual and relationship violence ever since. They are now 23. View their riveting spoken word piece at youtube.com/results?search_query=To+Be+A+Man+vera+house.

I am a ride or die type of guy,
This means that my loyalty is unwavering and I will never hesitate to throw that first punch.
So if you ask me...
“What does it really mean to be a man?”
For me, it means being strong
Even when I am weak.
It means holding it down,
Even when no one is there to hold me up.
And when it becomes too much, I’ve learned to just suck it up,
Even when I can barely hold it in.

I remember being 5 years old, falling down, and my coach told me to brush it off...
I was on the verge of tears
I remember being 10 and learning that it was an insult to be called gay.
I remember being 15 years old and knowing that if I had to fight someone to prove that I am not a pussy, then that is exactly what I was going to do.
But now, I think of my mother and all of the strong women that made me the man I am today
The women who taught me how to love and nurture, but also gave me my work ethic and values...
And if they are strong, then so am I
So I have some confessions to make, about some things that don’t necessarily align with the dominant story.

I can cook
I love to play the violin,
And my hidden obsession is Dancing with the Stars.

I’m tired of acting like I don’t care.
I’m tired of shrinking myself down to fit this idea of what a “real man” is.
I’m tired of loyalty meaning “Bros before hoes” and worrying about whether or not I’m being a cock block.
I’m tired of performing.

It’s been happening to me for as long as I can remember.
It happened to my father, and it’s happening to my brothers.

Masculinity can be an uncompromising force that suffocates me, and with every breath I sweat, until there is nothing left, but a puppet waiting to take the stage...
A puppet, whose hard exterior protects him from feeling anything warm,
Like love, joy, and happiness...for too long

But tonight I will take my final bow

Because I’m done, I quit.
I will no longer let your narrative be my reality.
I will no longer be society’s puppet,
Because I now know that the dominant story, your story, is not the only story.
And with every step I take away from you, I learn that I no longer have to take your cues,
To tell me how to walk, how to talk, how to dress or think.

We think that because we are strong, we cannot be wrong.
And that because we are alike, we must be right.
But this is what makes us puppets.
Masculinity cannot afford introspection,
It’s a form of self-reflection that requires us to question
Everything
So I ask again...

What does it really mean to be a man,
When we tell our boys
To man up
Stop being a bitch
Don’t cry,
And we excuse their violence by saying
Boys will be boys
He hit you because he likes you
...It was just locker room talk

Each is an excuse for abuse, so let’s not get confused,
This is a men’s issue
And as soon as we decide to be a part of the solution,
We can clean up this pollution that gives rise to toxic masculinity

My masculinity cannot fit in a box
My masculinity will not conform
My masculinity is diverse
But most importantly
My masculinity is my own.

Funding to underwrite production of the “To Be a Man” video was provided by a Consolidated Youth, Engaging Men and Boys grant from the Office on Violence Against Women at the U.S. Department of Justice.
Subscribe to the magazine, get the book, or do both

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Individual 8 issue sub = $45

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

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

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

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

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

—Library Journal

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

—Publishers Weekly

To subscribe—or to make a tax-deductible gift—please use the enclosed envelope or go to: voicemalemagazine.org
“Nobody has more respect for women than I do.”

Prove it, President Trump

Mr. President, women led the march, but they shouldn’t have to stand alone.

Mr. President, manhood is not about disrespecting women.

Mr. President, we are taking a stand for equality.

It’s time for you to do the same.

Mr. President, we ask you to respect all women’s rights.

Show us that you will #BeAModelMan.

Signed

Jimmie Briggs
Member, New York City Commission on Gender Equity

Casey Gwinn, Esq.
Alliance for HOPE International

Luko Charles Harris
African American Policy Forum & Vassar College

Byron Hurt
Filmmaker

Simon Isaacs
Fatherly

Allan G. Johnson, PhD
Sociologist & Author

Jackson Katz, PhD
Mentors In Violence Prevention (MVP)

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Organizations are listed for identification purposes only.

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