Fear vs. Safety in North Carolina

BY ROB OKUN

No cities or states that have passed legislation supporting transgender rights have witnessed increases in sexual assaults in public restrooms after the laws have gone into effect. Raising the specter of the sexual predator in debates around transgender rights should be unmasked for the multiple ways it can perpetuate gender inequality. Under the guise of “protecting” women, critics reproduce ideas about their weakness, depict males as assailants, and work to deny rights to transgender people. Moreover, they suggest that there should be a hierarchy of rights in which cisgender women and children are more deserving of protections than transgender people.

Edited excerpt from a statement by the American Sociological Association

Fear is making quite a showing in a large swath of the U.S. It’s amassed a lot of votes, including a huge number of delegates to the Republican national convention in Cleveland. And fear seems to be outpacing safety and tolerance, even as those old reliables remain indefatigable. Citizens standing up for safety and tolerance need to be more outspoken. Will they be at the Democrats’ convention in Philadelphia?

Where are safety and tolerance bills currently before Congress—or state legislatures—to counteract those sponsoring fear and hate proliferating in more than a third of the states? North Carolina’s House Bill 2—the bathroom bill—and related bills (see page 30) seek to impose state rule over individual freedom. In passing legislation requiring citizens to use the bathroom that matches the gender recorded on their birth certificates, opponents of transgender people as a protected class under the country’s hate crimes law. “Everyone deserves to live free of stigma, persecution and discrimination—no matter who they are or whom they love,” Mr. Trudeau said, adding that he wanted to ensure “all people—regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity—feel safe and secure and empowered to freely express themselves.” Is that too much to ask for here in the United States?

Meanwhile, as other state legislatures propose bills that discriminate against transgender people, Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau recently proposed sweeping legislation to protect transgender people from discrimination in his country. The Canadian government is working on a nationwide ban on transgender discrimination, as well as adding transgender people as a protected class under the country’s hate crimes law. “Everyone deserves to live free of stigma, persecution and discrimination—no matter who they are or whom they love.” Mr. Trudeau said, adding that he wanted to ensure “all people—regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity—feel safe and secure and empowered to freely express themselves.” Is that too much to ask for here in the United States?

To its credit, the Obama administration’s justice and education departments issued a directive to the nation’s schools in May to ensure that “transgender students enjoy a supportive and nondiscriminatory school environment.” Texas and 10 other states responded by filing a lawsuit challenging the directive.

Meanwhile, relations between North Carolina and the federal government have gotten testy. Threatened with the loss of significant federal funds to the state if it didn’t repeal or amend HB2, North Carolina sued the feds, who promptly countersued. Attorney General Cooper refused to file the state’s suit, forcing Gov. McCrory to hire a private law firm to prepare the state’s case.

In Canada, eight of its 13 provinces protect transgender people from discrimination and five cover both gender identity and expression, so their new laws would set a national precedent. Why are the two countries so far apart on such a fundamental issue of fairness? Why is Canada leaning toward tolerance and acceptance and many U.S. states promoting discrimination? It comes down to that four-letter word, fear.

Protection or Panic?

Transgender people, along with gay men and lesbian women, have a long history of being conflated with pedophiles and other sexual predators. Gender panics, a term coined by researchers with the American Sociological Association (ASA), gain legitimacy because many people believe that women and young children are inherently vulnerable and in need of protection from men. In dominant U.S. culture, the ASA researchers say, “men—or more specifically, people assumed to have penises—are both conceived of as the potential protectors of vulnerable people they have relational ties to, such as wives, sisters, daughters, and mothers, and a potential source of sexual threat to others…” Such thinking is part of a belief “that men constantly seek out sexual interactions and will resort to violence to achieve these desires. As transgender women are placed into the category of persons with penises—making them, for many opponents, “really men”—they become an imagined source of threat to cisgender women and children. And, as there are no protective men present in women’s restrooms, opponents of transgender rights imagine women (and often children, who are likely to accompany women to the restroom) as uniquely imperiled by these non-discrimination policies.”

The reality is it is the transgender community that needs protection. The empirical data on transgender people in the U.S. continues to be collected and it all underscores that transgender people are much more likely to face violence in a public bathroom than to perpetrate it. The ASA researchers reported that in none of the media accounts they analyzed “have opponents been able to cite an actual case of bathroom sexual assault after the passage of transgender-supportive policies.”

Deep-rooted cultural fears about the vulnerability of women and children may be difficult to counter, but if we are to advance transgender rights we have to look beyond the fear. Looking to our northern neighbors will be a good place to start.

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A Godmother’s Gift

In my sometimes frustrating attempt to get many people to read *Voice Male*, there is nothing to match getting a gem like the note below to give one heart. My godson, Michael, just graduated high school and while there had been the head of the Democratic Club—fairly significant given that he lives in Tyler, Texas. He wrote: “I would like to thank you for investing in me. When I first started receiving *Voice Male* I was around 13–14 and I took it for just a nice magazine that my godmother in New York was sending me. I now realize the purpose behind those monthly gifts and I could not be more thankful for them.”

Hope this makes your day as it has mine.

Bernice Gordon
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Gender Justice in New Delhi

I visit the *Voice Male* site and read the magazine and really value the work you are doing.

Our organization, Mittika (‘Mitti Ka’ or ‘Of Earth’) is hands on about enriching lifespaces (http://www.mittika.co.in/). While much of our work focuses on gender equality and youth participation, we prioritize the interconnections between different issues in society and push boundaries and definitions. In collaboration with different institutions, organizations, communities, we co-create strategic action that brings lasting, positive change in lives of people and societies.

Durba Ghose
New Delhi

Among our projects is ABC (Ab, Baaki Charcha), a dialogue on building equal participation for gender justice. Ab, Baaki Charcha translates as “Now, the Remaining Discussions.” Mittika, working with the Centre for Health and Social Justice, and the MenEngage in India, focused on a mobilization drive to engage diverse stakeholders in dialogue about gender. Towards continuing and sustaining the discussions, we have developed a manual and a film that others can use. These are available here: http://bit.ly/1QGN7Sm and http://bit.ly/1sPcTA1.

We are also in the process of launching DOR (Dialogue, Organise, Reclaim!), a program to address gender-based violence with diverse citizens’ groups in India, and will keep you posted on how it shapes up.

Judge a Magazine by its Cover?

I was turned off by the cover of your last issue. I didn’t view it as a profeminist magazine for men; I thought it was a political magazine—an immediate turn off. I suggest you avoid having the cover feature items that may turn individuals away before they give it a shot. Your overall message is good, but in order to expand readership the magazine needs to be inviting, especially for those who may be making a decision just on the cover alone.

David Myrick, Sr.
Southbury, Conn.
It’s on Us to Stop Street Harassment

Catcalls, sexist comments, public masturbation, groping, stalking, and assault; gender-based street harassment makes public places unfriendly and even scary for many girls, women, and LGBQT people. It limits their access to public spaces.

Meet Us On the Street, a program of Stop Street Harassment (www.stopstreetharassment.org), works to raise awareness about the insidious nature of street harassment. They have a simple message: it’s not okay. And they have straightforward approaches to working to stop it, among them: International Anti-Street Harassment Week, held in April, was the sixth annual week of awareness. Groups and organizations in dozens of countries participated, employing creative approaches to draw attention to what some have described as an epidemic. This year’s wrap-up report is being worked on; to read 2015’s, go to: issuu.com/stopstreetharassment/docs/antistreetharassment-week2015wrapup.

Organizers say that even though activists and individuals around the world work hard year-round to make public places safer, a once-a-year coordinated campaign amplifies everyone’s voices and makes the global mainstream media pay attention by collectively speaking out together.

Stop Street Harassment’s International Anti-Street Harassment Week is led by Holly Kearl and Britnae Purdy, who volunteer their time to make the campaign possible. Kearl is author of the important 2010 book Stop Street Harassment: Making Public Places Safe and Welcoming for Women.

Sexual Violence Rampant in South Sudan

Since South Sudan became an independent country in 2011, it has disintegrated into catastrophic war. Thousands of people have been killed and around two million displaced in a civil conflict that erupted in late 2013 between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and those led by his former deputy, Riek Machar. Although the two warring sides agreed to a peace deal in early 2016, violence continues and women and girls are still being forced into sexual slavery and raped by soldiers.

In 2014, those monitoring the conflict began to report rape on a massive scale. Human Rights Watch says tens of thousands are still crowded into UN bases, and the camps don’t always provide safe haven for women and girls.

Last June, reports surfaced of women and girls being raped repeatedly by soldiers, under the nose of the UN peacekeeping mission. The deputy head of the UN’s mission in South Sudan, Toby Lanzer, admitted that, “there have been incidents which have happened right outside our gates...” In July of 2015, the UN uncovered evidence of South Sudan’s army raping and then burning girls alive inside their homes.

Some women reported being taken as “wives” by soldiers from Army-affiliated militias and kept for sexual slavery in barracks where they were raped repeatedly. Witnesses said attackers often killed women who resisted them, made eye contact, or showed signs of being unable to withstand continued gang rape.

In a petition on Change.org, Annie Kraus of Denver, Colorado, wrote: “This is unacceptable...this violence and exploitation simply cannot be allowed to continue.” Kraus has called “for immediate action to end the mass rape of women and girls in South Sudan... Girls should be allowed to be girls,” Kraus said.

To see the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights’ report on mass rape in South Sudan, go to: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17207&LangID=E.

To watch a video on the situation go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7HLF4CXXlw. Note: The content includes extremely disturbing images.

Thousands of women and girls, mostly in South Sudan’s Unity state, have been abducted by government soldiers and allied militias for sex slavery during the brutal civil war that started in 2013.
Recently, Chinese social media called attention to the indifference that female Chinese citizens encounter when trying to seek help after—or even during—an assault.

**Women Challenge Assaults in China**

A violent attack in Beijing in April set Chinese social media ablaze, calling attention to the indifference female Chinese assault victims encounter when trying to seek justice. According to Foreign Policy, surveillance footage from a hotel in an affluent Beijing neighborhood showed a man dragging a woman down a hallway. The man grabbed the woman’s neck and pulled her hair as she struggled to escape. A hotel worker didn’t intervene; nor did several passersby. When a bystander grabbed the woman’s arm, the assailant ran away.

Police told the victim investigators wouldn’t be available until the next week. Would citizen and police indifference compel a Chinese woman to endure abuse with no consequences for the abuser? No! Social media made the difference.

The victim uploaded a video where she commented on the surveillance footage, writing that her assailant had asked for her room number and when she refused to tell him, became violent. The video went viral; on Youku it received more than seven million views. On Weibo, thousands of users reacted angrily to the victim’s complaint that police continued to deny her information on the case. They called her their “sister.”

One of the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s founding principles is equality between women and men, and recent changes in legislation introduced harsher penalties for rapists and child abusers. In December 2015, China’s legislature passed a domestic violence law, although it does not directly address sexual violence.

**Getting Men Talking to Men About Stopping Domestic Violence**

No one is better at convincing a man to end domestic violence than a fellow man, according to a longtime Australian activist and sociologist.

“Research shows that men listen much more to men than to women. That’s unfortunate, as it could mean we don’t always respect women’s voices,” says Michael Flood, an associate professor of sociology at Australia’s University of Wollongong. “However, it also means that men can be powerful advocates. When men speak out—at work, at church, in a community—other men are more ready to listen and give more authority to what they say. This means that men have a very important role to play,” Flood told journalist Sara Carabott of the Times of Malta.

Dr. Flood is currently conducting research on the impact of programs that try to engage men in preventing violence against women. Not just challenging violence against women, but also on how to be a good role model for children and how to challenge sexism within communities.

“It is important to involve men because men are part of the problem and part of the solution,” Flood writes in his book Men About Stopping Domestic Violence: Getting Men Talking to Men About Stopping Domestic Violence.

**Trump’s Hands-Off Fathering: I Provide the Funds, She Takes Care of the Kids**

If alienating women wasn’t enough, Donald Trump is infuriating another massive voting block: parents. While the Republican presidential candidate portrays himself as a family man, often joined on the stump by his three eldest children—Ivanka, Donald Jr., and Eric—his comments in past interviews reveal retrograde ideas about fatherhood that are out of step with today’s America, where both parents work in nearly half of all two-parent households.

Buzzfeed reviewed interviews from 2003 to 2007, in which Trump held forth on fatherhood, taking care of the kids, and parental gender roles. The real estate mogul’s message about parenthood: Dads supply the money, moms do everything else.

**Trump didn’t change diapers**

“No, I don’t do that,” Trump said on the Opie and Anthony show in 2005. “There’s a lot of women out there that demand that the husband act like the wife and you know there’s a lot of husbands that listen to that… I’m really like a great father but certain things you do and certain things you don’t. It’s just not for me.”

**No hands-on to care for his kids**

“I mean, I won’t do anything to take care of them. I’ll supply funds and she’ll take care of the kids. It’s not like I’m gonna be walking the kids down Central Park,” Trump said in a 2005 interview with Howard Stern. “Marla used to say, ‘I can’t believe you’re not walking Tiffany down the street,’ you know, in a carriage. Right, I’m gonna be walking down Fifth Avenue with a baby in a carriage. It just didn’t work.”

**It’s not just babies that Trump avoids**

In a 2007 interview, Trump told Stern about his relationship with Tiffany, his daughter with Marla Maples. Trump said that Tiffany visits him, “You know for about an hour, ‘Hi dad,’ ‘Hi Tiff, I love you, Tiff.’ She’s a great kid,” says Trump, who tells Stern that Tiffany’s a smart girl—something he knows because he “glances” at her report cards. To see the full article, go to https://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/donald-trump-thinks-men-who-change-diapers-are-acting-like-t?utm_term=.wy55gEAG.
solution. To end domestic violence, we will have to change not only men’s behavior, but also their attitudes,” Flood has long believed.

“Most men do not use violence. However, they tolerate it or do not see anything wrong with a man taking advantage of a drunk woman, for example,” Dr. Flood added.

Flood says that to end violence there needs to be a change in thinking. One way to do so is to intervene with school-age children, teaching them that domestic or sexual violence is unacceptable. He advocates offering students classes on healthy relationships along with mathematics and English.

Flood was in Malta as part of the Australian High Commission’s Public Diplomacy program, which includes a collaboration among the country’s Men Against Violence organization, the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, and the University of Malta.

**Body Image Issues Affecting Boys**

A new study of a national sample of adolescent boys reveals that nearly 18 percent are highly concerned about their weight and physique.

Some adolescents demonstrate an extreme focus on physique and begin to engage in potentially dangerous behaviors, according to a new report published in *JAMA Pediatrics* (the *Journal of the American Medical Association*). Such behaviors can be a signal of an eating or weight-related disorder—in males just as much as in females.

“The misunderstanding has been the generalization that eating disorders are a woman’s issue,” says Dr. Raymond Lemberg, a clinical psychologist and an expert on male eating disorders who is based in Prescott, Arizona. Studies in the last 15 years or so have shown “more men have eating disorders than ever before.”

Lemberg says the oft-cited figure suggests only about one in 10 eating disorders occur in males (https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/research-males-and-eating-disorders). However, newer research suggests the real ratio is likely closer to one in four (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1892232/?report=reader).

Although awareness of the risk of weight disorders among males is growing, there is still a problem with under-recognition, according to Dr. Alison Field, an associate professor of pediatrics at Boston Children’s Hospital and the lead author of the study. The under-recognition is primarily because it’s been assumed the disorders look the same in males as they do in females. Current assessments for eating disorders focus on the classical presentation typical of females, but since young men are often more concerned with gaining muscle than becoming thin, they typically don’t present as underweight, as girls often do. They’re also not as likely to starve themselves, use laxatives or induce vomiting; instead, they’re much more likely to engage in excessive amounts of exercise and steroid abuse. “Instead of wanting to do something unhealthy to get smaller, they’re using unhealthy means to become larger,” Field says. To read the full *JAMA* article go to: http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1766495.
In the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement, I often wonder where are the black men mobilizing against sexual violence against black women? Have we hidden—like the biblical David—away from the eyes of our communities because we are secretly invested in rape culture? Are we afraid because we do not actually know what sexual violence looks like?

Or are we worried that we may look in the mirror and face the fact that we may also be harm-doers?

In July 2015, a group of about 10 black men joined together in the living room of Black Women’s Blueprint (www.blackwomensblueprint.org) in Brooklyn, N.Y., to discuss these things openly and honestly, without restraint. We gathered because we wanted to discuss ways to dismantle the patriarchy inside of us. We pinpointed key ways to stand in support of black female survivors of sexual and intimate-partner violence. We also vowed to be conscientious of our socialization into a society that prizes misogyny and sexism, and strategized ways to move from theory to praxis and from talk to action.

We thought critically about what rape is, what consent looks like, how to stop street harassment and how to get real about the monsters deeply embedded in who we are as male-identified persons under patriarchy. We also agreed that this inner work is never-ending.

As I looked back on our meeting, I realized that we are doing similar work to our African forefathers during the nineteenth century. Historian Tera Hunter notes in To ‘Joy My Freedom, a book about Southern Black women’s lives and labors after the Civil War, that black men across the South joined together and mobilized against the sadistic and utterly vile attacks against black women’s bodies by white racists overcome with rapacious lust.

In Savannah, Ga., there was the Sons of Benevolence, and in Mobile, Ala., there was the National Lincoln Association, which met regularly to map legal and social solutions to the problem of white-on-black rape. Black men led and sustained an anti-rape movement at the height of white supremacist Klan terror. Despite the widespread anti-black violence that ensued following the legal eradication of slavery as it had formerly been practiced, black men unapologetically mobilized against racialized rape and sexualized racism alongside black women.

But how many black men mobilized against rape within black communities? How many black men chose to, instead, shame black women into silence? How many black men tasked black women with hiding their own victimization from the eyes of society in order to protect the black men doing the victimizing?

These past several months have been quite overwhelming for black communities and families faced with fighting our own demons. Social media has been filled with post after post of individuals wrestling with the ill that is sexual violence. In the midst of these conversations were rape apologists or people—mainly black men—who stood firm—even—on behalf of accused rapist Bill Cosby, and even joked about the severity of R. Kelly’s alleged molestation of children, despite his chauvinistic behavior on a HuffPost Live segment last December (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/watch-rkelly-walks-off-huff-

Mapping Police Violence

According to a watchdog organization tracking police killings of people of color (http://mappingpoliceviolence.org), police killed at least 102 unarmed black people in 2015, nearly twice each week.

- Nearly 1 in 3 black people killed by police in 2015 were identified as unarmed, though the actual number is likely higher due to underreporting.
- Thirty-seven percent of unarmed people killed by police were black in 2015 despite black people being only 13 percent of the U.S. population.
- Unarmed black people were killed at five times the rate of unarmed whites in 2015.
- Only 10 of the 102 cases in 2015 where an unarmed black person was killed by police resulted in officer(s) being charged with a crime, and only one of these deaths (Matthew Ajibade) resulted in convictions of the officers involved. Only one of the two officers convicted received jail time. The officer was sentenced to one year in jail and allowed to serve this time exclusively on weekends, the Guardian reported (http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/09/matthew-ajibade-georgia-student-taser-officer-prison-weekends).

For more information, go to mappingpoliceviolence.org/unarmed.
Engaging All Men to Stand with All Women

In his article on the facing page (“Black Men as Anti-Rape Activists”), Ahmad Greene-Hayes argues passionately for black men to step up their efforts to prevent rape and sexual assault. He challenges men in the Black Lives Matter movement to ensure that black women’s lives are also a part of the lives that matter.

As a white activist and organizer, I found the article meaningful and challenging. I do not mean to use this space to critique men of color’s involvement (or lack thereof) in the movement to combat gender-based violence. Rather, I read his article as an opportunity to examine my role as a white male activist, and the role of “Own It,” a project of the Center for Women and Families in Louisville, Kentucky, as we continue to develop as a multiracial effort.

There is a tendency for men who become involved in efforts to prevent sexual and intimate partner violence to focus primarily on “our women”—that is, the women who are like us (i.e., white men tend to think about white women, black men tend to think about black women). For me as a white man and in my role with the Own It Initiative, as a primarily white organization, Mr. Green-Hayes’s article has deep implications in terms of how I think about all women. Specifically, white men (black and brown men are more likely to be arrested, have a significantly higher conviction rate, and serve longer sentences than white men for the same or similar violent crimes). We can’t ignore this context in our efforts to engage and mobilize all men in the work of combating sexual and intimate partner violence. Further, there is a responsibility of white men involved in this work to overtly challenge these patterns.

To be effective, our efforts to engage and empower men to prevent sexual and intimate partner violence and promote gender respect must include understanding how those efforts are also efforts to combat racism and racist violence, and promote racial equality and racial respect.

—Rus Ervin Funk

Rus Ervin Funk has been actively working to engage men and boys for 30 years. He is currently the coordinator for male engagement at the Center for Women and Families in Louisville, Kentucky (where he facilitates the Own It Initiative: www.menownit.org). He is also a cofounder and member of the steering committee of the North American Men Engage Network (http://menengage.org/regions/north-america/). He can be reached at rus.funk@cwfempower.org. A version of this article first appeared in the Own It e-newsletter.

Ahmad Greene-Hayes is a writer, minister and scholar-activist who heads the Emerging Sons program at Black Women’s Blueprint. Follow him on Twitter (https://twitter.com/-brothagg). This article first appeared in The Root (www.theroot.com), which fosters and advances conversations relevant to the black diaspora (http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2016/01/stand_with_her_black_men_as_anti_rape_activists.2.html).

One of the themes of White Ribbon Kentuckiana, one of the main projects of the Own It Initiative, is empowering men to act as allies with women in ways that build alliances with other men. Most men, myself included, have knowledge and confidence to stand up for women in ways that confront, embarrass, or humiliate other men. We don’t have as much confidence in how to “stand up” for women in a way that builds an alliance with other men. This seems even more difficult when we cross lines of race or ethnicity.

We need to recognize and account for the ways that black and brown men tend to be held accountable in different ways from white men (black and brown men are more likely to be arrested, have a significantly higher conviction rate, and serve longer sentences than white men for the same or similar violent crimes). We can’t ignore this context in our efforts to engage and mobilize all men in the work of combating sexual and intimate partner violence. Further, there is a responsibility of black men involved in this work to overtly challenge these patterns.

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A woman in California shows up at a hospital for a sexual assault examination. Hospital workers delay because they don’t know that she has a right to get the exam, whether or not she reports the crime to police. By the time they examine her, it’s too late to detect certain “date-rape” drugs that she believes were in her system.

A woman in Minnesota is erroneously billed by the hospital for her rape kit. She spends two years fighting for the compensation she’s due.

A woman in Massachusetts has to jump through bureaucratic hoops every six months to keep her rape kit from being thrown out, in case she decides to press charges.

A sheriff in Idaho tells a news reporter that the legislature shouldn’t be mandating the testing of rape kits because “the majority of our rapes that are called in are actually consensual sex.”

These are the kinds of stories creating momentum in Congress and in statehouses for reforming how women and men are treated when they report a rape. A “survivors’ bill of rights” has been introduced in Congress, with a similar version working its way through the Massachusetts State House. Seven states are considering similar legislation.

Sexual assault is a crime so personal and so underreported, victims’ rights advocates say, that survivors have special needs. Unless those are taken into account, they add, it will be hard to make progress.

“We have to create an environment where survivors feel like the system is working for them,” said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D) of New Hampshire, in a statement in February when she and her cosponsors introduced the Sexual Assault Survivors Act.

In recent years, American society has undergone what victims’ rights advocates say is a sea change regarding the treatment of rape survivors—a change they say is necessary for people to be willing to report the crime. A big push has been under way to ensure that rape kits for reported crimes are tested, instead of languishing in police stations or forensic labs, partly because the evidence can help catch serial offenders.

A growing number of communities also have established sexual assault response teams to ensure that victims have a better experience with hospitals, police, and courts (http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2016/0221/CSI-Cleveland-How-the-city-is-curbing-sexual-violence). But there are holes in the patchwork quilt of state laws around these issues.

In some places, kits are stored until the statute of limitations runs out, while in others victims are not notified before destruction of untested kits. Victims in some states have trouble accessing their own medical records after undergoing a sexual assault exam.

For rape survivor Amanda Nguyen, who helped draft the proposal that became the congressional and Massachusetts bills, the transformation into a citizen-activist started at a hospital in 2013 (see sidebar).

Within 24 hours of being sexually assaulted, she underwent the hours-long examination to collect evidence for a rape kit. One of the pamphlets she received told her that if she didn’t report the crime to law enforcement, the kit would be destroyed in six months—unless she filed for an extension. In Massachusetts, the statute of limitations for the prosecution of rape is 15 years.
There were no directions about how to get the extension, and Ms. Nguyen decided she wasn’t ready to go through the often-grueling process of pursuing criminal charges for rape. She also wasn’t ready to have the evidence of the crime committed against her summarily tossed. So she entered what she describes as a “labyrinth” to figure out how to preserve the kit.

“Every six months, my life is reoriented to the date of the rape, because I have to fight to hold on to my kit [so it’s not] destroyed in the trash can,” she says in a phone interview.

The introduction of the bills is the culmination of grassroots lobbying by Nguyen, founder of the advocacy group RISE. With the help of what she describes as a “ragtag group of Millennials,” she drafted the basis of Shaheen’s bill, as well as the Massachusetts bill. It also led to a pending U.S. House resolution with bipartisan support that encourages states to take similar measures.

Shaheen’s Sexual Assault Survivors Act would offer states small grants to help them share information with victims about their rights when they first step into a hospital or police station. For victims of federal crimes, the bill:

• Provides for sexual assault examination kits to be preserved through the statute of limitations.
• The right to be notified and request extended storage if a kit is due to be destroyed.
• The right to be informed about results of the examination.

“Without a clear set of rights articulated in the law, it’s difficult for even the best law enforcement professionals to ensure that survivors receive fair, effective, consistent treatment, particularly across counties and states,” Shaheen said. Most sexual assaults are not tried at the federal level, so the bill aims to be a model for states, which often take a cue from federal laws.

The Massachusetts bill is broader, such as guaranteeing that a victim can have an advocate accompany her through medical and criminal justice proceedings and that she or he won’t be charged for a rape kit or emergency contraception. It also assures victims that toxicology reports from medical exams won’t be used to charge them with misdemeanor crimes, such as underage drinking.

These and other efforts around the country show that “people get that it’s not just about getting evidence, but making sure the human aspect is addressed … by treating every kit with the respect it deserves,” says Rebecca O’Connor, vice president for public policy at the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) in Washington.

There are signs of change, big and small. In March, Idaho Bingham County Sheriff Craig Rowland offered a clarification and apology for his remarks to a TV reporter that “the majority of our rapes” were consensual sex. “I misspoke when I said the majority of our rape cases are consensual sex,” wrote Sheriff Rowland in The Idaho Statesman. “This has been a very humbling experience and I now know that I have to clarify myself more when speaking of sensitive matters …

Idaho is actually one of several states with a bill for better handling of rape kits that was forged with input of all stakeholders, including law enforcement, says Ilse Knecht, of the Joyful Heart Foundation, which has lobbied to reduce rape kit backlogs.

In 2015, 11 states passed laws requiring sexual assault kit audits to or guidelines for submitting kits for testing, the foundation reports. The sticking point in such debates is often funding.

“Law enforcement recognizes there is a need to have more transparency and be more responsive to crime victims … but resources are a huge issue,” says Andrea Edmiston, director of governmental affairs at the National Association of Police Organizations in Alexandria, Va.

For Nguyen, the need is urgent. After a tough day telling her story to Massachusetts lawmakers, Nguyen says she went home and cried, praying for some sense that the effort was worth it. The next day, her Uber driver was the one who burst into tears, telling her about his daughter’s rape and her treatment by authorities.

“I could accept injustice or rewrite the law,” she says. “I chose to rewrite the law, because I am not the only one going through this.”


RISE for Dignity

By Amanda Nguyen

A merica’s justice system is broken in the way it treats rape survivors. Survivors’ rights vary from state to state, but no state has enacted comprehensive rights protections for survivors. This creates a patchwork system that works against the people it is supposed to support.

I know firsthand how the justice system treats rape survivors, but I also know that my story is not unique. The CDC estimates there are 25 million sexual assault survivors in the United States. More than 40 states have backlogs in untested rape kits. Some states do not cover the full medical expenses of a kit, leaving survivors to pay their own way toward justice. A handful of states don’t even notify the survivor when they permanently destroy a rape kit.

That is why I founded RISE in November 2014—to push for comprehensive rights for survivors in every state and at the federal level. We have come together as survivors and advocates to fight for a comprehensive Bill of Rights for survivors, including:

• The right to a copy of your own police report
• The right to a copy of your own police report

We have accomplished a lot in less than two years, including a bill currently pending in several states and in the Senate. Since the federal introduction, seven states have asked us to bring these rights to survivors in their states. Our Change.org petition currently has more than 90,000 supporters. A movement is building, and we need to seize this momentum to make America fair for all survivors—so that justice does not depend on geography.

RISE is entirely composed of volunteers who donate their time but we need resources to bring comprehensive civil rights to survivors across 50 states. During April, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and RISE sent survivors across the country to meet with key government officials, members of the press, and tech executives. In order to enact change, we need these leaders to hear our stories.

RISE set a goal of raising $20,000 to bring survivors to Washington and/or their state capitols to meet with legislators. To contribute to the campaign, go to: https://www.change.org/f/help-give-rape-survivors-a-voice/ contribute?source_location= fundraiser_show.
Imagine the scene: A rally in connection with antiwar protests at President Nixon’s inauguration in 1969. Activist Marilyn Webb, then 26, on stage giving her first speech to a large crowd. What were described as “movement men” shouted her down, saying things like, “Take her off the stage and fuck her.” What had she been doing? Trying to raise “women’s issues” within the antiwar movement. But the group of men near the stage was having none of it. She told me later that fistfights broke out in the crowd in front of the stage and that march organizer Dave Dellinger told her and the other woman speaker, Shulie Firestone, to leave the stage, saying they were causing a riot.

The gruesome incident, in all its raw sexism, is portrayed in the provocative film She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry, a dynamic portrayal, through interviews and archival footage, of the rise of the independent women’s movement in the late 1960s and early ’70s.

Watching the film I was appalled. I was at that protest, but not at the particular event depicted. In fact, I hadn’t heard about it happening. When I wrote Marilyn she confirmed it was at the 1969 counter-inaugural protest. I told her how sorry I was. We had a nice email exchange. She repeated the point she made in her interview in the film—that it was that experience that convinced her and other women activists to form a separate women’s movement. “The rest is history” (or herstory, as it were).

Our email occurred as planning was under way for the first reunion of the antiwar movement. It would mark the 50th anniversary of the introduction of U.S. combat troops in Vietnam and the 40th anniversary of the end of U.S. direct military involvement in the war. The gathering, complete with workshops, speakers, folk music, and a march to the King Memorial, took place May 1 and 2, 2015, in Washington, D.C. (Marilyn had suggested showing the film at the conference, but it was not included, although there was a workshop on women in the movement.)

I couldn’t go to the conference without raising the issue of how “movement men” had treated women comrades back then. Not all men, but enough to cause women to feel they needed to organize independently.

It wasn’t the first time I had thought about the connection between sexism and the movement. In fact, in 1970, in a paper I wrote on the history of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), of which I had been “chairman,” I noted that it was the sexism of men in the movement—more than fraternal support—that led to the rise of the women’s movement in the South, as it had nationally. In one of Marilyn’s emails, she’d written: “I think today that the women’s movement is the single most successful result of that era—aside from the war ending—and has indeed caused a revolution in world culture.”

But it seemed to me that shouldn’t be the end of the story. How pitifully inadequate is it for men to take credit for starting a women’s movement by being sexist assholes? Gee, guys, good job! I felt then, and still feel, we have a lot of unfinished business; we need to examine how badly too many men acted toward women in those days, especially if we want to be allies and antisexism activists today. So I wrote an “Apologia” and passed it out at the conference.

Some took what I’d written seriously and applauded the effort. Others said, “Yes, we were young and stupid.” Two leading women activists said they appreciated the effort, but also pointed out that the times were complicated, and that we were all trying to grow up, conditioned by a sexist culture in the 1950s and ’60s, while also trying to negotiate relationships, and end racism and war. A very full plate destined to yield divergent tastes, both bitter and sweet.

In the spirit of continuing the dialogue, I offer the “Apologia,” still a work in progress. I welcome others continuing the conversation, and engaging in the dialogue.

Tom Gardner is a former journalist and activist in the Southern civil rights and anti-war movements, and a professor of communication at Westfield State University in Westfield, Mass. A longtime board member of the Men’s Resource Center for Change, he is on the Voice Male national advisory board. The film She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry is now available via streaming through Netflix.
An “Apologia” for/from “Movement Men”

We “movement men” assumed the right (if not the responsibility) to be in the leadership.

We talked too much, leaving others struggling to get in a word. We failed to listen.

We interrupted, dismissed, ignored when women spoke, thus discouraging women’s participation.

We failed to acknowledge the brilliance, the work, the creativity, the energy, the leadership skills, and the commitment of women comrades, and failed to encourage their efforts.

We failed to step back and promote women into leadership.

We expected domestic chores essential to conferences, meetings, social gatherings, and living together would be done by women, leaving time for men to do research, writing, speaking, organizing, etc.

We greeted complaints about sexism in our ranks—or in ourselves—with jokes, thoughtless dismissal, or scary anger.

We dragged our knuckles and feet far too long in reading, discussing, and considering the importance of the emerging feminist literature.

We judged our interest in working with women by their sexual attractiveness.

We confused “campus traveling” with sexual adventure, or the sailor’s “girl in every port” approach to sexual relations.

We bought into society’s homophobia.

We confused hypermasculine, “egotesticle” chest thumping with militant political strategy.

We saw issues like abortion, rape, domestic violence, and unequal pay as “women’s issues” not deserving of the attention of radical men who had, after all, a world to save.

—Tom Gardner
The State of Fatherhood in the U.S.

There is a tale of two fatherhoods in the United States. High-income dads are championed for playing active roles in their children’s lives and they’re getting headlines, while low-income, many nonresident, dads are often either valued or stigmatized simply by their ability to pay their way. The U.S. is in urgent need of policies and support so that all fathers can realize their roles as fully engaged, fully equal caregivers, argues the first ever report on fatherhood in the U.S.

Fathers in the United States are more involved than ever before, but gender equality, child development, and the wealth of the nation rely on advancing this movement in the years ahead.

There is a fatherhood revolution going on in the United States. Men are doing—and are expected to do—more of the childcare and housework than ever before. This involved fatherhood revolution has the power to advance gender equality, improve child development outcomes, and raise the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) by several hundred billion dollars. How? By championing women to work outside the home at the same rate as men do. Despite the achievements, the U.S. is not doing enough to support or advance the movement—in part because until now there has never before been a clear or accurate national picture of the state of U.S. fatherhood.

Building on the success of the first State of the World’s Fathers report in 2015, Promundo, a global leader promoting gender justice that was founded 20 years ago in Brazil, worked with a diverse coalition of partners to produce the State of America’s Fathers report, a landmark analysis of fatherhood. The report features never before published data from the Families and Work Institute’s National Study of the Changing Workforce.

As of Father’s Day 2016, the report reveals that the fatherhood revolution is a highly unequal one. A tale of two fathers cuts down socioeconomic lines. At one end of the spectrum, society increasingly encourages upper middle- and upper-income fathers to be highly engaged with their children—with many Fortune 500 companies offering the paid parental leave to back this up. On the other end, low-income dads have the least access to paid leave in the country: 95 percent of low-wage workers do not have the option of taking paid family leave through their employers’ policies for the birth of a child or to care for a seriously ill family member. New data from the report reveals that one aspect which unites across lines is the inability for parents to find work-life balance: the majority of parents (59 percent) who work full time, and nearly three quarters (74 percent) of those that work overtime, feel that they do not spend enough time with their children.

The unprecedented size of the U.S. prison system also causes undue financial difficulties for low-income families. More than 11 percent of U.S. men will go to prison at some point in their lives, and due to racial biases and other factors, more than 60 percent of those in prison are people of color. In total, more than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have a parent who is incarcerated; and 92 percent of incarcerated parents are fathers. As such, harsh sentencing laws (particularly for nonviolent offenses) are harmful for children, in addition to being racially unjust.

In addition, the State of America’s Fathers finds that children in the country are now more likely than ever to live outside of the traditional heterosexual, two-parent household. The decline of marriage, the rise of cohabitation, and divorce as a less stigmatized option means that the “traditional” family is no longer a reality, with as many as 50 percent of children in the U.S. now spending some portion of their childhood years living in single-parent households.

Over the past 30 years, U.S. fathers have increased the time they spend with their children during the workday by nearly a third (65 percent). According to the report’s new data, both men and women are more interested in sharing childcare responsibilities than ever, and a minority of men—less than half (40 percent)—agree that “men should earn money and women should take care of the home and the family.” In addition, despite a pervasive stigma of nonresident fathers as absent fathers, or worse, “deadbeat dads,” research also shows that most nonresident fathers are consistently very active in the lives of their children.

The State of America’s Fathers report reveals that women and men alike are in need of policies and support so that fathers can realize their roles as fully engaged, fully equal caregivers. However, the U.S. is unique among high-income nations in its failure to guarantee paid leave to new parents, and 40 percent of U.S. workers find themselves ineligible for the 12 weeks of unpaid leave offered under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For those who are eligible, taking leave that isn’t paid
simply isn’t financially possible. Additionally, extreme rates of incarceration and high child support demands on low-income fathers underscore a need to reframe the conversation on economically marginalized nonresident fathers’ contributions to their children’s lives.

The *State of America’s Fathers* outlines key recommendations for action. These include:

• National legislation to provide for paid, equal, and non-transferable leave for mothers and fathers of newborns: noting that even as much as 12 or 16 weeks can generally be paid for by both mothers and fathers through a payroll tax of about one percent.

• To provide the poorest fathers and families with a living wage, to reform the justice system, and to provide additional services that encourage and support their caregiving—including an Earned Income Tax Credit for nonresidential fathers who pay child support.

• It posits that joint physical custody of children after a relationship or marital breakdown should be pursued when it is in the best interest of the child, and in cases where there is no history or threat of violence.

• Building on a foundation of reproductive justice, supportive programs and services, which include comprehensive sexuality education and quality reproductive health services, can support individuals to plan when and how they want to have children.

• Workplaces to value what parents do as caregivers as much as they value their professional achievements; for more men to join the HEAL (health, education, administration, and literacy) professions; and for children to learn the value of caregiving from young ages in order to help accelerate social shifts toward greater acceptance and valuing of caregiving qualities in all genders.

“What our report and our new data show is this: women and men want the policies and the support so that all parents can be full-on, fully engaged, fully equal caregivers, said Gary Barker, International Director and founder of Promundo, the organization that authored the report. “…implementing paid leave is far less costly than often thought; and when implemented alongside income support to low-income fathers and parents, these policies pay for themselves in increased productivity and happier, healthier families. What are we waiting for?”

The *State of America’s Fathers* was coordinated by Promundo, a global leader in promoting gender justice in partnership with women and girls (www.promundoglobal.org). Its editorial board includes key researchers and influential non-governmental organizations working on engaging fathers in the U.S., with representatives from: Families and Work Institute; the Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-Being at Columbia University; the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities at Stony Brook University; the National Partnership for Women & Families; and the University of Maryland. For more information, go to www.mendcare.org/soaf, @MenCareGlobal #SOAF.

### About the Fatherhood Report

Approximately 80 percent of men in the United States will become biological fathers at some point in their lives, and virtually all men have some connection to children and others in caregiving relationships. Fatherhood today is at the center of a national conversation that also touches on gender equality, work-life balance, race, and the question of what it means to be a man. More men than ever are stay-at-home fathers and involved caregivers for their children and more women than ever are in the workplace, balancing caregiving and providing roles with their partners. Engaging men in caregiving and care work is key to achieving women’s empowerment and supporting the well-being and rights of children. Building on the success of the first *State of the World’s Fathers* report in 2015, Promundo and a diverse coalition of partners launched the first ever *State of America’s Fathers* just before Father’s Day 2016. For the report, the Families and Work Institute prepared new, never before published data analyses of the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce. Conducted approximately every five years, the NSCW provides trend data on Americans’ lives on and off the job, dating from 1977. The study is widely used by policymakers, employers, the media, and others interested in the widespread impacts of the changing conditions of work and home life. For more information, go to www.familiesandwork.org, or contact Alexa Hassink (a.hassink@promundoglobal.org).
Comments like those above are just some of the things that have been said to dads who have been looking after their children, according to testimonies on Reddit, where the topic sparked a flurry of conversation after a father shared an image of a T-shirt bearing the slogan: “Dads don’t babysit, it’s called parenting.”

The man in the picture modeling the T-shirt is Al Ferguson from The Dad Network (thedadnetwork.co.uk). He posted a picture of himself online a while ago wearing the T-shirt, but the image resurfaced on Reddit, and it’s got people talking about parenting stereotypes.

“I’ve had people ask me ‘Are you looking after the kids today?’ Or, ‘I can tell you dressed the baby today.’”

“It’s just out of date. The modern dad is more active in their family life than they were historically. It’s out of date to assume the mum is the primary caregiver,” Ferguson says.

Although the number of dads who choose to stay at home and care for their children is on the rise, a 2014 study by the Pew Research Center showed that only 16 percent of primary caregivers are men (www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27626510). More than 3,000 people have responded to the suggestion that dads are only “babysitting” when they are, of course, parenting.

Some dads shared their own experiences on Reddit.

“It hurt really bad when I was a new stay-at-home dad and people would ask about me babysitting…. It really made me almost cry sometimes because it was like they couldn’t see me as a caretaker,” one dad wrote. Others broadened the conversation to talk more generally about the sexism that dads experience.

“Reminds me of all those ridiculous commercials where they make it seem like dads don’t know how to take care of their kids while mom is away,” said another father. “They make a mess, kids go crazy, they don’t know how to cook, clean, change a diaper…Where’s all the outrage?”

Another father wrote, “Single dad here. It’s even worse when my seven-year-old wants to have a sleepover… I call the parents. I explain she wants to have a sleepover and your kid is invited. Then the awkward question: ‘Will Mom be there?’ And when you explain there’s no mom here…sorry. There’s that long pause. Sad to say, to this day she still hasn’t had a sleepover.”

BBC journalist Emma Wilson can be reached at emma.wilson@bbc.co.uk. A version of this story appeared on the BBC’s news blog, http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-36144487.
Mallika Dutt and Sonali Khan of Breakthrough (center) mobilize communities using popular media, leadership training, and advocacy. They catalyze millennials, especially boys and young men, to recognize they have a role in working to end violence against women.

Mallika Dutt and Sonali Khan have an ambitious goal: to mobilize an entire generation to put an end to violence against women—and men are at the heart of their campaign.

Their organization Breakthrough works in the United States and India, deploying a mix of social media, pop culture and multimedia campaigns to challenge the deeply held cultural norms they see as the root of the problem.

The scale of the issue they are trying to address is huge: one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence, and in some countries the figure is as high as 70 percent, according to the United Nations.

“We’re using culture to change culture—and give people a concrete way to prevent domestic violence and discrimination against women,” Breakthrough founder and chief executive Dutt said in an interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Dutt and Khan were recently given the $1.25 million Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship, the most valuable prize of its kind.

Laws, policies and education are not enough to bring about change in the face of entrenched cultural norms, said Dutt, adding that people are more likely to respond to arts and storytelling than to lectures about human rights.

Breakthrough has attracted some high-profile male supporters, including Star Trek actor Patrick Stewart, who shared his story of witnessing, as a small boy, his father beating up his mother, and the impact it had on his life. His story created a social media storm and encouraged other men to share their stories.

“When men see they can be part of the solution, they are more likely to engage with the issue,” said Dutt, a lawyer who has worked on women’s rights issues for more than three decades.

Dialogue—and seeing men as part of the solution, not just the problem—is an important part of Breakthrough’s work, she said.

“Through our work on campuses in the U.S. with fraternity members, we have learned that men do want to speak out against violence against women but often don’t dare to because of the social norms within their group,” said Dutt.

Encouraging men to hold others to account is another key part of their work, for example through the campaign “Be That Guy,” which was featured at NASCAR motor races in the United States with its call on men to act against sexual harassment.

“The key for all our campaigns is to recruit social change agents—people who believe that change has to happen,” said Khan, Breakthrough’s vice president and India country director. “That’s how we build the Breakthrough Generation.”

Breakthrough says it has reached 15 million people in rural communities and 350 million through its social media campaigns.

Bell Bajao, Hindi for “Ring the Bell,” calls on people, particularly boys and men, to interrupt domestic violence wherever and whenever they witness it.

As part of the campaign, Breakthrough created television ads, inspired by true stories of men stepping up against domestic violence, which more than 130 million people have watched.

The rapid growth and reach of social media has been a boon for the organization, but Khan said it is important to focus on the local context.

In India, Breakthrough’s video vans travel through cities and villages to draw attention to violence against women and engage communities through games and street theater, while the #Asking-For-It social media campaign aims to improve the safety of women in public spaces.

“We work with local people to make sure we have the best approach for the local context,” said Khan.

Dutt and Khan were presented with their award at the Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship, taking place in Oxford.

Longtime gender justice activist, author, journalism professor, and Voice Male contributing editor Robert Jensen doesn’t shy away from controversy. As an observer of how the transgender movement relates to the larger question of challenging patriarchy, in the essay below, Jensen raises questions, spotlights challenges and concerns about the ideology of the movement.

A few weeks after I published online a critique of the ideology of the trans movement, I was at lunch with a friend who has long been part of various movements for racial, economic, and gender justice and works as a diversity coordinator at a nearby university.

The meeting came on the heels of a local activist bookstore denouncing me in an email (https://genderidentitywatch.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/smash-the-cistem-a-note-on-bob-jensen.pdf) to its listserv, which had led to tense conversations with some comrades. At the end of lunch, my friend hesitantly brought up the controversy, and I got ready to hear her critique of my writing.

Instead, she leaned forward and said, “I don’t dare say this in public, but I agree with you.”

It was reassuring to know that someone whose work I respected shared my analysis. But it was disheartening to be reminded that a progressive/liberal orthodoxy on trans issues has left many people afraid to speak.

Most people involved in feminist movements know how bitter the trans debate has become (http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/04/woman-2), and those of us who identify with radical feminist principles are used to being labeled transphobic TERFs (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist), sometimes even accused of supporting a climate of violence against trans people. My goal here is not to assign responsibility for the breakdown of dialogue, but to point out one consequence of this state of affairs: Many people are afraid not only to disagree with the trans movement’s policy positions but even to ask questions about the underlying claims.

I have condensed into a question, a challenge, and a concern what I believe are the most important points in the trans debate.

The Question

If the claim of trans people is that they were born into one biological sex category, such as male, but are actually female, what does that mean? Is it a claim that reproduction-based sex categories are an illusion? That one can have a female brain (whatever that means) in a body with male genitalia? That there is a non-material soul that can be of one sex but in the body of the other sex? I struggle to understand what the claim means, and to date I have read no coherent account and am aware of no coherent theory to explain it. (Note: The concerns of a people born intersex are distinct, raising issues different from the trans movement, http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex).

The Challenge

If the claim of trans people is that they were socialized into one gender category, such as man/masculinity, but feel constrained by the category or feel more comfortable in the norms of the other category—that I can understand, partly as a result of my own negative experiences with the culture’s rigid, repressive, and reactionary gender norms. But those norms are the product of patriarchy, which means we need feminist critiques of patriarchy to escape the gender trap. While some in the trans movement identify as feminists, others embrace traditional gender norms, and in my estimation the movement as a whole does not embrace a feminist critique of institutionalized male dominance.

The Concern

As one pro-trans writer put it after reviewing the dramatic interventions into the body that happen in sex-reassignment surgery—which involves the destruction of healthy tissue—“It can seem and feel as if one is at war with one’s body” (http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15532739.2014.899175). Is this procedure, along with the use of hormones—including puberty-blockers in children—consistent with an ecological worldview that takes seriously the consequences of dramatic human interventions into organisms and ecosystems? With so little known about the etiology of trans, is the surgical/chemical approach warranted?
I have developed these ideas in more detail in online essays (details below), which I hope people will read and consider, and I am working on a book that puts these issues in the context of a broader critique of patriarchy and the politics of rape/sexualized violence, prostitution/pornography, and trans. The pornography issue was where I first encountered the splits between radical feminism and liberal/postmodern feminisms; a radical critique of the sex industry, in which men buy or rent objectified female bodies for sexual pleasure, often got one labeled a SWERF (Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminist), as if a critique of institutionalized male dominance was nothing more than an attack on vulnerable women.

But I continue to believe that a focus on systems of oppression is essential. Since my first exposure to radical feminism in the 1980s, I have been convinced that such feminist intellectual and political projects are crucial not only to the struggle for gender justice but for any kind of decent human future.

Is reasoned and principled argument, within and between movements and political perspectives, possible? In some settings, the answer these days appears to be "no." For example, when I submitted a piece (see "Feminism Unheeded" below) to a website that had previously published my work, I warned the editors that it was a controversial subject. But they accepted the piece, made a few changes in editing, and posted it online. Within a couple of minutes—so fast that no one would have been able to read the whole article—a reader denounced me as transphobic, and the editors of the site, who had originally thought the piece raised important questions, took it down within a few hours (it was posted later on a different site).

Perhaps if these debates concerned purely personal matters, there would be no compelling reason for a public discussion. But the trans movement has proposed public policies—from opening sex/gender-specific bathrooms and locker rooms to anyone who identifies with that sex/gender, to public funding for surgery and hormone treatments—that require collective decisions. There’s no escape from the need for everyone to reach conclusions, however tentative, about the trans movement’s claims.

The trans movement is, of course, not monolithic, and varying people in it will identify politically in varying ways. But after two years of further conversations, reading, and study, I will reassert the conclusion I reached in the first article I wrote in 2014 (http://dissidentvoice.org/2014/06/some-basic-propositions-about-sex-gender-and-patriarchy/).

Transgenderism is a liberal, individualist, medicalized response to the problem of patriarchy’s rigid, repressive, and reactionary gender norms. Radical feminism is a radical, structural, politicized response. On the surface, transgenderism may seem to be a more revolutionary approach, but radical feminism offers a deeper critique of the domination/subordination dynamic at the heart of patriarchy and a more promising path to liberation.

One of the most common reactions I’ve had from people in progressive/liberal circles who agree with this statement but mute themselves in public conversations is that, in plain language, they just want to be nice—they fear that any question, challenge, or expression of concern will hurt the feelings of trans people. Sensitivity to others is appropriate, but should it trump attempts to understand an issue? Is it respectful of trans people to not speak about these matters?

A couple of months after the lunch described above, I had a conversation with a longtime comrade in feminist and progressive movements, who agreed with my analysis but said that she thought trans people had enough problems and that she didn’t want to seem mean-spirited in raising critical questions.

“So, your solidarity with that movement is based on the belief that the people in the trans community aren’t emotionally equipped to discuss the intellectual and political assertions they make?” I said. “Isn’t that kind of a strange basis for solidarity?”

She shrugged, not arguing the point, but sticking to her intention to avoid the question. I understand why, but those who make that choice should remember that avoiding questions does not provide answers.

Robert Jensen is a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin and author most recently of Plain Radical: Living, Loving, and Learning to Leave the Planet Gracefully (Counterpoint/Soft Skull, 2015). Information about his books, article archives, and contact information can be found at http://robertwjensen.org/.

For more extensive analysis of the issues raised in this article, Jensen recommends the following:


In a revealing new examination of gender and climate, a group of activists and researchers aim to establish a rationale for understanding boys’ and men’s multiple roles in climate change. Men, Masculinities and Climate Change presents—and analyzes—key areas for further exploration of masculinities (the characteristics associated with what it means to be a man) in patriarchal systems that play a contributing role in perpetuating climate change. As a concept paper, Men, Masculinities and Climate Change explores opportunities to engage men and boys as agents of positive change, alongside women and girls, and further strengthens the call for social, economic and environmental justice for all.

The excerpt from the narrative below was written by a team that included: Jane Kato-Wallace (Promundo-US), Nikki van der Gaag (Consultant, Promundo-US Senior Fellow), Joni van de Sand (MenEngage Global Alliance), Vidar Vetterfalk (Men for Gender Equality-Sweden), Wessel van den Berg (Sonke Gender Justice), Marina Parker (Centre Anna), Gary Barker (Promundo-US), Laxman Belbase (MenEngage Global Alliance), Sofia Santos (Promundo-Europe), and Kate Doyle (Promundo-US).

Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges facing the world today. We are the first generation to know that we are capable of undermining the Earth’s delicate ecosystem and most likely the last generation with the ability to do anything about it. Around the world, the 10 warmest years on record all have occurred since 1998. Globally, 2015 was the hottest year on record. After an assessment of more than 30,000 scientific papers from 80 countries, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently confirmed that “human influence on the climate system is clear and growing.” The more human activities disrupt the climate, the greater the risks of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and our ecosystems. The IPCC also highlighted that it is within our grasp to limit climate change and its risks in ways that allow for continued economic and human development. However, without radically challenging and transforming existing economic, political, technological and social systems—where the one percent own as much as the other 99—such efforts will fall short. Indeed, according to the IPCC 2014 report, climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems.

Though there is significant pressure from wealthy nations for poorer nations to cut their emissions—through carbon credits, for example—scientific analysis on the causes of climate change consistently reveals that it is the “cheerful recklessness” with which wealthier societies emit greenhouse gases that has caused unprecedented climate change. Climate data from the World Resources Institute finds that China is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, followed by the United States, the EU, India, Russia and Japan. Looked at a different way, an analysis by the Climate Accountability Institute on carbon-producing entities such as oil corporations finds that 90 percent of historical emissions since the 1750s can be traced to just the 90 largest fossil fuel and cement producers, most still in business today.

The threats of climate change are not gender-neutral. Gender analysis on climate change over the past three decades has brought to light the disproportionate effects of climate change and environmental degradation on women’s lives—particularly those of low-income women in global South settings. In countries where there is marked gender inequality, four times as many women as men die in floods. In some cases during natural disasters, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men. This phenomenon will grow more frequent with global warming. Research has also shown that women often have a smaller carbon footprint than men, regardless of whether they are rich or poor. Therefore, a greater understanding of
how gendered identities affect men and women’s roles, activities and subsequent contributions to carbon emissions is essential if mitigation politics and programs are to achieve their desired effect.

Simultaneously, activists—often led by women’s groups in the global South—have conducted policy advocacy on climate change to stress that the human rights of women and girls who live in poverty, or in vulnerable and unsafe conditions, are threatened by the double injustice of climate change and gender inequality. Such strict gender norms and expectations limit the options available to them as they try to manage the new risks brought about by climate change. For example, the work of Vandana Shiva advocates for an engagement of women in agriculture, and Wangari Maathai works for reforestation in Africa. Globally, women’s advocacy networks and coalitions such as the Women’s Environmental and Development Organization (WEDO) have highlighted the intersection between social inequalities and climate change and have mobilized feminists to take action.

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Women’s Major Group has facilitated women’s civil society input into UN policies on sustainable development. And most recently, the Women’s Global Call for Climate Justice campaigned for the urgent need for just action on climate change during the 2015 Paris Climate Conference.

At the same time, an understanding of boys’ and men’s multiple roles in climate change has remained almost invisible, except in certain areas of research. And, in areas where there is research, boys and men have mostly been analyzed as a monolithic group responsible for the negative effects of climate change due to their patterns of consumption and the association between modern industrialization and key aspects of hegemonic masculinities. However, few studies look at the diverse and nuanced ways in which boys and men also impact and are impacted by climate change, including as heads of large corporate sector organizations that are the drivers of climate change, as energy consumers, as victims of environmental degradation, and as agents of change alongside women and girls. There is little recognition that men’s diversity—according to social class, ethnic group, sexuality and other factors—also affects not only the way that they live their lives, but the way that they drive or respond to climate change.

Men, Masculinities and Climate Change presents the need for a more nuanced analysis of boys’ and men’s multiple roles in climate change. Such an investigation will contribute to a more complete understanding of the gendered root causes, impacts and solutions to climate change adaptation and resilience, and will further strengthen the call for social, economic and environmental justice for all. Boys and men must be seen as part of the solution to achieve gender-informed climate justice, as they are, in different capacities, in gender-based violence prevention, unpaid care work, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and peace and security. Men, Masculinities and Climate Change seeks to outline these multiple roles to identify possible ways forward to engage boys and men as agents of sustainable, positive change alongside girls and women.

Understanding the influences of patriarchy—the system that upholds men’s power over women as well as unequal power dynamics among men and among women—is critical to identifying causal relationships and developing solutions to tackle climate change. Such analyses have already led to more sophisticated understandings of and solutions for the fields of sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence against women, and women’s economic empowerment, among other topics. There needs to be a further strengthening of the call by women’s rights colleagues to integrate a gender lens into climate change debates. Heretofore, however, debates have focused far more on technical and economic arguments to underpin rationale for action, and neglected gender.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the progress of modern societies has been predicated on the need for continued modernization and
economic growth. The phrase “man versus (mother) nature” perhaps best epitomizes how men’s identities within patriarchal societies have been based upon the need to subordinate the surrounding natural environment. It should come as no surprise that ambitious international agreements on limiting CO2 emissions are viewed as threats to the current social and economic orders. Recent analyses on climate skepticism, primarily from corporate groups and politically conservative groups in the global North, show how such actors view the legitimization of climate change science as a threat to “modern industrial rationality” and hegemonic masculinities.

In the United States and elsewhere, the fields of meteorology, physics and chemistry have connections to military tradition where weapons and technology continue to be central to victory in wartime. According to scholar-activist Amina Mama, the process of militarization exaggerates the bipolarization of gender identities in extremis for the purpose of waging war. This bipolarization perpetuates a system where men prove their masculinity through performance such as military combat. The field of climate science is seen as just another function of the war machine that showed promise in allowing states to predict, control and alter the natural world. Most recently, resources have also been invested into investigating how geographic areas vulnerable to climate change can become breeding grounds for political instability and terrorism and ways in which military intervention can prevent violent acts from being perpetrated in the homeland.

Consequently, the alliance between the armed forces and scientific research results in solutions that have more in common with military missions than with empowering men and women to develop sustainable strategies for mitigation and adaptation. In addressing the impacts of climate change, the overrepresentation of male researchers on intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—tasked with setting climate change policy and negotiating climate change agreements—has been historically gender blind. Women and indigenous groups, for example, have had to lobby for decades to ensure their needs and realities were reflected in international agreements. Due to calls for gender parity, the UNFCCC has recently acknowledged that women’s representation within some of the constituted bodies of the Convention on Climate Change was as low as 11–13 percent. Now, though, consensus documents emphasize the importance of gender balance and the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations. Still, there is much more to be done. Achieving gender parity is not enough to develop and achieve a true transformational agenda to address climate change.

Feminists also critique that climate scientists have focused too many resources on understanding the geophysical characteristics of climate change—a phenomenon already well understood—and less on its social impacts, consequences, and grassroots solutions to adaptation. Current research reveals that women in some countries have less social and physical mobility and more domestic and caregiving responsibilities than men. Therefore, they are more likely to suffer the negative consequences of climate disruptions because they are often left to prioritize the safety of family members, particularly children. In many societies, rural women play a major role in agriculture, but have little power to invest in crops that are more resilient to climate change. There is also evidence, though not as frequently acknowledged, given the emphasis on a “women and girls as victims” analysis, of women’s courage and resilience in coping with disasters and in rebuilding their damaged communities.

At the same time, environmental disasters brought about by climate change also negatively affect boys and men in gendered ways that are, in general, different from girls and women. The invisibility of their vulnerabilities is also the result of the ways in which climate science and research has been driven by a patriarchal agenda. For example, in times of drought, male farmers in developed and developing countries have higher rates of suicide; such men have weak or nonexistent support networks. In parts of Latin America, expectations of male heroism require boys and men to engage in risky behavior in the face of danger and make them more likely to die in an extreme event. The notion of the “big man” in rural southern Africa, which includes the ability to accumulate wealth in the form of people (women and children) and assets such as land, cattle, and equipment, is causing a crisis of masculinity in areas of changing natural resources. In cases such as these, participating in conflicts and using violence can become an alternative to achieving and wielding power in society. In Western Zambia, subscribing to harmful masculine ideals worsens poverty in areas already made vulnerable by climate change. In the floodplains there, privileged ideas of what it means to be a man are seen as the cause of the “masculinization of spending,” where men spend money on women and alcohol, further burdening women and girls with the responsibility of holding the household together.

Gender socialization at the individual level, where boys and young men are often taught to be assertive, unfeeling, and unafraid, and girls and young women are taught to be passive and emotionally caring (particularly toward their families), may also impact how men and women view and respond to climate change in general. In recent polls conducted in wealthy countries, for example, men are less likely to consider climate change a serious threat than women. In Germany, 67 percent of women versus 52 percent of men are concerned that climate change will harm them personally. In the United States, the gender gap is even wider (69 percent of women versus 48 percent of men). In what is perhaps the most worrisome statistic, men are much less likely than women in wealthy countries to agree that personal lifestyle changes are necessary to reduce the effects of climate change—changes that are desperately needed since most greenhouse gas emissions are caused by wealthier nations. In poorer countries, however, where populations are much more likely to experience natural disasters caused by climate change firsthand, men and women respond in similar ways and are much more likely overall to view climate change as a real and visible threat.

Climate change is not gender-neutral. Gender analysis over 30 years reveals the disproportionate effects climate change and environmental degradation have on women’s lives—particularly those of low-income women in the global South.

The authors of Men, Masculinities and Climate Change are all members of the MenEngage Global Alliance (www.menengage.org). For specific inquiries, contact Jane Kato-Wallace, senior program officer at Promundo-US, jonk@promundogoal.org; Joni van de Sand, joni@menengage.org, global coordinator and advocacy manager; and Laxman Belbase, laxman@menengage.org, global networks manager at MenEngage. To read the report in its entirety, go to: http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Men-Masculinities-and-Climate-Change-FINAL.pdf.
Sustainable development goals are a “Plan of Action for People, Planet and Prosperity,” says Chibuike Alagboso, that African nations are working toward over the next 15 years. The goals include strengthening efforts to advance universal peace, eradicating poverty, and ensuring no one is left behind. What does the goal of ensuring healthy lives for all at all ages mean in practice, and how can it be turned from a catchphrase into action? “That,” Alagboso writes, “still need[s] to be worked out....”

Around the world, organizations, individuals and governments have made commitments and started initiatives to make the goals of advancing universal peace, eradicating poverty, and leaving no one behind a reality. Link Up is a project supported by the Dutch government and implemented by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance which is improving the sexual and reproductive health and rights of thousands of young people in Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Uganda.

The project reaches young women and men living with and affected by HIV aged 24 years and under, with a particular focus on those who get paid for sex, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. They all experience difficulties accessing services due to high levels of stigma, discrimination, and in some cases, fear of arrest. The strong focus on stigmatized young people affected by HIV makes the project unique.

These efforts are more important than ever. More than 2,400 young people are infected by HIV every day, and approximately 12 million young people will be living with the virus by 2030 when the sustainable development goals end and the next set of global development goals are adopted.

Sharing with a global audience

Last January’s International Conference on Family Planning in Bali, Indonesia, provided an opportunity to share work, learn from others, and restate commitments for progress in family planning research, programming and advocacy. It also provided young people from Link Up opportunities to share their work with an international community and learn about young people’s work in other parts of the world.

During the youth pre-conference, some of the Link Up implementing partners organized a side session, “Raising Our Voices: Recognizing the Diversity of Young People and a Rights-Based Approach.” It was attended by many young Indonesians.

Experiences from Link Up

Rawnak Rokonol, from Link Up Bangladesh, helped facilitate the session and shared experiences from implementing the work. He started volunteering while he was still an undergraduate studying marketing. He is a passionate advocate who enjoys working on Link Up projects, especially because people in his community continue to be affected by HIV as a result of high levels of illiteracy and lack of knowledge in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Rokonol believes “many of my country’s young people are not very educated. They lack basic information about sexual and reproductive health rights.”

Rokonol works with key population groups affected by HIV, including transgender people earning money by providing sex. He adopts the peer-to-peer approach to communicate about SRHR issues. This approach has proven very effective and helps mitigate some of the difficulties of his efforts. “I usually face a challenge speaking to transgender sex workers because they work at night and sleep almost through the day. But the peer educators we train are able to reach them easily to discuss issues around sexual and reproductive health and rights,” he said. “I just wish to see the life of one person changed. It means a lot to me... I believe that person will go ahead to positively affect the life of another.”

Female condoms in Burundi

Another youth advocate attending the conference, Nadia Ndayikeza from Réseau National des Jeunes vivants avec le VIH/SIDA (RNJ+)—part of Link Up Burundi—shared her experience of advocating for more family planning choices for women in her community, including female condoms. She was inspired to set up the female condom project after seeing a man wearing a condom as a bracelet, which made her realize many people do not know what they are or how to use them.

The efforts of these young people highlight what it truly means to “leave no one behind,” as they involve individuals from highly vulnerable and stigmatized populations. As young people continue to advocate for inclusion in the making and implementation of policies that affect them, it is important to involve youth from key populations.

The International AIDS Conference in July in South Africa will involve stakeholders from civil society as well as governments. It will be a key moment to ensure governments are living up to the agreements they signed at the UN General Assembly in September 2015. According to the pact, the governments agreed to work toward the global sustainable development goals and called for doing more than making a statement: they pledged to take action to ensure that no one is left behind.
A Poet’s Long Journey from Domestic Violence

By María Luisa Arroyo

Poet María Luisa Arroyo was the featured speaker at the 40th anniversary celebration of the New England Learning Center for Women in Transition, one of the oldest domestic and sexual violence prevention organizations in the region, serving northwestern Massachusetts. What follows is an edited version of her remarks.

I am the daughter of hard working Boricua or Puerto Rican factory and foundry workers, who, before they met and fell in love in a club in Springfield, Massachusetts, moved from Puerto Rico to find better-paying jobs, to help support their large, financially struggling families. In each of their instances, they were raised with beatings as a means to communicate, beatings as a way to silence, beatings as a way to discipline children.

For that young couple, my parents, in the 1960s in Springfield, physical and verbal abuse in the home—soaked in my father’s alcoholism—was as natural as breathing:

The Magic in These Cans

Three years old, she lines up beer cans like blocks.
Her photo eyes – one red, one brown – peer over the tin border.
Mami y Papi laugh so hard her pierced ears hurt.
She already knows that when she doesn’t fuss,
sits quietly in that short, powder-blue dress
that lets her legs stick to the cold metal chair,
they will forget her. And then she will feel safe.
Her sidelong glance wonders at the magic of these cans
that rattle like tinny maracas when she drops a few tabs in
and shakes shakes shakes that magic that makes
Mami y Papi hug and kiss and talk and sing. Here,
but not at home. Where, even though
she already knows how to keep still.
Where, even though she knows how to swallow
words that usually bubble up like champagne
in children’s mouths, Papi yells
& Mami cries & papi spanks her
when she colors outside the lines, spills
her milk, uses too much toilet paper,
wets the bed. Her fingers gripping the table
edged in white ache to take
one of these magic cans home.

Three brothers later, Mami chose to work second shift in the factory as an act of survival against Papi’s physical disciplining while sober, beatings while drunk. She thrust me, at age nine—the same age that she was taken out of school in order to earn money for her family—into the role of taking care of three kids and dealing with my father, que en paz descansen/may he rest in peace—a brilliant musician, a generous man to his friends, a hard working man, and a physically and verbally abusive alcoholic.

Here is the fragmented poem:

Girlhood Flashbacks, 1970s

Back door unbolted. I see a teen stagger
in the sun, a bleeding flower
on his chest.
When the rusty nail slices the
skin between
my thumb and forefinger, you
see nothing.

He rocks and rocks behind the closed door
until his second crib leans and breaks.

The first clotting of womanhood smells
like wet pennies and makes men pant, Mami warns.

Sunday School movie only for girls: a baby’s
vacuumed to pieces as the boys play football.

Sunday parties, callused hands pass plates,
shot glasses, brush against girl buds.

Ignore the thick rub of a man’s pants against
your belly as he hoists you up to dance.

School means poems about birds, teachers who praise,
perfect attendance, two meals a day.

During my junior year of college in Germany at the Universitaet Konstanz am Bodensee, I fell in love in a club with my ex-husband. Unsere gemeinsame Liebessprache, our common love language, was German. He, a liberal, educated Iranian who spoke Farsi and German; and I, a liberal, educated Boricua and American who spoke Spanish, English, and German. When we started to date and write letters together to Amnesty International to learn about the status of two of his brothers, MIA, during the Iran-Iraq War, I rationalized to myself, and to my worried girlfriends, his physical abuse.
Soldier You, Exile You

You shared memories that broke off
Inside you. I stayed every time you hit
me. At nineteen, I thought that was love.
Soldier you smoked opium to forget
boysthose high-pitched voices chimed promises
of bikes, rice above rations, even a lamb.

Short on tanks and men, Khomeini ordered soldiers
to take boys, taught them a new game,
mine-sweeping.
Those who won shaheed shod, became martyrs.

Open-air trucks dropped off boys near
the front
where your troop was ordered up dunes
to man anti-aircraft guns. Boys fingered plastic
keys painted gold, oohed at khaki jackets stamped:
“Permission from Imam Khomeini to enter heaven.”

They didn’t question the rope looped between their wrists.
Exile you chain-smoked Marlboros, tried to forget them,
but the more you tried, the harder it was for your fists to open,
to remember why you even loved me.

July 22, 1998, marked the last night he ever hit me, marked
the last time I would ever hear my son, then two years old, ask:
“How’s Daddy hitting you?” Thanks to close friends, I
fled the next morning with my son to a battered women’s shelter in
eastern Massachusetts.

after the police drop-off, 1998

Fear,
as I stand on the steps
of this battered women’s shelter,
you make me want to bolt back
to a violent known:
familiar twist of fingerbone
sucker punch to smash lips against teeth
shoves into counter edges
that bruise my back and slipping shoulders
shield my face against the butt of his head

Fear,
as I stand on the steps
of this battered women’s shelter,
you make me want to bolt back
to a violent known:
his hands will touch me here, want sex,
and this will break the brittle silence
that will have lasted for days
and we will not talk about
what our son has witnessed again
pretend everything is fine
until the next time

Fear,
as I stand on the steps
of this battered women’s shelter,
you make me want to bolt back
to a violent known:
my son cries
and I open the door
yes, Fear, to this unknown space

While we lived in a shelter for six weeks,
I was keenly aware of my educational and
financial privileges. At the time, I had my
master’s from Tufts University, my bachelor’s
degree from Colby College in Waterville,
Maine, and was entering into a PhD program
at Harvard University in Germanic Languages
and Literatures. Because I had a full scholar-
ship, I became independent financially when
I transitioned out of the shelter. For many of
the other women, there were complications
in their transitions, including to name a few
issues: finances, housing, multiple children,
citizenship, language, relocation, and tremen-
dous emotional stress.

Understand that physical and verbal
violence against women happens across class,
education, race, and cultures. And know that every generous dona-
tion you make to [support battered women’s organizations] helps a
woman like my mother, a woman like me.

In closing, here is a poem that speaks to the power of women.

Sostento: Sustenance

Manati, Puerto Rico, 1893 for my great-grandmother Luisa Manzano

Three soldiers splinter our door with rifle butts,
scatter my corn husk dolls, shout “¡Disidentes!” Then stop.

In our one-room wooden house, dirt floor swept smooth,
they see me, six, and Mami, cast-iron pan in hand

but nowhere for a man to hide. They stomp out, chicken shit
and feathers clinging to their boots. I pass nails to Mami

as she hammers planks to fix our door, praises me
for living up to my name, Luisa, “famous in war.”

After dark, the two men who braced themselves for hours
under the heavy frame of Mami’s bed

drop down into dust, mouths ringed white with thirst
as Mami ladles sopa de pollo into our bowls.

María Luisa Arroyo is author of the poetry collection, Gathering
Words: Recogiendo Palabras (Bilingual Press, 2008), and coeditor
with playwright and poet Magdalena Gómez of an intergenerational
multicultural anthology, Bullying: Replies, Rebuttals, Confes-
sions, and Catharsis (Skyhorse Publishing, 2012). She was named
the first poet laureate of Springfield, Massachusetts, in 2014. The
first two poems above are from Gathering Words; the last poem
is from Flight (Thousand Hands Press, April 2016). To purchase
an autographed copy of Gathering Words: Recogiendo Palabras
($12) or Flight ($10), please write miarroyo67@hotmail.com.
Men Attacking Pakistan’s New Domestic Violence Law

By Aysha Khan

Even though Pakistan has finally taken a positive step forward to foster gender equality, some men still believe the mistreatment of women is their God-given right.

The backlash began when the Pakistani government introduced the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill, which effectively criminalizes violence against women in Punjab, the country’s most populous region. Before the law was officially enacted on March 1, diehard extremists attempted to block the legislation, saying it would “destroy the family system in Pakistan” and “add to the miseries of women.” In denouncing the law, some right-wing Islamist leaders say it contradicts the Quran and will increase divorce rates.

“This law is in conflict with the Holy Quran, the life of (Muhammad), constitution of Pakistan and values of our country,” Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl party, said in March. “We are with all those who want to end violence against women, but by this law the country is going from one extreme position to another.”

The Protection of Women Against Violence Bill passed unanimously Feb. 24 in Pakistan’s largest province after about nine months of opposition. It criminalizes any form of abuse by men against women: domestic, emotional, psychological or done through stalking or cybercrime.

Activists hailed the law, which establishes a toll-free helpline, residential shelters, counseling, financial and medical relief, penalties for offenders, and a system for registering complaints, as a historic step. It also conceives a universal, toll-free 24/7 telephone number women can call in order to report abuse.

“The bill is aimed at upholding the principles of kindness, justice and equality enunciated by Islam,” said Fauzia Viqar, chairwoman of the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women.

Rehman, an influential cleric who has previously made statements in support of the Pakistani Taliban, said the women’s rights protection bill was a secular move in direct conflict with Shariah, going as far as to call it a Western conspiracy. “The bill (demonstrates) the blind following of American and European cultures,” he said. “It goes against Shariah and the norms of our society. … Today we are again being made a colony of the Americans and the British.”

Mukhtaran Mai, second from right, stands with students in a school she established in Meerwala in the Muzaffargarh District of Pakistan’s central Punjab province. Mai, a Pakistani victim of a village council-sanctioned gang-rape, became a symbol of the country’s oppressed women.

26 Voice Male
The Price of Forgiveness

A ccording to Pakistan’s independent Human Rights Commission, nearly 1,100 women were killed in Pakistan last year by relatives who claimed they had “dishonored” their families. In most of these cases, the victim is usually murdered by a close male family member.

Until the bill was enforced, women in the country were victims of a weak criminal justice system and an overall lack of social support, giving rise to utterly horrific stories of honor killings, acid attacks and ongoing abuse.

The issues recently came to light in the Academy Award–winning documentary A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness. It follows the horrific story of Saba Qaiser, a 19-year-old Pakistani girl who was beaten, shot in the head by her father and thrown into a river for marrying the man of her choice.

Miraculously, she survived, and her story ended up receiving attention both in Pakistan and globally, soon prompting the country’s prime minister to promise a crackdown on honor killings.

In an interview with The Guardian, the filmmaker, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, said the main problem with “honor” killings is that it’s considered to be a private matter—rather than a public legal issue. “People hush it up: a father kills a daughter, and nobody ever responds, nobody ever files a case. The victim remains nameless and faceless, and we never hear about them,” she said.

Obaid-Chinoy won her first Oscar in 2012 for Saving Face, a documentary about acid attacks on women in Pakistan.

Experts say

that violence against women, particularly in developing countries, is underreported. Honor killings, acid attacks, bride burnings, child marriages, and sexual and domestic abuse are commonplace, yet these crimes are grossly underreported.


How to Respond to Sexist Remarks

By Alan Berkowitz

Much progress has been made in addressing sexism in American culture. While the profeminist men’s movement has contributed to this evolution, it is undeniable that there is much more to be accomplished. Many of us can attest that remarks and behaviors that would have seemed inoffensive or “normal” some years ago are now correctly labeled as sexist, inappropriate, and in need of a response. In the language of bystander intervention theory and research now, more than in the past, we “notice the event,” “interpret it as a problem,” and “feel responsible for responding to it.” The question is: how to respond? What are some tools and ideas for effectively, appropriately, and safely responding to sexist and other prejudicial language that we experience in our daily lives?

The Spring issue of this magazine included an article, “Unbecoming a Man,” an excerpt from Allan G. Johnson’s memoir of the same title. The article provides an excellent illustration of this dilemma—how to appropriately respond to a clearly offensive sexist remark, even more so when it seems that our friends are not themselves uncomfortable.

On the way to a regular weekly dinner, Allan and three male friends stop at a liquor store so he can buy some beers for their meal. Overwhelmed by the plethora of choices and brands, he stands for a while at the cooler. Grabbing something and taking it to the cash register he comments to his waiting friends and the clerk: “Too many choices!” to which the clerk promptly retorts: “Wrong time of the month?”

Allan is shocked by the clerk’s offensive remark, disparaging to him and to women, and does not know how to respond; his friends remain silent. The article goes on to describe his internal conflict and remorse at not knowing how to intervene against the inappropriate remark and the oppressive, negative effect of his friends, silence: “And I of course, was also silent, letting it pass rather than risk making it worse, becoming smaller than myself in the temporary safety that I had learned to seek out as a boy among boys.”

Many of us can testify that this is a common experience—choosing silence as the safe way out in order to not challenge a remark, or our friends’ silence, or to have our “masculinity questioned” and then, later on, regretting our inaction. Years ago, at a sexual assault prevention conference, I arranged for all the male prevention experts in attendance to have lunch together to discuss common experiences and challenges. Almost all agreed that their biggest challenge was not knowing how to respond appropriately to offensive remarks and behaviors by men they knew.

Much of my professional work the past few decades has focused on educating myself and others on how to address this challenge—to identify and teach effective, safe, and appropriate responses when faced with inappropriate remarks and behaviors. The liquor store example can be used to illustrate what an effective response might look like. It is my hope that this discussion will help to alleviate the fears that freeze us into non-response and instead stir our creative juices to help identify ways we can address the sexism that exists around us, as well as the silence of the men we know which serves to enable it.

First, we must give ourselves permission to acknowledge that in some cases we may choose not to respond. This may be for safety reasons, when faced with a significant power differential between us and the person engaging in the behavior; for personality and cultural reasons; or even for practical reasons. For example, if I am on the way to picking up a child from after-school care and am late, I may feel that I do not have time to engage with an offensive comment made while rushing in and out of a convenience store. When choosing not to respond, what is important is that we feel comfortable with our choice. Often this is not the case, and we may feel guilty and disappointed that we allowed an inappropriate behavior to go unchallenged, carrying these memories for years. The “Unbecoming a Man” example is a case in point.

What then can we do if we want to act? How to deal with our friends’ silence? What, in other words, would actually be “Becoming a Man”? There is no one correct response for a particular situation, and that it is not appropriate for us to define for others what they should
do. What we can strive for instead is to offer more understanding and response options so that more people feel comfortable in doing something more of the time in situations where we and others are uncomfortable and previously may have been silent.

In some cases a direct, more confrontational remark may be appropriate. For the situation in the liquor store, examples might include:

“I am offended by your comment.”

“I don’t appreciate the implication of your remark.”

“I haven’t seen you being so decisive.”

Confrontational responses require a certain degree of confidence and the ability to be assertive and may not be appropriate in particular circumstances, or may not be comfortable for certain individuals. In these situations, an indirect remark may be more appropriate. Indirect remarks are especially useful in situations that are more impersonal and public, when a confrontational response might be considered culturally inappropriate, or when the other person has more status, power or is physically intimidating. Responding indirectly could include making a comment that illustrates that you choose to ignore the remark, or alternatively, offering a response that challenges the underlying assumption of the remark.

In the liquor store example, when the clerk says, “Wrong time of the month?” you could respond in any of the following ways:

“I was under the assumption that ‘haste makes waste.’”

“I’m more interested in having a nice dinner with my friends than in what beer we drink.”

“Actually, I was so enthralled by all the great beer choices you have I couldn’t decide. What do you recommend?”

“Personally, I don’t mind being seen as indecisive, even if that’s not the reason.”

“Actually, my doctor has determined that my indecision gene is on my Y chromosome, so that isn’t a good explanation.”

“Many women I know are more decisive than me all four weeks of the month.”

The first three responses do not address the underlying sexism of the remark, but still let the person and the other bystanders know that you do not agree with it and are not going to be silent about it. Often a remark that changes the subject results in a shift in energy with a new distraction response offers the opportunity for everyone to switch the conversation ensuing—perhaps in this case about the dinner plans. In the event that others who hear a remark are secretly uncomfortable, a distraction response offers the opportunity for everyone to switch the focus of the conversation.

The remaining three responses more directly address the underlying assumption of the remark—i.e., that women are indecisive during menstruation and that a man who is indecisive is less of a man by virtue of “acting like a woman.” In my work teaching options for intervention I find that indirect responses that challenge the sexist assumption underlying a remark can be powerful and welcomed, offering many who previously were passive bystanders a way to comfortably intervene. Another example of a situation in which an indirect response could be effective would be, when an academic colleague comments that “too many undeserving women are getting tenure,” to reply: “Really? Many of my best and brightest professors in college were women.”

In addition to responding directly to the person making the remark, one could involve the other bystanders, for example, gesturing to the friends present and commenting: “Actually, these guys know that I am indecisive most days of the month.” You could also engage the other bystanders after the fact, asking, “What did you think of what the clerk said to me?” Whether or not we decide to respond to a situation, we can engage other bystanders in a discussion and analysis of what happened and prepare them and ourselves to respond effectively in the future. It may be helpful to know that other men are also frequently uncomfortable with inappropriate remarks but we may incorrectly assume that they are not.

In my research (and that of others) on norm misperceptions it has been demonstrated that it is common for a majority of men to be uncomfortable with sexist behavior but to assume that others are not. This is also true for others: straight individuals with respect to homophobic behavior, white individuals in relation to racism, etc. Revealing the “true norm of discomfort” provides us with support from allies to respond in the future, and also undermines the belief that we are alone in our discomfort. Sexism is perpetuated, in part, when we incorrectly assume that other men are not uncomfortable with it, and when silence is misinterpreted as agreement.

A final option. Engage the person making the remark in conversation. This might not be appropriate with a sales clerk, but it is with a friend. I could respond to his saying, “Wrong time of the month?” by asking, “What do you mean by that?” or “Are all of the women you know indecisive during that time of the month?” or even, “It seems that indecision really bothers you; do you want to share why?” Engaging the other person in a open-ended, non-judgmental conversation can be effective in helping them to evaluate the assumptions of a remark and to introduce cognitive dissonance in relation to it. (This particular skill is taught by the National Coalition Building Institute and is called “Shifting Attitudes.”)

Remember, we shouldn’t be surprised when offensive remarks are made. They are part of the reality that we have committed ourselves to change—in ourselves, in our friends, and in society. In finding an effective response to such comments, rather than be put off we can leave aside our surprise and shock and engage our natural creative intelligence and passion for social change. This is a skill that evolves over time, through practice, through trial and error until it eventually becomes a “talent.” You may be pleasantly surprised when other bystanders step in to agree with or support your intervention. When confronted with sexist remarks and behavior we can find our humanity, our capacity for “Becoming a Man.”

Alan Berkowitz is an activist, educator, researcher and scholar who works with the military, higher education, and communities to prevent sexual assault and to foster social justice. The material in this article is derived from his book Response Ability: A Complete Guide to Bystander Behavior, as well as a book chapter titled: “Using How College Men Feel About Being Men and ‘Doing the Right Thing’ to Promote Men’s Development” published in Masculinities in Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Considerations. For more information about Alan and his work go to his website, www.alanberkowitz.com, or e-mail him at alan@fltg.net.
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in America face discrimination in their daily lives. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), currently, 17 states plus DC ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in employment, housing, and public accommodations, and an additional five states provide incomplete statewide nondiscrimination protections. There are a number of bills in state legislatures across the country and in Congress; some that would protect LGBT people from discrimination, and others that would roll back existing protections or open the door to discrimination against gay and transgender people.

“At this point in the 2016 legislative session, we’ve seen hundreds of bills that target gay and transgender people introduced with fumbled attempts to validate their legitimacy,” said ACLU senior staff attorney Rose Saxe. “While the vast majority of these bills are dead in the water, several have passed, and more yet loom over us and threaten to chip away at the dignity and equality all of us deserve. We’ll continue fighting every bad law, and seeking affirmative protections.” The ACLU believes all people—including gay or transgender individuals—should be treated fairly and equally by the laws of their state, and should have the opportunity to earn a living, access housing, and participate fully in society.

1. Missouri, SJR39: The broad religious exemptions constitutional amendment that would allow religiously affiliated organizations receiving state funds, businesses, and individuals to discriminate against same-sex couples, children of same-sex couples, LGBT youth and more is dead in committee. In April, the bill was filibustered on the Senate floor for nearly 40 hours (a record), which earned it national attention and business, political and public condemnation. The ACLU is hopeful it won’t get resurrected.

2. South Carolina, S. 1203: A sweeping anti-trans bill that would force transgender people to use the wrong bathrooms in schools and government buildings and block localities from protecting transgender people from discrimination in sex-segregated facilities is dead in committee. Many opposed the bill, including Republican leaders and Governor Nikki Haley.

3. Tennessee, HB 1840/SB 1556: In April, Tennessee governor Bill Haslam signed into law a bill that allows counselors to turn away patients simply because they may conflict in some way with the counselors’ “sincerely held principles.” This could result in discrimination against not only gay and transgender people, but women and virtually anyone else with whom the counselor may disagree.

4. Mississippi, HB 1523: HB 1523, a broad bill that would allow officials to turn same-sex couples away, and permit widespread discrimination against LGBT people signed into law in April, continues to raise questions of legality and criticism. Hundreds gathered in protest in May to call on the legislature to repeal the measure.

5. Anti-transgender municipal ordinances: In late April, Oxford, Alabama’s city council passed an ordinance making it a crime, punishable by a $500 fine and possible jail time, for a transgender person to use the bathroom according to their gender identity. The ACLU is investigating a possible lawsuit to strike down the discriminatory ordinance. A copycat ordinance was introduced in Rockwall, Texas, but failed after protests by the local community and hours of testimony against the proposed ordinance.
6. **Federal Title IX:** In early May, Senators Al Franken (D-MN) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), together with 38 of their colleagues, sent a letter to Education Secretary John King urging the Department to issue comprehensive guidance on the scope of protections afforded to transgender and gender non-conforming students under Title IX([https://www.franken.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=3452](https://www.franken.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=3452)). It urges the Department to clarify that state laws, such as North Carolina’s HB 2, that mandate systemic, statewide violations of federal bans on sex discrimination like Title IX run afoul of the law, and thus jeopardize states’ continued receipt of federal funding.

7. **North Carolina, HB 2:** Following protests at the end of April when the North Carolina legislature reconvened and nearly 200,000 signatures demanding the repeal of North Carolina’s anti-LGBT House Bill 2 were delivered to the office of Gov. Pat McCrory, there are continued and intensifying calls for full repeal of HB 2. In late March, the ACLU with partner organizations filed a lawsuit challenging the sweeping new anti-LGBT law and in April added new clients([https://www.aclu.org/news/three-more-plaintiffs-join-lawsuit-against-north-carolinas-discriminatory-anti-lgbt-law](https://www.aclu.org/news/three-more-plaintiffs-join-lawsuit-against-north-carolinas-discriminatory-anti-lgbt-law)).

Allison Steinberg is the communications strategist for the ACLU. For more information, contact her at asteinberg@aclu.org.

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**PEACE BEGINS IN THE GROUND**

Peace begins in the ground. Softer than breathing. More lasting than bones.

The long future. The long past. We are touching it now. In shadows of birds

on silver-black water. Cloudlight. Starlight. Her lips to mine. Its music already playing

beneath branches forming archways through which the whole sky falls. Without ending peace begins

in shredded cloth and rubble. In streams of pain. In shattered words. The children learning to read

our faces. Dawn blooms as mothers and fathers mourn. In the silence of salt. In a teardrop.

We are tasting it now. Its singular ocean. Its ongoing wave.

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Resources for Changing Men

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

For Young Men

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

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

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

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

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

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

On Masculinity

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

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

ManKind Project
New Warrior training weekends www.mkp.org

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

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

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

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

For Men of Color

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

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

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

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

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

FOR FATHERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Men’s Health

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

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

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

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

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

Prostate Health Guide
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/menagainstsexualviolence.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 oneinfourusa.org/themensprogram.php

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

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

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

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

Healthy Dating
Sexual Assault Prevention www.canikissyou.com

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

Men Against Violence
A movement launched by the National Domestic Violence Hotline. www.oneinfourex.org

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

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

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

Men’s Nonviolence Project
Texas Council on Family Violence
http://www.tcfv.org/education/rnp.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.nqvawnet.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.glbtqdvp.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 breathtecycle.org

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

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

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

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging
Resource center aimed at improving the quality of service and supports 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
austinmenscenter.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
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
Counseling for men, women, teens, couples and families on domestic violence and anger management, and explorations of gender and sexism.
http://www.portlandmrc.com

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

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

Twin Cities Men’s Center – Minneapolis, MN
Provides resources for men seeking to grow in mind, body, and spirit and advocates for healthy family and community relationships
www.tcmrc.org
For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. The shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. To someone who doesn’t understand growth, it would look like complete destruction.

—Cynthia Occelli

We’ve all heard of post-traumatic stress disorder. It refers to changes in the brain and our functioning after an experience of extreme trauma. It can actually change our genes and the wiring of our brains. Military veterans and survivors of physical and sexual assault are common victims of PTSD. The new buzz phrase is “trauma informed treatment” for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. It is important to understand how trauma affects the brain to understand what the survivor is experiencing.

We also read things like the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE) or a book like Scared Sick by Robin Carr-Morse to learn what devastating health issues may befall survivors of child abuse. I know; I have experienced many of those outcomes! I have also had survivors get mad at me for sharing the ACE Study with them. I hear, “Thanks a lot…now I know how miserable my life will continue to be.” But there is more to surviving trauma than the negative ways it changes us. There can be positive outcomes as well.

I recently became aware of a new field of study called post-traumatic growth, a name coined by two researchers from the University of North Carolina, Dr. Richard Tedeschi and Dr. Lawrence Calhoun. Now, Jim Rendon explores their theories in the recent book Upside: The New Science of Post-Traumatic Growth.

Talk about a dichotomy! One is a painful disorder and the other an awakening, and they are both supposed outcomes of trauma. What? As it turns out, scientists are finally discovering that people who put a lot of effort into healing from trauma often grow in surprising ways.

As we begin healing, most of us start from a place of hurt, anger, and often despair. We know that severe trauma is held emotionally in our minds and has no language, so that when we first tell or write our story, it gives us words to help understand what happened to us. That is where most survivors begin, and every one I know tells me that just telling their story helps them heal.

In many people, the process of speaking, writing and going to counseling is exactly what creates the conditions for “post-traumatic growth.” The amount of introspection and rumination about one’s life while healing often changes how we see ourselves, and our place in the world. For me, I had to find a way to put meaning into my life after all the pain and dysfunction.

Dr. Tedeschi compares a traumatic event to an earthquake that damages a building. The challenge is to see the opportunity presented by the seismic event. “In the aftermath of the earthquake, why not build something better? Don’t just live beneath the rubble. Don’t just build the same old building that you had before…”

He describes five factors of post-traumatic growth:

• Personal strength (feeling personally stronger)
• Appreciating life
• Relating to others in new ways (intimacy, compassion, showing up)
• New possibilities for life
• Spiritual change or growth

I have often wondered why I find survivors to be such amazing people. Many either work for or started organizations that exist to prevent abuse or support survivors. Now I see it is an outcome of growth from their healing process. “With post-traumatic growth, a person who has faced difficult challenges doesn’t just return to baseline, which is what happens with resilience,” explains Tedeschi. “They change in fundamental, sometimes dramatic, ways.”

To those of you out there who are just beginning your healing or who wonder, “What comes next?,” think about the fact that often new life comes because of the catastrophe, and it is not just a course correction, but an entirely new direction.

Randy Ellison is a child sexual abuse victims’ advocate and an activist promoting legislative and cultural change working with local, state and national organizations. Author of Boys Don’t Tell: Ending the Silence of Abuse, and of more than 180 articles on child sex abuse, Randy began his activism as one of Oprah’s 200 Men, male survivors of child sex abuse. A member of the Oregon Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Task Force, he maintains a website for survivors, http://boysdonttell.com.

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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.”

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To subscribe—or to make a tax-deductible gift—please use the enclosed envelope or go to:

VOICEMALEMAGAZINE.ORG
MenEngage Alliance

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

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

WHAT WE BELIEVE

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

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

OUR ISSUES

Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

Preventing gender-based violence

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

JOIN US

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

Register at: www.menengage.org/register