TRANSGRESSIVE:
HOW TRANSGENDER ACTIVISTS TOOK ON GAY RIGHTS,
FEMINISM, THE MEDIA, AND WON!  BY RIKI WILCHINS

THE END OF PATRIARCHY
DADDY, WHERE ARE YOU?
THE MISOGyny OF A FAILED PRESIDENT
MIDDLE EAST MEN: READY FOR GENDER EQUALITY?
FROM THE EDITOR

**TAKING ON THE MISOGYNY OF A FAILED PRESIDENT**

BY ROB OKUN

“When you’re a star they let you do it. You can do anything. … Grab them by the p***y. You can do anything.” — Donald Trump

The white male bully temporarily occupying the White House represents the worst expression of manhood the U.S. has ever seen, but that dangerous truth is being obscured by so many of his other treacherous actions. Millions of words have been written excoriating the questionably elected president on a host of topics—from denying climate change to restricting minority voting rights; from sanctioning draconian drug laws to promoting harsh prison sentences for nonviolent offenders. Almost entirely absent in this blizzard of assaults on social progress is the predator-in-chief’s misogyny.

A virtual sea of pink pussy hats liberally dotted the heads of millions of women worldwide protesting Trump the day after the inauguration. Happily, plenty of men attended. But since then, as a gender, where have men been?

Before the election, a dozen women charged Trump with sexual misconduct. Trump pledged to sue them all after the election, a promise he has not kept.

Consider: In a sworn affidavit, his ex-wife Ivana accused him in 1991 of rape. In a subsequent divorce deposition—while still saying her husband had “raped” her—she said she didn’t want this to be interpreted in “a literal or criminal sense.” Nevertheless, she added, “As a woman, I felt violated.” She downplayed her charge to secure a divorce settlement of $14 million in cash. As for Trump? He’s on record admitting to sexually assaulting women on the infamous Hollywood Access tape.

By our silence, are we not normalizing his behavior?

A simple question—a challenge, actually—for men: Why are we not standing up and speaking out to the effect that as men—sons, brothers, uncles, husbands, fathers, grandparents—we unequivocally reject Donald Trump’s denigrating behavior toward women? He is no role model for children or grandchildren. Those of us who are fathers or grandfathers—or mentors, coaches, clergy—need to explicitly reject his misogyny—which his administration’s policies and a Republican-majority Congress are promoting. Otherwise, by our silence, are we not normalizing his behavior? To advance women’s rights, men must join women on the front lines: for reproductive rights, for earning a hundred cents—not 79 cents—on the dollar, for childcare, family leave, nutrition assistance, for adding, not cutting, afterschool programs, among a myriad of programs in jeopardy.

We face many crises today—from the health of the climate to the health of the Constitution. When it comes to advancing gender equality and justice, men have a singular role to play: modeling a sensitive, aware manhood. Let’s start by asking women how we can support them—and really listening to what they have to say. Then, let’s talk with other men about how we want to get our voices heard. The renter in the White House is the most visible exemplar of men behaving atrociously; unfortunately, he is not alone. If we want to prevent his minions from feeling emboldened, it is up to men to say yes to a compassionate, nurturing expression of manhood. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

Rob Okun is editor of Voice Male.

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**J’ACCUSE! TRUMP’S SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

“Every woman lied….Total fabrication. The events never happened. Never. All of these liars will be sued after the election is over.” — Donald Trump

A summary of the accusations lodged against the president:

Jessica Leeds (1980s) claims Trump groped her on an airplane. “[H]e was like an octopus…his hands were everywhere.”


Kristin Anderson (early 1990s) was at a nightclub when she felt Trump’s fingers slide under her skirt, move up her inner thigh and touch her vagina through her underwear.

Jill Harth (1993) claims Trump groped her under a table at a business dinner, then months later assaulted her at his Florida mansion. He “pushed me up against [his daughter’s bedroom] wall, had his hands all over me and tried to get up my dress....”

Jane Doe (1994) Anonymous accuser filed a federal lawsuit claiming Trump raped her when she was 13.

Temple Taggart (1997) claims Trump kissed her against her wishes in the 1997 Miss Teen USA pageant. “He kissed me directly on the lips.”

Cathy Heller (1997) claims when introduced to Trump, he “went for the lips” and kept her there “for a little too long…” despite her turning her head.

Karena Virginia (1998) claims “Trump grabbed my right arm. Then his hand touched the right side of my breast. I was in shock, I fainted.” Trump asked her: “Don’t you know who I am?”

Mindy McGillivray (2003) claims Trump groped her at Mar-a-Lago. He “grabbed [her] butt…. All of a sudden I felt a grab, a little nudge…I turn around and there’s Donald.”

Natasha Stoyloff (2005), charges “Trump pushed me against a wall and forcing his tongue down my throat” when she was at his home to interview him and his wife.

Jessica Drake (2005) accused Trump of touching and kissing her without her consent, claiming he offered her £8,000 (about $10,000) and the use of his private jet to have sex with him.

Rachel Crooks (2005) claims when she introduced herself and shook hands, he wouldn’t let go and “kissed me directly on the mouth.”

Summer Zervos (2007) charges that Trump “aggressively kissed” her and placed his hand on her breast when she met with him at his hotel to discuss a job after appearing on The Apprentice.

Cassandra Searles (2013) Former Miss Washington was a contestant in Trump’s Miss USA pageant when she claims that he “continually grabbed my ass and invited me to his hotel room.”

For sources for quotes and accounts, see www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/24/documenting-trumps-abuse-of-women; www.thesun.co.uk/news/2059156/donald-trump-sexual-misconduct-allegations/.

2 Voice Male
8 TRANS/GRESSIVE: How Transgender Activists Took on Gay Rights, Feminism, the Media and Congress... and Won!
By Riki Wilchins

14 MIDDLE EAST MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY: Tradition and Modernity at a Crossroads
By Gary Barker and Alexa Hassink

18 MASCULINITY, MACHISMO AND CORRUPTION
By Héctor Portillo and Sebastián Molano

20 WILL MEN EVER DO HALF OF THE WORLD’S CHILDCARE?
By Alexa Hassink and Brian Heilman

22 PATRIARCHY UNMASKED
By Robert Jensen

26 WRESTLING WITH “REQUIRED MASCULINITY”
By Carl Erikson

28 A CALL TO MEN TO EMBRACE GENDER EQUALITY
By Abhijit Das

31 MALE EMPOWERMENT, REALLY?
By Maria Correia

34 WHERE HAVE ALL THE GOOD MEN GONE?
By Emily Cataneo

COLUMNS
2 FROM THE EDITOR
4 LETTERS
5 MEN @ WORK
13 COLOR LINES - THE TRAGEDIES OF BLACK MASCULINITY
By Jonathan P. Higgins
16 FATHERING - DADDY, WHERE ARE YOU?
By Andre Lewaks and David Snetselaar
32 RESOURCES

COVER: PHOTO BY MARIEITE ALLEN
Mail Bonding

Middle East DV Delegates Meet Voice Male

At the International Center of Worcester we work to promote citizen diplomacy by designing and implementing professional and cultural programs for international visitors sponsored by local and foreign governmental and non-governmental agencies, private companies, universities, and individuals. Earlier this year, the State Department identified Voice Male magazine as a great resource to highlight how the publication addresses the role of traditional media publications in gender equality and violence prevention campaigns.

Through the Center’s International Visitor Leadership Program, delegates from Algeria, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia came to the U.S. in March to meet with colleagues around the country—including Voice Male editor Rob Okun—to exchange best practices and grow their U.S. contacts. Examining programs and practices that raise awareness in confronting domestic violence and abuse—and strategies to transform attitudes of those who condone or tolerate abuse—following his presentation, the delegates engaged in a lively Q & A with Rob. We want to thank Voice Male for its work surrounding the social transformation of masculinity, and for helping us with our seven international visitors from the Middle East and North Africa.

Kellee Kosiorek
Program Coordinator
International Center of Worcester

Transforming “Son-in-Law” Day

We live in a society where many men believe they should always be in a higher position than women. “Jamai Sasthi”—Son-in-Law Day—is a festival where husbands receive food and gifts from their mothers-in-law in appreciation for the men’s kindness and good work. Jamai sasthi is a patriarchal concept that feeds a male egocentric characteristic in the society where masculinity is taken as a concept of dominance. Celebrated on May 31 this year, we broke this stereotyping, celebrating instead creating a society without masculine privileges dominating others on the basis of hegemony patriarchal concepts. In place of celebrating sons-in-law, our organization, Kolkata Rista, celebrated the power of gender equality and related ideologies that advance justice for all humanity. On Son-in-Law day we invited the transgender community so we could celebrate the transgender community and the true power of gender equality. It’s time to end patriarchal concepts of masculinity.

Dr. Santosh Kumar Giri
Secretary and Executive Director
Kolkata Rista
West Bengal, India

Editor’s Note: Kolkata Rista provides services and information to gender and sexual minorities, including “transgender/Hijra people and MSM (men having sex with men)” communities. Established a decade and a half ago, Kolkata Rista works to improve health conditions for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. For more, go to: www.kolkatarista.org/

Impact in Nepal

Voice Male is one of the impactful resources for me in my training classes and workshops in transforming masculinity for the journalists and social mobilizers in Nepal. Many thanks for the sharing of the magazine.

Kapil Kafle
Executive Director
Institute of Human Rights Communication, Kathmandu, Nepal

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

The international delegation is working to end violence against women and girls in their home countries.
Men @ Work

Film Depicts “Voiceless” Male Rape Survivors

Film producer and sexual assault survivor Vanessa McNeal’s new documentary film, The Voiceless, focuses on the experience of five male rape victims, a population on the margins of the national conversation about sexual assault.

Much of the media doesn’t often cover survivors of male rape and few studies of rape have focused on men. In fact, the FBI didn’t even start including men in their rape statistics until 2012, and even then, they only included instances of rape involving penetration.

Despite the silence, an estimated one in 33 men has been the victim of rape sometime in their lives, according to statistics compiled by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network). The 2014 National Crime Victimization Survey found that 38 percent of rape incidents occur against men. And, about 46 percent of male rapes have female perpetrators and instances of rape increase for men who are transgender and Native American.

McNeal’s film depicts a range of stories. Not all of the rapes involve penetration; some involve non-consensual sexual contact like kissing and molestation. Rape puts people at higher risk of depression, drug abuse, social anxiety and suicide. Much of the audience for the film has been students on college campuses.

In a promotional trailer for The Voiceless the male interviewees look into the camera and say: “Tell me it’s my fault. Tell me I could have fought harder. Tell me I was asking for it. Ask me what I was

Can “Bromances” Advance Feminism?

Want to smash the patriarchy? Encourage a budding bromance. A new study on men and “bromance” conducted with male university students in the U.K. found such relationships are more emotionally intimate, physically demonstrative, and based upon unrivaled trust and cohesion compared to the men’s other friendships.

“The Bromance: Undergraduate Male Friendships and the Expansion of Contemporary Homosocial Boundaries,” published in May in Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, measured the university men’s comfort levels with close male friendship (it’s higher than previous generations), put their relative openness in a historical context—and explained why bromance is good for men’s mental health.

While acknowledging they cannot say for certain that men are inherently predisposed to be less emotive and expressive than women, the researchers observed that 20th-century culture predisposed men’s emotional boundaries to be more rigid and distant.

The study provides a detailed history of the development of societal attitudes toward close male friendships, from the pre-Victorian normalcy of male intimacy—presidents Abraham Lincoln and George Washington both had close relationships with other men—to the homophobic Victorian era and Freud’s belief that an overbearing mother and passive father could turn a male child gay. Researchers cited a 1978 study’s conclusions that “self-disclosure, a vital component of emotional intimacy, was largely lacking between men in their friendships. Instead, young men knew that they had a friendship with another man when they engaged in activities together, like playing sports, drinking, fixing things, or gambling.”

Think James Bond, or any other “cool guy” whose whole persona was centered around always presenting a tough guise. It was only in the 1990s, researchers say, that men began to share more of their emotions with other men. The “sensitive guy” as love interest or icon is a new phenomenon. It’s easy to imagine Matt Damon and Ben Affleck calling each other during a hard time.

Societal pressure on men to keep all of their emotions inside and not show vulnerability makes them unhappy and unstable. Citing a 2008 study, the researchers reported that “cultural restrictions on male emotionality have drastically affected men’s ability to emote and confide, significantly reducing their coping strategies to deal with internal conflicts such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.” Such pressure leads to violence (because this limited, one-dimensional view of manhood views violence as power, and also because repressing emotions for a lifetime is likely to cause men to lash out in unpredictable ways), including mass shootings which have long plagued the U.S.

Some observers who have read the research speculate the world would be a different place if many straight men didn’t feel the need to prove they’re heterosexual, to constantly assert their masculinity by dominating conversations, shutting down discussions of emotion, mansplaining—not to mention committing acts of domestic and sexual violence.

Most discussions of feminism focus on the ways that women are oppressed, but the truth is that the goals of feminism—parity of the sexes and less rigid boundaries of what is acceptable behavior based on sex—would benefit men just as much as women.

We can’t have gender equality by only expanding the boundaries of what’s socially acceptable for women; we need a new expression of manhood for men. Women need to be able to pursue careers, be strong, independent, and ambitious, and men need to be able to be sensitive, gentle, caregiving, and celebrated for their roles in home and family.

(A longer version of this story by Lilly Dancyger, appeared in Glamour.)
wearing. Tell me I shouldn’t have been there. Ask me how come I let it happen to me. Ask me if I was really raped. Tell me I could have stopped it.”

McNeal hopes that the film will encourage more people to discuss a too long taboo subject.

“Masculinity Nostalgia” Amid War and Occupation

War and occupation not only disrupt gender norms, they also jump-start new gender norms, say a pair of researchers from Australia and New Zealand who studied men in the West Bank of Israel and Palestine.

Written by Megan MacKenzie of the University of Sydney and Alana Foster of New Zealand’s Department of Corrections, “Masculinity Nostalgia: How War and Occupation Inspire a Yearning for Gender Order,” explores civilian masculinities and the ways in which masculinities are impacted by conflict and insecurity. Focusing on the West Bank, they argue that insecurity and occupation create conditions for “masculinity nostalgia,” or a yearning for a set of gender norms and relations linked to fantasies of a secure, “traditional” and ordered past. Masculinity nostalgia builds on conceptions of thwarted masculinity and the ways in which individuals are held accountable to gender norms. The article draws on interviews with Palestinians to highlight how masculinity nostalgia is associated with three particular identities: father, breadwinner and landowner. MacKenzie and Foster demonstrate that Palestinian civilians lament the ways in which the occupation has impacted men’s ability to fulfill such archetypal identities, at the same time as they reaffirm the value and legitimacy of these identities. Peace and security are often assumed to be dependent upon men returning to their presumed rightful places at the head of households and as economic providers. In turn, masculinity nostalgia emphasizes the ways in which yearnings for peace and security can be interwoven with yearnings for patriarchal gendered orders.

More information can be found at Sage Publications’ website, journals.sage.com.

Outlawing “Stealthing”

A Wisconsin state lawmaker has proposed legislation that would make “stealthing”—removing a condom during sexual intercourse without permission—an act equivalent to sexual assault. If passed, the bill introduced by Democratic Rep. Melissa Sargent would change the definition of consent under Wisconsin law.

Sex cannot be categorized as consensual, according to the bill, if during intercourse one partner removes a “sexually protective device” without notifying the other partner. And if the intercourse is nonconsensual, then it would by law be sexual assault. “This is clearly a sexual crime,” Sargent said.

Secretly removing a condom during sex isn’t new. But it gained increased attention in April when Yale Law School graduate Alexandra Brodsky published an article on stealthing in the Columbia Journal of Gender and Law. Brodsky didn’t coin the word—men who promote the act apparently did, according to a website...
Feminism 1, Fox News 0

“Feminists are winning—slowly, painfully and with lots of setbacks, yet feminists are winning. Getting Fox News to admit that sexual harassment is wrong was a small step, but a pretty big symbolic victory. With enough of those victories, one day—far from now, but one day—the misogyny that [Roger] Ailes spent his life championing will be defeated.”

That was the conclusion Salon columnist Amanda Marcotte drew at the end of her column commenting following news in May that Fox News CEO Roger Ailes had died.

Ousted from Fox in July 2016 following a wave of accusations of sexual harassment by more than 20 women, Marcotte charged, “Ailes will be remembered primarily as an alleged sexual predator...” Fox News “reports” regularly castigated women who simply believed they are deserving of equality. The network attacked contraception, seemed to celebrate street harassment, and suggested that closing the gender pay gap would “lead to the destruction of society,” Marcotte wrote.

In the end, the management at Fox News and its parent corporation had had enough. Even as sexual harassment was praised behind the scenes as an important freedom “letting men be men,” Fox News’ owners recognized that Ailes’ behavior toward women was not acceptable and he had to go.

Men Can Help Close the Gender Wage Gap

Generations of baby boomer fathers wanted to raise strong daughters, support their interest in sports, arts and academics, and help them seek meaningful careers. But when they graduated and were offered only 79 cents for every dollar earned for the same job by our sons, most dads did nothing.

So says corporate gender strategist Jeffery Tobias Halter, a proponent of engaging men to advance women. Halter says men need to advocate for their daughters and their working female spouses. In an article he wrote for Women’s eNews, Halter cited a study by the National Women’s Law Center that reported: “Based on today’s wage gap, a white woman starting her career now will lose $430,480 over 40 years. For Latinas, this lifetime wage gap would total $1,007,080; for African American women the losses are $877,480.”

Halter, president of YWomen, a strategic consulting company (www.ywomen.biz), said, “If we are going to support our daughters we need to choose to become advocates for women. Men need to advocate for changes to corporate culture and policies.”

Based on the current rate of change, women will not reach pay equity until 2059. The same is true for advancing women into leadership roles. This information alone should compel more men to ask how they can help bring about pay equity.

Since up to 30 percent of men in the workplace do want to help but don’t know what to do, Halter launched the “Father of a Daughter” initiative. “It’s a simple opt-in program,” Halter said. “Men commit to doing a minimum of one thing (hopefully more) to advance women in the workplace.”

The initiative, embraced by a number of Fortune 500 companies, encourages qualified women to apply for positions when they become available, mentors or sponsors a female colleague, advocates having a candid conversation with a female colleague about her experiences working in that company and becoming aware of and correcting micro-bias in the workplace. To learn more, go to: ywomen.biz/father-of-daughter-initiative/.

Shark Attacks and Menstruating Women

One of the world’s greatest surfers says menstruating women are most likely to be attacked by a shark. “Obviously, if a woman has her period, then there’s a certain amount of blood in the water,” Laird Hamilton said in an interview reported on in Huffington Post. Hamilton may be one of the most experienced athletes in the world, but when it comes to information on women’s menstrual cycles, he’s all wet.

Women lose on average 35 to 50 milliliters (about 1.2 to 1.7 fluid ounces) of blood during the menstruation cycle, research shows. That’s not enough to attract sharks, says Chris Lowe, a shark researcher at California State University, Long Beach. “[T]he amount of blood loss during menstruation is probably less than the average scrape or cut that a kid or surfer may get while playing in the water.”

The researcher added that since children with minor injuries aren’t commonly attacked by sharks, it’s unlikely that sharks would bite menstruating women bleeding more than two fluid ounces during the span of a week.

“It takes a lot more than just a little blood to get a shark’s attention,” Lowe said.
Before Caitlyn Jenner became America’s most famous transgender personality, Riki Wilchins was leading the fight for transgender rights. In the new first-person history-memoir TRANSgressive: How Transgender Activists Took on Gay Rights, Feminism, the Media & Congress... and Won!, Wilchins recounts the long and winding road of trans rights from the early days of anti-trans rights in segments of the feminist movement, to the murder of transwomen such as Brandon Teena, through the fight to include trans rights in the “Gay and Lesbian” community. “This was a story that I thought might get lost forever,” Wilchins remembers. “When we did the things in this book—protesting, forming groups, demonstrating—they were obscure current events; even the gay press ignored us. Two decades later they’ve become history, but one in danger of being lost for good. Folks today see Caitlyn and Janet [Mock] and Laverne [Cox] and they think it’s always been this way. It hasn’t. There’s a backstory to all of that. There’s a place it all started. This book is that story. This is how a handful of genderqueers started a gender revolution.” What follows is an excerpt from the book, published in June by Riverdale Avenue Books, a leading LGBT publisher (www.riverdalebooks.com).

In the early 1990s, no one talked about transgender people because nobody knew one. We were invisible; we did not appear on TV shows or in movies (except as deranged killers). Police harassed, arrested, and assaulted us. Courts and legislatures found new ways to strip away our rights. Feminist theorists, psychiatrists, and right-wing bigots regularly prodded, dissected, and publicly denounced our bodies and identities: we were mentally unbalanced, “invading women’s spaces,” or “stealing women’s body parts.” Transmen were mostly ignored; transwomen of color especially suffered epidemic waves of violence that continue today.

There was no Gender Outlaw yet or Stone Butch Blues. There was no Internet or email. There was no LGBT movement, because Gay and Lesbian organizations still openly excluded transgender.

We were freaks. We were gendertrash. We were decidedly nonpolitical, waging our isolated struggles for survival alone. What little community we had emerged one weekend at a time at conferences held in lonely hotels out on the interstate. But all that was about to change, because bringing a despised and marginalized people together is in itself a political act. We didn’t know it yet, but we were about to reach critical mass.

When people start realizing that humiliation and degradation are not the result of personal failings, but of systemic oppressions, they stop begging for some social acceptance, and they start demanding their damn civil rights.

This is the inside story of how a handful of activists from an obscure community at the very margins of society launched a revolution that would challenge our most fundamental conception of bodies, gender, and sex—a revolution whose ideas would one day circle the globe.

This is the story of the birth of the modern movement for gender rights.

Gender fluidity, transgender, genderqueerness—all of this in the age of “I Am Cait”—seems to have found wings. Former President Obama mentioned transgender people. The military is finally allowing us to serve openly. We’ve made the cover of Time magazine and the front page of the New York Times. Even straight kids think being flexible about gender is cool.

I was recently interviewing a middle-aged mother in Chicago. Out of nowhere, she just mentioned offhand how her son told her he prefers to identify as “genderqueer” rather than male, because binary genders are soooo 20th century. He is 19, cisgender (someone whose gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth), and totally straight.

It wasn’t always so.

Less than 20 years ago, I hadn’t yet coined the term “genderqueer,” and even after doing so, practically no one else used it. Transgender activists were busy fighting for air, for any kind of awareness or recognition from mainstream cisgender society—straight and gay.
We had been slowly pushed to the margins of every community. Mainstream feminists wanted nothing to do with crossdressers or transsexuals. Lesbians were uncomfortable with us. And many “radical lesbians” were implacably opposed to our very existence (still are—why does “radical” so often translate to kicking the crap out of some other minority even more dispossessed than you are?).

Lesbian and gay organizations saw no reason to embrace these weird transgender people who lurked in the same gay bars and attended the same Pride parades, but seemed to have totally separate issues and, even worse, made straight people (and many gays) extremely uncomfortable.

Gay men weren’t effeminate; they didn’t run around in pastels and dresses. Lesbians weren’t butch and didn’t want to wear men’s clothes or ride motorcycles. Those were mainstream stereotypes that a newly emergent gay rights movement was eager to put behind it. Gay people were gender normative—just like straight people. Just like you and me—well, you, anyway.

But transpeople resurrected all these gender issues and put them front and center, and who needed that headache?

The Queerer Queers

As gay rights increasingly played to Main Street, trannies looked like a huge public relations nightmare—and a very avoidable one. I use the word “trannie” deliberately. It was what we called ourselves then—many of us at least, and some still do. It may have fallen into politically correct disfavor (certainly when cisgenders use it). But I’ve never considered it pejorative; rather it’s an affectionate shorthand.

All this rejection of trans was a bit weird in a gay community in which drag queens were still celebrated (on the down-low of course), gay men still teased other men with gender put-downs (“Get you, Mary!”), and “Dykes on Bikes” led gay pride parades.

But we were the queerest of the queer—too out to be in. Even among ourselves, there was self-consciousness, shame and the desire to pass as cisgender. We were mostly isolated. There was no email, no Internet to connect us. You found people by word of mouth or (more rarely) at the bars.

When I began transitioning in 1978, there were two other transwomen in Cleveland that anyone knew of—Joanne and Carmen.

They were my whole support system and basically kept me alive through the whole awful affair. I assiduously tried to fit in and pass as cisgender for 15 years. Needless to say, with my frame, voice, and height, it worked a lot better in my mind than it ever did on the street.

Even when it did work, at a certain point, trying to fill all the cisgender standards for true femininity got really old, and really tiring. It’s a good recipe for losing the last shreds of your self-respect, and losing any sense of self-worth independent of what others think. I told myself over and over that I didn’t really want to be active politically, but the truth was that I was afraid I’d beouted or evicted or both. Constantly being afraid of what the cis-sies will do to you feels awful, but that’s the world they created for us.

After trying for years to look traditionally feminine—long hair, lipstick, high heels, etc.—I simply got tired of it. A cis woman doesn’t have to do anything special and still looks like a cis woman. But without all the war paint and femmy clothes, I looked like a man with breasts. It’s exhausting having to do all that prep just to walk out the door, get the right pronoun and not get all the stares.

At a certain point you just say, “fuck it” and decide to be you, whatever that is. So I developed this butch-y look with short hair, jeans and no makeup.

Interestingly enough, this tall butch dyke look had its advantages. Other transpeople gave me major points for being so “radical” and turning my back on cisgender femininity. Actually, I would have loved to have been more femme, but I just never thought it looked good on me. And anyway, for me, most of being femme is an “inside job,” not about what other people think or how they perceive me.

So I became a visible part of the social fringe—a transsexual—a creature that many people had not even heard of, and few knew who or what we were. Even we were not sure what to call ourselves. The word “transgender” had barely been coined.

In fact “transgender” was introduced to refer to the excluded middle ground between transsexuals and crossdressers (and drag queens—there were no drag kings yet). Genderqueer and
genderfuck were not really on the horizon. We were still mostly into very binary ideas of male/female gender.

But, over time, transgender would morph into this grab bag term that included all of this, and all of us. And then, imperceptibly, inevitably, it would harden into another new identity—one with its own hierarchies and boundary issues, until one day it would become important to exclude people who weren’t “really transgender.”

It was a time when even our doctors encouraged and expected us to pass as cisgender. That was a large part of the “Real Life Test” or RLT: forcing us to live in the correct gender a year before being granted surgery. It wasn’t just to make sure we really wanted it, but to make sure we could survive in the world as cisgender-ish persons.

My doctor even announced point blank that I was a “successful” transsexual woman to the degree to which no one could tell that I was transsexual, that I could “pass”: blend in and live life as a “normal woman.” And I tried. I’d always wished I could pass, and was silently envious of those transwomen who could.

Partly as a result, there was little political activism. We didn’t think of our troubles as a group struggle, or even as political. I often thought of my own poor genderqueer body as the reason and locus for my troubles, just as much as the intolerance of cisgender people. As a result, I wasted a lot of years hating it, and myself. And self-blame—blended liberally with shame—is an effective antidote for political awareness.

That doesn’t mean, however, that there weren’t some amazing and important early efforts. In 1970 STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) was formed by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson in New York City in the wake of the Stonewall Riots and powered largely by drag queens of color.

In 1992 Texas attorney (now judge) Phyllis Frye organized the first conference on transgender law: the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy. In 1994, she and activist Karen Kerin would found It’s Time America, an early lobbying group that sprouted chapters in several states.

Software developer Anne Ogborn in San Francisco would launch Transgender Nation, modeled on the street action group Queer Nation, which became an offshoot of that group. (Anne was a true original and a visionary. She left a profitable software job to go live with the Hijra—the sacred outcast transpeople of India—and in the process almost dying from dysentery. Anne could be really mind-blowing: when I first met her she was wearing a T-shirt that read, “Sex Change—Ask Me How.”)

But, for the most part, these courageous first efforts failed to scale up and catch on with the larger community. The rhythms and energy of the lives of most visible trans people were dominated by the need to find one another and connect, to share information.

### Challenging Heteronormativity Down to Its Roots

*TRANS/gressive* is about what happened when [the affiliative phase] ended, and [it’s about] the transition from a collection of individuals focused on affiliation and self-education, trying to feel better about ourselves and gaining cisgender acceptance to an upstart political movement bent on changing the world.

My intent is not to diminish the timeless contributions of people: Virginia Prince who started the first crossdressing publication and organizations; Lou Sullivan who started the first Transmen’s support group in San Francisco; Ari Kane who launched one of the first transgender conferences; or people of color like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who stormed the Gay Liberation barricades and went on to found STAR.

These are leaders whose actions—often brave and alone—paved the way for all that was to come. They helped open our eyes to what we could be and do. Anything we accomplished was only possible because we were standing on the shoulders of giants. All of them and more are covered in Susan Stryker’s authoritative chronicle of transgender in the U.S., *Transgender History*, and in Patrick Califia’s in-depth documentation of the politics of transsexuality in *Sex Changes*.

Rather, my intent is to share the story of my own experience at the birth of what has grown into modern transgender political activism. At the time, it seemed like we were making no progress whatsoever. Looking back with 20 years of hindsight, it all now seems to have happened very quickly.

But it didn’t. Really, back then, no one would listen to us, and no one paid attention to us. We were shock value, or comic relief, freaks on the *Jerry Springer Show*, and not much more.

In fact, it was not until our first Lobby Day on Capitol Hill that any major city newspaper carried a “hard news” story about transgender. That was what we had to fight.

In fact, what made this movement unique was that we had to fight not only average Americans—who might deride or even despise us—but the progressive left which misunderstood us and wanted nothing to do with us, including feminist organizations, progressive groups and gay rights organizations.

It was a time when, just trying to buy food at the local grocery store, I would be openly mocked or laughed at. I’d go to my local gay community center, but they had nothing for transpeople. So that evening I would join a lesbian support group seeking help and a kind ear, and instead I’d get voted on and asked to leave. It was an interesting and lonely time.

It was also the time when a very small group of people was able to begin pushing very radical notions of gender nonconformity and fluidity—one in the most direct possible conflict with deeply entrenched heterosexual ideals—and eventually move them right into mainstream culture.

In many ways, the emergence of transgender challenged mainstream ideals of boy/girl, masculine/feminine, and the Ozzie & Harriet nuclear family in more radical ways than homosexuality ever could and ever will.

We challenged heteronormativity right down to its roots. We couldn’t say it was just about who we loved. This was about nearly everything important about bodies: how we looked, how we could desire, what genders we could inhabit, even how we could change embodiment itself.

—Riki Wilchins
was an act of unbelievable bravery. It was also a deeply abhor
them on simultaneously, outing themselves to one another. It
and heels and feminine attire to a hotel room, where they all put
vidual cross-dressers to bring brown paper bags with their hose
charges for corresponding about dressing-up fantasies with
in 1961 federal agents were prosecuting Virginia on “obscenity"
shows. It was a historical moment so hostile to trans issues that
feminine attire.

Both were mostly focused on and for crossdressers, although
the transsexual influence would grow. Tapestry had a robust
personal ads section—the magazine reportedly had a huge “trans-
fan” base of men attracted to crossdressers (one reason most early
covers featured conventionally feminine cross-dressers).

As Susan Stryker put it, describing Transvestia, the first trans
publication, our magazines tended to focus on “social commen-
tary, educational outreach, self-help advice, and autobiographical
vignettes.” Common topics for articles included how to find a
supportive wife (or deal with an unsupportive one), interviews,
transgender history, dealing with prejudice and accepting your
transgender self.

These get-togethers proved so popular that new ones kept
popping up. By the 1990s there was another medium or big
regional conference almost every month, year-round, each with
its own distinct regional flavor. Many of us flocked to these, if
we could afford the travel, hotel, and admission costs. Inspired
by the pioneering work of Tri-Ess and a support group founded
by Virginia Prince to provide support to crossdressers, they were
very oriented towards mostly straight, white, middle-aged men
who needed a safe space to dress up and express themselves in
feminine attire.

In fact, it all started with crossdressers—who, I might add,
still do not get on the cover of Time or land their own reality TV
shows. It was a historical moment so hostile to trans issues that
in 1961 federal agents were prosecuting Virginia on “obscenity"
charges for corresponding about dressing-up fantasies with
another crossdresser.

Virginia did not lack for courage. She invited a group of indi-
vidual cross-dressers to bring brown paper bags with their hose
and heels and feminine attire to a hotel room, where they all put
them on simultaneously, outing themselves to one another. It
was an act of unbelievable bravery. It was also a deeply abhor-
rent activity—considered shameful and abnormal— which they
knew was only barely legal and could easily get them all arrested,
which would ruin both their families and careers forever.

Yet this small first gathering of transgender people—
eventually named the “Hose & Heels” club—
just three decades later
would morph into the modern transgender
rights movement. And it was all started
by straight male cross-
dressers.

But, in the ’70s’
and ’80s, the move-
ment of sex reassign-
ment surgery (SRS)
into the hospitals
(it would eventually
move back out again)
was quietly creating
a large, hidden wave
of post—Christine
Jorgenson trans-
sexuals. By the 1990s that wave began to break, with more and
more of us showing up at crossdressing conferences, looking for
comfort and looking to find people like ourselves.

At first, almost all of us were transwomen, so we fit right in
with all the male crossdressers. But eventually transmen showed
up as well, first only a couple, but then in numbers. More and
more workshops addressed mostly transsexual topics like how
to get “top surgery,” finding a sympathetic surgeon, and going on
estrogen and testosterone.

Lesbian and gay organizations saw no reason to
embrace these weird transgender people who
lurked in the same gay bars and attended the
same Pride parades.

Politics by Any Other Name Would
Still Smell as Sweet

These conferences were affiliative in nature, dedicated to the
social side of being transgender: sharing information, support,
and advice. They were determinedly nonsexual and avowedly
nonpolitical, and they were meant to be. But when you’re dealing
with despised identities that are isolated and hidden, organizing
them in large groups for whatever reason is highly political.

Part of this has to do with the politics of gender and lifestyle.
For many crossdressers it was sufficient to be able to dress up,
and then go back home. But for the transsexuals, being a gender outlaw
was a full-time gig: there was no “home” to go back to. Anywhere
we went we were still outcasts and transgenders, and on enemy turf.
That made many of us angry and desperate—emotions that were
new to these gatherings.

Second, it’s much harder to keep feeling shame and self-hatred
when you’re no longer the only one in the room, when you start
regularly seeing hundreds and hundreds of people who are just
like you. Being you starts to seem more, well… normal.

Finally, you start slowly realizing that the oppression and
humiliation you’re dealing with every day isn’t personal, it’s
political. Everyone is going through it. It’s not about you or your
body, but about a system of cisgender intolerance and hatred for
your entire group. Your group. The conferences were the first
time in my life I felt part of any group. Or had any group to feel a part of.

The first time I walked into a gay bar was the first time in my young life that I didn’t feel like an outcast. But it took me 20 minutes, sitting outside in my car, to muster the nerve. The bar was off the downtown Cleveland manufacturing area simply called The Flats and it was all straight out of 1950s film noir: cobblestones shimmering wetly in the fitful street lamps, broken bottles in filthy gutters, the odd newspaper blowing down the street, with the constant sound of elevated traffic in the distance. If you put it in a movie today it would seem like a cliché.

The bar had no sign, just a plain, plank wooden door with number on it, illuminated by a single light. Small groups of men and women would go in, and I would watch them, thinking to myself, “THOSE are HOMOSEXUALS.” I had never seen one before. Neither had anyone I knew. In 1968 they might as well have been unicorns—you could read about them, but these were never ever seen in the wild. But the moment I walked in—I don’t know what it was—but I knew I belonged, and for once no one would ever tell me I shouldn’t be there. But they weren’t me. It was almost all gay men, a few lesbians huddled in a corner, and the odd drag queen.

I didn’t look like any of them. And they didn’t really accept me either. But I’d been a queer for a long time without knowing it, and I was finally among other queers. I was home, baby, and it was powerful.

I suspect the conferences were like that for many people. Other than all the crossdressers going out at night in groups, dressed outrageously and clearly having the time of their lives (“Why do crossdressers wear three-inch heels? Because they can’t find five-inch heels.”), the conferences were actually pretty tame: group breakfasts, lunches, and dinners at circular tables in giant ballrooms, speakers at a podium, and terminated by us streaming out to workshops and panel presentations in small, over-air-conditioned conference rooms. We might have been the American Bankers Convention.

But, unlike the bars, at the conferences I found lots of people like me. It was radical feeling normal and accepted, if only for a brief, three-day weekend.

**Hotels on the Beltway**

Feeling normal, accepted, and un-hated are powerful experiences. Moreover, they are political experiences. And I wasn’t alone in having them. As Tony Barreto-Neto, who would become pivotal in many of the actions that followed, recalled: “It was like finding a family and like-minded people who were, if not doing, at least thinking about doing something. It was affirming, it was frightening, it was exhilarating, it was liberating.”

There was a sense of suppressed potential at those early 1990s conferences. All those people, all that compressed energy, yet no real discussion of why we needed to keep gathering in these three-star hotels out on the beltway (never in city centers), served by smiling and conspicuously tolerant staff who’d been carefully briefed on our event, running into straightlaced and befuddled hotel guests in elevators and hallways (and women’s rooms!) who probably made us the highlight of their trip stories when they got home to Topeka.

I recall one occasion when the hotel failed to tell us we had been booked at the same time as a nationwide evangelical Christian gathering. The “Finding Jesus” workshops ran in breakout rooms right next to the “Finding SRS Surgeons.” It made for some unique and animated conversations between the two groups as we rode the elevators together.

We were there, in short, because we were isolated and despised and it wasn’t safe to be us and be out—particularly the crossdressers—anyplace else.

The conference was an island of safety, of gender sanity; but, like Brigadoon, it was a temporary sanctuary, an idyllic haven that quickly vanished again almost as soon as it appeared, leaving us once again stranded in our normal, everyday, transphobic lives. While we might be safe in groups of several hundred, especially at hotels where we were paying big bills, we weren’t safe alone—or anywhere else.

Even the grown, male crossdressers who would hit the local bars at night (many of whom could only dress up the rest of the year in the privacy of their own bedrooms) made sure to go out and come back in large groups and only to visit hotspots that had been carefully screened in advance to make sure they’d be welcome. And even they went out only at night.

But we didn’t talk about that much—and we certainly didn’t hold workshops and plenaries to organize politically to change it. In the politics of the moment, simply being positive about being transgender was a major step forward, which is another way of saying we were not only mocked and loathed, but too many of us had internalized that and scorned and loathed ourselves. But this affiliative phase couldn’t last for long. And it didn’t.

A leading advocate for gender rights and gender justice for more than 20 years, **Riki Wilchins** is one of the founders of modern transgender political activism, as well as one of its first theorists and chroniclers. In 1995 Riki launched Trans-Menace, the first national transgender street action group, which spread to 41 cities. The following year they launched GenderPAC, the first national political advocacy group devoted to gender identity rights. Riki was an early supporter in the launch of the intersex rights movement as well as the movement for alternative sexualities. They are the author of four books on gender theory and politics: Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion & the End of Gender; Queer Theory/Gender Theory; An Instant Primer; and Voice from Beyond the Sexual Binary. Riki has conducted trainings on gender norms and nonconformity at the White House, Centers for Disease Control, and Office on Women’s Health. Profiled by the New York Times 2001 and in Time Magazine, Riki was selected as one of “100 Civic Innovators for the 21st Century.” Excerpted from TRANS/gressive: How Transgender Activists Took on Gay Rights, Feminism, the Media & Congress... and Won! by Riki Wilchins © 2017 with permission from Riverdale Avenue Books (www.RiverdaleAveBooks.com).
remember the feeling I had when I saw the text come in from a friend back home. The text read, “Y’all hear about North Park Elementary?” All I could do was think about the feeling I had in the pit of my stomach when I got the same text about the terrorist attack that took place in my hometown of San Bernardino, Calif., back in 2015.

My friend followed up the first text with more information about how gunman Cedric Anderson went into his estranged wife’s elementary school classroom and took not only her life but also those of others in the crossfire and, later, his own. Almost one week later to the day, Steve Stephens from Cleveland was on the run after taking the life of Robert Godwin Sr. Stephens had gone live on Facebook and expressed that he was upset with his ex-girlfriend Joy Lane, his life, and the frustrations that came with being a black man in America.

Many reports about what transpired leading up to both incidents pointed to issues that the men had with their significant others, and also illuminated larger issues regarding black men, as well as masculinity and the way that black men are taught to handle and process emotions.

While both incidents highlight a much-needed conversation on intimate-partner violence in the black community, the common thread between these stories is how fragile and dangerous masculinity is. In both cases we see the issue of sexism and entitlement among black men, along with the use of fear and control, rear its ugly head. It makes a larger statement about how, even at a time when black men are being killed by the same forces (power, fear and control), male privilege will keep—as it always has kept—black men in an emotional prison.

I have spent several years working to undo all of the emotional damage done to me by both society and family. I know that it is important to examine how and where the cycle begins.

In my youth, I was often teased for being “too soft.” My uncles would comment that I was overly emotional for a young man and that I needed to do things that would heighten my masculinity. One of my uncles even went so far as to force me to play tackle football one summer because he believed that it was the one thing I needed to do to “toughen me up.” When I would cry or make comments about how I did not want to play football, because I did not understand how pain would make me more manly, his response was that I needed to “man up” because men, specifically black men, must be strong.

Considering the amount of emotional distress that both Anderson and Stephens seemed to be under before they took their respective courses of action, I would posit that subscribing to the ideals of masculinity has left many black men mentally and emotionally weak.

So what do the actions of Anderson and Stephens tell us about what it means to be a black man in America? In the film The Mask You Live In, director Jennifer Siebel Newsom examines both the psychological and sociological effects produced by expectations placed on males performing masculinity. In the documentary, the concept of the “mask” that men wear is connected to both the emotional and mental angst that men carry. The film also examines why men are more likely to carry out actions like the ones that Anderson and Stephens committed, with greater social commentary on ways that masculinity rejects anything and everything deemed feminine.

An example is how young boys can express their emotions by using terms like “love” and “caring” throughout adolescence, but by the time they are adult men, they shift away from being able to maintain high levels of intimacy. Doing so often makes it difficult for them to show love to the people who need it most: family, friends and, most of all, their partners.

Both tragic incidents in San Bernadino and Cleveland earlier this year put the focus on how men, specifically black men, need to be taught how to love better, not just the people who love them, but for themselves. We must teach them that love is not a right but, rather, a gift.

As a community, we have to begin teaching black men at a young age that being in touch with their emotions will only make them better people overall. We must do a better job of encouraging black men to seek out healthy and fundamental ways of getting the help they need in order to navigate the struggles they face both inside their home and out in the world.

Let’s encourage our black men to better understand their feelings instead of forcing them to live in them.

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When it comes to gender equality, where do young men in the Middle East and North Africa stand? Although traditional attitudes about gender equality still dominate, at least a quarter of men hold more open and equitable views, supporting various aspects of women's economic, social, and political equality in the Middle East and North Africa. That was a key finding of a new survey that directed a wide-angle, comparative lens on the lives of men—as sons and husbands and fathers, at home and at work, in public and private life. The study of nearly 10,000 individuals discovered manhood in the region is at a crossroads. Will more men move toward gender equality or adhere to the more patriarchal views of their fathers? The survey participants were from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and the Palestine Territories.

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), created by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), is one of the most comprehensive studies ever on men's practices and attitudes as they relate to gender norms, attitudes toward gender equality policies, household dynamics including caregiving and men's involvement as fathers, intimate partner violence, health, and economic stress. To date, it has been implemented in or is in progress in more than 30 countries, and is part of a multiyear, multicountry effort to build the evidence base on gender equality; raise awareness among policymakers and program planners of the need to involve men in health, development, and gender equality issues; and integrate gender equality within public institutions and policies.

To read the full report go to imagesmena.org/en/. For more on IMAGES go to promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/.
driving young men to revert to or uphold traditional views about men and women.

But not all men feel that way. “I was raised in a traditional rural household with a strict gendered division of labor. Gender equality was not part of my upbringing,” said a 30-year-old male schoolteacher in Ramallah. “Yet this has...changed in my current family, as myself and my wife have agreed from the beginning to form a more just and equitable family.” Another man, who is Syrian and living in Jounieh, Lebanon, said, “From when I was young, I was taught that a man is the one who is able to preserve his home, his wife, his children. This was his priority, and nothing else mattered.”

The research also confirms notable pathways to equality can be found around involved fatherhood: In all four countries, men whose fathers had participated in traditionally feminine household work and caregiving, as well as men who were taught to do this work as children, were far more likely to report contributing in this way within their own marriages. Fathers who encouraged daughters to take on nontraditional professions or to work outside the home, or who allowed daughters to choose their husbands, seemed to contribute to the emergence of more empowered women.

Women’s work outside the home is another factor associated with men’s more equitable behaviors. In two of the countries, men whose wives worked outside the home were more likely to do more of the unpaid care work. In a region where only about a quarter of women work outside the home, this points to the potential dual impact of policies to increase women’s paid work.

In addition to the support the research provides for the intergenerational cycle of care, it also reinforces international findings of the intergenerational cycle of violence: experiences of violence in childhood are associated with men’s use of violence in adult life. Men who witnessed their fathers using violence against their mothers, and men who experienced some form of violence at home as children, were significantly more likely to report perpetrating intimate partner violence in their adult relationships.

The research also reveals tremendous stress in men’s lives, namely the challenge of finding paid work and fulfilling the traditional masculine role of a provider in times of economic uncertainty, particularly in those countries affected by conflict.

The effects of conflict and unemployment were frequently cited as reasons for, or aggravating factors in, men’s depressive symptoms. One-third to one-half of men in the four countries reported being ashamed to face their families because of lack of work or income.

As seen in this study and many others, men frequently dominate or control household decision-making, political and leadership spaces, and the daily lives of women and girls, while men themselves are also facing tremendous pressure to be providers in times of economic uncertainty, migration, fundamentalism, and conflict. The research affirms that some men are coping, and some men are buying into gender equality, but many are not. The region’s young women seem, understandably, frustrated at the slow progress toward equality.

“We are in a crisis when it comes to social change in Morocco,” a 20-something women’s rights activist from Rabat said. “We’re no longer anchored in tradition, but not in modernity either. [...] We have not yet fully grasped that if we believe ourselves to be the same, equal, in everything, that this means a redistribution of [gender] roles.”

Despite the prevalence of traditional attitudes, the sizable minority of men in the region who support women’s economic, social, and political equality are a presence. Gender-equitable men in the Middle East or North Africa need not be imagined or wished for. They exist. It is a matter of encouraging others to join them, and to speak up and take action on behalf of gender equality.

One-third to one-half of men in the four countries reported being ashamed to face their families because of lack of work or income.

Gary Barker, a frequent contributor to Voice Male, is president and CEO of Promundo. Co-founder of both MenCare, a global campaign to promote men’s involvement as equitable, nonviolent caregivers and MenEngage, a global alliance of nearly 700 NGOs and UN agencies working toward gender equality, he co-created the International Men and Gender Equality Survey.

Alexa Hassink is senior communications and advocacy officer at Promundo. She leads the organization’s communications efforts, amplifying research and programming on masculinities and gender justice to inspire action and drive impact in personal opinion, community norms, and public policy.
Daddy, Where Are You?
By Andre Lewaks and David Snetselaar

In 2013, Belgian hip-hop artist Stromae released the single “Papaoutai.” In the song, he expresses frustration with his absent father, continually asking in the chorus: “Où t’es, papa, où t’es?” (“Daddy, where are you?”). In the accompanying music video, a young boy tries to reach his unresponsive father. The boy claims that though everyone knows how to make babies, nobody appears to know how to “make fathers.” Tragically, the boy is unable to connect with his father, and in the end we see him becoming like his father: absent, uninvolved, and unresponsive. The video not only alludes to the long-lasting effects of absent fathers worldwide, but also gives insight into the perspective of a child.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of father absence in the world. Results from a 2016 National Household Survey indicate that about 64 percent of children in South Africa do not have fathers regularly present in their lives. Positive involved fatherhood remains a huge challenge in South Africa as it does in many parts of the world. Men often struggle with cultural norms, balancing work and family, and often not knowing how to be a good father since they had no example in their own lives.

Initiatives such as the MenCare campaign (men-care.org), however, are making a difference in South Africa and around the world not only by educating men on how they can be better fathers but also by changing community norms. A number of studies have confirmed the efficacy of these programs, and many participants have said the training they have received helped them become better fathers.

What do children think? Do they see changes in their fathers’ attitudes and behaviors after their fathers participate in MenCare? In her research on the effectiveness of the MenCare program in and around Cape Town, Sjanna Westerhof focused on the children of fathers and caregivers who participated in MenCare positive parenting groups, run by Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa.

One daughter said: “I think MenCare convinces our fathers to do good things.”

In many cases these “good things” include spending more time with their children, helping with caregiving tasks, using nonviolent discipline, and providing their children with a sense of safety and security. Another daughter commented that her father “used to come home too late, but since he participated in MenCare, he has changed. He realized that he has to be home more often.” Another of the girls interviewed also indicated that her father stopped using corporal punishment as a means to discipline her. She said: “He used to hit me; since he went to the fatherhood program it changed.”
Results from the study reflected general improvement in father-child relationships, demonstrating that the intervention contributed to fathers becoming more positive role models for their children. Most of the children, for example, described an “ideal father” using the same attributes they used to describe their own fathers. One of the boys said, “My daddy is the best daddy in the world, because I go places with him.”

Further analyses revealed such changes in fathers’ behavior also improved the way children thought of their family in general. Healthy relationships between the father, the partner, and the children made the home a safe and pleasant place for the children. This was confirmed by drawings the children made; many said they drew them because they loved their families.

**From Absent Fathers to Involved Dads**

**Absent fatherhood in South Africa** has been on the rise since 1996, when only about half (49 percent) of fathers were reported to be present in the lives of their children. On the African continent, only Namibia has a higher rate of absent fathers. Only 37 percent of fathers in South Africa were present in the lives of their children in 2015, according to data released by the government study “Statistics South Africa.”

As a result of this high rate of absent fatherhood, women are bearing the brunt of raising children, and children are growing up without the positive influence of another caregiver.

**Why Are So Many Fathers Absent?**

The causes of this absence have been largely linked to historical factors of apartheid and migrant labor, which led to the separation of many men from their families. However, cultural norms, HIV and AIDS, high divorce rates, statutory removal of children because of child abuse and neglect, and child abandonment have also contributed to high rates of absent fatherhood. Additionally, in certain cases fathers believe that supporting their children financially is sufficient, seemingly ignorant of the importance of men being directly involved in caring for their children.

**Why Do Children Need Involved Fathers?**

All children can benefit from having multiple, loving parents or caregivers in their lives—whether they be mothers, fathers, or others. Fathers’ presence in their children’s lives is important for many reasons, and fathers can be involved in a variety of ways.

Being present does not only mean physical co-residence of financial support; it also entails fathers’ emotional involvement—giving love, affection, and support. Even if they do not live in the same household, fathers can play a meaningful role in their children’s lives by providing emotional connection and by being involved in their children’s care in nonfinancial ways.

Research shows that fathers’ positive presence contributes to children’s cognitive development, intellectual functioning, and school achievement. Children growing up with fathers who are positively involved are less likely to experience depression, fear, and self-doubt. When fathers are positively involved, boys are less likely to search for alternative sources of masculine identification and validation like gangs, and girls are more likely to develop higher self-esteem and less likely to experience unwanted sex. Further, when fathers play an active role in caregiving, it also improves women’s health—especially maternal health—and promotes women’s economic equality.

—Andre Lewaks and Yvonne Jila

**Journalist Yvonne Jila** was a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow and Child Rights and Positive Parenting Intern at Sonke Gender Justice.
Héctor Portillo and Sebastián Molano grew up in Mexico and Colombia respectively, countries where corruption is normalized to the point where not engaging in it is not only considered rare but naïve. They say that their countries also have deeply embedded cultures of sexism and machismo, noting that their “personal experiences with sexism, masculinities, and corruption motivated [them] to explore how the expectations, pressures, and privileges of ‘being a man’ can encourage or deter an individual’s engagement in corruption.”

The ideals men and boys are expected to live up to are called “masculinities.” Masculinities are socially constructed and reinforced, they vary by time, place, and community, and have hierarchies—“some forms are prized as being more valuable for men and boys to aspire than others.” These expectations “often put men under pressure” to conform to prevailing masculine ideals, which may or may not be what individual men would otherwise aspire to.

Some of the expectations of what it means to be a man may translate into violent and/or self-destructive behaviors. Those expectations have been described as “toxic masculinities”—defined as those where manhood is formed by a cocktail of violence, sex, status and aggression. They are often associated with risky behaviors (higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse) and prone to engage in violence (e.g. sexual violence, violent crime). In a 2015 presentation to the United Nations on masculinities and gun violence, the sociologist Michael Kimmel, executive director of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities, suggested that these expressions of manhood become socialized—that is, they are not just internalized by the individual, but also replicated by society.

**Male Attitudes Toward Corruption**

We believe that male attitudes toward corruption can be analyzed through three mechanisms. We present them as separate for conceptual clarity, but believe they interact with and possibly reinforce each other:

1. Corruption as a male privilege;
2. Corruption as a male performance of power and domination; and
3. Corruption as a pathway for men to fulfill society’s expectation of them to “provide.”

**Corruption as Male Privilege**

Let’s start with the proposition that gender inequality exists in most societies, and that this translates into men wielding more/most power—especially, “entrusted power” (i.e. political/policy power)—than women. Thus, men hold most of the resources and networks that maintain and give access to power. Most women, then, do not engage in corruption because they are unable to tap into the structures and networks that men have access to. In this sense corruption, “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain,” presents itself as a male privilege.
Corruption as a Male Performance of Power and Domination

The social definitions of what being a man looks (and feels) like are frequently correlated to power. If what we understand to be “manly” is toxic and what we understand as “power” is also thought of as “manly,” then the toxicity may permeate to power as well. Corruption, then, would be more likely where men are expected (and rewarded) for using their power over others; it would be a consequence and a symptom of toxic understandings of what it means to be a man, for men would understand corruption as another way to prove their manliness through power.

Corruption as a Pathway for Men to Fulfill Society’s Expectation to “Provide”

Our final proposed mechanism stems from the assumption that men are expected to provide for their families, and that their notion of value is tied to fulfilling this role. However, as is the case in most of the world, only a small proportion of the population can meet all their needs. Although this pressure is true for both men and women, the expected role of provider (and sometimes sole provider) while changing, is still often masculine.

Studies have shown that, in extreme situations of poverty and/or conflict, when men are unable to fill the role of provider (a role they consider quintessential to their identity as men) they are likelier to engage in self-destructive behaviors or to join criminal enterprises or armed groups. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to imagine that some men in positions of relative power (lower-level public officials, for example) might engage in corruption to fulfill their role as providers. In some contexts, engaging in corruption practices can be a coping mechanism for individuals who are part of a power structure.

Of course, there is nothing new in the notion that one of the reasons for some individuals to engage in corruption is economic distress or need. However, understanding how the economic pressures are gendered (i.e. different for men and women) may help understand how the mechanisms through which these pressures lead to corruption are themselves gendered.

However, it is also common to see men in high-level positions acting corruptly. In their case, the power attached to the positions they hold, the social networks they belong to, or their last names cover them with a veil of protection from the law. Different hierarchies of power among men engaging in corrupt practices may vary in scope and magnitude but the effects are the same: mistrust, impurity, and undermining democracy.

Interactions Across Mechanisms

As we suggest, the three mechanisms we have proposed interact with each other:

1. Access to positions of relative power or influence from which men can engage in corruption is an extension of male privilege.
2. The way men use (and abuse) said power for their private gain will be informed by a (masculinized and possibly toxic) understanding of how they ought to wield power.
3. Corruption is a possible pathway for individuals holding positions of relative power to earn additional income and/or solidify their positions and networks of power, allowing them to provide more resources for their families.

Can Gender Equality Decrease Corruption?

This exploration of masculinity and corruption leaves us asking this question: Can gender equality decrease corruption? While further research is needed to construct an evidence-based answer, our analysis suggests that as social understandings of power and (toxic) masculinities become dissociated from each other, corruption’s appeal as a (male) performance of power will diminish. Likewise, as men’s identity is less associated with the role of provider, pressures to engage in corruption may diminish.

Gender Equality Is Not Enough

Gender equality may reduce men’s use of corruption as a mechanism to exert power and domination over women, but it won’t necessarily reduce men’s (and women’s) use of corruption as a mechanism to use power to dominate other people. As gender equality advances, corruption will stop being a male privilege and become available for both men and women with power.

Programs addressing corruption or gender equality would be advised to consider the interplay of the two subjects. Existing and future programs on masculinities could be adjusted to incorporate notions of power and the construction of masculinity as a strategy to better engage with anti-corruption work. To the best of our knowledge, this approach has not yet been examined in a purposeful, measurable way. We hope raising these questions will inspire other researchers and practitioners to explore how work on masculinities and corruption might better complement each other in the days ahead.

A version of this article first appeared in CDA Perspectives, www.blog.cdacollaborative.org.

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In June, when millions of families celebrated Father’s Day, for some the celebration was muted. In no country in the world do men’s contributions to unpaid care work equal women’s. And, at the current rate of involvement it is estimated it will take 75 years to reach gender equality. That is one of the findings in the second ever State of the World’s Fathers report released in Belgrade, Serbia, at a gathering just before Father’s Day that brought together nearly 100 activists, academics, and practitioners from across 50 countries.

Globally, on average, the time women spend daily on caring for the home and children is still three times what men spend; this ranges regionally from about 2.7 times in East Asia and the Pacific to 4.5 times in the Middle East and North Africa, and 6.5 times in South Asia. Women consistently do more unpaid work—including caring for others and doing domestic chores—and paid work combined than men do.

At the current rate of global progress, it would take an estimated 75 years for women and men to achieve equal pay for equal work. Reaching equal representation in government, business, and other spheres of power could take even longer.

State of the World’s Fathers: Time for Action draws from nearly 100 research studies and reports, with data from nearly every country where it is available. A publication of MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign, it calls for a global goal and national action plans (building on Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals) to achieve men and boys doing fully 50 percent of the unpaid care work globally.

Even where men are contributing more than they used to, globally the gaps between women’s and men’s contributions persist. Across 20 countries, men’s contribution to housework and childcare increased only an average of six hours per week over 40 years. These gaps, which are largest in low- and lower-middle-income countries, not only hold women back in their paid jobs and professional trajectories but also limit broader social and economic development, as well as progress toward gender equality.

“Radical, transformational change in the division of unpaid care must be a global goal. Anything less is inequality,” said Gary Barker, president and CEO of Promundo, a global consortium working to advance gender equality, and MenCare’s global coordinator. “In a global political climate that is experiencing conservative backlash around sexual and reproductive rights and government support services, the time for action is now.”

The report affirms that many men do want to be more involved in the lives of their children. Even in countries where men’s involvement in care work is limited—such as those in the Middle East and North Africa—half or more of men surveyed...
said that they spent too little time with their children because of their job. In the United States, 46 percent of fathers said they were not spending enough time with their children, compared with 23 percent of mothers. For those men who are already taking on greater caregiving roles, *State of the World’s Fathers* reveals that it is often unexpected life circumstances—situations that present no alternative—that had driven their new household or professional roles.

A major impediment to progress is the “gender norms” that stereotype caregiving as “women’s work,” the report says. Across 59 countries, 45 percent of men and 35 percent of women, on average, agreed with the statement, “When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.” Economic and workplace realities, such as the gender wage gap and norms that discriminate against flexibility or taking leave, further drive an inequitable division of labor at home and at work. Finally, laws and policies around equal pay, taxation, and public provision of childcare, parental leave, and social protection often reinforce the unequal distribution of care.

“Women’s unpaid care is currently subsidizing labor markets across the world,” said Wessel van den Berg from Sonke Gender Justice, co-coordinator of MenCare. “Now is the time to reduce the debt that men, the private sector and states owe to women. Besides the question of equality, it makes good sense in terms of long-term resource use,” he noted, adding that an increased investment in early childhood focused care and development—along with an equal, nontransferable parental leave framework—would reduce long-term social welfare spending.

The report highlights specific recommendations for action, including its foremost policy recommendation advocating for paid leave, equally shared between mothers and fathers (or other caregivers). As of 2016, maternity leave—usually a short leave period specifically allocated for fathers after the birth of a child—is still offered in only about half of the world’s economies (86 countries), while parental leave—leave that is typically longer and can be taken by *either* parent—is offered in far fewer (53 countries). Such weak leave policies continue despite evidence that effective policies can help to transform gender relations at work and at home, as well as support women’s economic participation. *State of the World’s Fathers* also highlights access to income support—including alleviating poverty and providing affordable, high-quality childcare—and universally available father-centered parent training as spaces for progress.

*State of the World’s Fathers: Time for Action* comes two years after the inaugural *State of the World’s Fathers 2015*, a landmark analysis of fatherhood launched at the United Nations in New York, and subsequently in 10 cities globally, inspiring advocacy and action with MenCare partners in more than 40 countries.


### Unpaid Care Work by the Numbers

In no country in the world do men’s contributions to unpaid care work equal women’s.

- Globally, on average, the time women spend daily in caring for the home and children is still *three times* what men spend: 2.7 times in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia; 3 times in Sub-Saharan Africa; 3.3 times in Latin America; 3.6 in East Asia and the Pacific; 4.5 times in the Middle East and North Africa; and 6.5 times in South Asia.

- Employed, married men’s contribution to housework and childcare increased, on average, 6 hours per week over almost 40 years (across 20 countries).

- In all regions, women spend more time than men do on paid and unpaid work combined. Globally, women spend 45 minutes more than men on paid and unpaid work per day, resulting in almost six extra weeks of work per year, and five and a half extra years of work over five decades, according to data from 65 countries.
In the excerpt below from his timely new book, The End of Patriarchy: Radical Feminism for Men, Robert Jensen challenges men not just to reject patriarchy, but also to embrace feminism. More than articulating a cogent argument cataloguing the terrible harm patriarchy inflicts on women—and its poisonous impact on men—Jensen shares his own awakening to feminism through insights he first began having more than three decades ago. He invites men to confront our fear of giving up privilege as a necessary step to take on the road to an egalitarian, feminist-informed future—a world where men can be free.

Three decades of paying close attention to cultural/political/economic/ecological trends in U.S. society leave me more persuaded than ever that radical feminist analyses are the most compelling account of the sex/gender system available, and are crucial to a much-needed comprehensive radical analysis of the unjust and unsustainable systems that define the world today.

Rather than weigh in on all the theoretical debates that have surfaced in feminism in recent decades, I will sketch the framework that has helped me grapple with sex/gender issues, renewing my introductory disclaimer: In trying to understand how to organize my own life, I come to judgments about the nature of the society in which I live from a position of considerable privilege, and others may deem those judgments wrong or objectionable. But claiming that someone with privilege shouldn’t speak about his intellectual positions and political conclusions because of those disagreements—in this case, a man speaking about patriarchy and feminism—would, paradoxically, let privileged people off the hook for defending their political and moral decisions. Every day all of us—men and women—make decisions on how to act in the world based on an analysis of the sex/gender system, whether or not we articulate that analysis in public or are even aware of our analysis. In my view, it’s more productive to disagree openly and defend one’s assumptions, definitions, evidence, and logic.

PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy, from Greek, meaning “rule of the father,” can be narrowly understood as the organization of a human community (from a family to a larger society) that gives a male ruler dominance over other men, and overall gives men control over women. More generally, patriarchy is used to describe various systems of institutionalized male dominance, though some historians argue that the term should not be used so generally, that patriarchy is “father domination” based on generational authority and a specific conception of family power, which is just one form of male dominance.

While patriarchal systems developed thousands of years ago, the contemporary feminist critique of patriarchy as an all-encompassing cultural/political/economic system that disadvantages/subordinates/oppresses women emerged in the second half of the twentieth century; Kate Millett is usually cited as the first...
By other, with a focus on: the male perspective that leads to men defining women as the powerful institutions in society are dominated by men. The specific forms that patriarchy implies that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources. The specific forms that patriarchy takes differ depending on time and place, “but the essence remains: some men control property and hold power over other men and over most women; men or male-dominated institutions control the sexuality and reproduction of females; most of the powerful institutions in society are dominated by men.”

Psychologist Sandra Bem used the term “androcentrism” to describe this same “privileging of males, male experience, and the male perspective” that leads to men defining women as the other, with a focus on:

WHERE AND WHEN DID THIS IDEA OF HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION AND MALE DOMINANCE TAKE ROOT IN HUMAN SOCIETIES? PATRIARCHY, ALONG WITH OTHER ENTRANCED FORMS OF HIERARCHY, IS A RELATIVELY RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN HOMO SAPIENS’ 200,000 YEARS ON THE PLANET, AN OBSERVATION THAT CHALLENGES THE CONVENTIONAL CAVEMAN STORY ABOUT THE HISTORY OF SEX/GENDER AND POWER.

RESOURCES

Sexual Politics by Kate Millett, Doubleday, 1970
Theorizing Patriarchy by Sylvia Walby, Basil Blackwell, 1990
The Creation of Patriarchy by Gerda Lerner, Oxford University Press, 1986
Why History Matters: Life and Thought by Gerda Lerner, Oxford University Press, 1997
The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality by Sandra Lipsitz Bern, Yale University Press, 1993
History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism by Judith M. Bennett, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006

 Invisible Women of Prehistory: Three Million Years of Peace, Six Thousand Years of War by Judy Foster with Marlene Derlet, Spinifex Press, 2013
Paradoxes of Gender by Judith Lorber, Yale University Press, 1994
and even more frequent debates over prehistory (the period of human existence before written records), there is no evidence for this common view of patriarchy since the beginning.

The consensus in anthropology is that the small band level hunting/gathering societies, which were the norm for most of human history, were generally egalitarian, with no institutionalized dominance of male over female, or vice versa. In most hunter/gatherer bands, males did most or all of the big-game hunting, and females gathered plant foods and sometimes hunted smaller game. The caveman view assumes that male big-game hunting gave men greater value and status, but the majority of calories in these societies came from the females’ gathering—women were the key providers as well as primary caregivers for small children. Social systems around the world varied, but most were neither hierarchical nor male-dominated.

Judy Foster and Marlene Derlet, authors of Invisible Women of Prehistory: Three Million Years of Peace, Six Thousand Years of War, analyze the rise of patriarchy in the past 6000 years, working with the “Kurgan hypothesis” of the late archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, which focuses on the development of patriarchy among people speaking a Proto Indo-European language coming from the steppes of eastern Europe after domesticating horses. Foster and Derlet explain that pre-patriarchal societies were often matriarchal, but not in the sense of women dominating men. Instead, “matriarchy” (or what Gimbutas called “matristic” societies and Marilyn French called “matricentr”y”—“small simple societies centered about mothers”) should be understood as describing more egalitarian societies that typically were matri- lineal but with few restrictions on men or women based on sex differences.

Lerner analyzed the emergence of patriarchy in the ancient Near East around 3000 BCE, showing how the subordination of women and male control of their reproductive role preceded the development of private property and served as a model for the subsequent subordination of other humans by dominant ruling classes:

Economic oppression and exploitation are based as much on the commodification of female sexuality and the appropriation by men of women’s labor power and her reproductive power as on the direct economic acquisition of resources and persons.

The development of patriarchy is in part a product of the agricultural revolution, the domestication of plants and animals that humans began about 10,000 years ago. In agricultural societies, the communal and cooperative ethic of those hunter/gatherers was eventually replaced with ideas of private ownership and patrimony that led to men controlling women’s reproduction and claiming ownership of women. Here’s a short account, summarizing Lerner:

In the Neolithic Era, as larger and more hierarchical societies were developing, females increasingly became seen as a commodity in what anthropologists have called “the exchange of women”—groups giving women to another group for marriage alliances, as gestures of hospitality, or as part of rituals aimed at ensuring abundance. Lerner argues this system was not the result of a conspiracy of evil males, but instead was created by men and women because the practices were initially beneficial for all. Whatever the original motivations, Lerner points out the destructive consequences:

The sexuality of women, consisting of their sexual and their reproductive capacities and services, was commodified, even prior to the creation of archaic states [in the second millennium BCE]. The development of agriculture in the Neolithic age fostered the inter-tribal “exchange of women”, not only as a means of avoiding incessant warfare by the cementing of marriage alliances, but also because societies with more women could produce more children. In contrast to the needs of hunting/gathering societies, agriculturalists could use the labor of children to increase production and accumulate surpluses. The first gender-defined social role for women was to be those who were exchanged in marriage transactions. For men, the obverse gender role was to be those who do the exchanging or define the terms of the exchanges. As a result of such widespread practices, men had rights in women which women did not have in men. Women themselves became a resource, acquired by men, much as the land was acquired by men.

With the rise of agriculture, women’s labor—not only their productive labor in the fields and villages but also their reproductive labor to produce the children needed for the increasing amount of work in the fields—became a resource that patriarchs claimed to own. And, as larger-scale warfare became more common, especially during periods of economic scarcity, females were captured and enslaved. This, Lerner argues, became the template for eventually enslaving men.

In pre-patriarchal societies, male and female humans had different roles that grew out of the realities of sex differences. The sex-role differentiation that was a result of biology (females bear children and breastfeed) was the basis for gender-role differentiation (males, who didn’t nurse infants, hunted and females gathered). While there was no single organizational style of hunter/gatherer society, Lerner points out that this differentiation did not automatically result in hierarchy and inequality:

The biological difference between men and women became significant as a marker of subordination only by the cultural elaboration of difference into a mark of degradation. In pre-
state societies, before the full institutionalization of patriarchy men and women’s biological difference found expression in a sexually based division of labor. Women, either nursing babies, pregnant or encumbered with small infants, pursued different economic activities than men did, without this difference necessarily marking them as inferior or disadvantaged. It is the cultural elaboration of “difference” into a marker of subordination, a social construction which is historically determined, which creates gender and structures societies into hierarchies.

The agricultural revo-

dution gave rise to a new dynamic—the ability to stockpile food created opportunities for individuals to acquire power through control of that resource, a power that was claimed by men, which raises the unavoidable question of why it was men who seized that control. Sociologist Allan Johnson suggested that the answer lies in the way “[m]en’s connection to the creation of new life is invisible” and the fact that pre-patriarchal cultures lacked knowledge of how reproduction works. Men were more likely to experience themselves in ways disconnected from the larger living world and its cycles, compared with women who menstruate and bear children, making men more open to the cycle of control and fear that defines patriarchy: “Because pursuing control goes hand in hand with disconnection from the object of control, it is reasonable to suppose that as the idea of control emerged as a natural part of cultural evolution, men were more likely than women to see it as something to develop and exploit.”

It’s plausible that as human populations expanded with agriculture, men were more open to control of others as a “solution” to the problem of conflict, which would lead to greater fear of what other men might do to them, creating a spiral of control and fear. Whatever the explanation, in these patriarchal societies the generally egalitarian gender-role differentiation of hunter/gatherers went in a new direction, leading to the patriarchal reality of the contemporary world: In patriarchy, gender is a category that established and reinforces inequality.

Over thousands of years, patriarchal societies have developed various justifications for that inequality, many of which acquire the status of common sense, “that’s just the way the world is.” Patriarchy has proved tenacious, adjusting to challenges but blocking women from reaching full equality with men in the dominant culture. Women’s status can change over time, and there are differences in status accorded to women depending on other variables. But Judith Bennett argues that these ups and downs have not transformed women as a group in relationship to men—societies operate within a “patriarchal equilibrium” in which only privileged men can lay claim to that full humanity, defined as the ability to develop fully their human potential. Men with less privilege must settle for less, and some will even be accorded lower status than some women (especially those who lack race, class, or caste privilege; gender is not the only axis of inequality). But in this kind of dynamically stable system of power, women never achieve full humanity.

These analyses help us understand ourselves as individuals by illuminating the nature of the systems in which we live, though some use terms other than patriarchy. For example, sociologist Judith Lorber has argued that the term “patriarchy” has been overused without enough clarity but still she keeps the focus on the system: “I see gender as an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself.

This short account of patriarchy’s history reminds us that while male dominance has its roots in biological differences between male and female humans, gender inequality is a product of history and politics, not merely biology. Just as there was a pre-patriarchal period, there could be a post-patriarchal era in human affairs, a point when we transcend the hierarchy of patriarchy. It’s important to remember that patriarchy is not the default setting for human societies, but rather a recent development. Restating for emphasis: In the 200,000 years of the species Homo sapiens, patriarchy accounts for less than 5 percent of our evolutionary history. If we consider the two and a half million years of the Homo genus, our direct ancestors, patriarchy is less than 0.5 percent of our history. We cannot predict whether the human species will create new social formations in which biological sex-role differentiation (females remain the only humans who give birth) gives rise to stories we tell about the meaning of that difference that are not based on hierarchy and that do not produce social inequality. But we can strive for such a future. The social/political movement that seeks such a future has been—and is—feminism. If humans inevitably will tell stories about the meaning they make of sex differences—that is, if we can’t escape some kind of story about gender—feminism is essential to challenging the meaning that humans today make of gender in patriarchy.

Voice Male contributing editor Robert Jensen is a professor in the School of Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin where he teaches classes in media law, ethics, and politics. He is the author or editor of a dozen books including Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity (2007), The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege (2005) and Plain Radical: Living, Loving, and Learning to Leave the Planet Gracefully (2015). Excerpt from The End of Patriarchy reprinted with permission from Spinifex Press (www.spinifexpress.com).
For each man, one of the most persistent questions in his life is, “Am I a man?” or, more likely, “Am I man enough?” For each boy, the biggest question is, “When will I be a man?” or, “What do I have to do to be a man?” In Carl Erikson’s new book, The Challenges of Masculinity, a longtime leader of men’s support groups unpacks what he’s dubbed Required Masculinity, “the most enforced and expected form of masculinity in our culture.” Required masculinity is “rigid,” Erikson says, “in many ways harmful to men, to people generally, and to communities.”

To find and express his own masculinity, he says each man must grapple with many challenges including: Realizing Required Masculinity’s effects • Getting away from Required Masculinity • Finding my real self • Finding my masculinity tools and intentions • My emotions • Coping with conflict • Ending my loneliness • Being a father.

Weaving external resources with his own inner journey—including years working with other men—Erikson encourages men to create a “personalized masculinity” designed to bring men the most fulfilling life possible. What follows is an edited excerpt from the book.

In my late forties, I began thinking about masculinity and what it meant. This began primarily because I hadn’t ever fit into the “Required Masculinity” system very well. At that point in my life, I didn’t like living it anymore and, on several occasions, had paid painful prices for this misfit. I realized more and more that Required Masculinity was forcing me to live for everyone else’s purposes and choices; rarely mine. Often, I was unsure whether there was even a “me” here, wherever “here” was. One day in my early fifties, I finally revolted and refused to live this way anymore, and began searching for anything and everything that might help me reach a life I liked better. My searches pushed me again and again up against the expectations of Required Masculinity, what a man is “supposed to be”—and must be. In my search, I read a lot of books on masculinity and attended men’s groups and men’s gatherings. Once this began, I cracked the iron shell around Required Masculinity and, then, absolutely everything about it fell.

About five years after taking that first step, I began to put what I learned about masculinity into what became this book. Then, I plowed through 13 years of thought and frustration, five substantial versions of the book, and a couple of plays. The issues you find here constantly waved at me from the many books on men’s issues I continued to read. They talked to me whenever I facilitated a men’s support group or met a man struggling with his life. What began as the nerve to challenge one part of Required Masculinity became my right to challenge every piece of it and to demand that Required Masculinity justify why its rules and expectations had to apply to me.

I am not a trained psychologist, anthropologist, or neuroscientist. I’m just a man with a lot of personal experience with masculinity in my life and in the lives of many other men, who has done a lot of reading and thinking about men and their stressful lives. I’m a man who has found different perspectives on masculinity for us to explore. My purpose in this book is to free you from the demands and guilt that Required Masculinity puts on you and to give you the help, permission, and courage to find a masculinity that lets you live the life your heart wants you to live.
What Are You Getting Into?

The goal here is to give you permission to search for a Personal Masculinity that you find comfortable to live with and that you believe will let you be the kind of man you want to be. Given the present “one-choice-only masculinity” you and I face, we’re going to travel some roads you may find daunting and surprising.

My apologies in advance, men, for sometimes throwing you into what may feel like Alice’s Wonderland. My plan is to gradually reduce this Wonderland-ness for you and to lead you into a larger, stronger, and clearer understanding of masculinity than you have now. In some places, you may need to give my idea a couple of tries in order to effectively keep the power of Required Masculinity at bay and drag a different perspective into place. Please, trust me and keep at it.

We are focused here on individual men, living their real lives, not lab specimens or some philosophic, ideal man. Masculinity is best understood as the synergistic creation of three forces:

1. The abilities, ideas, and actions a male can innately have, a man’s Tools.
2. The Intention with which he uses his tools.
3. Acceptance or not by a man’s society of the masculinity Tools and Intentions he chooses and expresses.

I see these as a triangle. One force on each side aimed at a man in the center. The nature of a particular man’s masculinity is the result of how these three forces enhance and distort each other in him or how he lets them do this.

**Tools**

The Tools a man has to express himself and his life are his innate abilities, ideas, and actions. For the whole of the male sex, these are endless: from boxing to hairdressing; from steelmaking to playing a Stradivarius violin; from nursing to running a multi billion dollar-business. For the individual man, the variety of Tools is more limited but still enormous. So, start your consideration of “masculinity” knowing that each man has a huge range of Tools with which to build and express his masculinity.

Not one of these many Tools in its innate form is any better or worse than any other. They each have different effects, and these effects may be more or less desired by the man and the people around him. It’s important not to confuse the value of a Tool, say physical strength, with the value of what it is used for. Physical strength can save a drowning child or beat up a neighbor.

**Intentions**

The second side of the masculinity triangle is the Intention with which a man uses his chosen Tools. As previously stated, does he use his physical strength and agility to save the drowning child or beat up his neighbor? In other words, what does he use his Tools to accomplish? Does he use money to buy the protection and comfort of a home for someone, or does he use it to buy a glamorous second home to show off his wealth? Does he fight to protect himself or just harm or belittle someone else?

This Intention can range anywhere from the total self-sacrifice of a Buddhist monk to the egocentric greed of a “One Percent” tyrant. Although Intentions can change from experience to experience, the Intention choices of each man seem to gather pretty consistently around a rather narrow range on the continuum through a month’s experiences. A man choosing his own form of masculinity settles on what range on the Intention scale he wants to normally operate.

**Acceptance**

The third side of the masculinity triangle is social acceptance of the man’s choices of Tools and Intentions. While our man can get total control of his choices on the other two sides of the triangle, his choices on this side are down to two: match society’s expectations and demands, or his own choices and cope with the social consequences. Deciding this will probably boil down to answering these questions:

- How unhappy will I be living my society’s masculinity choices which I don’t much like?
- How stressed will I feel playing society’s man when I really want to be my own man?
- How long will I tolerate doing what they want me to do and think instead of what I want to do and think?
- How much happier will I be living my masculinity choices than living society’s masculinity choices?

It quickly becomes evident that these questions can only be effectively answered long after a man makes his initial masculinity choices. At the time a man begins making these choices, age nine or ten for most of us, he faces the abstract question of “me or them” without really knowing the facts. We’re children at this point. Society, especially in the form of parents, teachers, and peers, overpowers us with everything else we’re learning, so it does on the masculinity issue, and we end up with its masculinity choices, not our own.

These questions, if they get to a man at all, become clear only later in his life. In my experience—and that of the men in support groups I led or participated in—that happens around age 45 to 55. However, after 50 years of living with the indoctrination and enforcement of the cultural masculinity, few men have enough independence to fairly answer the questions, let alone understand that they have other choices of Tools and Intentions.

The second most important purpose here is to encourage you to answer the four questions and then to be led through the screen Required Masculinity has built so you can make your own choices of masculinity Tools and Intentions.

Breaking out of Required Masculinity and moving into your own masculinity choices requires you to shift your old perspectives and to make a lot of changes. This may also seem to require more strength and independence than you have. Not to fear. From my own experience—and the stories told by men in my groups—your desire for a new way of living will give you more than you need to make the break and to settle yourself in your own masculinity.

After a career in law, public policy, and finance, Carl Erikson is now a novelist, playwright, musician, theater stage manager, and management consultant.
Every day the news is painfully familiar. A man in the U.S. has shot students in a school or travelers at an airport; a gang of young men has had a street fight somewhere leaving many dead and wounded; a young man is arrested in a European country for being part of a terrorist plot that killed and maimed dozens; somewhere else, a man has raped a girl; a brother has shot his sister for planning to marry a man of her choice in Pakistan; a father killed his children and then his wife before hanging himself somewhere deep in the central part of India. The list is endless.

Men all over the world are in the news for killing, shooting, raping, domestic violence, honor killing, acid attacks and many more forms of violence against others—women, men, children, sisters, wives. Society has long glorified violence and killing, especially in wars aimed at political gain and public safety, where the other party is cast as the enemy. But in recent times such “heroic” acts of violence seem to be replaced by more interpersonal violence, or violence not aimed at any obvious enemy. And this disease seems to affect men everywhere.

Leaders of a number of development organizations sought me out not long ago on how best to reach men in the communities in which they work. All the organizations have been working with women for years, in some cases decades. Women had organized into community groups; they were engaged in different kinds of economic activity and bringing money into their households. A positive development, right? Except that because they were more articulate and mobile and had more aspirations for themselves, they faced resistance both from men in their families and their communities. The request to me was about working with men at community and family levels to create a more supportive and enabling environment for these obviously empowered women.

Violence and Societal Control

What is the relationship between the violence by the men I described in the first instance and the societal and familial control exerted by men in the second? The relationship begins with our expectation of men in the family and in society. In the second case the present expectation is for men to encourage and endorse women’s aspirations. While I can understand where the anxiety of these organizations comes from—and respect their understanding of women’s rights—they have failed to understand how patriarchal society, a society based on men’s primacy, creates men. Not only creates them, but leads them to a kind of hegemonic masculinity which controls not only through boundaries, orders, coercion and force, but equally through overprotectiveness. Men are comfortable being in positions of authority even when they assume those positions fueled in part by fear. And helping men understand women’s need for more opportunities and space can be challenging, as some men may become cruel or violent when they feel their control is challenged.

This phenomenon—men becoming cruel and violent when their comfort levels are challenged—is at the core of the high levels of violence we witness everywhere.

Violence, control and coercion are key expressions of power. Societies often glorify such expressions under the guise of providing “safety” and “discipline.” In virtually all families, boys are trained to become “conventional” men, internalizing masculine roles through myths, stories, games, toys, comic books, video games, TV. (The list of commercial influences is endless.) Even many well-meaning mothers prepare their sons for their future role by encouraging study, sports and outdoor life, much more than, say, household work, art, music, or dolls.
Among the emotions the masculinity police say are acceptable for boys and men is being sad, discouraged, feeling anger. And those feelings must be quickly pacified so men don’t linger on disappointment. Today boys are encouraged to be happy and successful at all costs; few are trained to manage disappointment. The result? We raise boys to be men familiar with being in positions where their needs are satisfied—in other words, to be in positions of authority and power. They know they can express dissatisfaction through anger and believe that violence by people in positions of authority can be morally justified if it is against a perceived “enemy.” Taken together this approach produces a toxic mix.

The real world is different from the cocoon of the family. It is full of potential disappointments and frustrations. Today the world order is changing rapidly. Subordinate social classes are much more assertive, livelihood opportunities once abundant for men are in decline; jobs are insecure and there is increasing poverty. In many cases, the security of the home is becoming lost due to patterns of migration. More men are finding their world topsy-turvy; fewer reside in the comfort zone of privilege, entitlement, and authority. In such confusing times many try to hang on to earlier security blankets of caste/class, and/or ethnic, race or religious-based superiority. Further compounding circumstances are the many groups preying on the insecurity of young men. The killing of bloggers in Bangladesh or any number of actions by ISIS feed off this phenomenon. Many men, who now see the “enemy” everywhere, feel justified in their violence. The staggering economic growth of neoliberal capitalism, coupled with the technological revolution, has not only sparked unprecedented rates of change, but also led to increasing social and economic division globally.

Women have been aspiring to improve their social, economic and political conditions and have fought hard to realize remarkable achievements over the last 100 years. Women also are adapting to the overall environment of change much better than are men. Their agitating for change, and their superior capacity to adapt to it, has resulted in many men seeing women as their enemy. Does that fact in part explain some of the violence happening at home and in the community?

Men’s inability to cope with change results for some in a deep sense of failure. Failure is not something most men are trained to deal with. From childhood onward, success is the only credo they have learned—in school, at sports, and on the battlefield. Believing that a man who has failed has no honor, many unsuccessful farmers in India have opted for suicide, leaving their families to manage their inherited debt. Women, better trained to manage failure, are left to continue on in their absence.

Where does this leave us in considering the road ahead in dealing with men? What pathways to a different future does it suggest? For those of us who have embraced women’s empowerment, one strategy has been engaging men as allies in redefining our ideas of manhood. Over the last few decades we have learned some lessons worth considering in exploring how to work towards a better future.

Many men find the incidents of violence I described at the beginning of this article as “upsetting” or “unacceptable.” In their feelings of disquiet are the seeds of a new understanding of human relations. In many cases their unease is followed by a rationalization that such violence happens “elsewhere”—not among men they know or are. Some try to avoid bad news, or intellectualize about it as a way to create distance between what’s actually happening and their personal circumstances. The goal? Dilute the truth to render it harmless.

The road to a different future lies in men acknowledging that the problem is not in “other” men or “other” communities, but in the men we are bringing up—our boys, our sons—through our own unconscious reinforcing of hegemonic masculinity. The most enlightened parent concerned about equality between the sexes might say, “I bring up my daughter like a son” but it is never the reverse. Boys are rarely taught the values of nurturing and empathy, of managing adversity and failure, and of managing for themselves. Among all classes it is nearly universal that most boys do not clean their own dishes or wash their own clothes. This is not about training for future participation in domestic work but a valuable lesson in self-sufficiency. Of course there is a pressure to succeed, but rarely an emphasis on collaboration, cooperation or respect for others. Equally if not even more important is the need to train boys to manage disappointment.

Remember the conversation I referred to with leaders of development organizations and the problem they see women in their communities facing? The solution does not lie in the most obvious approaches, i.e., asking men to loosen control at home and to protect women in public places. These approaches, as I mentioned earlier, can inadvertently create greater paternalistic concern and control.

Those of us working to transform our ideas about manhood have found that in order to create greater gender collaboration between women and men we need to work from a less competitive place. In a typical patriarchal arrangement, public space belongs to men and private space is women’s domain (but still under masculine control). This control is maintained either directly or indirectly—through “senior” women like a mother-in-law.

There is little interaction between women and men, even husbands and wives, in the home or personal space. An obvious example is men not sharing in housework or doing much child-care, often the sole domain of women. In rural India there are many physical barriers between husbands and wives interacting with any degree of intimacy. Similarly, brothers and sisters often drift apart after puberty. Fathers are not close to young children, since the latter reside within the women’s domain and only when sons become men through a coming-of-age ritual does the “man-
to-man” bond strengthen. We have found some men who say they regret a lack of closeness and connection not just with their wives, but also their daughters, sisters and sisters-in-law.

In working to engage men we have found that building closer relations with women at home has enabled men to understand the value of empathy. In forging closer relations with their children, men have come to value the virtues of caring, nurturing, and sharing. We have seen this happen with adult men in their twenties and thirties, and even older men. In addition, men can be encouraged to develop a new sense of fairness enabling them to begin to see through the limitations of patriarchy. Taking this a step further, in India, we have successfully encouraged men to take stands against caste and religious discrimination as well. But the initial step was taken via the roles and relations in the family.

These efforts have sometimes been belittled as essentially “reformist,” not sufficiently political, charged with not adequately addressing deeply embedded societal power inequalities. Others have said that the work lays too much emphasis in the private and personal sphere and not the public or political space. I hear these criticisms and I understand the anxiety. My justification of our approach is not only through my own personal practice and some small- and large-scale community-based interventions, but also draws on a nuanced understanding of power and privilege and how it is exercised and experienced.

A politically sound approach to social justice, or a world envisioned with less violence and more mediated solutions, cannot come from working with the violent and the underprivileged alone. Many political movements have been born from a sense of injustice and demands for rights. However, acknowledging this reality requires those with power and privilege to change their own beliefs and actions, and to exercise power accordingly. On the battlefield the loser has no power; in a negotiated settlement a third party is often asked to mediate so the loser experiences an “acceptable” loss of face.

In society there is often no third party. To get where we want to go—achieving true gender equality—means men giving up their positions of authority and privilege. And, it requires acknowledging that men’s advantages of power and entitlement are often one-sided and lead to subordinating others. Most men have little experience in giving up power without losing face. At home and in their intimate relationships, men can give up power without losing face; they can become comfortable without wielding power and authority. Such experience can serve as valuable practice for men creatively mobilizing their ability to share power and yield authority without a sense of loss. In our work, we have seen it happen.

Now is the time to take these lessons to scale. Once men recognize that inequality is unacceptable, once they acknowledge the fundamental equality among all humans, then we can adopt egalitarian ways of behaving towards others, beginning with the way we raise our children, especially our boys.

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Donald Trump's unabashed degradation of women, as well as the risks to women posed by the new American Health Care Act, are a dismal reminder that the struggle of women for dignity, fair treatment and equal rights is far from over.

Empowering women thus remains a human rights priority—including in the U.S..

But if we are striving for a gender-equitable society, a sole focus on women is not enough; we must also empower men. Of course, not in the conventional sense by giving men more power over women and over other men. Rather, by empowering men to challenge the prevailing social norms that lead to gender imbalances and by giving them the space to adopt new roles and behaviors as men.

The need to work with both women and men on gender issues seems obvious. Gender is a complex human system and women and men are integral parts of this social structure. Both contribute to and are affected by the system. Meaningful change and disruption of the system requires both women and men. Empowering women and expecting men to follow is unrealistic.

But challenging rigid gender norms, which have taken centuries to evolve, is not easy—particularly for men. Across societies, men are critically judged and assessed based on the dominant ideals of manhood, which generally means being tough, strong, resilient, exercising control over women and others, and being economically independent. The expression “man up” encapsulates the pressure felt by men to do the things they are traditionally expected to do. Men (and boys) who fail to achieve this ideal pay a price by being belittled or ridiculed on the playground, in sports, in the military—and by both men and women.

As we have invested in women’s empowerment, we must now do the same for men’s empowerment. One of the most extensive resources available is MenEngage, the global alliance of 66 country networks operating in the five regions of the world, and comprising some 700 nongovernmental organizations and UN partners. MenEngage provides a collective voice for men and boys to work and speak out on gender issues. Smaller, more localized interventions on men focus on themes such HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and family planning, parenting, and domestic violence.

The last decade has also seen the emergence of men’s programs and support groups to help men reflect and question masculinity and the norms governing men’s behavior. In some cases these are government-funded, a sign that there is broader recognition that men face gender issues and are part of the solution. But much more is needed. The tendency is still for men’s activities to work in the shadows of women’s programs and outside the gender mainstream. And there is still a reluctance to acknowledge that men are integral to gender programming.

The uptick in some quarters of retrograde masculine behavior—sometimes at the highest levels of governance—as well as the persistent threat of (male-dominated) terrorism, will hopefully bring increased attention to the oft overlooked male side of gender, and new ways of empowering men for positive change.

Maria Correia worked at the World Bank from 1994 to 2016, during which she researched and wrote on gender issues, with a focus on men. She continues to work as an advocate on male gender issues.
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. menaspeacemakers.org

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

**On Masculinity**

A Men’s Project
Extensive database of resources related to Men and Boys in N. America seeking gender justice and a more just world. www.amanesproject.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/faq.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 Latin communities www.nationallatinonetwork.org

**For Fathers**

Collaborative Divorce
www.collaborativealaternatives.com
www.collaborativdivorce.com
www.collaborativepractice.com
www.nocourtdivorce.com

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

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

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

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

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

**Men’s Health**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Male Survivors of Sexual Assault**

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

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

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

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

**Overcoming Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

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

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

Healthy Dating
Sexual Assault Prevention Canikissyou.com

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

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

Men Against Violence
Yahoo email list http://groups.yahoo.com/group/me-nagaintviolence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LGBTQIA Resources

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Resources for Changing Men

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

http://www.malesadvocatingchange.org/
Where Have All the Good Men Gone?

By Emily Cataneo

Despite the work of feminist men have been doing for decades to transform our own ideas about manhood and to promote women’s safety and gender equality—and our efforts to advance a more politically engaged, passionate and accountable expression of masculinities—many women and men remain unaware of our work. In the commentary below, feminist writer Emily Cataneo exhorts more men to show up on behalf of women.

Men! Hello there, men! You nice guys, you soft bois, you f**k boys; you monachiasts, you tech bros, you entrepreneurs; you politicians, you beta males, you alpha males. Are you listening? I have a question for you:

Where are you?

Specifically: where are you in the feminist movement? In the early 20th century, when women sought the right to vote, many of you were there to support the legislation that would become. But where are you in 2017, when seven states are now home to only one abortion clinic and our elected officials are questioning why men should pay for maternal healthcare?

Men, we’re in trouble. Despite the perks of the more egalitarian world into which many millennial women were born, we need feminism today more than ever.

So where are you, gentlemen? You marched on January 20, but where are you now? Where are the impassioned New York Times columns written by men about the importance of the feminist movement?

Where are the male politicians prioritizing women’s rights and reproductive justice? They are certainly not in Nebraska.

The crazy thing about your lack of commitment to feminism is that the patriarchy affects you, too. Maybe you don’t know that, or maybe you use that as an excuse: you’re a victim, too, so why should you advocate for a movement that prioritizes the victimhood of women over yours? Okay, you will never be as much of a victim as we are under the patriarchy. Never. That said, you are still a victim, and feminism, although it focuses on the liberation of women because that’s more important, also includes breaking down barriers for men.

The thing is, we need your help with this: you still run the world, and barring violent revolution, change can’t come unless those who hold the existing power get on board with that change (see: the 19th Amendment). So, where are you?

A cursory Google search of “where are the male feminists” proves to be a revealing exercise: the top Google results are not dominated by articles about how men should join the feminist movement, work to understand women’s perspectives, and become nurturing, helpful, outspoken allies. Instead, they’re dominated by articles (written by both women and men) about how feminism alienates men through its strident rhetoric and its unflinching criticisms of men’s bad behaviors.

Is this it, men? Are you staying away because feminism doesn’t spend enough time acknowledging your problems and your feelings? Look, I know you have problems and feelings too, and I get that it stings when no one seems to care about them. (Really, I do: you’re a person in the world, right, so of course you have problems and feelings. Being a person sucks like 85 percent of the time.)

But here’s the thing: you can’t compare feeling sad because you saw a woman wearing a “Male Tears” T-shirt with a woman worrying about getting murdered while she’s waiting for her train home at night. Feminism might hurt your feelings, but the world has been hurting women (everything about us, including our bodies, our children, our futures) for millennia.

Can you put aside your hurt feelings in service of our safety?

Or maybe it’s not that feminism hurts your feelings; maybe it’s that if you were honest with yourself, you’d realize you’re a little bit scared of it. You were born into a world that was engineered to tell you that you owned it. It valued the things you were taught to be good at; it validated your behavior. You have benefited from the patriarchy every single day, in a thousand ways that you probably don’t even recognize. We get it: changing that might be scary. Really, we do understand. But the world moves forward; you can’t cling to the way things were forever. It’s not good for any of us.

Or maybe, like so many “aware” and “engaged” men, you’re not a feminist—maybe you think abortion rights and reproductive justice are important but, like, just not that important. They would be nice, but how can we focus on them when we should be focusing on economic issues? By which you mean economic issues that affect historically male professions and spaces—not the economic issues of support for working mothers, equal pay for women, and social safety networks for the millions of underpaid women who work in service-industry jobs. You silo women’s rights into the realm of special interest group, forgetting that women’s rights are also human rights.

The bottom line, men, is that although you clearly have a plethora of reasons for your lack of involvement in feminism, we still need you. You need us too, of course—as already indicated, we all suffer under the patriarchy—but we would hope that you would want to get on board regardless. Because we women are people, we are imperiled in the world moves forward; you can’t cling to the way things were forever. It’s not good for any of us.

So men: where are you? We’re waiting.

This article first appeared on jwa.org, and is reprinted with permission of the Jewish Women’s Archive.

Emily Cataneo is the social media manager for the Jewish Women’s Archive, an online feminist historical archive based in Brookline, Massachusetts, that gathers and shares stories about Jewish women from the past and today. Emily is also a writer and journalist whose work has appeared in newspapers including the Financial Times, Boston Globe, and Christian Science Monitor.
Voice Male is a superb, groundbreaking publication offering a powerful way to engage men in working towards gender justice and to encourage younger men to learn new ways to become a man. Every individual and institution interested in gender equality and violence prevention should subscribe and spread the word!

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

“Rob Okun’s brave book chronicles a movement of men standing with women in the struggle to end violence against women and reveals an emerging new man culture where men are reclaiming their tears and their hearts.”
— Eve Ensler, playwright of The Vagina Monologues, founder of Vday

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

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

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