One of the awful facts of our age is the evidence that [the world] is stricken indeed, stricken to the very core of its being by the presence of the Unspeakable...[that] too few are willing to see.

—Thomas Merton

When we speak, we are afraid. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak.

—Audre Lorde

"W

hat if...?" All of us have uttered those two words at one time or another as we contemplated what might have been. Often our focus is personal. "What if mom or dad had lived long enough to meet the new grandchild?" for example. Sometimes the focus is global.

In the case of Project Unspeakable—a political meditation on truth, morality and secrecy as much as a compelling new play—the "what if" has profound implications for our times. "What if JFK, RFK, MLK, and Malcolm X had not been assassinated?" the play asks.

What would the world look like if they had lived?" That all four were gunned down within a five-year period—1963–1968—remains a life-altering backdrop to the lives of many who came of age in the sixties.

The script, completed in advance of the November 22nd fiftieth anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination, has asked intriguing questions, beginning geopolitically. President Kennedy had begun to turn away from violence as a head of state's primary governing principle, pivoting toward peacemaking. There is evidence he planned to withdraw U.S. troops from Viet Nam if reelected in 1964. And, in his pointed remarks against the Viet Nam war and in support of workers' rights—MLK was marching with striking sanitation workers in Memphis on the eve of his April 4, 1968 assassination—Martin Luther King, Jr. had begun to articulate the connection between class and war to the struggle for civil rights. In addition, at the time of their deaths Malcolm X and Robert Kennedy had also begun to enlarge their vision of social justice.

From the perspective of today's pro-feminist men's movement, the brothers Kennedy and Malcolm each were becoming more contemplative, ready sooner to negotiate and collaborate than to resort to aggression. Dr. King had recognized that by connecting the dots of the isms beyond race, he extended his moral authority, demonstrating a different way to express courage. There is much for us to consider in the "what if" the play asks about men at the cusp of change, especially men in leadership positions.

In many ways President Obama both exemplifies aspects of the transformation of masculinity and the rigidity of conventional manhood. How do we understand him: caring father and equal marriage partner who unambiguously speaks up for women's rights and gay rights? Or, Commander-in-Chief ordering more drone strikes in five years than his predecessor ordered in eight? Poised to become a Syriam killer one-minute, and championing nuanced diplomacy the next?

Even if Court Dorsey, who wrote Project Unspeakable, would not describe the play as about men per se, it is a play about men's privilege and entitlement. Inspired by James Douglass' JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters (Orbis Books, 2008), an impeccably researched book that continues to attract a following more than five years after it was published, Dorsey, an activist-actor with a long resume creating socially-infused art, wrote Unspeakable to incite a complacent citizenry to defend a democracy under siege.

Edward Snowden's revelations of National Security Administration efforts to erode citizens' liberties underscore why Douglass's book and Dorsey's play should be added to social studies curricula and debated in book groups and community forums. Anyone who has never questioned the official versions of the four assassinations should now be skeptical. That the play was meant for neighbors sitting around their living rooms to read aloud, as a staged reading in a faith community social hall, or produced as a full-scale theatre company production, makes Project Unspeakable a democratic civics lesson.

The burgeoning gender justice movement was unfolding in the shadow of the assassinations. I was an activist in college in Washington, D.C. in the late 1960s. My first day in town I opted out of a tour of the national monuments to hop a bus visiting parts of the city that lay in ruin in the wake of Dr. King's assassination. It was a time when few men were questioning how they were expressing their masculinity. Some of us were vaguely aware of the nascent women's movement but didn't necessarily connect its emergence to arrogant male antiwar movement leaders. I didn't recognize in the spirited female responses to New Left men's sexism that I was getting my first glimpse of women's liberation. At the times of their deaths, JFK, Malcolm, MLK, and RFK were taking markedly more progressive positions that were alarming the power elite. As the play painstakingly reveals, each of them posed a threat that could not be allowed to go unchallenged.

Dorsey, who developed the play with assistance from a cohort of longtime activists, says his intention goes beyond challenging the silence long surrounding the murders. He says he wants "to shed light on the “unspeakables” of today—the officially-covered-up crimes that have led to or worsened the multiple crises that currently beset our country and the world...

Project Unspeakable is an attempt to liberate the truth so that the truth can liberate us."

Forty five years ago, Trappist monk and mystic Thomas Merton—who coined the term "unspeakable"—corresponded with Nicaraguan priest, liberation theologian and (later) minister of culture Ernesto Cardenal. "The world is full of great criminals with enormous power, and they are in a death struggle with each other," Merton wrote. "It is a huge gang battle, using well-meaning lawyers and policemen and clergymen as their front, controlling [news]papers, and means of communication, and enrolling everybody in their armies." A harsh assessment when he wrote it in the wake of the four assassinations; sadly, still true today.

Perhaps not many who read or perform Project Unspeakable will explicitly consider the transformation of masculinity as a backdrop to the play's narrative. I hope some do, though, since "changing men" offer a ray of hope in a bleak political and moral landscape.


Rob Okun can be reached at rob@voicemalemagazine.org.
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Male Positive • Pro-Feminist • Open-Minded
MAIL BONDING

FUTURE PERFECT?

Recently, a long-time colleague of mine stopped by my office to show me a copy of your magazine. I flipped through the pages and immediately knew that I wanted to subscribe. Within the hour the subscription envelope was in the mail to you. I want to learn all that I can regarding the interactions between men and women, past, present and future.

Grace Megli-Turner, MSW, RSW
Edmonton, Alberta

BUCKING TRADITION

I have known about your magazine for a while. I found it online while I was doing research for my own work about egalitarianism and why heterosexual couples seem to continue to fall back into traditional roles despite their intentions to do otherwise. I find that people continue to maintain cultural beliefs often reflected in unsubstantiated “science” designating women to be innately more nurturing and men to be brutes or babies. I don’t believe any of that hogwash.

I think people are individuals with mixed characteristics; gender is an erroneous quality around which to order a society, and that there is a direct line leading from gender polarization mythology to war and the destruction of the earth.

I don’t know why I didn’t subscribe when I first came across your magazine, but I wish I had. Now I plan to receive it at my house, read it, perhaps glean articles from it, and then leave it in the lobby at my work (I’m a psychotherapist). I’m actually disappointed that I haven’t ever seen it anywhere, but I’ll soon take care of that little problem.

Jean Ballantyne
Santa Barbara, Calif.

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

Voice Male extends a deep bow of gratitude to the indomitable Read Predmore, our circulation coordinator from 2008-2013.
More Guns = More Murder

The largest study of gun violence in the U.S. confirms that widespread American gun ownership is fueling America’s gun violence epidemic. The study by Boston University professor Michael Siegel and two coauthors was released in September and reported on by Zack Beauchamp in ThinkProgress.org.

The researchers compiled data on firearm homicides from all 50 states from 1981 to 2010, the longest stretch of time ever studied this way. Their aim? To see whether they could find over time any relationship between changes in gun ownership and murder using guns.

While violent crime rates overall declined during that period, the authors used “fixed effect regression” (http://www.jblumenstock.com/files/courses/econ174/FEModels.pdf) to account for national trends other than changes in gun ownership. They also employed the largest-ever number of statistical controls for other variables in this kind of gun study: “age, gender, race/ethnicity, urbanization, poverty, unemployment, income, education, income inequality, divorce rate, alcohol use, violent crime rate, nonviolent crime rate, hate crime rate, number of hunting licenses, age-adjusted nonfirearm homicide rate, incarceration rate, and suicide rate” were all accounted for.

The authors acknowledge that rates of gun ownership don’t explain all of America’s gun violence epidemic: race, economic inequality, and generally violent areas all contribute to an area’s propensity for gun deaths. That suggests broader social inequality, not gun ownership alone, contributes to the gun violence epidemic. Nevertheless, the fact that gun ownership mattered even when race and poverty were accounted for suggests that Americans can’t avoid talking about the country’s fascination with guns when debating what to do about the roughly 11,000 Americans murdered by gunfire.

(http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2013/09/13/2617131/largest-gun-study-guns-murder/)

Sexism, Consumerism, and Parenting

By Laura Finley, Ph.D.

Some companies insist on producing atrocious consumer products. From “ghettopoly,” a Monopoly-style game featuring ridiculously offensive stereotypical black characters (a pimp, ho, gun, and marijuana leaf, for instance) to Legos designed specifically (read: only) for boys or girls, some corporations seem to have zero social conscience when it comes to the groups they will exploit to make a sale. Sexism in particular is rampant, and these sexist products have increasingly been marketed to young children.

Recently, the Children’s Place, a seemingly wholesome company that provides clothing for kids, pulled some T-shirts after customers complained about the way they reinforced negative stereotypes about women and girls. One shirt for girls read “Born to wear diamonds” while another showed a list of “My best subjects” that included boys, shopping, and dancing. Of course, math remained unchecked.

Before this most recent controversy, JCPenney pulled sexist t-shirts that read “Too pretty to do homework” while Gymboree, another supposedly family-friendly company, featured shirts for girls saying “Pretty like mommy” while shirts for boys read “Smart like daddy.” Disney has made shirts for boys that say, “Be a hero,” while the comparable shirt for girls says “I need a hero.”

While these examples are repulsive because they are marketed to young girls, shirts marketed to older demographics are even more disgusting. A quick Google search revealed shirts reading “Allergic to Algebra” (sold at the popular teen store Forever 21), “Too pretty to do math,” and “Gold digging” (replete with a symbol much like the Nike swoosh). On the more risqué side, there’s “Never trust anything that bleeds for a week and doesn’t die.” Then there’s the classy “Don’t be sexist, Bitches hate that.” Amazingly, someone even thought to market a onesie for baby girls with faux black-tassled pasties.

Another genre of T-shirt stupidity features pro-rape and abuse messages. One shirt shows a checklist of reasons why he is “sorry,” including “you provoked me” and “I was drunk.” Topman released a shirt in 2011 that reads, “Why do I abuse you? Let me count the ways” with the same list of “reasons.” In May 2013, Amazon removed from sale T-shirts that read, “Keep calm and rape a lot.”

Wow. Just writing this makes me sick. As a sociologist, I am keenly aware of the many ways we are all impacted by media and marketing. As the mother of a 10-year-old girl, I can’t believe any company would be so depraved as to think these products were their pathway to success. Reviewing them triggers my gag reflex.

So, what do we do? That’s easy, really. While we cannot stop someone from making and marketing these products, we can refuse to buy them. Although boycotts are not always the best way to eradicate social injustices, they surely are effective for this type of change. Parents must refuse to buy these shirts for their kids. And, in doing so, they must explain to their children—and the store manager, if they are feeling professorial—precisely why the messages are so problematic. What began as yet another example of irresponsible corporate activity can result in a teachable moment that might resonate for a lifetime.

Laura Finley, Ph.D., teaches in the Barry University Department of Sociology and Criminology. A version of this commentary was syndicated by PeaceVoice (www.peacevoice.org).
MATRIARCHY DEAD? HARDLY

In the epilogue to the paperback edition of Hanna Rosin’s *The End of Men: And the Rise of Women*, she recently impressed feminists to accept that the patriarchy is dead. Roxanne Gay says Rosin is mistaken. “The patriarchy is alive and well,” she wrote in Salon.com, and backed up her contention. “The tech industry is consistently embroiled in one misogyny-related controversy or another. At TechCrunch’s Disrupt, two programmers shared the TitStare app, which is exactly what you think it is. Something so puerile is hardly worth anyone’s time or energy but it’s one more example of the cultural stupidity that is fueled by misogyny (http://npr.org/blogs/alttechconsid/ed/2013/09/11/221052414/sexism-in-the-tech-industry-takes-center-stage). Harvard recently introduced Riptide, a project that will examine how the journalistic industry collapsed under the pressure of digital advances. Unfortunately, most of the people interviewed for the project are white men, offering, as usual, a narrow perspective on an issue that would benefit from a more diverse set of voices. Fix the Family, a conservative, Catholic family values organization, offers a list of reasons why families should not send their daughters to college. The list is not satirical. (http://www.fixthefamily.com/blog/6-reasons-to-not-send-your-daughter-to-college)

“[S]imply read the news, on any given day, for yourself…. If the patriarchy is dead, the numbers have not gotten the memo.”

IN DRAG, IRANIAN MEN PROMOTE FEMINISM

Kurdish men in Iran are donning drag to promote a simple message: Being a woman isn’t anything to be ashamed of. The “Kurd Men for Equality” campaign was started in response to an Iranian judge sentencing a convicted domestic abuser to wear women’s clothes in public. Following the ruling, Masoud Fathi donned a dress and had his friend Dler Kamangar take a picture. On Facebook they write: “Being a woman is not a tool to humiliate or punish anyone.”

Since the campaign launched in April, men young and old have been posting pictures to Facebook and taking to the streets dressed in colorful, traditional Kurdish women’s clothing. The Kurd Men for Equality hold signs with messages such as “Hoping for the day that sexuality, gender will not be a way of evaluating humanity” and “Disgracing Kurdish women is disgracing an international community. Women are mothers, sisters, and life partners.”

Diana Nammi, executive director for the Iranian & Kurdish Women’s Rights Organization, told CNN that while honor killings and child marriages are still culturally common in the region, it’s heartening to know some men in the area have more progressive ideas about gender roles. http://www.bustle.com/articles/5104-kurdish-men-in-drag-promote-feminism-in-iran

GOVERNORS IGNORING DO D GAY DIRECTIVE

Just because the Department of Defense (DoD) announced in August it would extend same-sex couples the same benefits available to straight military spouses doesn’t mean it automatically became reality. The governors of Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi have refused to process federally paid-for benefit applications from married same-sex military couples. In response, the ACLU and the American Military Partner Association have launched a national petition to the DoD calling on it to reaffirm that all married military personnel must be treated equally.

The southern states’ stance is in stark contrast to the actions of the vast majority, including those “that don’t recognize same sex marriage including Alabama, Kansas, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wyoming,” according to Stephen L. Peters II, president of the American Military Partner Association. He noted that resisting the DoD directive means same sex couples “may be forced to travel hundreds of miles just to do something that opposite-sex couples do not have to think twice about. This is not what equal treatment under the law looks like.” The petition is at: aclu.org/secure/stop-denying-benefits-same-sex-couples-serving-national-guard.

SELLING THE FANTASY OF FERTILITY

Assisted reproductive technologies, like in-vitro fertilization and egg donation, sometimes result in the birth of healthy babies, but far more often treatments fail. The European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology reports a 77 percent global failure rate. In the U.S. the rate is nearly 70 percent.


Zoll is author of *Cracked Open: Liberty, Fertility and the Pursuit of High-Tech Babies* (Interlink, 2013), her memoir-exposé aimed at exposing public and patient education about the traumas, health risks, and bioethical concerns linked to treatments.

An educator and advocate with more than 20 years’ experience in reproductive health and international public policy, in *Cracked Open* Zoll vividly recounts her husband’s and her seven-year quest to become parents, generously seasons the book with facts and figures that reveal the hidden side of the assisted reproductive technology industry. In “One Egg, Please and Make It Easy” (Summer 2013), she interviewed her husband, Michael Shashoua, who discussed invasive fertility treatments and their effect on the couple’s lives. (http://voicemalemagazine.org/summer-2013-issue/one-egg-please-and-make-it-easy)

In an effort to raise awareness about and integrate men’s perspective into the public discourse, Voice Male invites men who have experienced treatments to tell us more about it. Pen a short essay—300 words—about your experiences. Questions to consider include:

· What should men know before they enter into treatments?
· Did you consider the treatments to be invasive? If so, how?
· Did the media’s depiction of the fertility treatment process match the reality?
· Did the treatments strain your relationship? If so, how?
Send to: info@voicemalemagazine.org

Kurdish men in Iran are donning drag to promote a simple message: Being a woman isn’t anything to be ashamed of. They are members of Kurd Men for Equality.
That’s the question Voice Male tries to answer each issue as it chronicles manhood in transition. The changes men have undergone the past 30 years, our efforts following women in challenging men’s violence, and our ongoing exploration of our interior lives, are central to our vision. The magazine’s roots are deep in the male-positive, pro-feminist, anti-violence men’s movement. We draw inspiration from the world-changing acts of social transformation women have long advanced and the growing legion of men agitating and advocating for a new expression of masculinity.

At this key moment in the national conversation about men, Voice Male has much to contribute. Join us!

4 issues—$28 / 8 issues—$45
Institutional Rate: 4 issues—$40 / 8 issues—$65

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 executive director, Our Bodies, Ourselves

“Know Thyself” said the ancient Greeks. “Recreate Thyself” says Voice Male. This vital publication aims for nothing less on behalf of all men. Voice Male is an important tool in our struggle to re-imagine ourselves in the world.

—Bill T. Jones, artistic director, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company

To subscribe—or to make a tax-deductible gift—please use the enclosed envelope or go to: voicemalemagazine.org
Every day, Ian has a new tidbit about his expectations of beginning middle school. As I was driving him home from summer camp, he mentioned he had heard that sixth graders stayed mostly on the first floor of the building while seventh and eighth graders prowled upstairs.

“It’s not that the eighth graders pick on the sixth graders,” he added. “It’s the seventh graders who hate us. And most of the fights are between the sixth graders.”

Because Ian is a dozen years younger than his oldest sibling, I had forgotten the miseries wrought by middle school—the hellish combination of overcrowded classrooms and unfettered hormonal changes.

“You know if you see a fight, you need to walk away,” I said. “Don’t get involved. Walk away. Find an adult who can help. And turn the other cheek.”

“Turn the other cheek? What’s that mean?”

I blame myself for his biblical illiteracy, and explained to him the words of Jesus: “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek also.”

“That’s cool, but what about selfdefense?” he asked. “What then?”

We talked more about nonviolent responses to threats, and then turned our attention to another pressing middle-school matter: the right shoes and clothes to have before the start of school.

Earlier that same day, I had seen a news alert that proved to be untrue: that the great Nelson Mandela had been withdrawn from life support and died. It set me to memories of the Quaker college I attended in the early 1980s, where I first came to know and understand the evil that was apartheid. Somehow, a young black South African had made it to our North Carolina campus, and he and I became friends. One day, he told me about a protest that had occurred at his high school, police shooting into the crowd, a girl dying in his arms. He showed me bullet scars along his back.

It is hard to imagine that world, 30 years gone, when images of far-off places came to us via network news and an occasional documentary. For a while, apartheid seemed like a report from another planet, a science-fiction horror movie. Slowly, the realities played out, and eventually, good won out. As a graduate student, I took a workshop at the Institute for Policy Studies with Dennis Brutus, the South African writer and activist who had been imprisoned on Robben Island in the cell next to Nelson Mandela (see accompanying poem).

Awash in memory, I found an old Peter Gabriel CD and, on the drive to summer camp the next morning, had Ian listen to Gabriel’s classic song “Biko,” about the antiapartheid activist beaten so badly by his jailers that he died while in their custody.

“Do you know who Nelson Mandela is?” I asked. Ian shook his head. So I told him the stories I remembered, the images and circumstances of those awful days. What I really wanted him to understand was that nonviolent resistance is important and effective, and that its practitioners can—sometimes—carry the day. I told him of Mandela’s quest to win civil rights for black South Africans, his 27 years in jail, and his emergence to become South Africa’s first black president.

“All of this happened in your lifetime?” he asked, incredulous.

Young people, especially boys like my son, could take so many lessons from Mandela’s life, how he expressed masculinity and strength—rarely with violence and aggression, but with dignity and perseverance, and a sense that he was working to achieve a common good.

Upon his release from prison in 1990, he reiterated his support for any and all efforts undertaken by the African National Congress to bring an end to apartheid. He repeated his own words, spoken in 1964 to the court that sentenced him to prison:
“I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

In the end, he went on to become his nation’s president. Such an improbable outcome! In accepting the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, Mandela concluded, “Let the strivings of us all prove Martin Luther King, Jr., to have been correct when he said that humanity can no longer be tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war.” He continued, “Let the efforts of us all prove that he was not a mere dreamer when he spoke of the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace being more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.”

Indeed, being a dreamer in the face of what everyday life offers takes grit. Ian, just 11, has always had the sweetest disposition, and the most generous heart. I worry that adolescence will drive those traits into hiding. And I see that I need to take care to expose him more to the realities of the world—but also to its capacity for change, its underlying beauty.

Thirty years from now, I wonder what will seem surreal to Ian’s children and their generation. Which everyday practices of ours will seem preposterous, evil, and beyond comprehension?

I remember my own shock at the age of 10 when I learned that the diary of a young Dutch girl was a true story. Whatever injustices Ian and his generation face, boys and young men especially, I hope they discover and learn from the lessons of nonviolent leaders whose presence on this earth has transformed it.

Janice Lynch Schuster, mother of four sons and two daughters, is a writer based in Annapolis, Maryland. She is a senior writer for Altarum Institute, where she specializes in covering issues related to aging and end-of-life care, and is the coauthor of an award-winning book, Handbook for Mortals: Guidance for People Facing Serious Illness. Her articles and essays often run in The Washington Post. She is currently working to promote an idea for national service, the Caregiver Corps, which would engage people, young and adult, in developing better ways to care for our frail elders. She is the author of a collection of poetry, Saturday at the Gym.

STING: To Be a Man, Treat Women Well

Musician-activist Sting believes in gender equality. Interviewed about the meaning of manhood at the Printer’s Row Lit Fest June 8 at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago, he said the following:

When you integrate the elements of your psyche that were bequeathed to you by your mother—compassion, care, intuition, creativity—then you’re a man.

You’ve got a lot of other ways [to be a man]. . . . you can buy a gun, build your muscles up, join the army, wear a uniform—[it] doesn’t mean much.

But to treat women well—in the way society treats women well—will tell us whether we are a grown-up society or not. Any society that doesn’t treat women well will never grow up.

So for me to become a man is to treat women as they should be treated—as equals.

W ho is the real Private Manning? Does anyone know? Can anyone know?” Those were central questions in John Stoltenberg’s review of playwright Claire Lebowitz’s documentary theater piece Bradass87, about the Army private sentenced in August for passing secret government documents to WikiLeaks. Lebowitz crafted the script from primary sources—including Manning’s own online chats and instant messages, in which Manning used the handle Bradass87. Stoltenberg called the play “a unique and fascinating front-row seat to history. Built around Manning’s own words and artfully compiled from documents on the public record, Bradass87 delivers an audaciously up-close and first-person portrait that reveals how deeply the maligned young soldier himself was distressed by the question Who is Bradley Manning?” Manning’s answer, in part: “I’m not so much scared of getting caught and facing consequences at this point, as I am of being misunderstood, and never having the chance to live the life I wanted to. I’m way way way too easy to marginalize, I don’t like this person that people see. No one knows who I am inside.” After Manning announced her gender change, identifying as female and changing her name to Chelsea, Stoltenberg, a longtime profeminist activist and writer, interviewed the playwright about the incarcerated soldier, the play, and the role of theatrical art in politics.

John Stoltenberg: I watched a performance of Bradass87 in Washington, D.C., just a few days before Private Manning was to be sentenced—a tense real-time suspense that loomed over the real-life events unfolding on stage. At the time I could not have anticipated two extraordinary first-person texts that were soon to become public: First, on August 21, 2013, came Private Manning’s powerful post-sentencing statement. The next morning came Private Manning’s startling revelation, “I am Chelsea Manning. I am a female,” which has provoked an outpouring of responses both pro and con. What went through your mind as you learned of those two dramatic developments? What do you make of them? What effect do you think they will have on future iterations of Bradass87?

Claire Lebowitz: Bradass87 has always been a living document, and I see these two statements as reiterating and clarifying points that are present in the play and in previous statements Chelsea has made in public and in private. What I am struck by in these two statements is how Chelsea has consistently appealed to our highest, most moral selves. She has acted in a way that reflects our perceived values as Americans. The Declaration of Independence was a radical, revolutionary document written during a time of Enlightenment. Chelsea Manning perhaps is our new Enlightenment hero of the Information Age (Chase Madar, The Passion of Bradley Manning), taking the values our nation is said to be founded on to heart, and reflecting them back to us. After being sentenced to 35 years in prison—the harshest sentence in our nation is said to be founded on to heart, and reflecting them back to us. After being sentenced to 35 years in prison—the harshest sentence ever—she said: “I will serve my time knowing that sometimes you have to pay a heavy price to live in a free society. I will gladly pay that price if it means we could have a country that is truly conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all women and men are created equal.”

This simple statement begs a series of soul-searching questions:

- Why do we live under the assumption that American lives are more valuable than other people’s?
- What exactly makes us “exceptional”?
- What free society overclassifies information to justify illegal wars for profit?
- How can a functioning democracy with a free press overprosecute the messenger, rather than reviewing the crimes revealed and bringing the real criminals to justice?

In the statement asking the world to support her in becoming her true self, she challenges us to confront our limiting assumptions of identity and simply asks us for what she needs—support. Considering how much she clearly thinks of us, the American people (in contrast to how those in power might view us), she deserves our support, as she has supported us and challenged us to “become our true selves.”

In terms of the play, I’m considering having the audience reading the statement made August 21 from the screen before the play begins.
For someone who was treated so badly for being who she is throughout her life, her ability to identify with others and feel responsibility for the actions of her country is extraordinary. So often in this statement she uses the term we: “We have forgotten our humanity”; “We consciously elected to devalue human life in Iraq and Afghanistan”; “We elected to hide behind the veil of national security and classified information in order to avoid any public accountability.” I imagine the entire audience reading the statement from a screen like a mass mea culpa and an invocation of this individual who is locked away but we are bringing into the room. In terms of the trans statement, in the play we watch this young person struggle with not being able to express their true self, which I believe provides some sorely needed context to a discussion that is too reduced to who’s using which pronoun and could reach forward into a deeper truth about us all through the theater’s power to identify with, instead of separating from.

J.S.: After those breaking-news statements, I looked back at the Bradass87 script you shared with me, and I was surprised by how much rich context was in it that foreshadowed Chelsea Manning’s announcement—especially this: “I’m isolated as fuck, my life is falling apart, and I don’t have anyone to talk to. It’s overwhelming—I’m not comfortable with myself, I’m in an awkward state and the weird part is…I love my job. I was very good at it. I wish this didn’t have to happen like this. I don’t think it’s normal for people to spend this much time worrying about whether they’re behaving masculine enough. I behave and look like a male, but it’s not ‘me.’”

When writing my review, I made a conscious choice to stop that quote there—because I thought the rest of that passage would be a distraction. I see now that I omitted something not peripheral at all, something that was actually a central story point in your text:

“Eight months ago if you’d have asked me whether I would identify as female I’d say you were crazy, that started to slip very quickly, as the stresses piled up…. For whatever reason, I’m uncomfortable with my role in society in particular—I went on leave in late January/early February and…I cross-dressed, full on. Wig, breasts, dress—the works. For a few days I blended in…no one knew. The first thing I learned was that chivalry wasn’t dead. Men would walk out of their way and open doors for me; it was so weird. I was referred to as ‘Ma’am’ or ‘Miss’ at places like McDonalds (hey, I’m not a fancy eater). I took the Acela from D.C. to Boston. I rode the train, dressed in a casual business outfit. I really enjoyed the trip! It was…an experience I won’t forget…99.9 percent of people coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan want to come home, see their families, get drunk, get laid….I…wanted to try living as a woman, for whatever reason. I don’t know, I just kind of blended in…I didn’t have to make an effort, it just came naturally, instead of thinking all the time about how I’m perceived, being self-conscious, I just let myself go…well I was self-conscious in a different way, I was worried about whether I looked pretty, whether my makeup was running, whether I spilled coffee on my expensive outfit.”

To be honest, another reason I did not mention Manning’s self-identification as female was that I was wary of provoking the nasty flame wars I know to be going on between political activists who view transwomen as really “men” and political activists who counter that such views are “transphobic.” Well, as you likely are aware, that highly charged controversy is all going on now around Chelsea Manning anyway, and suddenly she has become its lightning rod (which in my view really is a distraction, because if she should be regarded and remembered as a poster person for anything, it’s for her bravery in exposing the U.S. war-and-deceit machine).

I’m curious to know your thoughts on all of this—on Chelsea, the controversy, the future of Bradass87—not only as the playwright but also as a longtime Manning supporter and as what trans-activists today call “cis” (meaning, in your case: a female-born woman).

C.L.: Originally when I started working on the project, the trans narrative was a much larger part of the story. I knew it was pervasive in the log of chats between Manning and Adrian Lamo (the confidant who turned informant). It’s a huge part of how Manning saw herself situated in the world. But from speaking to many ardent supporters and getting statements from the lawyer that Bradley would like to be referred to as “he” and Bradley till he could move on to the next phase of his life, it seemed that there was so much at stake with the trial ongoing, and perhaps it was just something that she was questioning while deployed and not a core part of her identity issues. I minimized it during development, but that section you quoted seemed to me to be one of the most beautiful passages, one I really missed when it was taken out, so I put it back in. For me it is the one moment that she is free from confinement, when she is remembering this moment that she felt comfortable—and like herself. I just love how she describes it.

It was a delicate balance of not ignoring this thing that she was clearly struggling with and making sure it was not used as an excuse or the “reason” that she had to act. I was committed to making sure that the lens that we view the act of leaking from is that of suppression of information and illegal imperialist wars, and not taken out of context as just a confused young gay man under Don’t Ask Don’t Tell with an axe to grind against the military.

In fact Bradass87 comes off to me as the opposite of confused; she knew she was a woman inside—“No one knows who I am inside”—and also felt so strongly that “information should be free” and “it’s important that it gets out, it might actually change something.” It is the world that is confused—how should we live in it? Like Bradley says at the beginning of the play, “I wish that things were black and white like the media and politicians presented […] it’s all shades of blurry gray”. Multiple things can be true at the same time; one can be intelligent, principled, and moral, and also have a condition called gender dysphoria.

When I was in court, one of the psychiatrists who testified said about gender identity, “[It’s] how we define our world and what role we serve in it at this point anyways. I think maybe some point in the future gender won’t matter as much. At this point, it’s very much a defining part of who we are and how we function. Maybe someday it won’t matter so much, but gender is still seen as a core issue of identity and how we interact in the world.” I like this idea, that someday the way we interact in the world will not be so limited to only how our bodies present us.

I wrote Chelsea a letter that day saying, “I have tried myself to transcend gender at different moments in my life and feel increasingly stuck in a box as I get older where people treat me a certain way (dismissive) because of their perception of me based on looks. In some ways I can see where being a woman inside allows you to empathize and feel connected to the powerless and oppressed. I’m often astounded by the lack of empathy and compassion displayed in hegemonic pervasive...”

Playwright Claire Lebowitz wrote Bradass 87 before Private Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

Logan Howlett: The “problem” of reaching men and masculine people who don’t see any problem with their masculinity as it is—why do you think these men are resistant to reframing masculinity? Why do you think various approaches (such as the “Real men don’t…” campaigns) have not affected these men? Do you think there’s a way to introduce these men to the concept of flexible masculinity?

John Stoltenberg: The basic dilemma with the gender identity “real man” is that it’s a contested sense of self. It’s not an identity one can simply put on in the morning like clothing. It’s not something that automatically inhabits one’s body with, say, one’s first nocturnal emission. Instead it needs to be reiterated, asserted and proven, repetitively, over and against what it is not.

Put another way: Manhood is an identity construct based on threat—the threat of being perceived (by others and oneself) as less than a “real man.” That’s why to many men and masculine people, any critique of that identity framework will seem to be another threat.

There are really only two reasons people seek fundamental change in themselves. One is because they are inspired to aspire to become someone better, which promises some positive pleasure or outcome; and the other is because they experience desperation, some serious pain or distress about how they are now.

So the answer to your first question is pretty simple. If a man or masculine person doesn’t experience any distress or problem with the boundaries around his gender identity as it is, he’s not going to want or aspire to be free. And if you try telling him he could be a better human being and maybe have better relationships with others in his life if he lets go of those boundaries, well, he’s just going to feel you’re judging him and threatening his sense of personal security.

It all goes back to the fact that the gender identity manhood originates as contested, and it has to be reproven and redefined against the threat of seeming not a man—which can feel like nonexistence, like being less than nobody.

I’ve been dubious for many years about the effectiveness of “Real men don’t…” campaigns. They preach to the choir, whereas to the unconverted they’re nonsense. That’s because much of what men and masculine people do to prove and assert their gender identity as “real men” entails the very acts deplored in “Real men don’t…” campaigns. For instance: Rape has been called an act of power and control, not an act of sex. But I don’t think that’s what’s really going on. In my analysis, rape and other forms of sexual assault are sexual acts of gender identity reification. What’s driving the sexual urge for power and control is the need to experience himself as a real man. So since that’s why a man rapes in the first place, you can’t get anywhere by telling him that rape is not something that real men do. It doesn’t compute. As an effort to communicate persuasively, it’s going to fail.

Over several years I’ve been fine-tuning an original communications theory that I believe holds promise for speaking to men and masculine people in a way that could prompt aspirational personal change. I’ve outlined the theory in a simple-to-follow webinar, “Health Messaging to Boys and Young Men: Dos and Don’ts” (http://youtube.com/6oryuF1dPaY). I began rethinking such communications to
young men when I conceived and creative-directed the “My strength is not for hurting...” campaign (http://www.mystrength.org/) which models consent and respect behavior and illustrates its positive relational outcomes. Never does the campaign speak to young men as men. It speaks instead to young men’s capacity for moral decision making. There’s a big difference.

LH: What does your masculinity mean to you? What makes you masculine? What makes you a man? Is there a difference between what makes you masculine and what makes you a man? Talk about your gender identity, including the characteristics you are proud of, your internal sense of your gender, your frustrations with gender roles, your history of adherence or rejection of gender roles.

JS: Wow, well, my personal anxiety about measuring up to “real manhood” goes back to early childhood. I’ve written about this a bit, including a short piece called “Why I Stopped Trying to Be a Real Man” (http://web.archive.org/web/20070402172337/; http://www.feminista.com/archives/v1n2/stoltenberg.html). I always felt my body was wrong—meaning it was never “masculine” enough—and I always felt I was in it wrong—meaning I never believed myself to be behaving like a real boy like other boys. I’m aware my phrasing here may seem to resemble other people’s experience of feeling they were born into the wrong body. But that did not happen to be my experience. I didn’t want a body more feminine; I wanted a body more masculine.

Truth be told, I can’t ever remember feeling masculine, even though I’m aware that I’m socially perceived as a man and I move through life as a man. To this day I’ve not gotten over feeling there is more masculinity in other men and I am deficient. And since I recoil at the sorts of cockfights, competitions, and combat by which other masculine people get their infusion or fix of gender-identity surety, I’m happily resigned to be at peace not trying.

I know that doesn’t directly speak to your questions “What makes you masculine?” and “What makes you a man?” But honestly, inside my skull, inside the sensorium that seems my fundamental self, the answer is simply nothing. Nothing has ever convinced me that I’m just as masculine as other people who seem masculine.

LH: Much of the time, when we discuss masculinity (in feminist circles), we use loaded language. Aggressive masculinity is “bad” or “toxic,” chivalry is “wrong,” etc. Do you think this language is turning away men who might otherwise be willing to examine their masculinity? Do you think there’s value in designating certain masculine behaviors as negative?

JS: Well, the backlash in some quarters against feminist critiques of men’s behavior has become pretty intense. For instance, such language has become a flashpoint for retaliatory rage among so-called men’s rights advocates. Is the feminist language itself what’s impeding or obstructing what could be their self-interest in rethinking their adherence to manhood “if only they saw the light”? I don’t think manhood works that way. I think these men’s adherence to manhood requires animus and opposition in order to exist and be experienced as authentic. And it’s way safer waging vitriolic combat against women than against other men.

Incidentally there’s an important lesson here for profeminist men. Attacking antifeminist men (out of righteousness, indignation, self-purifying anger, whatever) serves no purpose other than to provide yourself a cockfight with which to prove your own (allegedly higher-quality) manhood. Your denunciatory grandstanding may impress some women for a while—until they catch on to the game. But bottom line: The irate manhood-proving cockfight is neither a cogent nor persuasive communication. Unless you knock the other guy’s lights out. And that would be even dumber.

LH: When I wrote my piece “My Strength Is Not for Hurting” (http://disruptingdinnerparties.com/2013/04/26/my-strength-is-not-for-hurting-2/) I was struggling with how to be masculine without taking on the more damaging aspects of male privilege. Do you have any thoughts on how the masculine community can welcome someone who was not born male without falling back on the more damaging aspects of male bonding (like objectifying women, or engaging in risky behavior)?

JS: I remember reading that piece and being really impressed by how amazingly you framed that question. You really asked what I would now say should be “everyman’s” question—meaning the question someone should ask whether they were assigned at birth to grow up male or whether they elected to live as a male sometime later on. So rather than thinking of your question as coming from some marginal, outlier, outsider position, I would encourage you to assume the truth, which is that your question is absolutely central to the conversation. And that also means: Don’t assume there are no others in what you call the masculine community who could not relate to your particular struggle, learn from it, and be inspired by it. Years ago, once I began to be publicly honest about feeling unfavorably compared to the greater masculinity in others, I began to realize I was not the only one. In fact I’ve never since met anyone raised to be a man who did not at some level share that secret fear. So what I thought was my problem being accepted—or welcomed as you wonderfully put it—was actually my problem being honest, open, and courageous. Did everyone want to hear what I said? Of course not. But as it turned out, enough people did that I soon realized I was not the anomaly I thought I was; I was just someone who tried to speak truthfully to those who could hear.

LH: What would masculinity look like to you in an ideal world? Would it be severed from sex organs? Would it be gentler? Would it be more expansive? Would it include a wider variety of men? Would it include the same number of men but be less disdainful of men who fall outside its limits? Dream big.

JS: Well, if my big dream could come true, the thing I would sever masculinity from is character: (I of course would wish the same for femininity.) This vision echoes Dr. King when he said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” None of us should be judged by the color of our skin or the gender of our bodies. Character and its corollary conscience comprise who we fundamentally are—to ourselves and to others—as evidenced by the choices we make and as embodied in the actions we take. No one is their race. No one is their sex. But attributions and aspersions on the basis of both race and sex have been foisted upon us as self-concept archetypes though they say nothing definitional about who we are.

I know that’s counterintuitive. But it’s what I have come to believe. Distinguishing character from gender styles, gender expressions, gender trappings, gender cultures, gender modalities, and such would be a huge breakthrough in human existence. Finally, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (and the many iterations of that idea) would get to mean what it means. And finally everyone would be relieved of the obligation to act some scripted way because it’s the way a man (or a woman) is supposed to act; finally we would all be simply human. There would be no us—them, only I–Thou. There would be no gender boundaries to police or enforce. Sexuality would all be open source; the only border, one’s own body. I know that sounds woo-woo. But I believe it’s what our species needs.

John Stoltenberg’s new novel, GONERZ (http://amazon.com/dp/BOOAYNH30), projects a radical feminist vision into a postapocalyptic future. He tweets at @JohnStoltenberg.
If the fight against pornography is a radical one, where are the radicals fighting against pornography? Earlier this year, the 18th annual San Francisco Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair, an event that brings together radical activists from around the world, was held at the headquarters and production facility of so-called “alternative” porn company Kink.com.¹

Kink.com is known for its unique brand of torture porn. As longtime antiporn activist and writer Gail Dines reports, women are “stretched out on racks, hogtied, urine squirting in their mouths, and suspended from the ceiling while attached to electrodes, including ones inserted in their vaginas.” But to grasp the agenda of Kink.com, we can just go to the source: founder Peter Acworth started the company after devoting his life to “subjecting beautiful, willing women to strict bondage.”

When the Anarchist Bookfair announced its choice of venue, feminists were outraged. The few who were billed to speak during the event dropped out. But ultimately, the decision was defended, the outcry lashed back against, and the show went on.

Anarchists are my kind of people—or so I thought. When I first discovered the radical Left some eight years ago, I thought I’d stumbled on the revolution. The rhetoric seemed as much: brave, refreshing demands for human rights, equality, and liberation; a steadfast commitment to struggle against unjust power, however daunting the fight.

It wasn’t long, though, before my balloon of hope burst. To the detriment of my idealism and trust, the true colors of my radical heroes began to show.

Pornography was then and is now one such letdown. Over the years, I’ve bounced between a diversity of groups on the radical Left: punks, Queers, anarchists, and many in between. But wherever I went, porn was the norm.

Here’s the latest in radical theory: “We’re seventeen and fucking in the public museum. I’m on my knees with your cock in my mouth, surrounded by Mayan art and tiger statues. Our hushed whispers and frenzied breathing becomes a secret language of power. And us, becoming monstrous, eating-whole restraint and apology. The world ruptures as we come, but it isn’t enough. We want it all, of course—to expropriate the public as a wild zone of becoming-orgy, and to destroy what stands in our way.”² I’m sad to report that this quote, and the book it comes from, reflects one of the most increasingly popular of the radical subcultures

Conflating perversion and revolution is nothing new. We can trace the trend all the way back to the 1700s in the time of the Marquis de Sade, one of the earliest creators and ideologues of pornography (not to mention pedophilia and sadomasochism). Sade was famous for his graphic writings featuring rape, bestiality, and necrophilia. Andrea Dworkin has called his work “nearly indescribable,” writing, “In sheer quantity of horror, it is unparalleled in the history of writing. In its fanatical and fully realized commitment to depicting and reveling in torture and murder to gratify lust, it raises the question so central to pornography as a genre: why? why did someone do . . . this? In Sade’s case, the motive most often named is revenge against a society that persecuted him. This explanation does not take into account the fact that Sade was a sexual predator and that the pornography he created was part of that predation.” Dworkin also notes that “Sade’s violation of sexual and social boundaries, in his writings and in his life, is seen as inherently revolutionary.”³

Despite all they seem to share in common, most of today’s radicals actually don’t revere the Marquis de Sade. Rather, they look to his followers; namely, one postmodern philosopher by the name of Michel Foucault, no small fan of Sade, whom he famously dubbed a “dead God.” Foucault’s ideas remain some of the most influential within the radical Left. He has catalyzed more than one generation with his critiques of capitalism, his rallying cries for what he calls “social war,” and his apparently subversive sexuality. Foucault, who in fact lamented that the Marquis de Sade had “not gone far enough,” was determined to push the limits of sexual transgression, using both philosophy and his own body. His legacy of eroticizing pain and domination has unfortunately endured.

So where are the radicals in this fight against pornography? The answer depends on who we call radical. The word radical means “to the root.” Radicals dig to the roots of oppression and start taking action there—except, apparently, when it comes to the oppression of women. How radical is it to stop digging halfway for the sake of getting off?
What is called the radical Left today isn’t really that. It’s radical in name only and looks more like an obscure collection of failing subcultures than any kind of oppositional movement. But this is the radical Left we have, and this one, far from fighting it, revels in porn.

Just as we need to wrest our culture from the hands of the pornographers, we need to wrest our political movements from the hands of the sexists. Until we do that, so-called “radical” men will continue to prop up sexual exploitation under the excusing banner of freedom and subversion.

This male-dominated radical Left is expressly anti-feminist. In a popular and obscure anarchist essay, “Feminism as Fascism,” the author—who is male, need I mention—ridicules feminists for drawing any connection whatsoever between porn and violence against women. He concludes that feminism—rather than, say, the multibillion dollar porn industry—is a “ludicrous, hate-filled, authoritarian, sexist, dogmatic construct which revolutionaries accord an unmerited legitimacy by taking it seriously at all.”

I’ve ceased to be surprised at the virulent use and defense of porn by supposedly radical—and even “anti-sexist”—men. The two have always seemed to me to go hand-in-hand. My first encounter with radicals was at a punk rock music show in the basement of a stinky party house. I stood awkwardly upstairs, excited but shy. Amidst the raucous crowd, a word caught my ear: “porn.” Then, another word: “scat.” Next, the guys were huddling around a computer. And I was confused… until I saw.

More sophisticated than the punks, the anarchist friends I made a few years later used big words to justify their own porn lust. Railing against what they deem censorship, anarchists channel Foucault in imagining themselves a vanguard for free sexual expression, by which they really mean, men’s unbridled entitlement to the use and abuse of women’s bodies. And any who take issue with this must be, as one anarchist put it, “uncomfortable with sex” or—and I’m not making this up—“enemies of freedom.”

The Queer subculture puts the politics of sexual libertarianism into practice. Anything “at odds with the ‘normal’ or legitimate” becomes fair game. One Queer theorist, Sandra Jeppesen, explained in specifics: “Sleaze, perversion, deviance, eccentricity, weirdness, kinkiness, BDSM and smut… are central to sex-positive queer anarchist lives,” she wrote. As the lives of the radicals I once counted as comrades began to confirm and give testament to this centrality, I abandoned ship.

Pornography is a significant part of radical subcultures, whether quietly consumed or brazenly paraded. That it made me uncomfortable from the beginning did not, unfortunately, deter me from trying it myself. It seems significant though, that, despite growing up as a boy in a porn culture, my first and last time using porn was while immersed in this particular social scene. Who was there to stop me? With all semblances of feminist principles tossed to the wind, who was there to steer me from the hazards of pornography and toward a path of justice?

The answer is no one. Why? Because the pornographers control the men who control the radical Left. Women may be kept around in the boys’ club—or boys’ cult—but only to be used in one way or another; never as full human beings. How is it a male radical can look honestly in the face of a female comrade and believe her liberation will come through being filmed or photographed nude?

I have a dear neighbor who says, “There’s nothing progressive about treating women like dirt; that’s just what happens already.” My neighbor has little experience in the radical Left, but apparently has more common sense than most individuals therein. She, along with many ordinary people I’ve chatted with, have a hard time believing—that alone understanding—that people who think of themselves as radical could actually embrace and defend something as despicable as pornography. If the basic moral conscience of average people allows them to grasp the violence and degradation inherent in porn, we have to ask: what’s wrong with the radical Left?

In a way, this letdown is predictable. From ideologues like Sade and Foucault, to the macho rebellion of punk bands like the Sex Pistols, to the anarchist-endorsed Kink.com, justice—for women and for all—has been a peripheral goal at best for countercultural revolutionaries. Of vastly greater priority is this notion of transgression, an attempt at “sexual dissidence and subversion which challenges the symbolic order,” the devout belief that anything not considered “normal” is radical by default.

![Por No](image)

**Progressive Men Are Confronting Pornography**

From the earliest days of feminist activism against the deep misogyny of the porn industry, a small but vocal number of men have joined with women not only to protest the harm porn culture causes women, but to articulate the need for a radical critique of porn’s role in shaping (heterosexual) men’s sexuality in a way that reinforces men’s dominance, power, and control over women. “The core of one’s being must love justice more than manhood,” said John Stoltenberg in 1994.

While the trend within a significant segment of the radical Left bends toward male entitlement and violation, there is more to the story. For some progressive men, humanity and justice have seemed the better choices.

Profeminist men—radicals in the most honest sense of that word—comprise a movement that should hearten men everywhere. Since the 1970s, both in and outside of the “organized” left they have supported feminist activism on a range of issues, including challenging the sexism of men on the left. They have created organizations, organized conferences, written books, held trainings, participated in demonstrations, and taken legal action.

They have also produced works that explore the role of pornography in maintaining sexism, racism and other systems of inequality, as well as its effects on men’s lives, sexuality, and relationships. Books like Stoltenberg’s *Refusing to Be a Man*, Robert Jensen’s *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, Michael Kimmel’s *Men Confronting Pornography*, and Jackson Katz’s *The Macho Paradox* are encouraging men’s role in this struggle. And organizations like The Anti Porn Men Project, as well as periodicals like *Voice Male*, illuminate the path toward gender justice, without which any sense of social justice is just empty rhetoric.
Three women are sitting around a small table in a bar, a night out together, talking and laughing when a man walks over and rests his hand on the back of a chair as he leans in and says, “Are you ladies alone?”

I want to state for the record that men are not born with a predisposition to say such things. Or to write, “Man, being a mammal, breastfeeds his young.” Or to be socially forgetful and inept, or unable to read nonverbal cues, including the difference between being friendly and wanting to have sex. These results are from long and careful and sometimes painful training. In the interest of fairness it should also be made clear that these are variable patterns among men, but they still show up enough to become sitcom plots and punch lines in comedy routines, not to mention stories that women tell around tables in bars.

The patterns include men’s tendency to dominate conversations, which has been extensively researched and documented. I remember with Nora having lunch one day many years ago when she brought up a topic for conversation. I don’t remember what it was exactly, which gives a clue to the problem right there. But I do remember her starting off in a general way, as in, “I wonder about such-and-such,” which is all I needed to jump right in. Apparently I went on for quite awhile before she managed to get my attention long enough to ask a few questions.

Did I actually know what I was saying, she wanted to know, and was I keeping track or just rattling on, and did I have reason to believe I was correct, since my tone seemed so confident and sure?

Being clueless about emotions and human relationships has disastrous consequences.

I didn’t have to think it over for very long before saying no. I’d been having a good time saying whatever came into my mind without much thought to anything else.

You need go no further than cable news to see there’s a lot of that going around.

These patterns are part of what keeps male privilege going, but they also make men vulnerable to looking foolish and being the butt of jokes like the one about there being a market for human brains and women’s brains selling at just a quarter the price of men’s because women’s brains are used.

The source for that particular joke was the actor, Sharon Stone, as she introduced Betty Friedan at the 75th anniversary celebration of Time magazine, attended by a crowd of some 1,300 luminaries, including a slew of powerful and prominent men, from Mikhail Gorbachev, Henry Kissinger, and John Glenn to Muhammad Ali, Joe DiMaggio, and Tom Cruise.

The important thing is that the crowd laughed.

I think it’s worth asking why. Why would Sharon Stone be able to predict a joke like that would play so well to an audience full of powerful and ego-driven men? Why make fun of men’s brains in a world where it’s hard to name a social institution or powerful organization—including science and universities where brains are what it’s all about—that is not controlled by men? Not to mention if men’s brains are distinguished from women’s in not being used at all, how come they’re running the world?

I think part of the answer is that Stone wasn’t talking about all that when she said men don’t use their brains. She was speaking in a familiar code that allows women to make fun of men and get away with it. Men don’t use their brains for things that, in a patriarchal culture, are optional for men—all of the emotional, relationship-tending tasks that are left to women. If men are no good at those, it’s only because they’re off doing more important things. The message in the crowd’s indulgent laughter was clear: so long as you leave men’s manhood alone, and the control—both real and
imagined—that goes with it, you can make fun of them all you want about things that don’t really matter.

Except they do matter. Being clueless about emotion and human relationships has disastrous consequences. In Gil Elliot’s careful and conservative study, Twentieth Century Book of the Dead, he estimates that in just the first 75 years of the last century, more than 120 million people lost their lives because of wars waged by men. And most of those wars were a series of blunders from beginning to end, with only the victors’ magic brush of masculine history to make it look like something else.

The list of powerful men who overreach, who misjudge the facts, who lie to themselves and everyone else, who misread their adversaries, who go to war because they’re afraid not to and, once started, keep it going for the same reason, and who are completely unprepared to deal with the chaos, destruction, and mass suffering that result, is staggering. Our own government knows no equal when it comes to charging off under the delusion that the men in power know what they’re doing, that with enough money, troops, and manly grit they can make it come out the way they want, and not only that, it won’t take very long or hurt very much.

And they are almost always wrong. No, actually, they’re always wrong.

From 1900 to 1975, more than 120 million people died because of wars waged by men. Blunders from beginning to end, with only the victors’ magic brush of masculine history to make them look like something else.

It is a miracle that we don’t go to war more often, and that we do not is undoubtedly because a woman’s hand is in there somewhere, not that it will make the front page of the Times.

When Ronald Reagan was president, the Cold War was coming to a head with nuclear posturing on both sides, when the president’s wife, Nancy Reagan, confronted him. As the story goes, she told him he had to cut it out, to find a way to get along. And why? “Because you’re scaring everyone.”

Amazingly enough, he listened. But also amazing is that so many men can become so powerful and yet be so clueless about something as basic to human existence and well-being as how to get along without pulling out a gun or blowing one another up or scaring everyone half to death.

In all this poking fun at men we are whistling past the graveyard, because buried in the laughter at Sharon Stone’s joke is the sobering truth that if it is only half true, you really have to wonder why men would be in charge.

Voice Male contributing editor Allan G. Johnson is a nonfiction author and novelist whose books include The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy; Privilege, Power, and Difference; and The First Thing and the Last. To visit his blog, go to agjohnson.wordpress.com.
I don’t know why people are so reluctant to say they’re feminists. Maybe some women just don’t care. But how could it be any more obvious that we still live in a patriarchal world when feminism is a bad word?

—Ellen Page, actor

If the word “feminist” has negative connotations, running away from the word won’t fix that. Whatever new word you come up with will eventually take on the same negative connotations. Because the problem isn’t with feminists; it’s with those who demonize feminism.

—Rebecca Cohen, cartoonist

With such an onslaught of pressing issues facing those concerned about gender justice today (for starters consider the recent actions to severely restrict women’s reproductive rights by the legislatures in North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas), the current debate about whether it’s still appropriate to call oneself a “feminist”—or in the case of Voice Male, “pro-feminist”—seems to me to be a huge, politically divisive distraction.

In our 24-7-365 online culture there’s a tendency to overlook history, if not an outright attempt by some to rewrite it. The current debate about the usefulness of the word centers around concerns that feminism has been poorly “branded,” including having been irreparably smeared by conservative commentators. (What else is new? The effectiveness of a movement can in part be judged by the actions of those trying to squelch it.) It is disconcerting to think some would abandon the word at a moment when rape, both in military and civilian culture, the sex trafficking pandemic, and the mainstream “pornification” of sexuality are such an ongoing threat. If ever there was a time calling for an explicitly feminist response it is now.

The fact that some longtime proponents of the ideas embodied in feminism are now shying away from identifying themselves as actual “feminists” is disappointing and contributes, perhaps inadvertently, to erasing the history of the feminist movement (including men’s supportive role in it)—a history that stretches at least as far back as the struggle for suffrage. For someone to proclaim they are articulating a vision of “gender equality” (the term some prefer), while distancing themselves from the “F word” by name, seems to me both nearsighted and shortsighted.

It obscures the legacy of male privilege and helps erase one of feminism’s greatest contributions to social justice: creating and sustaining a space for ongoing dialogue and questions, self-critique and internal conflict in the service of a more nuanced understanding of all systemic oppressions. It also ignores, undermines—or both—the rich gender-justice history that’s been at the forefront of much profound social change, the impact of which is still being felt today with gains from Middle America to the Middle East.

On the wall in my office is a copy of a handbill announcing a meeting, “What is Feminism?” scheduled for the People’s Institute at Cooper Union in New York City. Nothing unusual about it except, perhaps, for the date: February 17, 1914. Among the dozen scheduled women and men speakers was Frances Perkins, first woman to serve in the president’s cabinet when she was appointed secretary of labor in 1933, and the novelist, playwright, poet, literary critic and editor of The Masses, Floyd Dell. His July 1914 article (which ran in the Summer issue of Voice Male) begins with these words: “Feminism is going to make it possible for the first time for men to be free.” That was a century ago and it’s just as true today as it was then.

From my vantage point in the pro-feminist men’s movement—a movement active on every continent (see MenEngage.org)—a steadily growing number of men recognize the truth in Dell’s century old observation. Our lives are better since embracing feminism—as sons and brothers, partners and husbands, fathers and coworkers.
Encouraged to leave the constraints of the “man box” that seeks to impose a rigid definition of manhood, more of us have begun to access a range of feelings—from finding our tears to accessing our hearts. I am particularly proud to see how many younger men are

As I went to return the old handbill to my wall, I noticed more

And the name they bestowed on that meeting? “What is Feminism.” It featured seven women speakers addressing a range of issues, including “The Right to Her Convictions,” “The Right to Her Name,” “The Right to Organize,” “The Right to Ignore Fashion,” and “The Right to Specialize in Home Industries.” And the name they bestowed on that meeting? “Breaking into the Human Race.” It’s 100 years later and women still recognize its truth—from the statehouse in Austin to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Supporters of feminism don’t need to address its so-called “branding” problem; they need to challenge sexism.

Perhaps some of the people who profess to be more comfortable with the term “gender equality” than the word “feminism” will rethink their position and step forward to recommit themselves to the cause. Imagine them joining a crowd filling a cobblestone square at dusk as the town crier calls out into the darkening sky, not about the passing of a monarch, but instead about an egalitarian movement growing stronger and stronger. “Hear ye, hear ye,” the crier intones. “The Feminists Are Alive. Long Live Feminism!”

Rob Okun is the editor of Voice Male. He can be reached at rob@voicemalemagazine.org. A version of this commentary also appeared in Ms. magazine online. The “Men Support Feminism” campaign was developed by Voice Male interns Tim Boateng and Ethan Corey.
A United Nations study of 10,000 men in Asia and the Pacific found that overall nearly half of those interviewed reported using physical and/or sexual violence against a female partner—ranging from 26 percent to 80 percent across the sites studied. Nearly a quarter of the men interviewed reported perpetrating rape against a woman or girl, ranging from 10 percent to 62 percent.

Men were interviewed across Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Papua New Guinea. The study, “Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It?” (a UN multicountry study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific), asked men about their use and experiences of violence, gendered attitudes and practices, childhood, sexuality, family life, and health. According to Partners for Prevention, a regional program of the United Nations (which conducted the study), they focused on nine sites in six countries and the data is representative of those sites.

“This study reaffirms that violence against women is preventable, not inevitable” says James Lang, Partners for Prevention program coordinator. “Prevention is crucial because of the high prevalence of men’s use of violence found across the study sites and it is achievable because the majority of the factors associated with men’s use of violence can be changed.”

Regarding rape, the study found that in the sites where the survey was conducted:

- Men begin perpetrating violence at much younger ages than previously thought. Half of those who committed the crime.

  - Of those men who had admitted to rape, the vast majority (72–97 percent in most sites) did not experience any legal consequences, confirming that impunity remains a serious issue in the region.

  - Across all sites, the most common motivation that men cited for rape was related to sexual entitlement—a belief that men have a right to sex with women regardless of consent. More than 80 percent of men who admitted to rape in sites in rural Bangladesh and China gave this response.

  - Overall, 4 percent of respondents said they had perpetrated gang rape against a woman or girl, ranging from one to 14 percent across the various sites. This is the first time data has been collected from such a large sample of men on gang rape.

The study’s findings reaffirm that violence against women is an expression of women’s subordination and inequality in the private and public spheres. They also show how men’s use of violence against women is associated with men’s personal histories and practices, within a broader context of structural inequalities. For example, men who reported having perpetrated violence against a female partner were significantly more likely to:

- Have gender-inequitable attitudes and try to control their partners. For instance, in Bangladesh and Cambodia men who exercised highly controlling behaviors were more than twice as likely to perpetrate partner violence than those who did not.

- Have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse as a child, or witnessed the abuse of their mother. More than 65 percent of men in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, and the site in China reported experiencing emotional abuse or neglect as children, and these men were at least twice as likely to use violence against a female partner.

- Have practices that celebrate male toughness and sexual performance, such as being involved in fights and paying for sex. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, men who reported having sex with a sex worker or transactional sex were two times more likely to use violence against a partner than those who had not.
The study featured several recommendation including:

• Through community mobilization programs and engaging with people who influence culture, make violence against women unacceptable.
• Through sustained school-based or sports-based education programs, promote nonviolent and caring ways to be a man.
• Through parenting programs, comprehensive child protection systems and policies to end corporal punishment, address child abuse and promote healthy families.
• To foster respectful relationships, work with young people, with a particular focus on boys and adolescents, to understand consent and healthy sexuality.
• Through criminalizing all forms of violence against women, and promoting legal sector reform to ensure effective access to justice, end impunity for men who use violence against women, particularly marital rape.

• Ensure the full empowerment of women and girls and eliminate gender discrimination.

“Given the early age of violence perpetration we found among some men, we need to start working with younger boys and girls than we have in the past. We also need laws and policies that clearly express that violence against women is never acceptable,” said Emma Fulu, a research specialist for Partners for Prevention.

Partners for Prevention is a regional joint effort of the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programs in Asia and the Pacific.

Raymond Brandes is a program specialist for Partners for Prevention. To learn more or to read the full report go to www.partners4prevention.org.
For my colleagues and me in western Massachusetts, the late 1980s through the mid-1990s was a devastating time to work with families affected by domestic violence. There had been an unprecedented string of domestic violence murders: over the course of eight years, ten women and one child had been killed. One murder was particularly horrific. Sherry Morton, and her six-month-old son, Cedric, were stabbed to death by Sherry’s ex-boyfriend, the baby’s father. The entire community was traumatized.

In the wake of these murders, the community became determined to create a more coordinated and collaborative system to try to reduce the risk of lethal violence. Spearheaded by the district attorney’s office, key players in the community—police officers and dispatchers, prosecutors and probation officers, advocates and batterer intervention counselors—collaborated to create a more seamless response to families affected by domestic violence. One of the people at the table was Yoko Kato, the mother and grandmother of Sherry and Cedric. A local dressmaker who decades earlier had come to the United States from her native Japan, Yoko forged her grief over their murders into a commitment to work as a domestic violence activist.

Somehow Yoko knew that helping survivors wasn’t enough. She realized that no matter how many victims were helped, the source of the problem was the men who were abusive and violent. She yearned to understand how to stop men’s violence. This is what brought her to Men Overcoming Violence, the batterer intervention program where I worked, a part of the Men’s Resource Center for Change in Amherst, Massachusetts. Before long Yoko joined the MRC’s board of directors.

It was Yoko’s idea to dialogue directly with men in our program. She wanted the opportunity to ask domestic violence perpetrators some difficult questions. Why did they feel justified in hurting their partners? What excuses did they make for their behaviors? How did they learn to be violent? What got them to wake up and face themselves? She also wanted to share her story, the story of Sherry and Cedric and her work as an activist. We arranged a meeting one November afternoon in 1997 with Yoko, five members of our program, several of our counselors, and our program director.

It had been four years since Sherry and Cedric had been killed. My colleagues and I were nervous. We had never before seen anything like this: a survivor and perpetrators sitting in a room together speaking directly to one another. I had worked in battered women’s programs for more than a decade before becoming the partner support counselor at Men Overcoming Violence. In all my years doing domestic violence work, there was always a firewall between domestic violence victims and perpetrators. Unless they were in a courtroom, survivors and perpetrators were never intentionally brought into the same space.

Healing, possibility, and hope can show up in the most unlikely of places. The meeting that day was one of those places. Our small meeting room was crowded, buzzing with tension. At Yoko’s invitation and with the permission of the participants the entire dialogue was being filmed by a Japanese television crew. In addition to her local work, Yoko was taking domestic violence prevention work back to Japan, where the issue was an enormous problem with scant awareness or resources to address it. The footage from the meeting was going to be part of an exposé on domestic violence, offering the first glimpse many Japanese citizens would have of domestic abuse perpetrators talking about their violence.

The men who participated in the meeting that day had been invited to attend by program staff because they had shown promise. Each had acknowledged responsibility for his violence and had been attending our program for at least two years. Each also agreed to share his story with Yoko. Because there was no place left to sit, I stood in the doorway. While Yoko shared her story, the men listened attentively. Her voice broke when she described her relationship with her daughter and grandson. She spoke about Sherry’s abusive relationship, her struggle to break away, and the trauma of their violent deaths. She talked about her feelings about the perpetrator, sitting in jail after being found guilty of their murders. Finally, she spoke about her mission to end the violence that took the lives of her daughter and grandson. The room was so still I could hear my own breathing.

One by one, the men began to tell their stories. They talked about the abuse they had perpetrated against their partners and the damage their behavior had caused. They talked about getting arrested or being served restraining orders and what it had taken to finally get them to take responsibility for what they had done. They talked about the work they were doing in our program. Each voiced his regrets; some choked back tears. They seemed to sense how deeply Yoko was listening, sharing with her both their deep remorse and the pride they felt about their small successes. They shared with her the wounds they were working to heal and, most significantly, the different men they were becoming. Yoko challenged the men to continue their work and to reach out to other men who had violence and abuse problems.

Yoko told me later that the meeting was an important turning point in her own healing process. Though the man who murdered Sherry and Cedric was in prison, he continued to be unremorseful. By contrast, the men who shared their stories had taken responsibility for their violence. This had been important for her to witness. “I wanted to see if some of these men—if they got the right intervention and support—could really end their violence,” she told me. “It’s too late for Sherry and Cedric, but the work you are doing might help save someone else’s children and grandchildren.”

When I first started working in the domestic violence field, I didn’t believe abusive men could really change. Now I know that some can. Sadly, these men who’ve committed to change do not represent the majority of men who are abusive. Too many abusive men continue to live unrepentant lives, unaccountable, still a danger to their families. The men whose stories I’ve highlighted are part of a select minority chosen by batterers’ intervention program leaders from around the country as representatives of the best possible outcome: men who have dug in and done their work. Many of them did not choose to enroll in their programs, but ultimately each did choose to become nonviolent. It is my hope that their stories will inspire others to make the same choice.

Three Men Speak Out

What follows are short excerpts from three of the eleven stories that appear in Unclenching Our Fists.

Chuck

I’d get angry about everything: If she didn’t cook breakfast at 6:30 instead of 6:35. Or if she didn’t park the car properly. If she asked me to do the dishes or sweep the floor, I did my best to screw it up so she wouldn’t ask me anymore. I just picked on her for any little thing I could—the way she dressed, who she talked to, how much time she spent with her friends and what they talked about. I would tell her she wasn’t raising the kids right, not giving them responsibilities. I would criticize her childrearing but I wouldn’t change a diaper or get involved in the ongoing care of the kids. It was her responsibility.

The kids were all exposed to the abuse. If we were sitting at the dinner table and something set me off, I’d reach over and knock her out of her chair right in front of the kids. If she was in the car and she was giving me directions but didn’t give them to me soon enough or the wrong street, I’d beat her up in the car while I was driving. The kids saw all of that.

I didn’t realize that she had made up her mind that if I hit her again she was going to the police. I was scared. This was the first time in my entire life I had ever had a run-in with the authorities. I had always stayed far away from the police. It was the first time I had ever been held accountable by something more powerful than me.

I went to court, and the judge agreed that if I signed up for a program I wouldn’t go to jail. At first, I didn’t like my group. I didn’t think the program applied to me or my situation. Each week in group, we had to report our “incidents.” We each had a turn to say what we did during the week. The rest of the group would give us feedback. I learned about “time-outs” and other strategies to prevent violent behavior. I also became aware of my own feelings which I had never done in my life.

I had a major attitude adjustment to make—I was used to thinking of women as chattel, children as chattel; that women are merely here to serve. I had to learn to value women and see them as equals.

Staying engaged with support and assistance has been the key. I needed to stay connected to the work. Most perpetrators don’t want to do that—they want to think it’s all in their past. I don’t think you can rehabilitate yourself if you don’t stay engaged. Men need to realize that even if you stay engaged with the work, you might not make it as a couple.

Emiliano

I had to face that I had been physically and emotionally abusive with girls. I had been treating them disrespectfully and sexually harassing them. It was the norm at home, the norm on the street. In my world, women were seen as property, as sexual objects. Men would harass women constantly, whistling, grabbing them, calling them puta, bitch, whore. I took a lot of cues from the street. Guys were always talking about their sexual conquests. There was no one saying it was wrong—everybody was in on it, including me. In order to feel like I was part of the gang, the group, to feel I belonged, I had to participate. These were the only friendships I had, and I wanted to feel their respect.

In the [batterers’] group, we discussed anger, jealousy, healthy relationships, how to deal with feelings and anger management skills. I knew the issue wasn’t all about anger and loss of control for me because sometimes I would do abusive things when I was completely calm. We talked about sexuality. No one had ever before had these conversations with me.

All the while I was going to my group, I was still hanging with the guys from the neighborhood. But it was getting harder and harder to be in both worlds. I was watching the men around me dying from drug abuse, from gang violence, dropping out of school, going to jail for domestic violence and sexual violence. I wanted to separate myself from that reality.

What that ultimately meant was that I had to make the choice to separate from my community. It was a difficult choice because my family and neighborhood were such central parts of my life. But I just couldn’t be at home anymore. As soon as I was old enough, I was out of the house. I knew that I had to do that if I was going to make any real lasting changes, if I was going to really live and breathe, that I ultimately had to get out.

I’ve never had the chance to be accountable to any of the women I hurt. I wanted to, but they didn’t want to talk to me. They didn’t want to hear from me. My penance, to put it in my Catholic frame, is this: to take responsibility for not just my actions but for the actions of other men. I realize that my silence has made men’s violence possible.

Steve

As a young man, I wish I had known that it was okay to be different than the men in my life, to act different, to talk different, and to walk different. I wish I had known that I would still be loved and accepted and wouldn’t be hurt for being different. That’s the kind of thing my wife and I want our son to know—that he is beautiful and he can be whoever he wants to be, can love who he loves. It’s a message I never got.

The intake was really difficult. All those questions about my behaviors, about all the things I least wanted to discuss, least wanted people to know about. I knew I wasn’t totally truthful during that intake. I wanted to put the best spin on it that I could. I wasn’t in the place where I could be totally honest about my life. I couldn’t own everything, but what I did own really scared me. As I answered the “power and control inventory,” I could really see what kind of problem I had. There was no way I could sit there and say, “That’s not me.”

The first day of group, I measured myself against the other men. I told myself, “These guys are worse than me.” I didn’t want to see myself like them. I wanted to think I was different. I was still in denial.

Learning about the cycle of violence had a huge impact on me. I saw myself clearly in that cycle. I could remember all the flowers, the candy. I even went back to my own relationship with my father. I remember sitting in the kitchen the night after he hit me—making excuses about what happened to me.

One of the guys in the group was like a teacher’s pet. He did a lot of the confronting of the other guys. It seemed like he had his shit together. He was getting ready to leave the program and was going to get married one week later. Well, he ended up having the marriage annulled—he’d had an incident at his wedding. He came back to the program. This really showed me that if I was going to do this well, I was going to have to dig really deep.
Charlie Donaldson and Randy Flood each have been therapists for more than a quarter century. Their goal in their counseling practices has been “to better understand men and create more effective treatments for them.” They established the Men’s Resource Centers of West Michigan, followed closely the work of colleagues working with men ran groups for court-referred batterers and substance abusers, facilitated men’s groups for self-referred men, and offered workshops on men and men’s issues to other therapists and health professionals. They wrote a book for abusive men, Stop Hurting the Woman You Love: Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse (Hazelden, 2006) , and along the way did personal work in men’s groups, at retreats and workshops, “always on the lookout for other men to walk along the road beside us.” What motivated Donaldson and Flood was identifying, describing, and explaining what they saw as an affliction that seemed to plague so many men. What keeps them going now is “watching our clients transform themselves from lonely, angry, and shamed loners into relational, grounded, and compassionate men. It’s among the most gratifying aspects of our work.”

Like a lot of psychotherapists, we began our therapy practices treating disorders such as panic attacks, PTSD, major depression, and alcohol dependence using insight and cognitive-behavioral therapy. But as we listened to the stories of men’s lives, we realized we needed something more than could be found in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM).

Mark had been in the group for eight months, and had frequently spoken of the trauma of growing up with his police officer father who abhorred signs of weakness, particularly the tears of a young boy. Mark told this story: At the age of eight, after he had cried one day, his father handcuffed him to the mailbox with a bath towel—tied around him like a diaper—so the kids in the neighborhood could see “the baby.”

Mark had described his humiliation on the day of Jacob’s first session. Jacob was stunned. He couldn’t imagine disclosing such intimate matters, and yet, a couple months later, more acclimated to the group than he knew, he shared how his father had abandoned him at night in the woods to teach him not to be afraid of the dark. Jacob said the lesson sort of worked: he confessed that he’d lived his whole life pretending that he was never afraid, and knowing he didn’t hide it very well.

Boys and girls both endure the excruciating lessons of socialization. Sometimes the teaching moments are humiliations, and like Mark’s and Jacob’s, become permanent brands that spill out in shame as adults—“Mark, you get upset so quickly. What’s the matter with you?” Other times, they seemingly go unremembered, but unconsciously exaggerate similar situations in their brains—Jacob feigning a smile as the doctor tells him he has brain cancer while his grown children look on.

Therapists talk about the big three of dark emotions: hurt, fear, and shame. Most agree that hurt really isn’t in a class with the other two: both fear and shame are more searing and have greater staying power. And Michigan psychologist Kirk Brink adds this telling point: it really isn’t fear and shame; it’s fear of shame. Both men and women live in fear of humiliation.

Men, however, have their own singular socialized stigmas. Mark’s and Jacob’s fathers set them up to:

• Live in emotional poverty—feelings are unmanly, feminine
• Keep distant from others—don’t get too close, especially with other men, or people might think you’re gay
• Experience pervasive loneliness—it’s safer to keep a distance
• Exaggerate their autonomy—asking for help invites mockery
• Live with shame and relentless fear of shame

Many men go through life believing it’s not safe to be fully human. When their consequent unconscious suffering explodes, it sends painful shards flying everywhere—on a personal level from frustrating relationships to premature death; on a societal level from domestic violence to mass shootings.

The DSM serves up a banquet of intriguing disorders that describe a range of aberrations from the norm. Yet when it comes to males, it neglects the fundamental domains of men’s experience. We realized that if we wanted to explain the behavior of men like Mark and Jacob and find ways to help them, we needed to think differently about them.

MASCUPATHIC DISORDER: MANHOOD THROUGH A NEW WINDOW

In our search for a higher-powered lens with which to see men more clearly, we looked to the literature of gender role socialization—the process of inculcating children with societal norms and values. Beginning close to a half century ago, feminists revolutionized our understanding of gender, demonstrating that gender roles were not inherent but social constructs; they brought the dark side of gender role stereotypes to light. As Carol Gilligan pointed out in her catalytic book In a Different Voice, traditional psychology had ignored the voices and experiences of women, having based its research only on white male participants. In so doing it replicated society’s exclusion of women.

In her groundbreaking book The Feminine Mystique, Betty Friedan challenged the narrow definition of women’s roles, in particular taking Freud to task for his contention that “Law and custom have much to give women what has been withheld from them, but the position of women will surely be what it is: in youth an adored darling and in mature years a loved wife.”
Following in the footsteps of these leading women, men began writing about their male clients as well as their own experience. Over the last 40 years, they contributed revolutionary new ideas that challenged accepted views of masculinity. Two pioneers, Paul Kivel in *Men’s Work* and Frank Pittman in *Man Enough*, exposed the systemic social structure that induces and coerces boys to sacrifice a big part of their humanity in service to men’s toughness, domination, and power. And educator-activist Jackson Katz revealed how hypermasculine media images encourage men to mask their fear and shame. In *Tough Guise: Violence, Media and the Crisis in Masculinity* (the video he made with Media Education Foundation), Katz pointed out that while men certainly abused, hurt, demeaned, and subjugated women, they oppressed themselves as well. In addition, therapist Terry Real challenged traditional concepts of men’s mental health in *I Don’t Want to Talk About It*, describing the covert depression that men won’t admit they have. Real is credited with developing the concept of externalization—acting out to escape hopelessness and lethargy.

**Men’s Struggles Go Unnamed**

Before she wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan described the state of women as “a problem with no name.” In our work with men, we realized that the malaise men experience is also nameless. The *DSM* had poked around, pointing out pieces of men’s erratic personalities, but it offered no overarching concept, no identifying moniker for therapists to understand male clients and plan their therapies.

Early in our practices, when we’d worked primarily with men who had abused women, we’d often describe batterers as “hypermasculine.” As we broadened our practices to include men who struggled to find—and express—their emotions, and who avoided intimate relationships, we recognized hypermasculine only represented some men. Others did not manifest aggression and toughness; they were in fact hypomasculine, either unable or unwilling to meet the taxing requirements of masculinity, acting out like other men but for different reasons. As a consequence, we created the concept and diagnosis, M ascupathic Disorder (MPD), to describe men with a range of struggles.

MPD is a mental health condition—a pathology of masculinity—an imbalance in personality stemming from a socialized exaggeration of genetic masculine traits: aggression and invulnerability, and only a minimal expression of inherent feminine characteristics, openness and sensitivity. The symptoms—inadequate self-awareness and governance, emotional numbness and instability, relational ineptness and withdrawal—result in poor or failed intimate partnerships and parenting, excessive competition and one-upmanship and, in the extreme, violence against women, children, and other men.

Since the bar for achieving “acceptable manliness” is impossibly high, many men externalize, acting out their shame about their failure to be adequately masculine. Some abuse alcohol or others drugs; some throw themselves into their work, engaging in high-risk activities, or becoming preoccupied with sex. Most men are perceived to live “normal” lives only because traditionally such behaviors have heretofore defined normalcy.

**Like the Water Fish Swim In**

Though virtually every male could be described as having it, the severity of M ascupathic Disorder varies greatly. Although some men carry many symptoms that interfere with normal functioning and other men have mild cases, MPD is nevertheless a plague on all our houses. While not included in compilations of disorders it is because it’s so common it seems normal—like fish not knowing they are in water—it is our contention that MPD is far and away the most destructive pathology in the history of the human race. Of course there have been men over the centuries who have acted courageously and sensitively, self-sacrificing and honorable men who have been there in every generation. They have been tireless leaders working to achieve global goals of social justice and humanitarianism. Sadly, many men around the world in positions of leadership suffered from Mascopathy; the results have been devastating. Men suffering from Mascopathic Disorder have used it to rule the world since human beings emerged from the apes. In the 20th century alone, male-instigated wars and genocides led to a hundred million deaths.

The severity of M ascupathic Disorder falls on a continuum from severe to moderate to mild. The severe form we call “Consuming” because like an addiction, it takes over, leaving no aspect of life unaffected. “Problematic,” the moderate form, refers to the mascupath who displays fewer symptoms but, similar to a problem-drinker, his disorder manifests in some behavioral and relational difficulties. The “Negligible” type is comparatively symptom-free, but nevertheless struggles with occasional distorted thinking and errant behavior. (See box below.)

The presence of M ascupathic Disorder causes impairment in four domains of human functioning.

- **Weak self-concept** – A pattern of poor or distorted sense of self, excessive grandiosity or inadequacy; an extreme emphasis on self-presentation, and/or incongruence between thoughts/feelings and actions, resulting in impulsive and erratic behavior or withdrawal and insularity.
- **Inadequate emotionality** – Persistent difficulty with experiencing, naming, managing, expressing, and governing feelings, leading to behavioral instability and shallow and/or conflictual relationships.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consuming (Severe)</th>
<th>Problematic (Moderate)</th>
<th>Negligible (Mild)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak, unstable, and distorted self-concept leading to rigid patriarchal and grandiose thinking and aggressive/intimidating and sociopathic behavior including hypercompetitiveness and violence or asocial insularity and alienation</strong></td>
<td>Variable self-concept resulting in moderate interference with normal human functioning; hierarchical thinking leading to intermittent control tactics and emotional aggressiveness or episodic withdrawal</td>
<td>Stable, balanced, and positive self-concept with generally respectful and egalitarian thinking; occasional self-aggrandizing and controlling behavior, especially during times of stress</td>
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<td><strong>A poverty of healthy emotionality including the inability to identify, name, experience, express, or govern feelings; profound sense of failure, inability to empathize or express compassion</strong></td>
<td>Variable or limited emotional awareness; moderate deficiency in managing and expressing feelings; restricted capacity to empathize</td>
<td>Consistent ability to name, experience, express, and govern feelings. Frequent positive emotionality with moderate capacity for empathy. Occasional emotional distancing and/or over-reaction.</td>
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<td><strong>Poor, unstable relationships with frequent conflicts resulting in excessive and abusive behaviors; virtually no self-disclosure, intimacy, or emotional connection, often resulting in an obsession with sex as a substitute for connecting</strong></td>
<td>Variable satisfaction with partners and friends; moderate and variable levels of openness and intimacy; conflict resolution skills reduced in times of stress</td>
<td>Responsive, caring, and respectful with partners and friends; generally able to self-disclose, express empathy, and enter into intimacy; occasional, mild acts of aggression or distancing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Persistent externalization (acting out) through addictions, work, sex, violence, and high-risk activities; compensating for frustrations resulting from a paucity of expressions of accountability and poor life skills, especially deficits in relationships</strong></td>
<td>Moderate levels of externalization as a result of conflicts in relationships, disappointment, or stress; limited accountability as demonstrated through episodic rationalization and blaming</td>
<td>Generally high levels of accountability and limited use of externalizing behaviors due to relatively accurate and balanced perceptions of self and others, leading to gratifying relationships</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Mascupathy is an imbalance in personality stemming from a socialized exaggeration of genetic masculine traits, aggression and invulnerability, and only minimal expression of inherently feminine characteristics, openness and sensitivity.

Advantages of Group Work

Therapists who work with men have often found that of the three typical forms of therapy—individual therapy, couples counseling, and group work—group work is far and away the most effective; men’s groups often produce remarkable transformations.

Groups work for men because both the source of their problems—and the solutions—rest in the company of other men. While genetics play a part, it is the groupthink of an androgynous life—incorporating the best qualities traditionally associated with the masculine and the feminine.

From Treatment to Transformation

In treating Mascupathic Disorder, we have developed a three-stage protocol—resocialization, reclamation, and recovery. Goals include increasing men’s understanding of Mascupathic Disorder and its symptoms and developing greater emotional self-governance and relational abilities, as well as finding a sense of self.

Resocialization uses cognitive therapies in structured groups to challenge men’s core belief systems—I’m a guy and I’ve got to be tough—and open their minds to the alternative ways of thinking—I don’t always have to be aggressive. The process begins by acknowledging harmful behaviors such as distancing, control, and condescension as well as externalizing with substances, rage, control, and emotional or physical abuse in intimate relationships. Men also learn to replace grandiosity and rationalizing with clear and deliberate thinking.

While many programs, especially with court-referred clients, end after six to 12 months of cognitive treatment, we believe that is only the beginning. Once men have completed resocialization training, it is recommended they continue their personal work through experiential reclamation therapy. This phase continues the process of resocialization but adds psychotherapeutic group activities which guide men through the process of recovering the balances of childhood lost to rigid socialization: awe, easy intimacy, empathy, and spontaneity.

The third phase is recovery. Like rehabilitation from alcoholism, healing from Mascupathic Disorder is a lifelong pursuit, the ultimate goal of which is the creation of an androgynous life—incorporating the best qualities traditionally associated with the masculine and the feminine.

In 1973, 10 years after The Feminine Mystique was published, Betty Friedan wrote:

“How could women and men ever really know or love each other as long as we kept playing those roles that kept us from knowing or being ourselves? Weren’t men as well as women still locked up in isolation, alienation, no matter how many sexual atrocities we put their bodies through? Weren’t men dying too young, suppressing fears and tears and their own tenderness? It seemed to me that men weren’t really the enemy—they were fellow victims, suffering an outmoded masculine mystique that made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill.”

Fifteen years later, most men are still both perpetrators and victims of their own oppression; they still subjugate others. Meanwhile, women have made significant strides. Only 60 years ago the only jobs most women could get were as a nurse or schoolteacher. They frequently couldn’t open a bank account or buy a house without man’s co-signature. Certainly there is much work still before full equality (women still earn less than men), but many women are free of their mothers’ roles while men are stuck in their fathers’. They live in an outmoded masculinity, out of step in today’s world and certainly unappealing to women who want a partner who believes in equality, not a king-of-the-castle husband.

The act of self-disclosure is one of the most essential elements of this kind of therapy. As John Bradshaw, a master of understanding family systems, famously said, “We’re only as sick as our secrets.” As men and clinicians, we have learned the great paradox: that admitting shame—the last thing on earth most men want to do—is what begins to heal it and invites men to exercise self-care and self-compassion.

Geraldo, an Army colonel who did four tours in Iraq, wound up in the men’s therapy group after his wife kicked him out of the house, tired of his control tactics and abuse. Though he’d never been a man’s man tough guy, still he believed he should be the commander. When he finally opened up after ten months in the group, he admitted he’d been fearful that expressing emotions was dangerous to him and that he had learned to perceive emotional candor as a badge of courage.

One day, he told the group that Jane wouldn’t take him back. “It was just too late. Too much water over the dam.” Over the next six months, Geraldo grieved his loss. One day, Mark paused and looked at him: “Gerald, sometime you’ll meet another woman.”

“You,” Gerald replied. “But next time, I don’t want to be commander.”

“You don’t seem like much of a tyrant anymore.”

“I guess I’m a different kind of guy.”

“You’ve learned to how to live with other people.”

The struggles of men like Geraldo who strive to heal from the most toxic form of Mascupathy and adopt androgyny are beginning to receive the attention too long ignored by a society focused more on our acts of hurting others than on the hurts we experience ourselves. In our work we are feeling the shift. Men are showing up for each other in growing numbers as we work—and play—at transforming our lives. What could be called “new men” are present at every turn. We just have to be on the lookout for them. Still, treatment alone can’t accomplish the transformation of manhood. We recognize that social change—addressing [continued to page 34]
A Journey into Men’s Hearts of Darkness—and Light

**The Men’s Story Project:**

*Out Loud!*

(Proyecto Historias de Hombres: ¡En Voz Alta!)

Directed by Josie Lehrer, Sc.D.

Spanish, with English subtitles

107 minutes, Dark Hollow Films, 2013

Here are men more on an expedition into the heart of darkness and light that make up their lives than characters in a documentary film. The Men’s Story Project’s *Out Loud!* (Proyecto Historias de Hombres’s ¡En Voz Alta!) highlights diverse Chileans—celebrities, community leaders, and everyday men—sharing personal stories with a live audience at a popular theater in Santiago.

With unusual candor, the presenters address hot button topics including family relationships; substance abuse; bullying; aging; homosexuality and the Church; transgender identity and LGBT rights; violence between men; living with HIV/AIDS; breaking the cycle of domestic violence; the evolution of men’s social roles; poverty, manual labor, and classism; physical disability and self-actualization; and the healing power of self-acceptance, community, and love. Mediums include prose, comedy, dance, photography, and video.

Directed by the Men’s Story Project’s founder, Jocelyn Lehrer, the film “offers a unique window into the complexities of masculinity and its painful impacts on boys and men, girls and women,” noted Steven Botkin, executive director of Men’s Resources International. “Her introduction is a brilliant example of a woman being an ally for the healing and liberation of men. In both process and content, this film helps us all recover our humanness.”

The men’s stories illustrate the many meanings of masculinities and they share their accounts with such raw honesty that they become a collective Everyman reaching across gender, race, and class. Even though they are all Latino and speak from a cultural perspective unique to Chile, the struggles they narrate and solutions they found have universal appeal.

“I have worked with men for more than 20 years, and know well the need we have to tell our stories,” said Juan Carlos Areán, director of the National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities. “I also know that there are very few spaces where we can do so safely and authentically. Historias de Hombres provided a moving and powerful example of men overcoming their negative socialization and fear, and sharing openly both about painful and joyful experiences in their lives.”

Among those performing their stories are Coco Legrand, Chile’s most popular comedian; Pedro Sánchez Melivilo, a leader of Chile’s indigenous Mapuche community; and Andrés Rivera Duarte, the first transgender man to legally change gender in Chile.

Sponsored by Amnesty International, educational goals of the production were developed through interviews in Santiago with researchers, health care providers, educators and advocates regarding linking masculinities with key health and justice challenges in the country.

The film is a “spark we need to catalyze a movement,” said Esta Soler, president of the San Francisco–based Futures Without Violence. “I would love to see this project replicated in every city and town across the world—from New Delhi to Steubenville.”

The Men’s Story Project is a replicable, movement-building initiative that can be created with new groups of men in local communities, says founder-director Lehrer. To contact her, to arrange MSP presentations and trainings, or for more information, write josie@mensstoryproject.org

To purchase the film and discussion guide, visit www.darkhollow-films.com. To learn more about the Men’s Story Project, go to www.mensstoryproject.org.

—R.O.
For My Son, A Kind of Prayer

By Richard Jeffrey Newman

...for they know
Of some most haughty deed or thought
That waits upon his future days...

—William Butler Yeats,
“A Prayer for My Son”

Just before his mother pushed him through herself hard enough to split who she was wide enough for him to enter the world, I touched the top of my son’s head; and after he was born, the midwife—Vivian, I think it was—held my wife’s umbilical cord in a loop for me to cut, which I did, freeing our new boy’s body to enter the name we had waiting for him; and then Vivian laid him against the curve of his mother’s belly, giving him to the breast he would for years define his world by; and once that first taste of love was firmly lodged within him, she bundled him tight, placed him in my arms and, while I sang his welcome in a far corner of the room, turned to assist the doctor sewing up my wife’s birth-torn flesh.

I don’t remember what song I chose, and it’s been a decade at least since I’ve told anyone about my son’s first moments as my son, but they’ve come to me here, in this urologist’s waiting room, because I picked up from the coffee table the copy of The Nation another patient must have left behind, and the first article my eyes fell on, “Silence=Rape,” by Jan Goodwin, introduced me to Shashir, six years old and gang raped in the Congo. When they found her, she was starving; and when they found her, she could neither walk nor talk; and so they stitched together the parts of her the men had ruptured, fed her, gave her clothing; and that night she slept for the first time since no one knew when in a bed that was not the bush the militia had left her to die in; and maybe the tent walls shaping the room she lived in when Goodwin learned she existed had come to mean for her a kind of safety; and maybe that safety was fertile ground, where words for what the men had done to her, dropped like seeds from the mouths of those who rescued her, could begin to take root.

I have not been gang raped, but a man much older than I was when I was twelve forced his penis into my mouth, seared the back of my throat with what he poured out of himself and sealed into silence everything that took me fifteen years of pushing till who I was split wide enough that who I am could speak his first true words.

“Mr. Newman?” The nurse, white, blond, about my age, calls my name, one of the few she has not butchered, sitting as I am among the men of my neighborhood, where names that would twist the tongue of any English speaker are common, but I’m not yet ready to leave Goodwin’s piece. Maria was seventy when the Interahamwe tied her legs apart like a goat before slaughter; and the women Goodwin leaves nameless, most of them killed later by infection, their labia pierced and padlocked when their rapists were finished—the story belongs to them as well.

“Mr. Newman?”
I put the magazine down, bear those women with me as I rise towards the door I need to walk through so I can place in this doctor’s hand the left testicle I found a bump on three days ago. A few of my fellow patients glance up as I pass, one of them smiling, nodding his head, as if to say, “Don’t worry. It’ll all work out.”

I smile back, grateful for his small empathy, noticing as I do so that the flag pin on his lapel and the name of the newspaper folded over in his lap place his origin in, or at least his allegiance to, a country now making headlines for stories like Shashir’s; and I know such things don’t happen only over there; and of course not one man in this room has ever done enough, could ever do enough, to stop them, and so this place—where our penises are just penises, and our balls are glands, nothing more—becomes in my imagination where we are supposed to be, a kind of purgatory pregnant with poetic justice.

The door shuts behind me. The nurse turns a perfect about face, grins “Please, follow me,” over her shoulder, and leads the way in silence to a room dominated by a wall-size, four-color poster of the flaccid male genitalia. The poster, I notice, includes the foreskin; the plastic model sitting on the cabinet next to a box of tissues does not—something to ask the doctor about, but when he arrives my only thought resembles a prayer.

He snaps on his latex gloves; I let my pants fall to my ankles, my underwear to just below my knees, and I watch him handle what in my wife’s language are called my tokhm or “eggs.”

“It’s probably nothing,” he nods sagely, stepping back, peeling the rubber off his hands, I pull my clothing up, tuck in my shirt. “Still,” he continues—I’m fumbling with my zipper—“let’s check it again six months from now.” He smiles, offers his hand for me to shake, then moves on to the next man in the next room. I head back out the way I came, where my friend smiles and nods again, lifting his hand in a farewell I answer with my own nod and smile, the reprieve I’ve just gotten predisposing me not to assume the worst of anyone.

Outside, the wind rips the hood away from my head; snow-gusts slap me back and forth across my face; and I am reminded how quickly beauty turns cold, how easily death wears friendship’s face. I want to know how a man who loves his children does not see their faces in the eyes of the girl whose vagina he is opening with a bottle or a bayonet; I want to know how their voices woven into that girl’s screams do not paralyze his hands or keep his penis soft.

My son will never know Shashir, but he will know men who could’ve been, who’d gladly be, among the ones who violated her; and he’ll know women, and other men like me, who carry violation within them. A time will come, because it comes to all of us, when he’ll be forced to choose where his allegiance lies. These words are for him on the day of that decision.

Richard Jeffrey Newman writes about the impact of feminism on his life as a man and classical Persian poetry on our lives as Americans. His books include The Silence of Men and The Teller of Tales: Stories from Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh, a translation of part of the Iranian national epic. He is a professor of English at Nassau Community College in Garden City, N.Y. www.richardjnewman.com
A Short History of One of the Most Important Social Justice Movements You’ve Never Heard Of

By Rob Okun

For nearly two generations a growing number of men of all races and ethnicities in the U.S. and around the world have followed women both in working to prevent domestic and sexual violence, and also in redefining and transforming traditional ideas about manhood, fatherhood, and brotherhood. We’ve been called all kinds of names, but many of us describe ourselves as members of the profeminist or antisexist men’s movement.

Even though it has been nearly four decades since modern day men began this transformative work, embracing many of the ideas (if not always the label) of profeminism, the breadth and depth of the profeminist men’s movement is revealed in a range of programs and projects from boys to men and fathering to male survivors and men of color; GBTQ men and men overcoming violence; men’s health and men and feminism. Woven together, they create a multilayered tapestry revealing a wide rich swath of one of the most important social change movements you’ve probably never heard of.

Profeminist men hold the simple “radical” belief that gender and sexual equality are fundamental democratic goals and that women and men should each have the same rights and opportunities. Although marginalized and largely absent from the national conversation about gender in the mainstream media, modern-day profeminist men have been engaged in a sweeping critique of manhood and masculinity since the 1970s. The first large-scale organized effort was by the National Organization for Changing Men—now known as the National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS).

In 1975 a group of male students in a women’s studies class at the University of Tennessee organized “The First National Conference on Men and Masculinity” in Knoxville. Since that time, groups and organizations have sprung up across North America and in many parts of the world, following in the footsteps of the idealists in NOMAS, men in their twenties and thirties who had been inspired by the women’s movement. What may have begun in part as a kind of “gentlemen’s auxiliary”—providing childcare in part so mothers could participate in demonstrations—soon became an inquiry into a panoply of men’s experiences, in many cases reluctantly addressing the elephant in the room: male privilege.

Learning to Speak “Emotionalese”

Despite media messages that lag far behind on-the-ground truth, a progressive transformation of men’s lives is well under way. Men’s inclination to become involved in anti-sexist activism grew out of a sense of justness and fairness heightened by men’s involvement in the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s. For many, those feelings easily carried over to women’s call for liberation, itself nothing less than a social justice imperative of obvious historical importance.

Many men simultaneously felt threatened by and envious of women’s groups, women’s politics—the entire women’s movement. Most of us
couldn’t keep up. Women’s bilingual fluency—speaking both “Emotionalese” and “Politicales”—certainly made it challenging, but not impossible, for men to understand what was happening in those dizzying times; especially once we relinquished our heretofore unquestioned belief that in the world of gender there was only one official language: “Manspeak.” In those early days, some of us were confused and angry; some tuned out, choosing to ignore multiracial women’s marches toward liberation. Still, a small number of men began tuning in.

Acknowledging women’s fluency in Emotionalese, haltingly some of us began to talk about our struggles, our feelings, our inner lives. Trouble was we were primarily doing so with the people we believed could hear and understand us best—women. Slowly, over time, more of us realized (often with a firm push from our partners, wives, or women friends) that who we really needed to be talking to was other men.

Despite the modest number of men involved, chinks in the armor of conventional manhood are visible, and as our numbers grow the chinks grow larger, threatening to crack open. Since the late 1970s, besides activities in the U.S. and Canada, profeminist men’s work has been ongoing in Great Britain, Scandinavia, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Mexico, and Central America. In more recent years India and Nepal have joined the growing list, as have a number of African nations. The roots of profeminist men’s work are deep.

In North America, antiviolence men’s centers and men’s programs have offered general issue support programs for men, as well as groups for young men of color and GBTQ men. Fathers, groups and a variety of programs for boys on the journey to manhood also are on the rise, as are programs addressing men’s health, including male survivors of child sexual abuse. Batterers’ intervention groups began in the late 1970s and now operate in most states in the U.S., often overseen by state departments of public health. There are also numerous educational initiatives engaging men in gender violence prevention efforts on college and high school campuses, in sports culture, and through a variety of community-based organizations.

Since the late 1970s, profeminist men’s activities have ranged from op-eds and letters to the editor, newspaper signature ads, rallies, demonstrations and advocacy campaigns, as well as books and films—all aimed at offering an alternative to conventional notions of masculinities. As time and technology marched on, listservs were created, websites launched, electronic publications introduced, and social media campaigns inaugurated. (One of the most wide-ranging and comprehensive online resources XYonline: Men, Masculinities and Gender Politics, has long been maintained by internationally respected profeminist scholar-activist Michael Flood.) As a sign of the growth of the movement, there are today ongoing collaborations with long-established women’s programs across North America and internationally, often through women’s initiatives at the United Nations. (Eve Ensler, the activist and author most well known for writing the Vagina Monologues, made sure there was a “V-Men” page when she launched her organization’s V-Day website.)

In 2009, nearly 500 men and women allies from 80 countries met for four days in Rio de Janeiro at a symposium, “Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality.” The growing global movement, united under an alliance called MenEngage, now operates on every continent. Major conferences on related themes of men and women collaborating to prevent violence against women and promoting healthy masculinities for boys and men have been held in recent years across the globe. In North America there are numerous events occurring each year from coast to coast, in our largest cities and at many of our most prestigious colleges and universities.

Recognizing the movement’s growth and potential to become even more of a force for social change in addressing gender justice issues, in 2013 the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded a two-year grant to establish the first Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities. Headquartered at the State University of New York, Stony Brook it is being led by the sociologist and writer Michael Kimmel. The profeminist movement is beginning a new chapter. It’s been a long road to get here.

Resources for Changing Men

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

For Young Men

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

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

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

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

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

On Masculinity

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

Engaging Men
A public resource for anyone committed to gender justice and overcoming violence against women
engagingmen.net

ManKind Project
New Warrior training weekends
www.mkp.org

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

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

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

XY
www.xyonline.net
Pro-feminist men’s web links (over 500 links): www.xyonline.net/links.shtml
Pro-feminist men’s politics, frequently asked questions: www.xyonline.net/misc/pfaq.html

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.cbnational.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.idvac.org

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

For Fathers

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

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

Fathers with Divorce and Custody Concerns
Looking for a lawyer? Call your state bar association lawyer referral agency. Useful websites include:
www.dadsrights.org (not www.dadsrights.com)
www.divorce.com
www.divorcecentral.com
www.collaborativealternatives.com
www.collaborativedivorce.com

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

Feminist Fathers
Resources for dads seeking to raise fully realized human beings with a mindfulness to how gender socialization affects parenting and children
http://feministfatherhood.com/

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

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

Men and Feminism

Finally, A Feminism 101 Blog
An information resource, for both feminists and those questioning feminism
finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com

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

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

Men’s Health

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

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

Giving and Receiving Guidance & Hope
A page of brief stories written by men who were sexually abused.
www.jimhopper.com/hope/

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.1in4forusa.org/themensprogram.php

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

Men’s Rights
National organization supporting men’s rights
www.mensrights.org/
EMERGE
Counseling and education to stop domestic violence; comprehensive batterers' services
www.emergedv.org

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

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

Healthy Dating
Sexual Assault Prevention
www.canikissyou.com

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

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

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

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

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.mvynational.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sexual Violence Prevention 101
Sexual assault and domestic violence prevention workshops by Todd Denny
http://www.olywa.net/ttdenny/

Stop Porn Culture
A group for those willing to question and fight against pornography and porn culture
stop porn culture.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

Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project
Provides crisis intervention, support and resources for victims and survivors of domestic abuse
gmdvp.org/gmdvp

Hear My Voice
Educates and engages young people in the LGBTQ community to create safe and healthy relationships, and connects victim of dating abuse to help and legal services.
hearmyvoice.breathecycle.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

Intersex Society of North America
Devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with an anatomy that someone decides is not standard for male or female
www.isna.org

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

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

MEN’S RESOURCES CENTERS

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

Lake Champlain Men’s Resource Center
– Burlington, VT
Center with groups and services challenging men's violence on both individual and societal levels
www.lcmrc.net

Males Advocating for Change
– Worcester, MA
Model men's center offering support groups for men and consulting with individuals and groups on a range of issues related to men and masculinities.
www.mrfchange.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

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

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

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

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I can’t speak for you, but there are plenty of things that I think deserve not to be seen as normal. Take Kink.com, for example. Despite the cheerleading of shock value crusaders, I don’t really care how many cultural boundaries the company believes itself to be transgressing; tying up and pissing on another human being is simply wrong. If this sentiment gets me kicked out of some sort of radical consensus, so be it.

What is transgressive for some is business-as-usual oppression for others. As Sheila Jeffreys explains, “Transgression is a pleasure of the powerful, who can imagine themselves deliciously naughty. It depends on the maintenance of conventional morality. There would be nothing to outrage, and the delicious naughtiness would vanish, if serious social change took place. The transgressors and the moralists depend mutually upon each other, locked in a binary relationship which defeats rather than enables change.” Transgression, she contests, “is not a strategy available to the housewife, the prostituted woman, or the abused child. They are the objects of transgression, rather than its subjects.”

Being radical is a process, not an outcome. To be radical means keeping our eyes on justice at every instance, in every circumstance. It means maintaining the agenda of justice when picking our issues and the strategy and tactics we use to take them on. Within a patriarchy, men cannot be radical without fighting sexism. This is to say that radical activism and pornography are fundamentally at odds. Where are the radicals fighting porn? The ones worth the name are already in the heat of battle, and on the side of justice, whether or not it gets us off.

As for the rest, we’re going to have to make them. As the current radical Left self-destructs under the crushing grip of misogyny—as it already is and inevitably will—it is up to us to gather from the rubble whatever fragmented pieces of good there are left. And it is up to us to forge those pieces into a genuinely radical alternative.

Women have been doing this work for a long time. But it is by and for men that women’s lives are stolen and degraded through pornography. And it is by and for men that the radical Left colludes with this injustice. So it must now be men—the ones with any sense of empathy or moral obligation left—who take final responsibility for stopping it. Women have already mapped out the road from here to justice. Men simply need to get on board.

It’s no easy task taking on the cult of masculinity from the inside, but it’s a privileged position in comparison to being on the outside and, thus, its target. And this cult needs to be dismantled. Men need to take it down inside and out, from the most personal sense to the most global.

Men can start small by boycotting porn in our own lives, both for the sake of our individual sexualities and for the sake of the many women undoubtedly suffering for its production. Through images of dehumanized women, pornography dehumanizes also the men who consume those images.

Endnotes:
5. Jeffreys, Sheila. Unpacking Queer Politics.

Ben Barker is a writer and community organizer from West Bend, Wisconsin. A member of the Deep Green Resistance organization, he is currently writing a book about toxic qualities of radical subcultures and the need to build a vibrant culture of resistance. He can be contacted at benbarker@riseup.net.

Private Manning

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white male culture (the one that we all live in and holds us captive).”

Theater is the most political, social art form, one that could spur an audience into action because they’ve gone through something and perhaps had a transformation in their thinking. This play allows us all to consider who we’ve become in the world, especially in the last 10 years, by relating Chelsea Manning’s experience and how she’s been treated. The soldier taking the fall for two failed wars deserves to have their pathy, visit the Institute for the Prevention and Treatment of Mascupathy (dcmetrotheaterarts.com).

John Stoltenberg was creative director of the “My strength is not for hurting” sexual-assault-prevention media campaign, which he conceived. He continues his communications- and cause-consulting work through media2change and writes regularly about theater for DC Metro Theater Arts. He tweets at @JohnStoltenberg and @media2change.

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Endnotes:
5. Jeffreys, Sheila. Unpacking Queer Politics.

Masculopathic Disorder

[continued from page 26]

burning issues of race and class—must be addressed fully and intentionally to bring about a more humane society.

In the short time since Hanna Rosin published The End of Men, the transformation of men has been accelerating and, we believe, sooner than you might think, “the end of men” will be transformed into another story—one of men’s new beginnings.

Charlie Donaldson is a psychotherapist, former codirector of the Men’s Resource Center of West Michigan, and author of Restorative Treatment, a guidebook for therapists.

Randy Flood is director of the Men’s Resource Center of West Michigan, a psychotherapist, and cofounder—with Donaldson—of the Institute for the Prevention and Treatment of Mascupathy. He offers workshops and trainings on male socialization and the treatment and prevention of Mascupathy.

To reach Donaldson write chasdonaldson@rocketmail.com. Contact Flood at RFlood@fountainhillcenter.com or by visiting www.menscenter.org. For more information about their forthcoming book on mascupathy, visit the Institute for Prevention and Treatment of Mascupathy at http://www.mascupathy.org.
Psychologists Charlie Donaldson and Randy Flood create a new terminology: **Mascupathy - a pathology of masculinity.**

They explain that men’s errant behavior is not capricious or malevolent; instead, a product of male socialization that exacerbates inherent masculinity leading to the loneliness, fear, and shame that characterizes so many men’s lives. The authors believe innovative treatment regimens and societal interventions can **cultivate a self-aware and whole-hearted masculinity.**

“The last half century saw the revolution for women. A **new era is upon us,** a time when men are discarding their ancient and errant masculinity, and seeking the soul of a new manhood. Mascupathy is an important book, the first to identify the problem, awaken a new consciousness, and usher in men’s second act, **revealing hope and transformation.**”

David Rosen, Ph.D., author of *Changing Fictions of Masculinity*

For ordering information contact Institute for the Prevention and Treatment of Mascupathy.

**Also available on Amazon December 1.**

mascupathy.org
“ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS YOU’VE NEVER HEARD OF…”

VOICE MALE: The Untold Story of the Profeminist Men’s Movement takes you inside one of the most important social justice movements you may never have heard of—the social transformation of masculinity. Although it’s been under way since the late 1970s, it still largely remains under the radar of much of society.

Thematicallly arranged essays by leading experts and moving first-person stories illustrate how a growing movement of changing men has discovered in feminism the basis for redefining masculinity and creating healthier lives.

The longtime editor of Voice Male magazine, Rob Okun introduces audiences to men examining contemporary manhood from a variety of perspectives—from boys on the journey to manhood to men overcoming violence; from fatherhood and mentoring to navigating life as a man of color, as a gay man, and as a survivor. The voices of a chorus of women can also be heard in the book’s pages.

Long recognized for articulating a hopeful vision of the future of men, Okun sensitively presents a vivid portrait sure to be welcomed by a wide audience interested to learn what is happening with men. Voice Male offers compelling evidence of a new direction for men and illuminates what’s around the bend on the path to gender justice.

Voice Male: The Untold Story of the Profeminist Men’s Movement can be ordered through Interlink, on Amazon, and your support of independent bookstores.

“FINALLY A BOOK FOR WOMEN TO FEEL HOPEFUL ABOUT MEN.

Rob Okun and a chorus of contributing writers chronicle a movement of men standing with women in the struggle to end violence against women and girls. But his brave book does more than that, revealing an emerging new man culture where men are reclaiming their tears and their hearts as they join women in creating a world where we are all safe and free.”

—Eve Ensler, playwright of The Vagina Monologues; author of In the Body of the World and I Am an Emotional Creature.

Interlink Publishing
Changing the Way People Think About the World
www.interlinkbooks.com

Robokun.net