T
he National Rifle Association’s public face, Wayne LaPierre, woke me up the other night. No, it wasn’t a midnight phone call; it was a dream. He wanted to know what I’d thought of “the speech.” You know, the insensitive one he delivered last December 21, just seven days after Adam Lanza shot his mother in her bed and then went to Sandy Hook Elementary School and murdered 20 first graders and six school staff before turning one of the weapons in his mother’s arsenal on himself.

In the dream, I could hear him reciting the oft-repeated line from his arm-the-schools diatribe: “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” My dream self kept responding: “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a cream pie is a good guy with two cream pies.” What I remember next is LaPierre and me watching him on television delivering “the speech.” It was really creeping me out. Just as he came to the “good guy with a gun” line, out of the shadows a guy I couldn’t quite make out (me?) pied him. Twice; cream pie all over his sour puss. As Wayne-LaPierre-on-television wiped his face clean, an off-camera voice called to him: “Wipe the smirk off, too, Mr. LaPierre.” Before I could see how he responded, I woke up.

I’ve wrestled with the idea of writing about Mr. LaPierre for some time. Frankly, I haven’t wanted to give him any more ink than he has already received. Still, as a symbol of the brand of manhood I am committed to transforming, he continues to pull me in. One thought keeps nagging me: I have no idea if Mr. LaPierre is pompous, arrogant, self-righteous, and belligerent “in real life.” I want to think it’s an act designed to appeal to NRA members or, better yet, potential members. What I want to believe is that in the privacy of his home he is kind, attentive to his family, clears the table, loads the dishwasher, and wipes the counters clean before checking his email and watching the basketball playoffs. What I want to believe is that when news broke that the NBA’s Jason Collins announced he was gay, Mr. LaPierre turned to his wife and simply said, “Good for him.” (That the next day he may have asked an aide to find out if Mr. Collins was a gun owner and might make a great ambassador to gun-toting gays and lesbians—well, that’s just business.)

Alongside their wives they are leading the way in a cultural shift Mr. LaPierre and his NRA backers in Congress have heretofore never seen. The tears of fathers are mixing with the fierce determination of mothers to create a tribe of new social justice change agents—activist parents.

This is a good sign for those who support the Newtown parent-survivors’ promise to continue lobbying Congress until substantive gun reform legislation is passed (www.sandyhookpromise.org). Beyond that pledge, though, will soon come another to urge—no, demand—that Congress, the Obama administration, and the media add gender as a central part of the national conversation about mass shooting violence. We need only look at the deadly Boston Marathon bombing to notice that gender, specifically white maleness, was once again absent from the discussion. Rather than being distracted by Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev’s religion, let’s remember that like Newtown’s Adam Lanza, James Eagan Holmes (Aurora, Colo.), Wade Michael Page (Oak Creek, Wisc.), and Jared Lee Loughner (Tucson, Ariz.), the Chechen brothers were white males.

For white men in particular this is a perfect moment to leverage whatever privilege and influence our status affords us to add white maleness to a conversation now fixated on guns (see Charlotte and Harriet Childress’s commentary on page 14). It won’t be easy to make the change; there are a lot of forces against us. Powerful, white male forces. If we are to accelerate the pace of change in redefining manhood, then we have to expose its dangerous conventional white male expression at every possible moment—just as at the same time we must encourage each other to spotlight expressions of egalitarian, profeminist manhood whenever we see them. (Just look at the organizations and groups listed in the Resources section at the back of this magazine for starters.) We need to amplify our voices in telling our side of the story. For too long, we’ve ceded the stage to Mr. LaPierre and company. Those days have to come to an end. The time to begin is now.

In the years to come I believe Mr. LaPierre will be seen as a throwback to a bygone era. I know, I know; we’re not there yet.

There’s a simultaneous cultural truth operating as we fishtail along the slippery road of gender justice reformation. On the one hand a man like Mr. LaPierre is still attracting followers despite the disgust and astonishment with which his tone-deaf analysis of how to prevent gun violence is being received by a sharply growing number of citizens. On the other, men like Mr. Collins are opening the door for younger males—gay young men of course and lots of others—hungry for a way out of the “man box” that seeks to constrain them. Mr. Collins’s announcement about his sexual orientation didn’t receive anywhere near the attention Mr. LaPierre received for essentially telling us about his.

In the years to come I believe Mr. LaPierre will be seen as a throwback to a bygone era. I know, I know; we’re not there yet. You may call me a dreamer—I already shared one of my dreams—but I’m not the only one. Sooner than later, he will be marginalized as a credible voice representing the will of the American people, replaced perhaps (besides the next Jason Collins) by the eloquent voices of the heartbroken fathers of Sandy Hook murder victims. There was a time when we didn’t hear much from men after heart-wrenching family tragedies. (“He’s the silent type,” a female relative would report. “He just keeps it all bottled inside,” she’d say to explain a stoic man holding back his tears—and his emotions.) Well, the Sandy Hook dads are different.

I suggest putting a teacher in every gun store.

—Jef Johnson
Is There a Future for “Man Up?”
by E. Ethelbert Miller, Shira Tarrant and Stephen McArthur

Working with Violent Machistas in Costa Rica
by Gregory Jaquet

Why White Men Keep Mum about the White Maleness of Mass Shootings
by Charlotte Childress and Harriet Childress

Sports & Hypermasculinity
Violence, Male Culture and the Jovan Belcher Case
An Interview with Daryl Fort by Jackson Katz

I’m Mad as Hell at Conventional Manhood
by Rob Okun

One Egg, Please, and Make It Easy
The Pursuit of High-Tech Babies
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Feminism for Men in 1914
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Mom Museum’s Male Voices

When the Museum of Motherhood of Motherhood (www.mommuseum.org) hosted a gathering on Valentine’s Day as part of One Billion Rising!, the largest global action in history to end violence against women and girls, we wanted Voice Male to be a part of the day. As a museum and teaching facility that focuses on women, mothers and families, we’ve been handing out copies of the magazine for some time to visitors who find our space on the upper East Side of New York. Editor Rob Okun was kind enough to speak at our “Rising” and we continue to distribute the magazine because we see this kind of partnership as a hopeful sign in the growing collaboration between disparate women’s and men’s organizations working for the common goal of gender justice.

Joy Rose, founder
Museum of Motherhood
New York, N.Y.

VM: Compassionate Communication

I am an 86-year-old woman who was fortunate to have a husband for 58 years who was kind, nurturing and seldom concerned himself with control issues. (He died in 2011.) In my faith group (Unitarian-Universalist) we just completed a course in Compassionate Communication. In so many violent situations, the couples are poor communicators. I was happy to read your writings. What a great movement you are helping to spearhead!

Dorothy McKenna
Green Valley, Arizona

From Grandma’s Heart

This Winter issue with its faces of the Sandy Hook victims has moved me to write and encourage all Voice Male readers to do what they can to advance VM subscriptions, especially among colleges, other organizations of learning, community based organizations and elected officials. Please share your copies with others in order to advance the conversations and the activism so needed to end male violence in the many forms it is taking to the planet beyond Sandy Hook. The future for all our young is seriously threatened. From this grandmother’s heart to your eyes, please do all you can.

Bernice Gordon
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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

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**Men @ Work**

**Shedding Tears for the Decline of Men?**

Is the labor market in such bad shape that it’s deflating men’s chances of marrying—and causing a further fraying of the social fabric of the American family?

Longtime business and economics columnist at The Washington Post Robert J. Samuelson thinks so. With nearly a half million people having left the labor force in the last six years, Samuelson believes the problem is only going to get worse: Even before the Great Recession, men who had only graduated high school faced lower wages and a harder time securing a job and as a consequence were not considered good marriage prospects. The result has contributed to an uptick in single-parent families. Additionally, unyielding high unemployment exacerbates these destructive trends.

In a paper prepared for the liberal think tank Third Way (www.thirdway.org), economists David Autor and Melanie Wasserman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (http://economic.mit.edu/files/8754) attribute the decline of marriage to men’s economic weakness compared with ascendant women. Females are now seen as more independent economically than are men, and the days of marrying for a guy’s financial stability are over.

In the past 35 years, hourly wages for men 25 to 39 have fallen 20 percent for men with only a high school diploma, while wages for their female counterparts have risen by 1 percent. During the same time frame, the number of male high school graduates with jobs fell by 9 percent and rose for women by the same amount.

[continued on page 6]

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**Dallas Men Say Domestic Violence Is “Our Problem”**

They said they wanted to break the culture of silence around domestic violence.

Called to a rally by Dallas mayor Mike Rawlings, thousands of men gathered in Dallas at the end of March, encouraging themselves and their peers to take responsibility for violence against women.

“My dad was the biggest, strongest man I ever knew, and he hit my mom and broke her nose,” said legendary Dallas sportscaster Dale Hansen, his voice cracking with emotion. “Never has such a big man looked so small in the eyes of a little boy,” Hansen, a nightly news staple for 30 years, told the gathering. For once, he dropped his reputation as a jokester and a smart-ass. At the Dallas Men Against Abuse rally (www.dallasmenagainstabuse.com) he wasn’t kidding around.

The rally, held in the shadow of the imposing concrete City Hall, drew a wide swath of Dallas-area men called to action by politicians, activists, and television personalities, by pastors, priests, and imams, and by sports figures who, in a place like Dallas, occupy an almost religious status themselves. Hours of programming featured former Dallas Cowboys Emmitt Smith and Roger Staubach and recorded messages from daytime television’s Dr. Phil and Bishop T. D. Jakes of the Potter’s House, one of the country’s largest megachurches.

Mayor Rawlings organized the rally in response to the January murder of 40-year-old Karen Cox Smith, who police say was shot and killed by her estranged husband, Ferdinand Smith. Smith had been accused of trying to strangle his wife in December, and a warrant was pending for his arrest when he allegedly shot her in a parking garage on January 8.

In the aftermath of the shooting and in light of police reporting a dramatic increase in domestic murders in the city—husbands and boyfriends killed 26 wives or girlfriends in 2012, up from 10 domestic murders in 2011—Mayor Rawlings held a press conference at City Hall earlier this year.

In a story in the Dallas Morning News, Rawlings is quoted as saying in the middle of his remarks, “If I could, I’d ask all the women to leave the room. I want to talk to the men now. This violence is our fault.”

Though much of the programming focused on physical violence, college football hall-of-famer (and former NFL player) Don McPherson opened up the scope of the event to include talk about rape, sexual violence, and emotional abuse. He said he’d never seen so many men gathered to address the problem of domestic violence in one place before.

“We call it a ‘women’s issue,’” said McPherson. “It’s our issue.”

Certainly the men in the audience saw themselves—as well as their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters—as victims of domestic violence. Byron Sanders and Christian Yazdanpanah, 29-year-olds living in Dallas, said they both grew up in abusive homes but had never before spoken to each other about it before the rally was announced.

“I grew up in an abusive house, but we just put that under the rug,” said Sanders, recalling how his family would pretend nothing was wrong when “company” would visit. Yazdanpanah grew up in a similar situation, but it wasn’t until he got an e-mail from Sanders inviting him to the rally that he ever told his friend that they shared a similar history.

Sanders said he saw the rally as a “blow” against the culture of silence around domestic violence.

“We never talk about this,” agreed Yazdanpanah. But that changed, at least for two young men, on a cloudy Saturday in Dallas.

—Andrea Grimes

(For more information, go to: http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2013/03/23/thousands-of-dallas-men-rally-against-domestic-violence-its-our-problem/#sthash.va7bs3Qq.dpuf)
partly because of jobs evaporating in industries previously filled by less educated men, like manufacturing and construction. Female workers have better adapted to a work environment where a bachelor’s degree is more important than ever in getting a good job. Figures from 2010 show that among 35-year-olds, women were more than 15 percent more likely than men to have attended college. Lower- and middle-class men lag behind women in their social class in education, employment, and wages. Is anyone paying attention?

**FEELING LIKE A FATHERLESS CHILD**

Is there a crisis of fatherless children in U.S. families? Oprah Winfrey thinks there is and cites government figures to back her up. Nearly 24 million children in the United States—one out of three—live in biological father-absent homes, according to 2011 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Statistics like that are alarming. Still, not every absent father stays that way. When a father resurfaces to reconnect with his son or daughter, how can children open up to him when he reaches out to try to rebuild trust amid their pain?

In a two-hour program on fatherless sons on a special Oprah’s Life class, one father admitted to walking away from his children and then shared his struggle trying to find a place again in their lives. In the program, his apologies and explanations didn’t seem to help repair the relationship.

“What [your children are] looking for is to see and feel your heart break,” Oprah says. “When they can see and feel your heart break, and not have it be an intellectual discussion about ‘where I was’ and ‘I wasn’t there for you,’ that is when they’ll be able to see you—not just as the image they’ve created for the father who was absent. They’ll be able to see you as a human, feeling man, [maybe even a] fatherless son who also had pain.”

Until a parent “is able to say ‘Forgive me’—not from [his] throat or…head, but from the core of [his] being,” says relationship expert Iyanla Vanzant, his children will not know that they can trust his presence, and won’t trust him.

The program first aired at the beginning of May on OWN. To learn more go to www.oprah.com/fatherlessons and www.oprah.com/oprah-lifeclass and http://singleparents.about.com/od/communicatingwiththekids/f/absent_father.htm.

**RINGING THE BELL FOR PEACE**

Calling violence against women the “single greatest human rights violation of our generation,” actor Sir Patrick Stewart is among the latest celebrities to step forward to prevent violence against women. Stewart is part of a global campaign, Ring the Bell. Its tagline: “One million men, one million promises. End violence against women.”

For some time Stewart has been speaking more openly about his experiences witnessing his father abusing his mother when he was a child. “I witnessed terrible things, which I knew were wrong, but there was nowhere to go for help,” he told 200 activists, actors, politicians, filmmakers, and musicians. He was shocked hearing those who condemned the abuse. “I heard police or ambulance men, standing in our house, say, ‘She must have provoked him,’” or, ‘Mrs. Stewart, it takes two to make a fight,’” he told his audience. “They had no idea. The truth is my mother did nothing to deserve the violence she endured. She did not provoke my father, and even if she had, violence is an unacceptable way of dealing with conflict. Violence is a choice a man makes and he alone is responsible for it.”

Stewart spoke in March at an event marking International Women’s Day at the Diplomat Ballroom at the UN Hotel in New York. Among the speakers were Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former NFL quarterback and Voice Male advisory board member Don McPherson, who reminded the audience, “White people confronted white people to fight racism. Men need to confront men.” Dallas mayor Mike Rawlings, who has vowed to curb Dallas’s domestic violence rate, held a Ring the Bell rally for men and boys attended by 10,000.

The Ring the Bell campaign is run on the Breakthrough.tv website (http://breakthrough.tv/ringthebell/). Breakthrough is a company crafting messages for human rights campaigns using a mixture of new media and traditional publicity techniques. It has offices in India and the U.S. In India the campaign is called “Bell Bajao.”

**A CALL TO COACHES**

Can CBS Sports, Verizon, and the Baltimore Ravens play a role in preventing domestic violence? The trio of unlikely partners believes it can.

The Verizon Foundation took the lead, engaging A Call To Men—a leading national violence prevention organization—to train hundreds of middle school, high school, college, and community coaches in mid-April at a domestic violence prevention training program entitled A Call To Coaches: Your Voice Counts.

“We wanted coaches to get the tools and resources, hear the stories from the rest of us in terms of what we can do to shape healthy men out there,” said CBS sportscaster James (JB) Brown, who interviewed Baltimore Ravens new linebacker Chris Canty as a way to boost attendance. At the interactive seminar in Baltimore, coaches and mentors were introduced tools to foster a respectful manhood, promote healthy relationships, and encourage positive locker room talk. Participants left the training with a list of action steps and free resources to equip them to continue the conversation with their teams and in their communities.

The training is part of the Verizon Foundation’s Your Voice Counts campaign, which seeks to engage and empower men to speak up and be part of the solution to end domestic violence. Seminar training materials are available for public download on the Your Voice Counts website (www.verizonfoundation.org/yourvoicounts).
Facing the Ugly Truth About Prostitution

Ready for the ugly truth about prostitution and sex trafficking? They are crimes with lots of victims.

On any given day, more than 16,000 women and girls are prostituted in the greater Chicago area. The vast majority entered the sex trade after fleeing abusive homes, often while still in their teens. The average age of death for a prostituted woman? A heartbreaking 34 years old.

These are just a few of the facts that prompted the Voices and Faces Project (www.voicesandfaces.org) to launch “The Ugly Truth,” an End Demand Illinois public service campaign (www.enddemandillinois.org/). The Ugly Truth is a multimedia advertising campaign that seeks to raise awareness of the harm inflicted on women who are trafficked or prostituted, while calling the public to clear and measurable action on their behalf. Created through a dialogue with the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, the campaign is currently working to pass critical anti-sexual exploitation legislation in the Illinois state legislature. The Ugly Truth campaign seeks to create a demonstrable change in public attitudes about trafficking and prostitution in Illinois, and serves as a national model for coordinated policy and media efforts. The campaign, which launched in Chicago, Springfield, and Rockford in April, is expected to reach tens of millions during the campaign’s three-month duration.

“Kindling” a New Magazine for Dads

A new magazine for fathers has recently been launched. The Brooklyn-based Kindling Quarterly, cofounded by David Michael Perez (publisher and editor) and P. August Heffner (publisher and creative director), describes itself as “an exploration of fatherhood,” but with an aesthetic, creative emphasis. The first two issues are replete with lush photography of dads and their kids, and writings on fatherhood that tend toward the insightful and literary. The magazine’s website (www.kindlingquarterly.com) notes its highlighting of “creative individuals whose work and lives are inseparable from their role as a parent.”

“There is no shortage of familiar portrayals of dads in media,” the publishers write, “yet we aim to present a thoughtful dialogue about fatherhood that is missing from our cultural landscape. Men who are active caregivers are not a novelty and we do not depict them as such. While the subjects of our stories are fathers, each issue appeals to anyone interested in art, creativity, and community. Kindling Quarterly playfully assesses and celebrates the multitude of experiences that form contemporary fatherhood.”

A year’s subscription to Kindling Quarterly costs $46 plus $12 shipping in the U.S. Individual issues may be purchased for $14 plus $3 shipping.

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Man Down

I seldom use the term “man up” in conversation. I do recall my wife saying it to me after a silly argument earlier this year; so I guess the expression has a washcloth and towel in my house. The words however sound so militaristic or perhaps what a football coach might say at halftime to a losing team in a losing season.

What are you supposed to do when you man up? Check your jockstrap? Punch someone? Pay the bills? Help a woman you don’t even find attractive? Is “man up” something you tell your son? Since I don’t know how to drive a car or repair things around my house, I’ll never be able to man up. I’ll be a failure in the eyes of other men. It also means my wife will look at me with pity and the shaking of her head that secretly means she made a mistake when the vows were passed around.

Many times it’s my wife who seems to “man up.” She’s the one yelling at drivers in other cars, arguing the price of food items with clerks in supermarkets, and instructing our children on how not to back down when the possession arrow is pointing in their direction.

I don’t think we need another word or term to replace “man up.” I think we just need to understand our full potential and relationships to others. If we simply do our best we don’t need to crave a power drink to quench our thirst. And what might it mean to man down? Would this mean the end of conflicts and wars? If so, it might explain why we never hear the expression used this way. “Man down” usually refers to someone injured or worse.

How do we reclaim language? What if “man down” was defined as someone in prayer—kneeling in a pious state? What if “man down” was the ultimate act of not submission but humility?

Maybe God is the only one waiting for us to man up!

—E. Ethelbert Miller

E. Ethelbert Miller is a literary activist, director of the African American Resource Center at Howard University, and a writer and poet who has authored several books.

Code for “Suck It Up”

Man Up is another way of saying “Suck it up. Be tough.” This constant demand for men to be hard is part of the problem when it comes to conventional manhood. I asked my students at California State University, Long Beach, if they thought “Man Up” could ever be reclaimed. Most said “Man Up” could never truly have a positive spin because its meaning is so closely tied up with the core ideas of hegemonic masculinity. My students make a compelling point. But if “Man Up” isn’t the slang-of-the-day there will be another term just like it to take its place.

It’s crucial that we go deeper and rethink masculinity (like Voice Male does). We need to uproot the expectations and demands of hypermasculinity that limit men and are so dangerous to us all. With that in mind, being strong, brave, bad-ass, or powerful isn’t the problem. It’s what we do with that strength, bravery, bad-assery, or power that matters. One chapter of my book Men and Feminism is titled “Man Up.” This title calls out the term for scrutiny. At the same time, it’s a call to action, a strong request for men to step up to the political and ethical demands of nonsexist commitment. In other words, the phrase says, “You wanna be tough? Be nonexist. Now that’s being tough.” There are many starting points for gender justice action. Getting rid of the term “Man Up” is one; transforming the rigid demands on masculinity is another.

—Shira Tarrant

Shira Tarrant is the author of Men and Feminism (Seal, 2009) and editor of Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex, and Power (Routledge, 2013).
As a teen boy in the 1960s, “be a man” and “act like a man” were the phrases I regularly heard. What I believed my father (and mother) were teaching me were ideas of righteousness, standing up for what I believed, standing by those who may have needed my help and support, and being a mensch. They gave me the gift of understanding that being a man had everything to do with being respectful, caring, empathetic, generous, tolerant, and nothing really to do with violence, coercion, control, or dominance—although on one memorable occasion, when I was being physically bullied in eighth grade, my father did suggest to me that if I simply “popped” the kid once on his nose, he would stop. I believe my father thought of this clearly as what a man could do to defend himself.

Take a look at all the definitions of “man up” in the Urban Dictionary (www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=man%20up): “Don’t be a pussy, brave it, be daring,” “strap on a pair, grow some balls, stop being such a complete and utter wuss,” “take control, be strong, rise to the moment,” “to work through impediments and obstacles without whining,” “derived from the phrase ‘cowboy up,’ meaning ‘be tough, be strong, act like a real cowboy,’ which was in use in rodeo circles at least since the mid-1970s. ‘Man up’ means, similarly, ‘Be tough, be a man, do what a man should do.’” There are a few other, more positive, definitions and usages, but you get the picture.

When I played football at a military academy in the 1960s, coached by an unhappy and aggressive man who had played football under Paul “Bear” Bryant at the University of Alabama (but who didn’t make it into the NFL), the pejorative sense of “man up” was everywhere in different guise: “Don’t be a sissy,” “No pain, no gain,” “Don’t just hit him, hurt him,” and, of course, “Don’t be a crybaby.” All the while, the funny little military caps we often wore at the academy were called “cunt caps,” reminding us that our manhood was always in question.

I don’t like the phrase “man up” and I never use it in my work supporting change in men’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. At the very least, it is far too limiting.

At a conference a few years ago, playwright-activist Eve Ensler said: “What greater tragedy is there than for a man to be separated from his own heart.” I want men to connect to “their own hearts,” I want men to understand what it means to be fully human. I guess I want them to “human up.”

—Stephen McArthur

Stephen McArthur is a direct service advocate for victims and survivors of domestic violence in Vermont and works with hundreds of students from middle school to college each semester in helping to answer the challenges confronting them, including bullying, sexting, dating violence, and domestic violence. His poem “When Men Do Nothing” was published in Voice Male (Summer 2012).

www.theprisonbirthproject.org
David is 32. He was a policeman. Then he went to jail for committing domestic violence.

“Lived with my parents,” he says with a sigh. “I spent my days in the prison. I was locked up in a cell for 23 hours a day.”

Now a free man, David speaks to 70 men who listen to his confession in the sitting room of the Instituto WEM in San Pedro, a neighborhood east of San José, Costa Rica (www.institutowemcr.org). The institute provides counseling to violent men and helps them work through their personal issues to confront the causes of gender-based violence. Forced to attend by the courts after an episode of domestic violence, forced by their wives, or simply joining of their own free will, these men represent part of Costa Rica’s male society, and they are here to talk about what they’ve done and what they’ve learned.

David wears jeans and a dated training jacket. His hair is short, and he doesn’t know what to do with his arms in front of such a large audience. He seems uncomfortable. His lip trembles and his eyes are wet.

“A year ago, I was violent with my wife,” he begins. “I was sentenced to nine months. After the sentencing, I came to WEM workshops to learn to manage my anger. I did 45 sessions, and I understood many things. And then I screwed up. I broke the restraining order against me. What I did—and I regret it—is write a message to my wife’s sister. A message. And they ordered my arrest.”

RENOUNCING VIOLENCE

David now stands like a policeman—legs apart, hands on hips. He seems to reach for his belt, gun, and handcuff holster to pose. But he’s no longer a cop. He’s exposed, alone. And he tells his story to the group of men who have chosen to become “better” and to renounce violence by participating in these workshops.

“In my cell there was a man who got 35 years for killing his wife. A murderer. I lived with him 23 hours a day for nine months. With a murderer.”

David touches his nose, looks down and pauses. The assembly is silent. Álvaro Campos, the director of WEM who has initiated this session, approaches David and puts his hand on his shoulder, encouraging him to continue. “Tome su tiempo,” take your time, he says.

David starts again, but his voice quavers. “It’s hard when you’re in the prison, you’re a police officer and the prisoners know it,” he says. Another pause, and David sobs. In this room with green walls and trembling neon light, he looks like a sad child.

“I received no calls. All these sons of bitches who were my friends? Not a single call in nine months. The only contact was from my parents.”

When he finishes, Campos returns and applauds, thanking him for his contribution.

WORKING WITH MEN

There are five or six pensioners, 20 men aged 40 to 60, 20 more between 30 and 40, and a few younger ones. They are dressed in sports clothes and work attire. They came to the WEM Institute to redefine masculinity, get educated, and hopefully prevent more violent episodes—or as Campos describes it, the institute is “combating inequality by working with men.”

Campos points out that domestic violence is problematic throughout Latin America.

The region’s violent history—military regimes, revolutions, and authoritarianism, for example—and a patriarchal tradition have created virtual dynasties of violent men, who act out against their wives and children. Despite its more peaceful history, Costa Rica is also affected by this phenomenon.

Also, the trivialization of violence due to drug trafficking and gang activity is another cause of almost automatic recourse to intimidation and the exercise of power.

POWERFUL, VIRILE, DOMINANT

WEM has 15 employees, psychologists and social workers and a network of men known as the “Red de Hombres”—50 volunteers who work with the institute to organize activities. These professionals have created a method to work with men based on their values and histories. They ask the men to commit to becoming nonviolent. This helps address the “machismo” problem, a social construction that allows them to become powerful, virile, and dominant.

Many workshops are organized to deal with these issues: group sessions, anger management classes, management of marital separation,
They are here to talk about what they've done that part of Costa Rica's male society, and the causes of gender-based violence. Forced "Homes east of San José, Costa Rica (www. of the Instituto WEM in San Pedro, a neigh who listen to his confession in the sitting room to go out," he recalls. "I experienced true solitude. The prison had domestic violence. David is 32. He was a policeman. "It's hard when you're in the prison, you're a police officer and the prisoners know it," he says. "Hopeless, many men understand that they need to learn something new. We suggest they come to WEM," he says.

During a group session not long ago, men are motivated to speak, telling their stories, their mishaps. And when a participant faces a challenge, it becomes a therapy session. The rules are repeated at the beginning of each session: "Hablar de mis sentimientos, escuchar a los otros." Speak what we feel, listen to others.

Alfonso is 28. He says he was “sent” by his wife because he is a machista (male supremacist) and is authoritative. Alfonso says he was violent with his children, and his wife complained of being terrorized.

"How did you come to be like this?" asks Alex, the group facilitator.

"At home. My grandfather raised me. He hit me with his belt and set his dogs on me when I didn’t do things the way he wanted," Alfonso responds.

He seems shy, his body closed tight. He holds his scooter helmet against himself and speaks with his eyes downcast.

Assisted by facilitators, Alfonso uses powerful words: “pain in the heart,” “an open wound.” “I would tell my grandfather that I need love and not orders or punishments,” he says.

"I INHERITED THE THRONE OF MY FATHER"

Alfonso’s confessions bring others. Edgar is 50-something. He says little at first, but then lets go, revealing that he was tortured by his parents; they scalded his hands in boiling water when he was six.

Edgar cries for a long time. There is an awkward silence. He says he understands why he became a violent man. It was because of his father.

“I inherited the throne of my father,” he says to illustrate that he has behaved like a dictator in the family he created. “I advance and move on through these sessions. But my wife and children, who have grown up, still say that they are terrified. How long will it take me to regain their trust?”

In this ugly room without heat, men speak of a father’s lack of love, a mother’s caress, a child’s games, and missing tenderness in their lives. And slowly, the image of the Latin American machista is cracking, and the possibilities for becoming a new kind of man are cracking open.

Gregory Jaquet is a 35- year-old Swiss expat living in San José, Costa Rica, where he volunteers for Eirenesuisse, a Swiss NGO (www.eirenesuisse. ch). To see more stories and pictures go to his blog, www.henryjaquet. com, and visit the WEM Institute’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Instituto-Wem-Masculinidad-sexualidad-y-pareja. A version of this article appeared in the Tico Times, an English-language newspaper published in the Costa Rican capital, San José.

In modern Latin American society, women have changed. They’re empowered to study, work, and live as liberated people. Latin American men, however, have not gotten the update about women’s emancipation.

MEN MISSED THE UPDATE

Campos says that in modern Latin American society, women, at least, have changed. “In Latin America as elsewhere, empowerment allows women to study, to claim the right to work, to live in society, share the chores. This emancipation was explained to Latin American women in schools, by mothers, aunts, and sisters. The men, however, have received no update.”

Often, he says, men’s source of knowledge for how to behave in a relationship comes from their fathers. Young men from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Mexico, for example, imitate the actions they have seen— or experienced—during childhood.

“Many men who come to WEM do so because they fail in their relationships or (in) living as a couple. They lose their wives, their children, and they must pay support when they earn almost nothing,” Campos says.

In Costa Rica, laws call for severe punishment in domestic violence cases; home evictions, restraining orders, and child support are ordered by the courts every day.

Attitudes of some Latin American men have not changed much since the time of the conquistadores. The exaltation of “virility,” including taking on the exaggerated trappings of authority, can be a common issue.

Alex is a psychologist and conducts workshops on anger management at the institute. He says that in modern Latin America as elsewhere, empowerment allows women to study, to claim the right to work, to live in society, share the chores. This emancipation was explained to Latin American women in schools, by mothers, aunts, and sisters. The men, however, have received no update.”

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Why White Men Keep Mum about the White Maleness of Mass Shootings

By Charlotte Childress and Harriet Childress

The national conversation about the Boston Marathon bombing suspects shows again how important it is to continue to write about the effects of white male culture on violence (see Voice Male Winter 2013), say Charlotte and Harriet Childress, researchers on social and political issues. Despite the Tsarnav brothers being immersed in U.S. white male culture for 10 years, virtually all discussion about their actions focused on their religion. The suspects were clearly white men of European descent. Nevertheless, the overwhelming response to what happened dismissed their race. Why?

The Childresses noted that many conservatives essentially said the men weren’t white; they’re Muslim.

“Most of the tens of thousands of comments that followed, the response found on 300 websites, and on talk radio shows offered no logical conversation about solving the violence problem. The comments we saw appeared to be from white males. Their primary goal was to shift accountability away from their group and their leaders.”

Imagine if African American men and boys were committing mass shootings month after month, year after year. Articles and interviews would flood the media, and we’d have political debates demanding that African Americans be “held accountable.” Then, if an atrocity such as the Newtown, Conn., shootings took place and African American male leaders held a news conference to offer solutions, their credibility would be questionable. The public would tell these leaders they need to focus on problems in their own culture and communities.

But when the criminals and leaders are white men, race and gender become the elephant in the room.

Nearly all of the mass shootings in this country in recent years—not just Newtown, Aurora, Fort Hood, Tucson, and Columbine—have been committed by white men and boys. Yet when the National Rifle Association (NRA), led by white men, held a news conference after the Newtown massacre to advise Americans on how to reduce gun violence, its leaders’ opinions were widely discussed.

Unlike other groups, white men are not used to being singled out. So we expect that many of them will protest it is unfair if we talk about them. But our nation must correctly define their contribution to our problem of gun violence if it is to be solved.

When white men try to divert attention from gun control by talking about mental health issues, many people buy into the idea that the United States has a national mental...
Health problem, or flawed systems with which to address those problems, and they think that is what produces mass shootings.

But women and girls with mental health issues are not picking up semiautomatic weapons and shooting schoolchildren. Immigrants with mental health issues are not committing mass shootings in malls and movie theaters. Latinos with mental health issues are not continually killing groups of strangers.

Each of us is programmed from childhood to believe that the top group of our hierarchies—and in the U.S. culture, that’s white men—represents everyone, so it can feel awkward, even ridiculous, when we try to call attention to those people as a distinct group and hold them accountable.

For example, our schools teach American history as the history of everyone in this nation. But the stories we learn are predominantly about white men. To study the history of other groups, people have to take separate classes, such as African American history, women’s history, or Native American history. And if we take “Hispanic American History,” we don’t expect to learn “Asian American History,” because a class about anyone but white men is assumed not to be inclusive of anyone else.

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This societal and cultural programming makes it easy for conservative, white-male-led groups to convince the nation that an organization led by white men, such as the NRA or the Tea Party movement, can represent the interests of the entire nation when, in fact, they predominately represent only their own experiences and perspectives.

If life were equitable, white male gun-rights advocates would face some serious questions to assess their degree of credibility and objectivity. We would expect them to explain:

- What facets of white male culture create so many mass shootings?
- Why are so many white men and boys producing and entertaining themselves with violent video games and other media?
- Why do white men buy, sell, and manufacture guns for profit; attend gun shows; and demonstrate for unrestricted gun access disproportionately more than people of other ethnicities or races?
- Why are white male congressmen leading the fight against gun control?

If Americans ask the right questions on gun issues, we will get the right answers. These answers will encourage white men to examine their role in their own culture and to help other white men and boys become healthier and less violent.

Charlotte and Harriet Childress are researchers and consultants on social and political issues. They are the co-authors of Clueless at the Top: While the Rest of Us Turn Elsewhere for Life, Liberty, and Happiness, on outdated hierarchies in American culture. To learn more, go to http://cluelessatthetop.com/
Just two weeks before the Newtown massacre, another high-profile murder-suicide dominated the 24/7 news cycle and—briefly—captured the public’s imagination. On December 1 last year the news broke that 25-year-old Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher had murdered his 22-year-old girlfriend, Kasandra Perkins, and then drove to Arrowhead Stadium where he committed suicide in front of his coach and other Chiefs staff. Until Newtown pushed that story off the front pages, there had been an outpouring of commentary from people in the gender violence prevention field, sports journalism, and the cultural mainstream.

Much of the conversation revolved around men’s violence against women as an ongoing national tragedy, and the specific aspects of professional football culture and its unique and often combustible mixture of hypermasculinity, bodily self-sacrifice, and misogyny, along with the stark reality that the players—many of them young African-American men—are under intense pressure to perform in an industry where they can become famous and make a lot of money, but where their physical and emotional health takes a backseat to the demands of the business.

In the wake of this tragedy, many people in the gender violence prevention field called on officials of the National Football League to respond by increasing their efforts to provide counseling services to players and their families in need, as well as to provide training for team personnel in how to detect and intervene in potentially volatile situations, and to implement violence prevention programming league-wide.

The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program, which I cofounded in 1993 at Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society, has worked extensively with college and professional football players, coaches, and administrators for two decades. In addition, over the past decade MVP has also been called in to work with professional sports organizations after high-profile domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment incidents. Focused workshops at such “teachable moments” can help make future incidents less likely if the participants—individuals and organizations—are willing to forthrightly address some of the underlying causes.

Jovan Belcher’s murderous actions formed one of those teachable moments. Since then, countless people inside and outside sports culture have been talking about domestic violence and asking: what can we do? To provide some badly needed context for the national conversation sparked by the Kansas City tragedy, Voice Male agreed to provide a forum for me to engage in a dialogue with my friend and MVP colleague Daryl Fort. Fort has long been among the most senior trainers with MVP, and is one of the most experienced male gender violence prevention educators in the world. He has worked extensively with NFL players, coaches, and front office staff since 2006. A former senior adviser to the governor of Maine, Fort is a 1992 graduate of the University of Maine, where he played on the football team.

Jackson Katz: You’re a graduate of the same college football program as Jovan Belcher, although you’re almost a generation older. That must have hit closer to home for you than it did for most of us. Can you talk about your initial thoughts and feelings when you heard that he had murdered his girlfriend and then took his own life?

Daryl Fort: Like many people around our former collegiate program and among his NFL peers, I felt a deep sadness. Personally, it struck a nerve that was already close to the surface because a couple of weeks earlier, a former high school classmate of mine here in Maine had murdered his wife and committed suicide. On an almost annual basis, the majority of all homicides in this state (as in so many others) are domestic violence related. And almost all of those murders are perpetrated by men against women. It is always disturbing when a man decides to externalize his own pain by lethally assaulting someone he purports to love and care about.

JK: There are hundreds of domestic violence murder-suicides in our society every year. But because this one was perpetrated by a professional athlete, people want to talk about how male sports culture—especially football culture—might be implicated. But as someone who has worked extensively in gender violence prevention with men inside and...
outside of sports, I was wondering if you could offer any observations about whether football players react similarly to or differently from other men with whom you’ve worked on these issues.

DF: The fact that an NFL player killed his intimate partner is why so many people are talking about this issue now. It’s why many people want to read about it. What makes this a potentially important moment to talk more about these issues is that we know so much about the dynamics involved in the overwhelming majority of DV homicides, as well as the violent and abusive behaviors of many, many perpetrators. We need much more serious dialogue, asking some important questions such as: Why do many men use violence or the threat of violence to gain or maintain control within their intimate relationships? Why do so many people—from professional athletes to, say, mortgage brokers—choose not to “get involved” in the face of this abuse?

JK: It’s important for people to know that in Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), or other programs that utilize the bystander approach, the kinds of abuses we talk about are generally not the sensational murders that happen periodically. Sexist attitudes and behaviors occur along a continuum, and MVP encourages men to interrupt and challenge each other in a range of ways. It’s not just about helping guys know how to detect or what to do when their teammates or friends might be on the verge of killing someone.

DF: No question. At the end of the day, we’re trying to get people to consider the connection between disrespectful, harassing, abusive attitudes and language and the violence and abuse most everyone agrees is unacceptable. We’re looking at rape, murder, and domestic battering at the top of a pyramid of very destructive behavior. At the bottom of that pyramid lies the foundation for those almost universally denounced crimes, things like sexually bigoted “humor,” sexist language, and objectification.

In a larger culture where sexist behavior and sexist media are considered edgy, marketable, and cool, it’s a process to get guys to look past what feels normal and harmless to see the potential harm. Even for guys who are willing to recognize a lot of what they see and hear as abusive and disrespectful, it still takes courage to step into the social backlash they’re likely to get from peers, team-mates, and colleagues who are likely to tell them to lighten up for saying “Hey man, why you gotta call women bitches all the time?”

But with the challenge there also lies an opportunity, when we’re talking about engaging high-level athletes. On the one hand, we’re talking about guys who in many ways are supposed to represent the edgiest, the coolest, and the most “manly.” For them, there is some pressure to go along and uphold rather than buck that system. On the other hand, we are also talking about guys who stand on a cultural platform because of their status. For the many guys who take that responsibility seriously, it’s about leaning hard into that desire to want to do the right thing by shifting the conversation about what “the right thing” is and challenging them to have the courage to take action.

JK: In the Belcher case, many people focus on the violent nature of football, or speculate about physiological factors that might have arisen from head injuries he sustained. I think it’s comforting for many people to think that in cases of horrific violence, “something must have snapped.” But in MVP sessions with men, we talk a lot about manhood and social norms, both in the larger society and in various subcultures. How do you see men responding to that discussion?

DF: Men’s responses are basically the same whether we’re working with college or professional football players, athletes of other sports, military personnel, or corporate professionals. There is almost always a cross-section of responses within football and non-football peer groups; some guys are reluctant—the discussion is especially challenging because of the degree to which some of them have invested in the gender stereotypes of how they are supposed to relate to one another as well as women. We offer an opportunity to have an unvarnished dialogue about these subjects, and guys are often quick and eager to engage.

Men who are reluctant participants at the outset often become the most enthusiastic proponents of taking positive action. For example, at the beginning of an MVP training on one of the largest military bases in the world, a master sergeant with 19 years’ service in the Marine Corps made it clear that he had much more important things to do than talking about sexual violence and how to prevent it. He made everyone in the training aware that he was there because it was required. But by the second day, some junior noncommissioned officers were expressing doubts that they could leave the space and challenge their peers about abusive behavior toward women. The master sergeant firmly told them he didn’t think they had the right attitude, and that he expected more of them.

JK: Many people imagine that football players—because they occupy such a hypermasculine and privileged space—would be particularly resistant to this kind of introspection about men’s violence against women. Do you think that’s the case?

DF: No. I find men want the opportunity to talk about relationships and the challenges that often surround navigating the expectations that the culture can impose on men—expectations to behave in certain ways and represent dominant, in-control roles in their relationships. Elite football players have many of the same issues about masculinity and relationships—and some of the same anxieties—as other guys. But many people see them as “alpha males” who have it all figured out. I believe some of the assumptions other people make about who we are and can be as men trouble NFL players as much as they do regular guys on the street. I’ve had many, many of these guys eager to talk about those pressures when they feel there is a safe environment to do so. Facilitating that space is a big part of my job. It can help when you’re sitting in a locker room or meeting space that some of these guys spend more time in than they do on the verge of killing someone.

JK: Some men can get very defensive when you try to strip away the tough exterior.
DF: Often we see an initial defensiveness regarding the subject; I once had a young college basketball player from a Division II school ask me before a session, “I’m from the Bronx, what can you teach me about violence?” Of course he was flexing a little bit, trying to let me know a classroom couldn’t teach him anything of value about life “on the street.” It’s still a surprise to many who work with us that the “teaching and learning” isn’t some kind of PowerPoint lecture. Want to have a conversation—one that is structured yet open, honest, and frequently raw—and, hopefully come to some often difficult and powerful conclusions about our responsibilities as men hold ourselves and each other accountable with courage and compassion.

Another assumption a lot of these guys make coming in is that we’re going to point fingers at them and treat them all as potential perpetrators. For some, that has been their experience. For many others, it is a taught reflex in the wake of the media stereotype of “athletes behaving badly.” Of course, a big part of the real message is that men’s violence against women affects all of us one way or another. What can we do as men, as brothers, fathers, uncles, cousins, teammates, friends, to be part of the solution? Once these guys see they have an opportunity to participate in an honest dialogue, to speak their minds, the introspection, the curiosity about one another’s perspective, and their personal desire to talk about personal wants, needs, and challenges often takes over. Don’t get me wrong—not everyone feels comfortable with the content of these conversations. Far from it. Especially since we focus on their responsibility to address these issues within their peer cultures and interrupt their teammates’ sexist behaviors. For a lot of people that’s anxiety-producing. Think about it: How do I tell my friend that taking that drunk woman home to try and have sex with her is a bad idea for him and her, when before we went out, his game plan was to get laid? How do I talk to my boss about how inappropriate and uncomfortable I think sexist banter around the office is when he/she’s one of the participants? When we bring it down to those types of authentic and difficult circumstances, you can see the wheels turning in people’s minds because many of them have encountered those very situations. In terms of inspiring leadership, finger wagging won’t get it done. But in a team/peer group concept we have encountered those very situations. In terms of inspiring leadership, finger wagging won’t get it done. But in a team/peer group concept we don’t necessarily have to go it alone—We can have each other’s back. That’s also part of the message.

JK: What’s your strategy for motivating men as leaders in gender violence prevention?

DF: A way to do this is to get folks to see themselves as the friends, family, teammates, peers of both perpetrators and victims of abuse. We will ask directly what it might feel like to have a woman they care deeply about be the victim of violence or abuse. Too many don’t have to imagine it—they already know. Others find it upsetting and infuriating. An important dynamic to consider is to ask ourselves how we would feel about someone or a group of people who had the opportunity to do something about stopping that abuse. In the end, most of us want those bystanders to find a way to help, whether they know our loved one or not. The next step is to figure out how individually and collectively we can develop and nurture the tools to actually help. But the opportunity to step up and make courageous choices here comes, in part, from recognizing how much influence we have over our peers’ attitudes and behaviors on a daily basis already. We do it in positive ways and, unfortunately, in negatives ways as well. It is our choice to make.

JK: One particularly sensitive dimension of the Jovan Belcher case is his—and his victim’s—race. Belcher was African-American, as was Kasandra Perkins. I realize you did not know Belcher personally, and so you can’t presume to know the dynamic of his, or their, relationship struggles, and how race did or did not play a critical role. But as a black man yourself, and one who has facilitated countless dialogues with men and women of color, as well as white men and women, can you talk about how race—and racism—plays a role in workshops devoted to men’s violence against women? Do men ever talk openly about race?

DF: Like almost everywhere in our culture, it is often a challenge in MVP sessions to have a nuanced and honest discussion about the dynamics of race. It’s woven through the fabric of American life. One of the issues is an old one: guys in a room mixed along racial lines are usually unwilling to speak to any conflicts over race. Ironically, this is also true within sports and military cultures, where over the years great strides have been made in this country in the ways that people work together across racial lines. You might think some of those bonds help to create an environment where enough trust exists to have those difficult conversations. But as with gender, utopian dreams often overshadow our vision of reality.

Race is always a subtext to the work we do, but sometimes we make it visible and explicit. There may be 40 football players sitting in a stadium meeting room having a conversation and the split is 60/40 black-to-white. I’ve often asked a group of guys who have no issues referring to women as “bitches” how they would respond to a group of white guys using the term “niggers” to describe their teammates of color. Most groups consider the racially bigoted term unacceptable, because, they will say, the word has a history and current meaning that is derogatory. It’s degrading to black people. Well, doesn’t the “b-word” carry the same derogatory status, both historically and in current times? Half may look at me like I’m crazy. Another quarter of the group may take on a contemplative disposition. The other quarter of the group may nod in agreement and challenge the rest to see their point of view. The personal challenge we’re posing to each person in this instance is, “What is the difference between racial bigotry and gender bigotry—in principle? Just because we have normalized one form, does that make it right? And further, don’t we all still make the choice to participate in and/or condone the use of bigoted language?” To be clear, it’s not a magical spell that transforms everyone’s opinion. But people are always engaged, and you can clearly see some attitudes change.

JK: In an interview the day after the murder-suicide, Chiefs quarterback Brady Quinn said, “When it happened, I was sitting and, in my head, thinking what I could have done differently. When you ask someone how they are doing, do you really mean it? When you answer someone back how you are doing, are you really telling the truth?” Quinn was expressing what many people around perpetrators—and victims—often feel. Could I have prevented something terrible from happening if I knew more, and was willing to act? In MVP trainings we encourage men to speak up and support their teammates and friends when it’s possible, or to interrupt their abusive behaviors—even if they merely suspect something might be going on. We make it clear that being an active bystander is an act not only of friendship but of leadership.

DF: This can feel like tricky and anxious territory for a lot of guys; how do I “get in his business,” meaning issues about a teammate/friend’s personal relationship or apparent depression. What it highlights is the limited emotional range of expression and means of support within which too many people—men in particular—operate. Sadly, in the sports culture, there seems to be even less. Think about what Brady Quinn was suggesting: locker room culture doesn’t allow its male inhabitants to ask for or offer certain types of emotional support. It’s the type of support that is labeled “feminine,” and that’s the last thing many men want to have associated with their reputation—especially among other men. My experience is that there is implicit pressure to limit your range of deeply expressed emotions to the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. But think about it: if your teammate is reluctant to share with you problems he’s having in his relationship for fear of being “clowned” as a punk or a “pussy,” can you really say you’ve got his back?

T
here are too many damn tragic anniversaries of men killing women. Pick any month and you’ll find them. Take June 12—the 19th anniversary of the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson. Unbelievably, her ex-husband O. J. Simpson, the former professional football player, was found not guilty of killing her and her friend Ronald Goldman, 25—the same age as Jovan Belcher, the Kansas City Chiefs linebacker who murdered his girlfriend and himself last December 1. That horrific act of domestic violence was big news until the mass murders in Newtown, Conn., two weeks later bumped the story from the headlines.

Outraged citizens distracted themselves with cries of “Gun control now!,” “Reform violent sports culture,” or “Shame on the NFL.” (Kansas City played its regularly scheduled—and highly lucrative—game the day after the murder-suicide.) The old adage “Follow the money” comes to mind, but let’s put a bookmark there; I don’t want to get distracted, too.

Here are the facts: It was domestic violence. It was murder. Belcher killed his “beloved” Kasandra Perkins, 22-year-old mother of his three-month-old daughter Zoey, at their home and then drove to team headquarters and killed himself in front of his head coach, general manager, and other staff. Missing from the news accounts? It’s the masculinity, people.

In the aftermath of the murder-suicide, I can’t get the anti-mantra “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore” out of my head. That famous line from the classic film Network just won’t go away. Maybe that’s a good thing. Maybe millions of us should open our windows, stick our heads out and yell it too, adding this additional phrase: “I’m mad as hell—that we keep ignoring the shadow side of masculine culture—and I’m not going to take it anymore.”

Just as they did after the mass killings in Newtown in December and last summer in Aurora, Colo., the media and elected officials have again failed to focus on the twin root causes: men’s mental health and how men are socialized.

Just as it was well before Columbine in 1999 and Virginia Tech in 2007, and the Sikh temple outside Milwaukee last summer—and all the other “school/temple/cinema shootings”—it’s not about where the tragedies happen; it’s about who pulls the trigger. As stated many times in these pages, the vast majority of good men don’t abuse and don’t kill. But we need to be talking to these pages, the vast majority of good men don’t abuse and don’t kill. But we need to be talking to these pages, the vast majority of good men don’t abuse and don’t kill. But we need to be talking to those who were there because they seemed high-functioning men with the honorific of “role model.”

For many years, I facilitated batterer groups at an antiviolence men’s center and saw plenty of seemingly high-functioning men who were there because they acted abusively. Intervening with such men, trying to educate and encourage them to unlearn 30 or 40 years of male socialization in 30 or 40 weeks is among the most challenging work I’ve ever done. A lot of times it felt like trying to climb Mount Everest in shorts and sneakers.

For Jovan Belcher, being part of an antiviolence class at UMaine should have only been the beginning of his education. Clearly, he needed more help. And, as a society, we have to do much more. All the literature at campus information tables or community antiviolence rallies, all the pledges men sign, all the women’s groups we support, only scratch the surface.

We need a sustained, nationwide education campaign that begins in preschool and continues through college.

For starters, how about if middle school, high school, college, and university administrators and faculty spend time over the summer planning teach-ins to begin when schools resume? How about if the secretaries of education and health and human services contract with organizations that years ago developed curricula that address nonviolent communication, peace building, and conflict resolution? How about a parallel effort overseen by the Centers for Disease Control to roll out a comprehensive study of both male mental health and male socialization? And, on a local level, how about hospitals securing resources they lost years ago for classes for expectant fathers? We can’t begin early enough.

We need an all-out effort now, one that includes an array of allies: from gun control campaigns to sports broadcasters airing antiviolence commentaries. But none of it will matter if we don’t ask more of the men on the sidelines to take the field and answer the call to fundamentally redefine masculinity. Now. It’s late in the fourth quarter. We have no more time-outs. The game is nearly over. But just one more thing: It’s not a game.

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A version of this commentary was published in Ms. (www.msmagazine.com/blog/blog/2012/12/06/im-mad-as-hell-at-conventional-manhood/).
I am an official member of the Late Boomer Generation. We grew up after the Pill and the Baby Boomers, in the socially transformative 1970s and ’80s, watching with wide eyes while millions of American women—some with children and some not—infiltrated formerly closed-to-females professions like medicine, law, and politics. This exodus from the kitchen into the boardroom created a thrilling, radical shift in home and office politics, in the economy, and in relations between the sexes.

“Shoot for the stars,” some of the more thoughtful women advised us, “but don’t forget about the kids.”

We are the generation that also came of age at a time of burgeoning reproductive technologies. We grew up with dazzling front-page stories heralding the marvels of test-tube babies, frozen sperm, and egg donors; stories that helped paint the illusion that we could forget about our biological clocks and have a happy family life after—not necessarily before or during—the workplace promotions.

Each newsstand brimmed with stories about older celebrities becoming mothers with the help of miraculous fertility treatments. A few years ago, photographer Annie Leibovitz birthed her first child at the age of 52, while actress Geena Davis delivered at 48 and supermodel Christy Brinkley at 44. More recently we read about singers Mariah Carey and Celine Dion delivering twins at 41 and 42, and actresses Courtney Cox and Marcia Cross became mothers at 43 and 45, respectively. From where we stood, science and technology was the New God, giving women once considered over the hill a chance to start a family in middle age. Whether we knew it or not, we comforted ourselves in a security blanket of medical and media reassurances that age and motherhood no longer mattered.

On my wedding day, a friend of the family asked if I was going to have children. I told her I didn’t know.

“You’re so young. You have plenty of time,” she responded. “My sister-in-law never wanted children and she had two in a row in her early forties. You’ll do just fine.”

I was 35 at the time, but I wasn’t worried about conceiving. I was more concerned about my ability to raise an emotionally balanced and healthy child who felt loved and respected. My soul had barely survived the second half of my own childhood and the idea of creating a family from scratch, now that I was finally happy in a relationship, seemed anti-intuitive to me. I had true faith in my husband’s parenting abilities, but when it came to me I still had serious doubts. I always needed to know there was a way out of whatever situation I was getting myself into, and I learned at an early age that children and exit strategies don’t mix. Once a baby is delivered into your arms, you are its sun and its moon, its wheat fields and rivers. Without you, it will die. I looked upon this as an enormous responsibility and to some degree a great burden. Parenting was simply too overwhelming for me to consider—until the day I turned 40 and realized that I would never be the Mother from Hell I imagined myself to be.

That morning, I solemnly swore that my number-one life priority would be making a baby. This courageous decision marked one of the first times in my conscious adult life that I intentionally placed all my
eggs, so to speak, in one basket. That October morning, I looked in the mirror at the faint crow’s-feet visible around the outer corners of my eyes and gave myself a stern talking to. “It’s time,” I told myself. “No more flip-flopping on the baby issue. It’s now or never. Understand?”

I meekly shook my head yes. I may have run away from motherhood before, but I was ready for it now. So five years after I had first uttered the words “I do,” I said it again. I put my fears and arguments on hold, threw my birth control pills out the window, and tried to make a baby the “old-fashioned way.” After six months and no pregnancy, my nurse practitioner suggested that my husband, Michael, and I begin using an ovulation kit. “It will tell you when you are ready to ovulate,” she said, patting me reassuringly on the arm. “You can also rely on your vaginal discharge. When it becomes very viscus, like egg whites, you’ll know you’re ovulating or near ovulation.”

Like so many other well-meaning people in my life, she was confident I would become pregnant. “My youngest child was born when I was 43,” she said, beaming me a big smile. “You just never know.”

Her faith in me meant a lot, and I began to latch on to the idea that I had invincible eggs and Michael had invincible sperm. I was optimistically convinced that together we could certainly make at least one baby. We hopped along the Baby Trail equipped with our little ovulation kit, going through the motions of intercourse as directed on the back of the box we purchased at CVS. On a certain day of the month, I would pee on the stick provided and when we saw the appropriate set of colored lines come into focus like an old Polaroid photo, we would stop what we were doing and make love. Fourteen days later, I would pee on a home pregnancy stick and wait for the right constellation of colors to appear, which they never did. Each month we waited with great anticipation that we might be pregnant, and each month we weren’t.

One day well into the Baby-Making Process, I collapsed on the floor during a yoga class. Intense pain flooded my lower right side, and I became dizzy and nearly fainted. I managed to drive myself to the hospital emergency room where I received the first of many ultrasounds and vaginal probes. Tests revealed a cyst on my right ovary that doctors believed was endometrial. Bad news for two reasons: one, endometriosis was known to inhibit pregnancy, and, two, it was likely to become inflamed and irritated again during my monthly cycles unless I had surgery to remove it. While I was contemplating what we should do, pain once again dropped me to my knees. Eight weeks later, for the first but not the last time in my life, I was sedated while my gynecologist removed visible signs of the growth from my womb.

All in all, we had lost about six precious months of baby-making time, putting me at close to 41 years old. If I had been deaf to the ticking of my biological clock before, it was now so loud it kept me awake at night with worry. Though we were both wary of the medical establishment, everyone we spoke to told us that if we really wanted to have children it probably was time to weigh in with a SWAT team of fertility experts who might help us to conceive.

We chose a prominent clinic in the Boston area that, according to its website, was highly regarded in the industry for being one of the founders of IVF—in-vitro fertilization—otherwise known as the test-tube method of making babies.

Twenty years earlier, as a young newspaper reporter at the peak of my fertility, I had written an article about the first test-tube baby born in Massachusetts. The mother lived in my hometown, and I snuck into her hospital room claiming to be a family member. As I snapped a photo of the young woman tenderly holding her newborn, it was clear that she didn’t care that her daughter had been born as a result of a then extremely controversial technology. She just seemed happy to be holding her tiny, healthy baby girl.

On the morning of our first appointment, Michael and I were nervous and excited. The clinic literature cited studies claiming, “Well over two-thirds of all couples seeking treatment for fertility-related problems become parents.” It didn’t occur to us then to ask if this statistic meant that two-thirds of parents birthed their own babies or a donor egg baby, or if they became parents through adoption or surrogacy. We were as green as could be about what to expect and what to ask, and we were eager to hear how the doctors thought they might help us.

We were also surprised at the number of young couples we saw in the waiting room. All along, we had thought older couples were the largest assisted reproductive technology (ART) consumers. We quickly learned there was a growing trend of infertility plaguing younger couples that some studies linked to increased stress for women and exposure to environmental toxins, particularly plastics. A 2007 “State of Fertility” report issued by IntegraMed America Inc.—the nation’s largest chain of clinics—indicated that the percentage of female college graduates between the ages of 22 and 29 seeking ART grew by 23 percent from 1995 to 2002. It is not clear how many of these women were egg donors.

Some research has shown that, for women under 30, the chance of conceiving naturally in any given cycle is about 20 percent. Using ART, women under the age of 35 purportedly have more than a 30 percent chance of becoming pregnant, which should never be confused with or compared to delivering a healthy newborn. CDC 2009 data show that women younger than 35 are in fact the largest and most successful ART consumers (38.9 percent) in the U.S.

Across the globe today, an estimated 9 percent of women aged 20 to 44 experience infertility lasting more than 12 months, and most who seek out ART are between the ages of 30 and 39. In most age groups in America, according to the CDC, percentages of ART cycles that resulted in live births were lower for women who had previously undergone an unsuccessful cycle. Data provided by the clinic we chose indicated that the “male factor” accounted for 35 to 40 percent of all infertility cases, compared with 20 to 25 percent from “unexplained factors,” 15 percent from “tubal conditions,” 10 to 15 percent from “ovulation disorders,” 10 percent from conditions related to age, 10 percent from endometriosis, and 5 percent from uterine and cervical conditions.

That first day, we met with two health care professionals, one who examined my female interior and another who walked us through the ins and outs of the medical aspects of fertility treatments. A marble egg sat on a little pedestal on both staff members’ desks, and at one point during our meetings they each held it between their thumb and index fingers. In the spirit of Vanna White, the former Wheel of Fortune hostess, they smiled and said, verbatim: “Like we say here at the clinic, it only takes one good egg to make a baby.”

It was obviously the clinic’s mission statement. I immediately thought that, if all we had to do was find one good egg, we were certainly the right candidates for the job. How hard could that be, really? We had the best of modern science and medicine at our fingertips. I was in great mental and physical health. I exercised and practiced yoga regularly. I ate well. What more could a doctor ask from a patient? Little did I know that the process of finding one good egg would be a bit like panning for gold in a mine that had already been stripped of much of its bullion.

A few weeks later, we met with a veteran physician I like to refer to as the Silver Fox. He greeted us with a warm handshake and a smile, and gave us time to look at his marble egg and photos of ferocious sperm fertilizing healthy eggs. Once he read through our medical records, he
Michael Shashoua: I don’t believe there is any easy way to begin treatments, but don’t enter into this life-changing process blindly. Talk to other people who have gone through them—whether they succeeded or not. Understand that the most likely repercussions will be emotional and sexual challenges in your relationship, and recovering from trauma, especially if the treatments fail. Are you willing to be tested, and to test your relationship in this way?

Be aware of that before you sign up. It’s been five years since we stopped treatments and we are still feeling the aftershocks, still trying to heal. We know couples that have split up after going through these procedures. I don’t think they split because the treatments succeeded or failed, but because the invasiveness and stress of the treatments really do change the dynamics of your relationship.

MZ: How much faith—or skepticism—should you place in the doctors?

MS: You should know that the fertility specialists will be prescribing very powerful drugs for your partner and that these drugs are potentially harmful. Do you automatically believe the doctors when they say everything will be fine? You need to be very discerning. We won’t know for many years what kind of effects these drugs might have on your partner’s long-term health.

MZ: Were there other aspects of the treatments you hadn’t anticipated?

MS: Yes, the emotional side. At a certain point your partner may say she has put her health in jeopardy for you. How does that make you feel? What about the effects on you? You are going through emotional upheavals, too, and being prodded all the time by the clinic, being asked to produce semen on demand. Are you okay with that?

MZ: In the larger sense of your life, how did the process affect you?

MS: It really changed me. The worst part is that it made me unhappily realize how far I would go to chase a dream, whether or not that dream was attainable—and how unfortunate that was. I was always a little disturbed by the idea of manufacturing a biological being in a laboratory. I was always trying to reconcile that aspect of what we were doing. At some point, I realized I was engaging in the process for my wife but not for myself.

MZ: How would you say the fertility treatments affected our relationship?

MS: It made it very difficult to communicate. As you well know, we didn’t realize it until later, but we both buried how we really felt about the treatments and the science. We kept putting our best foot forward for the sake of the other person. During the whole long, four-year process we were often alienated from each other even as we were very supportive. It took us years to recognize that some aspects of the procedures we endured really did not make sense medically. The clinic purported to be taking care of our reproductive health but they were first and foremost a business; many people, including us, are fooled by the lab coats. Their primary concern is manufacturing embryos in exchange for a couple’s money. The doctors want to make sure the fetus grows in your belly because it boosts their success rates. They will do whatever they can to make sure that happens, and that does not necessarily mean the patients’ health and safety is their primary concern.

MZ: How did the failed treatments affect you?

MS: I was devastated. I entered into this process full of hope but I was also extremely skeptical. I signed up because I wanted to give this biomedical procedure a chance to work. We really believed that science could help us have a baby. When you did become pregnant and then miscarried, I was shattered. Ultimately, we entered the donor egg process but with trepidation. We both felt that not only were we putting your health at risk, but we were now also purchasing this young, naïve woman’s biological tissue and asking her to take drugs that might adversely affect her, too. That was a really awful feeling. I am so grateful those treatments didn’t work.

MZ: What is the most rewarding aspect of being a father to our adopted son?

MS: The rewards are beyond words. Any previous decisions I may have made about the direction of my life or personal desires have waned in comparison to the importance of his life and his well being. He is my primary focus.

You know, once you adopt a child, you love him in totality; ultimately there is no distinction between a biological and an adopted child. There may be a longing for something you don’t have but it is not instead of, it is in addition to. Our little boy is teaching me what fatherhood means. Emotionally, I feel more complete than I ever have in my entire life.
sighed very dramatically, clasped his hands together on top of his desk, and looked me straight in the eye.

“The first thing I want to say is that you’re old.”

I winced as his words cut through me like a razor-sharp sword, and then within a split second I found myself in a serious state of denial, fighting back the urge to tell him that he was the one with the white hair, not me. He was the old geezer in the room, not me. No sir, not me. All my life I had to convince people that I wasn’t as young as I appeared. I knew I was teetering on the brink of officially entering middle age, but I didn’t think I was there—yet. Sure, I noticed the sagging little pockets of skin forming beneath my chin and the heavy lines etching into my brow. I even acknowledged that the flab of my triceps had taken on new dimensions and that I might one day take flight. I knew all of these things already. I didn’t need him telling me I was getting older.

“Women your age have a harder time conceiving, especially if they have endometriosis,” he continued. “You should have come to see me when you were 30.”

Of course the Silver Fox was right. Older women do experience more complications, but did they really think that women just beginning to establish themselves professionally were in any kind of position to disengage from the workplace and the security of their paychecks? On top of that, did they really expect a whole generation of women to coparent with someone they didn’t really love and risk the financial and emotional challenges that single mothers the world over endure?

When I was 30, my writing and public policy career was just beginning to fall into place, and I never thought about my fertility. I was too busy working with a remarkable team of women producing the Ms. Foundation for Women’s original “Take Our Daughters to Work Day.” I was young. I wanted to travel, and I wanted to have fun. I wanted a life of action and career offices. New York City was my ticket to living a life completely different from the one I had come from; from the one my mother had lived. Instead of looking for someone to marry and have kids with—something, by the way, that the majority of my women friends never thought about either—I set off on the path of proving myself in Manhattan. Like millions of other young American women just starting their careers, paying off student loans, and developing their confidence, I did everything I could to avoid motherhood. I used birth control like a woman possessed, squeezing half a tube of spermicide into my 1950s-style diaphragm each time I used it. For the first time in my life, rather than just listening with envy to everyone else’s exciting adventures, I finally had enough confidence and skills to travel and work overseas. And at 30, I wasn’t involved with someone I loved, let alone someone I trusted enough to have children with. There was no way I would ever settle for Mr. Good-Enough.

Instead of Mr. Good-Enough, I found Mr. Right, my husband Michael, and the story of how we came to be husband and wife is complicated. Our love is deep and our souls are bound, but our relationship over the last quarter-century has not been easy, which is one of the main reasons why we didn’t have children when we were 30, as the Silver Fox advised.

We were acquaintances at the university where I worked as an editor for the college newspaper. He rode his motorcycle about town, looking like Michelangelo’s statue of David come to life. The first time I met Michael, I saw a vulnerable man-child who appeared to be perpetually windswept: some article of clothing always askew, a shoe lace inevitably untied or a shirt untucked, and always a look of mischief and the joy of being alive.

I had moved to Boston after graduation and was compensating for my very meager income freelancing for The Boston Globe and the

The newest member of Voice Male’s national advisory board, Miriam Zoll is an author, educator, and advocate with more than 20 years’ experience in the reproductive health and international public policy arena. She is the founding coproducer of the Ms. Foundation for Women’s original Take Our Daughters to Work Day and a member of the board of Our Bodies Ourselves. She has previously worked for the United Nations, the Earth Institute at Columbia University, Planned Parenthood, Gay Men’s Health Crisis, and the International Women’s Health Coalition. This article is excerpted from her new memoir, Cracked Open: Liberty, Fertility and the Pursuit of High Tech Babies (May 2013). Reprinted with permission of the publisher, Interlink Books (www.interlinkbooks.com).
I’m lying facedown on my chiropractor’s table. Soothing music wafts above me. Soft lighting lulls me. My chiropractor is doing her magic, helping my body reset. My spine has become more pliant under her hands; still, on her last pass we find a spot that remains clenched. She lightly touches one, two places mid-back. My breath deepens. She steps away. Like glass defrosting, something clears throughout my body; an armoring I wasn’t even aware of dissolves. My eyes moisten. I feel absolved, returned home.

At the start of the session I mentioned I was feeling tenderhearted (I didn’t share the night of intense dreams I’d had). But my bad dreams had left me not just sore in the heart; I was guarded, hardened.

Reevaluation counseling teaches that among our earliest hurts is to be taught that our innate healing response (the free discharge of emotions) is something we should interrupt—males get this in the form of “big boys don’t cry” and “real men are tough” (which for many means numb). So we men often mask our fear, shame, and sadness with anger or prickliness—the sanctioned male emotions. I see this tendency in myself and among many other men. I see my own armoring reflected in how as a nation we engage in “national dialogues” about the deficit, climate change, marriage equality, women’s reproductive rights, etc. I see it too in how we get stuck in polarization: right/wrong, smart/stupid, good/bad.

**To Control or to Learn**

There’s a simple theory that explains this “hardening”: in any encounter with differences, we can respond either by attempting to exert unilateral control—to get our way, to prove our point, to prevail, to “win”—or to foster mutual learning, aiming to learn—from, with, and about each other—and collaboratively apply that learning to the challenge at hand. (The terms are defined by Roger Schwarz in *The Skilled Facilitator Fieldbook* and build on the work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön.)

In our society unilateral control is the default. Mutual learning requires a conscious effort and practice. Most of us had caregivers, teachers, religious institutions, and community groups that modeled unilateral control. Our legal and penal systems as well as our norms for public discourse (talk shows, op-ed columns, etc.) typically reinforce this approach. (This makes sense when looked at through the lens of gender socialization in our hypermasculine U.S. culture. Males are taught to outcompete, to dominate, to be in control; while women and girls are socialized to connect, find common ground, and strengthen relationships. Still, in our culture today the masculine path is the norm.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Unilateral Control</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mutual Learning</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Armoring:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Curiosity:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• posturing, protecting my position</td>
<td>• humility, vulnerability</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “I know and I’m right (and you don’t and you’re wrong)!”</td>
<td>• “I know that I can’t know it all (together we can see and know more).”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Withholding/Distorting:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• not sharing all relevant information</td>
<td>• sharing all relevant data, strategies, reasoning, and intentions</td>
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<td>• “Letting you know certain things will undermine my position.”</td>
<td>• “I share what I know, you share what you know.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shaming and Blaming:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ad hominem attack, indulging or suppressing emotion</td>
<td>• seeing self and other as part of a system</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “You’re not only wrong, you’re bad and should be punished.”</td>
<td>• “We’re all in the same boat. Let’s work together to plug the leak.”</td>
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In the chart on the opposite page is a simplified breakdown of the two approaches, my adaptation of the Argyris and Shön model.

**START WITH SELF**

This model attempts to explain our behaviors in interpersonal contexts (presidential debates, getting cut off by another driver, a difficult conversation with a child or sibling). I think we can apply the same ideas to the intrapersonal, our exchanges with ourselves, our self-talk. (I also believe these ideas would have profound positive results if they were institutionalized, embedded in politics, religion, education, etc.)

So what about my dream—the one that led to my armoring? Let’s look at how my response to it demonstrates a unilateral control approach with myself. Then I’ll imagine what a mutual learning approach would have looked like.

I am underwater. There has been some kind of accident and two people are submerged in deep water. I am diving down to try to rescue them. They are small—children or youth. I am able to grab hold of one and the other is holding on to her. My lungs burn. I push off and start upward. I feel a tug. One of them is caught on something—their clothing snagged on a jagged piece of metal. For a split second, I consider going back to try to free them. My lungs feel like they’re collapsing. I let go and dash to the surface.

**Shame:** I wake feeling hungover and weighed down. I am filled with shame for leaving them there.

**Withholding:** I do not analyze the dream. I do not explore its details or try to glean meaning from it.

**Armoring:** I harden against the shame; I get distant and prickly.

**SOFT BELLY**

That hardening, that psychic and physical armor, is what I discovered and felt dissolve on my chiropractor’s table.

Spiritual teachers and writers Stephen and Ondrea Levine use the term “soft belly” to refer to a practice that is “a physical trigger for the mental state of letting go.” If I am armoring, my belly—and my body, generally—hardens. Soft belly starts with breathing deeply and allowing the belly to move with the breath. It’s about making space—literally and figuratively. I suffer (and harden) when I identify with my pain. Pain without suffering is possible when I am able to make space around that pain. “The difference between my pain and the pain is the space it floats in.”

That space, that softening, allows for mutual learning—for curiosity, for transparency, and acceptance that I am part of something larger and connected with whatever “other” I may have been viewing as separate from me (another way of saying joint accountability).

**DREAM, TAKE TWO**

Let’s imagine now that upon waking from my disturbing dream I’d been able to bring compassion—“soft belly” acceptance—to that pain and then enter into a kind of mutual learning with myself, with the dream.

**Joint Accountability:** Instead of seeing myself as the “bad” one who abandoned the drowning victims, I see all parts of the dream—including the two trapped underwater—as aspects of myself. This immediately lifts the condemnation.

**Curiosity:** As the condemnation lifts, it allows space for curiosity to enter. I wonder tenderly about what is “underwater” in me; what is feeling trapped or caught; what is waiting to be freed, allowed to breathe. And what part of me fears it will drown if I explore what has “me” caught. The more I engage in this curiosity, the more I experience the unity (rather than the polarization), and the result is that joint accountability and curiosity become mutually reinforcing.

**Transparency:** Instead of avoiding the dream because of the pain of shame, I now want to see and explore its details. I now want full transparency with and between the parts of the dream and the parts of myself.

**A WORLD THAT DANCES WITH DIFFERENCES**

The world many of us seek to change is waking from a kind of slumber to some very disturbing realities. I dream of and hope for a transformation in the way in which we approach our pressing and difficult circumstances and conversations—from polarization to pulling together, from hardening to heart opening. From power over—armored, withholding, and shaming—to shared power and mutual learning. In moments of profound hope, I can see members of the U.S. House and Senate, joined by key leaders at the United Nations, taking workshops on these vital topics. Maybe I’ll be leading them. Whether or not that vision comes to pass, I can work on my own relationships and my conversations with myself and those around me. I can practice soft belly; dissolve my armor; and come home again and again to myself and my world.

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Floyd Dell was an American novelist, playwright, poet, and literary critic born a century and a quarter ago in 1887. His influence was felt in the literature of major American writers working in the first half of the 20th century, including Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Carl Sandburg. In 1913 Dell became managing editor of The Masses, a socialist magazine founded in New York City. Dell was considered one of the leaders of the bohemian community in Greenwich Village before the outbreak of World War I. Despite his literary acclaim, including penning a Broadway hit in 1928, today he is remembered mainly for his fierce support of feminism. He details his beliefs in the article below, first published nearly 100 years ago in The Masses, in July 1914—six years before women got the right to vote. Although some of his depictions of marriage and family life fail to anticipate gay rights, his tongue-in-cheek portrayal of men’s options reveals a prescient insight into the evolution of the profeminist men’s movement that emerged six decades after Dell’s article was first read.

The Emancipation of Man

Feminism is going to make it possible for the first time for men to be free.

At present the ordinary man has the choice between being a slave and a scoundrel.

For the ordinary man is prone to fall in love and marry and have children. Also the ordinary man frequently has a mother. He wants to see them all taken care of, since they are unable to take care of themselves. Yet, if he has them to think about, he is not free.

A free man is a man who is ready to throw up his job whenever he feels like it. Whether he is a bricklayer who wants to go out on a sympathetic strike, or a poet who wants to quit writing drivel for the magazines, in any case if he doesn’t do what he wants to do, he is not free.

To disregard the claims of dependent women, to risk their comfort in the interest of self or of society at large, takes a good deal of heroism—and some scoundrelism, too.

Some of the finest natures to be found among men are the least free. It is the most sensitive who hesitate—and are lost to the world and their own souls.

And this will be true so long as women as a sex are dependent on men for support. It is too much to ask of a man to be brave, when his bravery means taking the food out of the mouth of a woman who cannot get food except from him. The bravest things will not be done in the world until women do not have to look to men for support.

The change is already under way. Irresistible economic forces are taking more and more women every year out of the economic shelter of the home into the great world, making them workers and earners along with men. And every conquest of theirs, from an education which will make them fit for the world of earning, to “equal pay for equal work,” is a setting free of men. The last achievement will be a social insurance for motherhood, which will enable women to have children without taking away a man’s freedom from him. Then a man will be able to tell his employer that “he and his job can go bark at one another,” without being a hero and a scoundrel at the same time.

Capitalism will not like that. Capitalism does not want free men. It wants men with wives and children who are dependent on them for support. Mothers’ pensions will be hard fought for before they are ever gained. And that is not the worst.

Men don’t want the freedom that women are thrusting upon them. They don’t want a chance to be brave. They want a chance to be generous. They want to give food and clothes and a little home with lace curtains to some woman.

Men want the sense of power more than they want the sense of freedom. They want the feeling that comes to them as providers for women more than they want the feeling that comes to them as free men. They want someone dependent on them more than they want a comrade. As long as they can be lords in a thirty-dollar flat, they are willing enough to be slaves in the great world outside.

They are afraid that women will cease to ask them to do things, will cease to say “Thank you!” They are afraid women will lose the timidity and weakness which make them turn to men for help. They are afraid that woman will emancipate her legs with trousers. (And so she will; only they will not be so ugly as the garments at present worn by men, if Paul Poiret has anything to say about it!)

In short, they are afraid that they will cease to be sultans in little monogamic harems. But the world doesn’t want sultans. It wants men who can call their souls their own. And that is what feminism is going to do for men—give them back their souls, so that they can risk them fearlessly in the adventure of life.

The fact is that this Occidental harem with its petty lordship over one woman, and its inefficient voluptuosities after the day’s work, is not a fit place for a man. Woman has long since discovered that it is not a fit place for her.

The fit place for men and women is the world. That is their real home. The women are going there. The men are already there in one sense, but not in another. They own it, but do not inhabit it. They do not quite dare.

The world is a home only for the free:

“For there’s blood on the field and blood on the foam,
And blood on the body when man goes home.
And a Voice valedictory: Who is for Victory?
Who is for Liberty? Who goes Home?”

Sweethearts and Wives

It is a time-honored masculine generalization that sweethearts are more fun than wives. This proposition really implies another, that wives and sweethearts are two distinct and different things. If we admit the validity of the latter proposition, the former stands unquestionably true.

This is, as somebody once pointedly remarked, a man-made world. Certainly the distinction in theory and practice between a wife and a sweetheart is a masculine creation. No woman, it may be affirmed, having once been a sweetheart, would ever of her own free will and accord cease to be one.

For observe what it means to be a sweetheart. In the first place, there is the setting; the milieu, the scene of action. This is definite by virtue of its remarkable diversity. One is a sweetheart in the park, in the theatre, in
the elevated train, on the front steps, on the fire escape, at soda fountains, at baseball games, in tea shops, in restaurants, in the parlor, in the kitchen, anywhere, everywhere—that is to say, in the world at large. When two people are being sweethearts, they inhabit the world.

And they inhabit it together—that is the next thing. It is one of the conditions of being a sweetheart that you are always “along” whenever possible—and it is generally found possible. It seems to be the proper thing for one of a pair of sweethearts to be always where the other is. There is never any reason, or any excuse, for a sweetheart staying at home. The fact that a man cannot take his sweetheart to work with him is universally held to justify him in neglecting his work. But when he plays, he can take her with him, and he does. He takes her to the theatre, he takes her to the baseball park, he takes her out to Duck Creek and teaches her how to fish.

That is the third thing about being a sweetheart. She is not shut out from his society by reason of differences in habits or tastes. The assumption is that their habits and tastes ought to be alike. If she doesn’t understand baseball, he explains it to her. If he likes golf, he teaches her how to play. If he loves poetry, she sits up and reads her his favorite poets. He doesn’t permit any trivial differences to come between them. If she has been brought up with the idea that it is wicked to drink, he will cultivate her taste in cocktails. He will give her lessons in Socialism, poetry, and poker, all with infinite tact and patience. And he will do all of these things very humbly, with no pride in his own superiority. He will bring his most cherished ideas anxiously to her for approval, and listen with the most genuine respect to her criticisms. They plan their future with the solid democratic equality of partners in the business of life.

Which is all very delightful. But in the course of time they are married, and very shortly after that the sweetheart becomes a wife. She is still the same person—she hasn’t changed. But the conditions have changed... There was once a man—I don’t pretend to approve of him—who had a wife and also a sweetheart, and he liked the sweetheart so much better than the wife that he persuaded his wife to divorce him, and then married the sweetheart; whereupon he simply had to get another sweetheart, because it was just the same as it had been before. The poor fellow never could figure it out. He thought there must be some mysterious and baneful magic in the marriage ceremony that spoiled things. But that superstition need not detain us. Proceed we to an inquiry as to where the difference really is.

There is the matter of rendezvous. The whole spirit of meeting a sweetheart is that one is never quite certain whether she will really be there. Usually, as a matter of fact, she is late. One is anxious or angry, but one is never complacent about her coming. She may have misunderstood or misremembered the street corner. She may be waiting somewhere else. Or she may have changed her mind—a devastating thought.

But with a wife it is quite different. It is impossible for her to forget the place, for there is only one place. It is neither at the elevated station nor in the park nor on the library steps. It is a place quite out of the world. And she will always be there. Or, at least, if she isn’t there, she ought to be. “A woman’s place is in the home.”

This saying applies only to wives. It does not apply to sweethearts. No man ever thought his sweetheart belonged at home. He regards her home with hostility and suspicion, and keeps her away from it as much as possible. It is only when she is a wife that he begins to think he has a right to expect her to be there. When he thinks of her, it is always in that setting. He thinks of her in that setting complacently. When he goes there to meet her he does not go anxiously, with a beating heart. The home is not a rendezvous. It is not one of the delightful corners of the world where two companions can meet for an adventure. It is a place out of the world where one keeps one’s wife.

Home is a place quite different from the rest of the world. It is different by virtue of the things that are not done there. Out in the world, anything is likely to happen. Any restaurant may hatch a business deal. Any barbershop may be a polling place. But business and politics do not belong in the home. They are as out of place in that atmosphere as a “jag” or a display of fireworks. And from not being done in the home, they come not to be thought about there. Cooking, clothes, children—these are the topics of interest for the inmate of a home. These things are interesting. They are quite as important as baseball or politics. But they lack a certain imaginative appeal. They are not Homeric enough. A new dress is an achievement, but not the same kind of achievement as a home run. A new kind of salad is an interesting experiment, but one does not stand around offering to bet money on the results. In a word, the home is a little dull.

When you have got a woman in a box, and you pay rent on the box, her relationship to you insensibly changes character. It loses the fine excitement of democracy. It ceases to be companionship, for companionship is only possible in a democracy. It is no longer a sharing of life together—it is a breaking of life apart. Half a life—cooking, clothes, and children; half a life—business, politics, and baseball. It doesn’t make much difference which is the poorer half. Either half, when it comes to life, is very near to none at all.

Of course, this artificial distinction does not strictly obtain in any particular marriage. There is an attempt to break it down. It is an honorable attempt. But our civilization is nevertheless built on that distinction. In order to break down that distinction utterly, it will be necessary to break down all the codes and restrictions and prejudices that keep women out of the great world. It is in the great world that a man finds his sweetheart, and in that narrow little box outside of the world that he loses her. When she has left that box and gone back into the great world, a citizen and a worker, then with surprise and delight he will discover her again, and never let her go.

A Question of Privilege

If the cult of masculine superiority is to be maintained, there must be some things that women are not allowed to do.

From the Polynesians with their sacred mysteries which women are not permitted to witness, to modern gentlemen in their exclusively masculine clubs, there has always been the instinct to dignify the male sex by forbidding certain of its privileges to women.

Counteracting this instinct is the instinct of comradeship. Man as a comrade of woman violates gleefully the taboos established by man as a male.

As a male, man has reserved for himself the ceremonial vices of drinking and smoking. As a comrade of woman, he finds it fun to initiate her into these mysteries.

A long as men were comrades only with special classes of women, excluding their wives, smoking and drinking tended to be restricted to actresses, dancers, and courtesans. But now their wives have appropriated these habits, partly to the delight and partly to the scandalization of men. There is a lingering resentment at this infringement of a manly custom.

It is the same way with games. There is no reason why women should not have their competitive athletic exercises just like men. They do, and the men let them, expressing their half-conscious resentment only in their patronizing attitude. But they do resent it.

It is the same with clothes. They pass ordinances to keep women off the streets when they venture to wear the new trouser-like skirts. They gather in crowds and hoot at the shameless female who cannot even let a man keep his pants to himself.

Swearing—yes, it is the same way with swearing.

And it is the same way, precisely, with the vote. All the reasons that men give for not wanting women to vote are disingenuous. Their real reason is a deep annoyance at the proliferation of a masculine mystery. The vote is all we have left. The women have taken everything else that we could call ours, and now this—it is too much!

“Can’t we be allowed to do anything by ourselves?”

It is a time-honored masculine generalization that sweethearts are more fun than wives. This proposition really implies another, that wives and sweethearts are two distinct and different things. If we admit the validity of the latter proposition, the former stands unquestionably true.
When the NBA’s Jason Collins became the first currently active professional male athlete in a major team sport to come out as gay at the end of April, the big story was, well...that the story was not really so big, argues Voice Male contributing editor Michael Kimmel. “First,” the sociologist and author of a number of books about men and masculinity says, “look at all the qualifiers in that description—’currently active’ and ‘professional,’” noting that there are many athletes, professional and otherwise, who have come out after their playing days were over. Sure, it was a brave stance for Collins to take in 2013. Still, female tennis superstar Martina Navratilova came out in 1981 and was met with great hostility. Interviewed on Democracy Now! the day after his announcement, Navratilova praised Collins but noted that she received no congratulatory call from then-President Ronald Reagan the way Collins did from President Obama. Certainly times have changed for the better; still, homophobia remains widespread.

The reaction to Jason Collins’s coming-out interview in Sports Illustrated has been a single-note chorus of support. Current and former players lined up to offer their support (and express their slightly self-protective surprise—“Wow, I had no idea, and my locker was next to his, and we showered together, never had a clue...”). He’s going to be the hottest photo op in the red carpet of sportsdom. Even the president applauded Collins’s courage. And Doc Rivers, the Boston Celtics coach for whom Collins played, hyperbolically compared him to Jackie Robinson. (Sorry, Doc. I don’t foresee his teammates signing a petition refusing to play alongside him.)

On the other side? Pretty much nothing. A resounding silence. No Chicken Littles running around fretting that heterosexual marriage will instantly collapse, that the integrity of sports is forever breached, or that straight men will henceforth be unable to watch an NBA game ever again without “wondering.” Even Rush Limbaugh, rarely at a loss for words, gossiped over the story and refused to publicly condemn Collins for his gayness, opting instead for a smirking swipe at diversity in general: What if they gave a coming-out party and everyone showed up?

The truth is that homophobia, as an attitude about gay people, has pretty much fallen off a cliff—especially among young people. More than three-fifths of Americans—male and female—agree that homosexuality is “morally acceptable”—a massive spike since just 2006. Well over half of all Americans support same-sex marriage.

But wait. Let’s not rush too quickly into an orgy of premature self-congratulation. Yes, it’s okay to come out—if you’re a celebrity. Did anyone even blink when Anderson Cooper came out? And, no, it’s not okay to condemn homosexuality in public, even on Fox News. But in the hearts of Americans, homophobia remains quite alive. It just may be about more than just gay people.

Homophobia remains a foundational principle of heterosexual masculinity. “That’s so gay” is still the epithet of choice on every middle school, high school, and college campus in the country. It’s the basic mechanism of “gender policing” among straight boys and young men, the subjects of my book Guyland, which looked into the inner lives of young men ages 16 to 26.

Over and over I heard the same sentiment. The fear of being misperceived as gay still inspires young straight guys to take all sorts of risks, do all sorts of dumb stuff, hurt themselves, and bully others. Young guys still tie themselves up in knots in order to prove to their peers that they’re real men, and not gay.

That we associate homosexuality with not being a real man—being effeminate—means that homophobia is still “useful” to coaches who want to motivate their players the way Mike Rice, the disgraced former Rutgers basketball coach, slung around antigay epithets, or the way Bobby Knight famously put sanitary napkins in his players’ lockers to “motivate” them.

The story, then, is a story about gender, about masculinity, as much as it is about sexuality. It’s about the association of male homosexuality with effeminacy, with not being a real man.

We live in a moment of great transition. The fear of being misperceived as gay remains fully in force among straight guys—even while being correctly perceived as gay seems to have begun its decline into the dustbin of archaic forms of discrimination. Being gay is losing its magical power to define a person, while being perceived as gay still terrifies young guys into gender conformity.

To be sure, young gay boys are hounded, bullied, and tormented by other guys—as are boys who may not be gay, but who are perceived as gender nonconforming. Homophobia is not dead. It’s dying a slow death—and among the first funerals is for the condemnation of celebrities—athletes, TV and movie stars, rock and rap singers. It’s unarguable that Jason Collins’s courage will make it easier, if only slightly, for others to come out, even if they aren’t seven feet tall.

We’ve made significant progress on the acceptance of homosexuality in America, though we still have a ways to go. Jason Collins’s act took courage, and it will still raise eyebrows privately, if not publicly. But we’ve barely begun to disentangle homophobia from our understanding of masculinity—a task that is more about “us” than about acceptance of “them.”

Voice Male contributing editor, and sociologist Michael Kimmel, is the author or editor of numerous books on men and masculinity including Men’s Lives, Guyland, and Angry White Men (forthcoming).
Why Every Black Man Should Wear Number 42

BY E. ETHELBERT MILLER

I was born a few years after Jackie Robinson broke the color line in baseball. By the time I was gripping and throwing a ball, Robinson’s career was over. It was as if I were a black person being born one or two years after Emancipation. I would grow up never knowing the tip of the lash. I was taught about Jackie Robinson in the same manner I was told to associate peanuts with George Washington Carver. History has a sorry way of reducing events and individuals to footnotes. The fact that Jackie Robinson is also enshrined in baseball’s Hall of Fame is a reminder of how good a ballplayer he was. We tend to sometimes overlook this fact. We shy away from acknowledging Robinson’s temper and his racial pride. There are also things about Jackie Robinson’s career after baseball that we refuse to mention or take note of. Robinson is a key figure when it comes to the civil rights movement in America. He is also a key figure in a then-unnamed black masculinity movement.

The life of Jackie Robinson, like the recent movie 42, embraces a wonderful love story. Would we have had a Jackie Robinson without a Rachel Robinson? Baseball is a game that begins and ends at home. More and more African American men are remembering that simple truth. At the end of the movie 42 we see a victorious Robinson rounding the bases after hitting a game-winning home run and there is a visual overlap of him heading home into the arms of Rachel. It’s a Barack/Michelle moment; another run scored in the image column and scorecard of African Americans surviving in the United States. The film is not without heartbreak. We see Robinson in a hospital celebrating the birth of his first child, a haunting image since Robinson’s son (Jackie Robinson, Jr.), after a difficult time with drug abuse, would die in an automobile accident in 1971. No parent should bury a child. Too many African American men don’t make it to old age.

What does the film tell us about black masculinity? It tells us that it demands equality, excellence, and independence. It is questioning, humble, yet fierce. It is accommodating but never submissive. Yet there is the underlying loneliness of the black male. How often we see Robinson alone, by himself, even as it was his presence, his essence, that was responsible for the enormous change taking place in the world. Here is what he wrote in the epilogue of his memoir:

"I have many memories. I remember standing alone at first base—the only black man on the field. I had to fight hard against loneliness, abuse and the knowledge that any mistake I made would be magnified because I was the only black man out there. I had to fight hard to become "just another guy." I had to deny my true fighting spirit so that the "noble experiment" could succeed. When it finally did I could become my own man; many people resented my impatience and honesty. But I never cared about acceptance as much as I cared about respect."

If there is a number all black men should wear on their backs it’s 42. We saw this number’s return in Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing. The lead character Mookie walked around Brooklyn wearing Robinson’s jersey. We need to think of Robinson’s number the way we once thought about freedom and spirituals. Jackie Robinson was the man who brought speed and daring to the American pastime. His was a quiet dignity kept warm by the raging furnace in his heart. Robinson’s career coincided with the Cold War and even cool jazz. This is what perhaps made him exceptional. Robinson always reminded people that he was a black man in a white world and that he never had it made.

Today a fire continues to burn in the hearts of black men. It has never been just a game.

E. Ethelbert Miller is a poet, literary activist, and board chair of the Institute for Policy Studies. He serves on Voice Male’s National Advisory Board.

Angry White Men

Why Every Black Man Should Wear Number 42

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Masculinity and Race

Why Every Black Man Should Wear Number 42

BY E. ETHELBERT MILLER

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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, profeminist, 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!

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TO SUBSCRIBE—OR TO MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFT—PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE OR GO TO: VOICEMALEMAGAZINE.ORG
What is the most complicated and least understood aspect of child sex abuse? That 90 percent of all perpetrators are known to the victims (www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics). Only 10 percent are strangers. And as if that weren’t enough, 30 to 40 percent come from the victim’s immediate family. The other 50 to 60 percent of perpetrators include older kids, babysitters, teachers, ministers, coaches, and leaders in youth-serving programs. So to state the obvious: in most cases victims usually know their offenders and are related in some way before the abuse starts.

Offenders take advantage of the trust placed in them. They can be so calculating, and the abuse so gradual, that it goes unnoticed or undetected. It is not uncommon for the victim to even think the behavior is “normal.” Even if they know on some level that something is wrong, it can be incredibly difficult for a child—a victim of power and control—to rationally separate the abuse from the normal parts of the relationship. Most abuse starts with what is called “grooming,” where the offender uses attention, flattery, and sometimes gifts to gain the child’s trust. The grooming behavior of the offender validates the victim just as the abuse invalidates them. As a result of the grooming and manipulation, most child victims think the abuse either is normal or was brought on by their behavior.

As a survivor, I may have many rationales for why the abuse happened, but no matter what, in my heart I truly believed it was brought on by something I did or did not do. The mantle of shame was mine to wear until I finally did the work to be able to take it off.

Because I believed I had brought on the abuse, I let the offender off the hook. I had completely separated the abusive behavior from the person whom I loved and looked up to. Eventually I realized it just wasn’t true and that blaming myself hurt me in the long run. At the time that approach helped me avoid facing the truth; as a consequence it kept me sane. Since I had to see the offender almost daily, with the abuse locked away under my guard, I could now “normalize” my relationship with him. When I was around my abuser in public everything was normal, so no one suspected what I thought I had done. On every other level I had great respect and deeply loved my abuser just as long as I kept the secret locked away; it was easy to show love for him.

Who was my offender? My minister, whom I idealized. He was my mentor. Everyone, including me, thought he was an amazing gift from God. I wanted to grow up to be just like him, but I thought I could never be that good. After the abuse ended, I would still go see him on a regular basis. Three years later he performed my wedding ceremony. A year after that he performed my mother’s memorial service. I continued to see him on a decreasing basis until I was in my early forties.

I had never once thought, “You bastard! Why did you do that to me?” My self-esteem suffered. I was the one living with shame as a constant companion. It never dawned on me that keeping the secret was hurting me. Some part of my brain figured that keeping the secret was the way to be “normal.” No, I thought, “Nothing wrong here!” Unfortunately, maintaining that denial and dissociation could not possibly have been more destructive.

If you find yourself in a place like this, where I once was, try to begin speaking your truth. Find someone safe and just blurt it out. That’s a start. The shame isn’t yours to carry—it belongs with the perpetrator. Completely.

Once you risk starting, you’ll find you have a lot to unpack. So be prepared. This kind of healing is not a destination; it’s an unending journey. But here’s the twist: on the healing path, you will go to amazing places, meet incredible people, and see, hear, and feel things you never imagined.

Safe travels. May your journey be blessed.

Randy Ellison, an advocate for survivors of child sexual abuse, has written extensively on the subject and was interviewed in the Spring 2012 issue. President of the board of the Oregon Abuse Advocates and Survivors in Service (OAASIS), he is the author of Boys Don’t Tell: Ending the Silence of Abuse (Morgan James, 2011). A version of this article is on the blog of the Joyful Heart Foundation (www.joyfulheartfoundation.org).
FLIRTING WITH DANGER: POWER & CHOICE IN HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Long before the town of Steubenville, Ohio, became synonymous with males raping females, the question of how young women need to think— and act— in navigating their sexual lives, especially in college, was underexamined. For straight women, as a new film shows, not asking can have dangerous results.

In Flirting with Danger: Power & Choice in Heterosexual Relationships, psychologist Lynn Phillips explores the often-avoided gray area between consent and coercion found in college student hookups. The film explores victim blaming and victim denial, the effects of sexist media on young men and women in sexual relationships, and the “virgin/slut” dichotomy.

Produced by the Media Education Foundation, Flirting with Danger presents a dialogue in which men and women, and perpetrators and victims, can begin to examine their own personal encounters. The result creates a unified conversation through which both men’s violence against women and victim blaming are addressed. Young women are perceived as playing with fire if they: go out drinking, wear revealing outfits, go to parties, or interact with males. In other words, live their lives as normal young adults.

One interviewee says, “I did internalize a lot of ideas that it was sort of my fault. And how can they say it’s rape when I went there? What was I expecting?” Such ideas focus on women and create a culture in which women are vilified unless they fit society’s perfect image of “rape victim.” Remember the 2012 elections where Republican candidates for U.S. Senate talked about “legitimate” rape? Where they discounted women believed to be sexually promiscuous, drunk, or a “tease”? The double standard abounds: woman as slut, man as stud.

As Phillips states in the film, “It’s no wonder why so many women don’t come forward to report what happened to them….Unless they match the notion of what the ‘perfect’ victim is, they run the risk of not being believed and not finding support.”

Victim blaming creates victim denial. Young women, Phillips’s interviews revealed, do not want to see their forced sexual experiences as rape. They do not want to see themselves or be seen by their peers as victims, so they reframe their abusive experiences as “just a bad night” or “a fluke.” Among the most striking statistics in Flirting with Danger is this one: 27 of the 30 women—90 percent of those interviewed—had experiences that would fit the legal definition of harassment, battery, or rape. And, to make matters worse, many of the young women defended the behavior of their abusers and often internalized responsibility for what happened.

Rather than vilify men, the film highlights the nuanced ideas surrounding rape culture that often underexamine men’s roles as perpetrators. In doing so, it promotes the potential for men to play an integral part in putting an end to sexual assault. If anything, a critically important message of Flirting with Danger is that male supporters can communicate the ideas presented in the film in order to end the cycle of abusive relationships.

While ignorance is no defense in the eyes of moral law, many men often do not know that they have crossed any lines—ethically or legally—in their hookups. Despite our living in a highly conscious culture more than a decade into the 21st century, there are still many who promote female subservience. The tacit belief in male coercion is strengthened by messages promoting male entitlement seen and heard every day in the media, our schools, our workplaces, and, sadly, in many of our homes. For us as men, while there may be no set guideline to assist us in deciphering between coercion and consent, how hard is it to understand that “no” means “no”? It is imperative that men become fully cognizant of the societal pressures directed toward young women so we can be seen as allies and not assailants.

While it’s appropriate to put pressure on men to look at our actions toward women, we can’t ignore the huge influence the media has on men. Men can feel the pressure to either exaggerate—or listen uncomfortably—in locker room or water cooler conversations (or wherever men gather) to brag about their own “sexcapades.” Despite the constant stream of messages promoting male dominance, men still bear responsibility to deconstruct the messages of domination in order to collectively resist becoming perpetrators or even passive bystanders.

Throughout Flirting with Danger, Phillips aims to dismantle the virgin/slut dichotomy, the idea that women must be pure and innocent yet still overtly sexual. The film suggests that our culture demands women straddle the line between angelic virgin and reckless slut. I’ve often heard guys on college campuses describing particular women as “un-dateable” because they are “too slutty” or “too prudish.” Phillips seamlessly weaves the connection between this dichotomy and rape culture. When sexually active women are inherently seen as “bad,” it creates a setting that maligns them as prostitutes and propagates the idea that “they deserve what they get” or “they’re asking for it.” The result? A perpetuating cycle of abuse and victimization.

While the conversation about abusive and coercive hookups on campuses is ongoing, Flirting with Danger provides viewers with realistic and relevant accounts of straight college women’s experiences. By so doing it serves as a springboard for a much-needed dialogue regarding our ideas of consent, pleasure, and meaning in our relationships.

—Brian Paris

Professor Lynn Phillips is a lecturer and chief undergrad advisor at the University of Massachusetts. Recipient of the 2012 College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Outstanding Teaching Award, Phillips is an advocate in issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Her research focus includes the subjective and social implications of media images, hypermasculinity, and the hypersexualization of young girls, along with the health and environmental impacts of media-driven consumerism.

Brian Paris is a junior English and communication double major at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is currently working on a Web portal that will connect students with nonprofit volunteer/internship opportunities in the Pioneer Valley region of western Massachusetts. He can be reached at bparis@student.umass.edu.
Hard to Get: 20-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom
By Leslie C. Bell
University of California Press, 2013
262 pages, hardcover, $29.95

“We could have had it all,” Adele muses on her album 21, which she recorded at just that age. Can young women? For more than a generation, young women have been talking about the difficulties of trying to construct love, relationships, and sex, but few have listened to them. Feminist sociologist and psychotherapist Leslie C. Bell has now given them voice in her new book, Hard to Get: 20-Something Women and the Paradox of Sexual Freedom, a window into the lives of these women that is reminiscent of Lillian Rubin’s Worlds of Pain. The women in Bell’s book have more freedom than their mothers and grandmothers, but they are also living with mixed messages about motherhood, sex, careers, and marriage. Managing these freedoms, messages, and their own desires can be decidedly difficult.

Bell takes us movingly through the lives of women in their twenties, college graduates and childless, from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and an assortment of sexual orientations. These are the women born after 1972 for whom Title IX, affirmative action, and Roe v. Wade helped to shape their consciousness and, in turn, hopes for their liberation. Bell reports that college-educated women now marry on average at 27, and women in general have their first child at age 25, in contrast to 1970, when they did both on average at 21.

Claudia, a 28-year-old graduate student, describes a one-night stand she’d had the evening before the interview, revealing both her sexual agency and her shame about her desires. “I wish I weren’t so horny so I didn’t need to go out and get it so much. I wish I could take a pill to kill my desire.” Alicia, also 28, delayed sex until after college, acted demurely, and wanted more than anything to be married with children. Yet she learned very little from her family or her Catholic school about sex. Most of her information came from her friends, and her attempts to be a “good girl” were an alternative to teen pregnancy, sexual exploitation, and dropping out of school, as many of her peers had done. Being good was how Alicia rebelled. Her first intercourse was a “date rape” at age 21. Afterward, she didn’t want to be intimate or touch anyone sexually for a long time. “I’m a good little girl. However, I do have my mind and my mouth, and I use them.”

Jeanette, also 28, was a “bad-ass” girl who was smart and opinionated. She was raised by parents who nurtured a range of qualities in her daughter, including strength and vulnerability, which helped her rise above culture and psychological pressures to think in either/or terms, instead insisting that people can feel two contradictory desires at once. The result? She developed a female identity that felt genuine to her.

Bell has been interested in gender inequality in the private sphere since her undergraduate years, particularly in the area of sexuality. In an interview she said she decided to take on the issue of female sexual agency because young sexually active women “seem most likely to have achieved gender equality and... have the most access to education, information, training.” Delving “deeply into what’s happening in their lives in the private sphere,” Bell said she “wanted to see the ways in which that equality is and isn’t yet achieved.” Bell uses an interviewing style which stems from her work with Nancy Chodorow and other feminist sociologists and anthropologists who believe in building relationships with participants in their research. She “listens for what is not said as well as what is said” and developed a framework that allowed for her to ask probing questions about these women and their perspectives on their own sexuality. She said that “the process of doing the interviews themselves was quite rich and engaging and I loved being surprised by people, humbled at how willing they were to not just share their experiences with me but in some cases grow and think differently through the process of being interviewed.”

In her interviews, Bell found that, for all the hype about sex in America, little is known about the sexual and love lives of “ordinary” women. She sees the complexity of their desires to create meaningful relationships, careers, and sexual lives against the backdrop of a social structure of shame and guilt. She found that for the women in her study, the “rules” are not always clear and the contradictions are rife.

Bell developed a theory of three archetypes—the sexual woman, the relational woman, and the desiring woman—as a way of understanding how young adult women in the 21st century deal with confusing and conflicting sets of beliefs and values. In Bell’s findings, the sexual woman has a high degree of conflict over relational desire, the relational woman has a high degree of conflict over sexual desire, and the desiring woman is able to tolerate conflicts over sexual and relational desire and bring them together in fulfilling ways.

—Jane Fleishman

Jane Fleishman is a retired staff development director of a large public psychiatric facility in Connecticut and now offers training and consultation in sexuality issues. She has taught classes for over 20 years and is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in Human Sexuality from Widener University in Chester, PA. You can contact her at www.janefleishman.com

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Summer 2013 31
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.boystomen.org

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

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

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

EngagingMen
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/pftfaq.html
Homophobia and masculinities among young men: www.xyonline.net/misc/homophobia.html

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

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

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
Working to enhance society’s understanding of and ability to end violence in the African-American community
www.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.thezliblibrary.org/site-index/site-index-frame.html#soul
http://www.thezliblibrary.org/lz/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
Organization improve the well-being of children through the promotion of responsible, engaged fatherhood
www.fatherhood.org

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

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

A Call to Men
Trainings and conferences on ending violence against women
www.acalltomen.org
EMERGE
Counseling and education to stop domestic violence; comprehensive batterers’ services
www.emergedv.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

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

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/menagainstsviolence

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

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

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

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

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/tddenny/

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

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

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

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

LGBTQIA Resources
Ambiente Joven
An advocacy project and LGBTQ community for Spanish-speaking LGBTQ youth
www.ambienviernov.png

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
gmadvp.org/gmdvp

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

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

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

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 decided 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.lgbtageng.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 Resource 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 nonabusive men and batterers’ intervention groups, services, trainings and consulting for men overcoming violence
http://www.malesadvocatingchange.org/

Men’s Resource Center for Change
– Amherst, MA
Consultations and training in helping men develop their full humanity, create respectful and loving relationships, and caring and safe communities
www.mrcenter.org

Men’s Resource Center of West Michigan – West Michigan
A mythopoetic gathering dedicated to filling the need for men to come together in community healing
redwoodmen.org

Redwood Men’s Center – Santa Rosa, CA
A non-profit organization 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.saskatoomenscenter.com

Twin Cities Men’s Center – Minneapolis, MN
Provides resources for men seeking to grow in mind, body, and spirit and advocates for healthy family and community relationships
www.tcmc.org
Snow still falling this late,
when each house framed
by the window above my desk
is dark, and even my wife’s breathing
has grown indistinguishable
from the quiet, snow still falling
as a truck rolls by, big-cat-svelte
on eighteen wheels, orange
running lights spreading
up and down my block
a Halloween glow
in mid-December,
like a space vessel landing,
bringing me the boy I was
standing in the courtyard, searching
the descending whiteness
for the shapes of ships
I longed to fly away on,
snow still falling this late
when I could be sleeping,
the way I should have been
the night I saw my mother nude,
and her friend on his back, and them both
too slow to hide what they were doing,
and I told my brother and we tried it,
and we tried to understand
why grown-ups did it—
how could you let someone
pee in your mouth?—snow still falling this late
is the whisper we tried to laugh in, breath
the old man dropped, syllable—
when—by syllable—will I
see you?—into my ear, and I
couldn’t move, wouldn’t,
and so it wasn’t me
who followed him upstairs, who listened
to the lock click shut in the door,
and it wasn’t me
whose belt he unbuckled, and when
his pants joined mine on the floor, it wasn’t
me he pled with, whose head he used
both hands to pull towards him
when I balked, whose mind
at this moment always whites out
until it wasn’t me
who unlocked the door and walked
to where the snow is still falling,
as if even now he waited
in the apartment above mine,
and no matter how many times
my brother asks, I won’t go out,
not even to be first sled down
a virgin hill of the season’s new snow.
WE BELIEVE IN MEN

BUT THE IDEA OF MEN HAS BEEN DISTORTED, LIMITED TO ONE-DIMENSIONAL STEREOTYPES
THAT DIMINISH OUR POTENTIAL AND RESTRICT OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO A HEALTHY SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN IT’S TIME.

TIME TO WRITE A

NEW CODE

OF

MANHOOD.

A CODE AS COMPLEX AND DIVERSE AS MEN.

ONE THAT DOESN’T

CONFINE US TO LABELS

LIKE JOCK, NERD,

HERO, CLUELESS,

HUSBAND OR STRONG

SILENT TYPE.

THAT ENCOURAGES

SELF-RESPECT

AS THE FIRST STEP IN

RESPECTING OTHERS.

THAT CELEBRATES

STRENGTH BUT SEES

WEAKNESS IN USING

IT FOR HARM.

THAT FREES US TO

EXPRESS ALL EMOTIONS.

THAT DEMANDS

EQUALITY FOR ALL AND

INSPIRES US TO PLAY

A POWERFUL, POSITIVE

ROLE IN THE WORLD.

WE BELIEVE IN MEN.

LET’S SHOW THE

WORLD WHAT IT

MEANS TO BE ONE.

BE/A/MAN

WHITE RIBBON

www.whiteribbon.ca

www.whiteribbon.ca
“Odds are, everything you know about fertility in America is wrong. Between our culture’s blind faith in technology, the media’s compulsion to sensationalize, and a lot of magical thinking, an entire generation of women has plotted their futures based on false information about their reproductive options. Miriam Zoll does an enormous service by making public her quest to get pregnant, but her memoir is more than a moving and honest personal story. As a professional human rights and health advocate, she is able to make sense of a confusing morass of studies, statistics, and practices with a scientific rigor that rises to watchdog journalism. May others follow in her stead.”
—Kate Bolick, contributing editor, The Atlantic

**Cracked Open** is Miriam Zoll’s eye-opening account of growing into womanhood with the simultaneous opportunities offered by the U.S. women’s movement and new discoveries in reproductive technologies.

Influenced by the pervasive media and cultural messages suggesting that science had finally eclipsed Mother Nature, Zoll postponed motherhood until the age of 40. When things don’t progress as she had hoped, she enters a world of medical seduction and bioethical quagmires. Desperate to conceive, she surrenders to unproven treatments and procedures only to learn that the odds of becoming a mother through reproductive technologies are far lower than she and her generation had been led to believe.

*Miriam Zoll* is an award-winning writer and an international public health and reproductive rights advocate and educator. She is the founding co-producer of the Ms. Foundation for Women’s original Take Our Daughters To Work Day and a member of the board of Our Bodies Ourselves.