

on the road to healing

a booklet for men
against sexism



issue **2**

feminists long

"FEMINISTS LONG FOR MEN TO HEAL... We dream of a world full of men who could be passionate lovers, grounded in their own bodies, capable of profound loves and deep sorrows, strong allies of women, sensitive nurturers, fearless defenders of all people's liberation, unbound by stifling convention yet respectful of their own and others' boundaries, serious without being humorless, stable without being dull, disciplined without being rigid, sweet without being spineless, proud without being insufferably egotistical, fierce without being violent, wild without being, well, assholes."

S T A R H A W K

from her essay "A Men's Movement I Could Trust"

for men to heal



hey, welcome!

yesterday i was motivated again to finish this zine. i was reading a zine called RAW — a zine where this woman talks of being raped by someone close to her [get a copy by sending \$1 to lupine ladies press / po box 543 / accokeek, md 20607 / usa]. i was motivated out of the anger toward her rapist and out of my feeling of necessity that as time ticks, sexism in it's many violent patterns continues on and on.

In his poem, coded language, saul williams speaks:
"We enlist every instrument: acoustic and electronic.
Every so-called race, gender, sexual preference.
Every person as beings of sound to acknowledge their responsibility to uplift the consciousness of the entire fucking world."

I know that zines are an instrument of mine. I have seen the pain of sexism and know many ways I participate in creating that pain. I know that now is the time to work on my own patterns and to encourage others to do the same.

This zine exists to provide a printed space for articles, stories, art, photography and other printable mediums directed at critical theory and personal reflections on male socialization, sexism and the concept of manhood. How have these concepts influenced and molded us? How do they relate to all other facets of our lives?

For me, sexism and the concept of masculinity I was raised under are deeply connected. Through acknowledging and critiquing that I came to a place in my life where I understood the impact of patriarchy and sexism on my life and in the world. Hence, I created this zine as a space for people to talk about masculinity in an anti-sexist framework.

i was motivated again to finish this zine because the writers in here have much to say. and i want their words to inspire dialogue, communication and social change. i want you to read this as a conscious being who is ready think about what is being said here. let it touch you. let it light a fire under you. let it make you sad, mad, connected. eat it up. rip it apart. create your own spark. use your own instrument.

thanks for reading * basil

all the extras you might like to know:

contributors: jeff ott, donald cavanaugh, chris crass, chris dixon, ahimsa timoteo bodhrán, cameron bustamante, loolwa khazoom, michael flood, tony switzer, brian, and me, basil.

cover and inside photos: i copied a bunch of pictures off the web, ran them through photoshop and made weird art out of them. that's what you see here. some of them are my kid pictures too.

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if you want to order more zines or get in touch with a contributor, write to me:

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this zine is a project of the planting seeds community awareness project • <http://www.pscap.org>

thanks to all the people who contributed articles, time and money to this project.

while laying out this zine, i listened to "Broken Speak," a cd by "I was born with 2 tongues" — a Chicago based panAsian spoken word group. More info is available on them online through www.2tongues.com or by writing 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave #428 . Chicago, IL 60647. I also listened to Saul Williams' cd — which is amazing.

cult of manhood

written by Jeff Ott

CULT (KILT) N.

- 1.a. A religion or religious sect generally considered to be extremist or false, with its followers often living in an unconventional manner under the guidance of an authoritarian, charismatic leader. b. The followers of such a religion or sect.
2. A system or community of religious worship and ritual.
3. The formal means of expressing religious reverence; religious ceremony and ritual.
4. A usually nonscientific method or regimen claimed by its originator to have exclusive or exceptional power in curing a particular disease.
- 5.a. Obsessive, especially faddish, devotion to or veneration for a person, principle, or thing. b. The object of such devotion.
6. An exclusive group of persons sharing an esoteric, usually artistic or intellectual interest.

I recently read a book that got me thinking about what we call manhood. It's called *Refusing to be a Man*, by John Stoltenberg. The basic premise is that what has come to be called manhood is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. I always thought that was the case but I never really thought about how the whole thing was put into place. I couldn't really put it all together in my mind until I stumbled onto the idea of putting the concept of "manhood" into the context of a Cult.

When I was younger I was apprehended by a cult called the O.T.O. or Ordo Templi Orientis. They did the usual cult things to get kids into their cult. They gave out a lot of free pot and speed. They attracted guys with the allure of sex from their women, and visa versa. They presented the promise of being able to reveal the mysteries and secrets of magical power and so on.

Personally I was into the speed and the "free love", so I hung out with them and they happened to move into the house where I was crashing at the time. I was lucky, I was such an addict that I was too interested in getting more dope in my arm, and I never ended up joining them. None the less when I started to back away from them, one of them tried to stab me. Every time I try to question them there are more implied threats of violence/death, even today. The reason I said that I was glad I never joined is because the penalty for unjoining or resignation is supposed to be death.

So any way once I started thinking about my experience with them I realized that it was basically the same experience as the one I had with being socialized into my gender role.

This goes in two stages:

1. Lures and Encouragement
2. Threats of violence or actual violence for lack of compliance

When I was little they tried to lure me into the manhood thing by showing me the advantages it held for me, power over the women, being higher on the hierarchy ladder, etc. They told me lots of lies about why it made sense to not have my emotions. They told me I was good and/or rewarded me when I played with guns and trucks and dirt and sports equipment. There are probably tens of thousands of examples but if you are male I probably don't need to tell you about them cuz you already know. The basic equation is that if you act in accordance with how they defined your gender you get praise and encouragement.

On the other hand if I didn't go along with their brand of manhood a very different reaction would occur. It would usually be something like, "when your father gets home I'm going to tell him and he's going to..." or I would get beaten with something out of the drawer of the kitchen or they would laugh at me in a way to intentionally shame me. If it wasn't my parents and it was my peers or my brother, they would call you a sissy and a faggot and if you didn't immediately disprove that you weren't a sissy then they took that as permission to beat you when ever they felt like it.

So today things aren't much different. Out in the world most of the "men " are still out there trying to prove their "manhood". I've gotten pretty good at avoiding them, but sometimes it's impossible. It's always the same thing, they violate your space until you give some sort of reaction to acknowledge their action, then they do the physical intimidation thing to prove that they don't have to abide by any sort of agreed upon social conduct. The stupid thing is that these are the same asshole's who are constantly verbalizing the American worker's mantra "yes sir, no sir,

kiss your ass sir? oh, of course sir!", at work. They are probably trying to prove their "manhood" all the time because they feel so powerless inside.

I find it most difficult to call people on their sexism when they are people inside the punk scene. I guess I still hold the fear instilled in me that if I question them they will take back their approval of me or that they will publicly question my "manhood" or that they will react violently.

There is this other part of manhood I noticed. It is the structure called hierarchy.

There were once kings. If the king abused, taxed and violated everyone equally no one would tolerate it, they would collectively kick his ass. However if every man was told that he was the king of his own family then he wouldn't have to redirect the abuse back to the original abuser, he could just take it out on his wife and kids. This is the same way that manhood resembles a cult, there is someone at the top who receives all the benefits and privileges. This might sound a little weird but you know what they say.

A man's home is his castle.

Furthermore it hasn't been until lately that some women aren't considered property. Also children are still legally considered property until they are eighteen years old.

So sometimes I get kind of discouraged because sometimes it seems punk is built on a foundation of "manhood" and not much else. It makes me wonder how much I want to invest (emotionally, physically, intellectually) into punk. It all seems like macho guys, subservient worshiping women, stratified classes that include a "ruling class", arena rock star attitudes, etc.

I have been finding it increasingly helpful to try to define for myself what manhood could/should be:

- A man should be emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually available to his partner.
- A man should be emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually available to his children.
- A man should be emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually available to his community.
- A man should strive to nurture his family and his community.
- A man should be responsible for respecting his connection to the Earth and her inhabitants by not harvest-

ing resources beyond his own needs.

- A man should not only be present for his own children but also to the other children in his community.
- In a sexual relationship a man should be primarily concerned with the new life he may be creating rather than his own personal want for sexual release.
- A man should find himself a gender identity through the experience of being a responsible, respectful man rather than proving it with sexual or violent conquest.
- A man should take responsibility for speaking his mind to the other men and not withholding his opinions and feelings on the basis of their common gender.
- A man should act in defense of his family and community in a way that might include violence but does not necessarily include violence.
- A man should abandon the notion of POWER OVER.
- A man should embrace the notion of POWER OF.

Finally, I thought I should reprint the page from John Stoltenberg's book that set the spark in my mind.

"All the time I was growing up, I knew that there was something really problematic in my relationship to manhood. Inside, deep inside, I never believed I was fully male-I never believed I was growing up enough of a man. I believed the someplace out there, in other men, there was something that was genuine authentic all-american manhood-the real stuff-but I didn't have it: not enough of it to convince me anyway, even if I managed to be fairly convincing to those around me. I felt like an impostor, like a fake. I agonized a lot about not feeling male enough, and I had no idea then how much I was not alone.

Then I read those words-those words that suggested to me for the first time that the notion of manhood is a cultural delusion, a baseless belief, a false front, a house of cards. It's not true. The category I was trying so desperately to belong to, to be a member of in good standing-it doesn't exist. Poof. Now you see it, now you don't. Now you're terrified your not really part of it; now your free, you don't have to worry anymore. However removed you feel inside from "authentic manhood", it doesn't matter. What matters is the center inside of yourself-and how you live, and how you treat people, and what you can contribute as you pass through life on this earth, and how honestly you love, and how carefully you make choices. Those are the things that really matter. Not whether you're a real man. There's no such thing." ¶

objections to objectifications

written by Cameron Bustamante

A LUMP IN MY THROAT FORMED AT THE MOMENT THAT I realized that this was something that men “just don’t do”, and that I was one of those men. There were about twelve of us, sitting in a circle, facing each other in almost complete silence. The situation may seem odd, but it’s quite familiar to me actually. I have been in many like it, but never was one as eerily lethargic as this one. As a discussion group attendee, I am one of the quiet ones. Not because I fear speaking in front of people, I try to conserve my words for a time when I think that they can and will be meaningful. Anybody that has been involved in things similar to this can tell you that they are very commonly ripe with people stating (and restating) the obvious, not to mention the occasional riding of the political high horse around the room. That is not to say that reiteration and ideology has no place in discussion groups, as I think that they do in moderation. I think that this particular discussion group could have used some more, actually. What we had instead was a few declarations that the subject at hand was indeed “a problem” and a few vague ideas to things we can do to solve it. I thought that those people (albeit the more characteristically outspoken) were giving a good go at it, but in between them there were many extensive periods of silence as we tried to avoid each others eyes and round up our thoughts on the subject (or pretended to).

And then I turned my ears to MY silence. I was genuinely ashamed and, to an extent, confused. Why could I not for the life of me think of something worthwhile to add? Why couldn’t anybody else? And then it slapped me in the face. This was a subject that men just don’t talk about.

Not even self-righteous revolutionaries like us.

Perhaps it was the bruising of my ego that hurt me so much as

I realized this, but the fact remains that it hit me. The subject was sexual violence, and our inability to discuss it with any fervor was strikingly ironic. No matter how “conscious” of the issue we claimed to be, our silence possessed a horrid echo. No matter how much we thought of ourselves as being part of the solution, that night’s discussion group left me feeling like a large part of the problem.

Of course, being a self-righteous revolutionary, I just couldn’t let that be. So I began assembling my thoughts and doing some reading and generally putting the issue of sexual violence to the forefront of my thought. The more effort I put into doing this, the clearer it came to be to me: I had never given it much thought. The lack of premeditation that I had (and I would think that the same is true for the rest of my male discussion groupers) was characteristic of the problem and how it continues to be a formidable one, if not its very backbone.

I came across a man named Jeff Hearn’s research of what he refers to as “anti-sexist men’s movement” and others who are attempting to change these trends both in their personal lives and in society itself, he finds that “...because many men prefer to keep their public and

private lives separate, they regard their relationships with women as their private business. Consequentially, they are unwilling to challenge other men’s violence against women”. The dichotomy we generally make between our “public and private lives” that this quote refers to is very apparent in our everyday lives, and isn’t thought of as being a problem most of the time. Privacy is a naturally conducive to intimacy, it would seem. Some of us would even go as far as to say that the inverse is true as well. I would add that these notions seem true enough, but the problem persists. As our relationships with other



people fold inward, becoming more and more private, they become almost untouchable by public scrutiny. Sexual violence persists both in practice and in its appearance in the form of jokes, fantasy, and as an outlet of anger in male conversation. It persists mainly because the majority of us have been in countless situations where it has come up either right before our eyes or abstracted in conversation and we have let it slide right off of our backs. I myself have been part of the later and as I develop a definition of sexual violence that is becoming more and more broad, I understand that this happens WAY more often than not. In my case, I can't think of one instance where I actually took a stand against it. When a guy who has been repeatedly brutalized by police officers in order to "prove a point" can't think of one instance when we have even risked conflict in a friendly conversation to bring sexual violence into scrutiny, you know it's a problem. This is magnified greatly when I realize that I am by no means alone.

The answer seems to be that ever-elusive thing called compromise. Elusive, because of its difficulty we are better off asking how we can do so and, more importantly, why would we want to do so.

In the larger scheme of things, we are accountable for our actions in regards to sexual violence. Seeing as terms such as "Sexual Harassment" have been added to the tip of the everyman's tongue, we can say that we are under more legal scrutiny than ever before. This also contributes to a broader, more realistic view of what sexual violence really is. Understanding the limits of the law and its most basic flaw of detouring crime by punishing it after the fact, many activists believe in taking a more pro-active stance. A rolling up of the sleeves to get the job done, so to speak. As men committed to this, what could be more pro-active than starting with that little area where our public and private lives come together, our relationships with other men? As much as we might like to be buried under such heavily packed notions of men being (naturally?) inept at showing their emotions, we actually do so on a regular basis. Although we may not be having heart-to-hearts every day, our take on women (and the violence we commit upon them) is apparent in the most casual conversations. There is much to be heard in the way we joke, fantasize, and confide with each other. When a joke, fantasy or whatever is presented in a conversation that is adverse to our ideals, even more is to be heard in our silence than the offensive language used.

Jeff Hearn continues to observe that in almost any situation where men feel comfortable with their masculini-

ty the conversation tends to drift from "more progressive, even pro-feminist stance toward those that are ambiguous even anti-feminist" I believe that this happens simply because it is convenient for us to do so. That stalwart feminists have beckoned repeatedly called "the patriarchy" seems to lie upon the foundation of male conversation like a skyscraper we walk by every day. Ominous, but we rarely look up to see it baring down upon us. We just scurry past it and enjoy the shade it provides us with on hot summer days. It's easy to see how men have the advantage of ignoring the problem, but how do we deal with it? Do we loathe masculinity? Do we loathe ourselves? I would hope not. We should start by taking note when our casual conversations find themselves leaning upon the patriarchal structure that we, supposedly, despise. It is here where we can make a difference. It is here where we learn that the dissection of our lives into such rigid schemes of "public" and "private" only serves to offer us yet another easy way out of accountability. Finding yourself publicly accountable for your private ideals and actions can only encourage others to follow suit.

Objections to Objectification Anyone?

One of the few men who spoke out in the group brought to our attention that one of the main problems that we have as a gender is our tendency to become visual "butchers" as he said. Butchers, because we view women as pieces of meat or different body parts severed by our eyes into things removed from the idea of a woman as a whole. I asked myself if I (being attracted to them) turned women into objects before my eyes. I got a little laugh that I would even pose that question unto myself, because I absolutely do. That I do so is not even up to questioning, it is a given. What really needed to be addressed was whether it was wrong as stated by the man in our group.

Sexual attraction is a very powerful force, and leaves me feeling that in a very strong sexual sense that we are objects. When I am physically attracted to somebody, an impulse is present because of physical beings, the visual make-up of that which is taking up space, quite beautifully, in front of me. Although, this is only a simplified version of sexual attraction, it seems like the most common. We have this tendency to treat objects differently according to the abstract concept of "what they are". Likewise, we as men want to be respected on different levels, one being the equally abstract "who we are inside". What we are and "who" we are inside have very blurred boundaries, and we need to recognize that the same is for women. Simply stated, (and to play with

a particularly odd philosophical device) the machine is an object but never forget that there is a ghost in there somewhere. I know that sounds weird, but people are bodies and something else too. "Value" them as such.

Easily said, but not so easily done. It is in our best interests to keep the patriarchal gears turning with as little friction as possible, so we don't treat women as we would want to be treated. We abuse them on many different levels, the most vile being rape.

As Susan Brownmiller deftly chronicles in her book "Against Our Will", rape has a strong historical bond to our inability to conceive of women as the equal to us. Historically, our objectification of women goes beyond sexual desire and has resulted in treating women as property. As our concept of property evolved along proto-capitalistic lines, women were, and continue to be, covered under this concept. Our language is a testament to this because even if they are used in the most endearing way, "wanting" a woman denotes possession and "courting/dating" implies a certain work that needs to be done to achieve a material gain. How can you enjoy an object and not feel the need to own it?

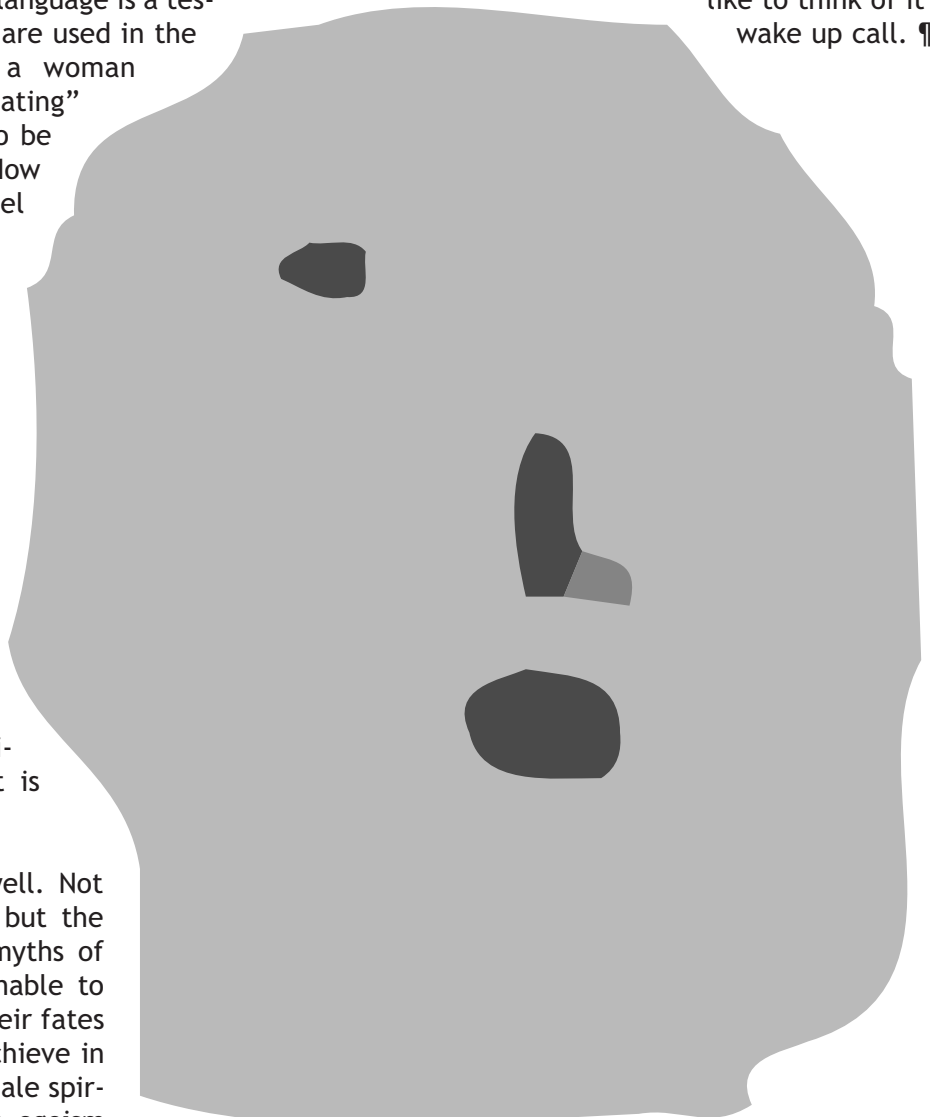
You can almost hear the capitalist within us chattering its teeth and writhing sleeplessly. Not only are our relationships with property, but our entire concept of it, at fault it seems. We abuse women not only out of hatred and complacency for the patriarchal structure we are born into, but because of the capitalist mentality we have been born into as well. By it, acquaintance or date rape (the most common type) is rationalized because one cannot abuse his own property and patriarchy allows us to take because it is ours by birthright.

This goes beyond the physical as well. Not only do we own the female body, but the mind within. By perpetuating the myths of women being the weaker sex or unable to handle stress, we are able to own their fates by limiting what they are able to achieve in our world. Our possession of the female spirit is another extension of the same egoism that allocates the Earth to mankind. Just as we

have seen, when mankind has positioned itself as the ideological ruler of the Earth, mankind has fewer qualms with abusing it.

Of course, not all of mankind have traditionally believed that they "owned" the earth, just those who stepped up and beat it into submission. Readily available in various cultures is the concept that the earth is something that can not be owned. This is a very humbling statement by western standards because it implies that mankind is part of the earth, and not some heaven-bound creature who is the exception to every natural rule. For these reasons its just as humbling when we realize that as men we cannot own women.

This is all nice and uplifting when it hangs among the rafters of theory, but when it comes down it will deal a painful blow upon male heads. I'd like to think of it as a wake up call. ¶



a tribute to my Father

written by Chris Dixon

MY DAD WAS DIFFERENT. SURE, HE AND I PLAYED CATCH and wrestled, watched sports and enjoyed Star Wars together. But he also talked about feelings, cooked dinner regularly, and encouraged me to play with dolls and action figures alike. He didn't even flinch when my mom began painting my toenails pink. Although I wouldn't realize it until later, my father was the first pro-feminist man to touch my life. Growing up, I knew him as a man uncomfortable with 'manhood.' I saw him openly struggle with his own entrenched sexist and homophobic socialization. I watched him try to break down rigid gender roles, with mixed success, in his relationship with my mother. And in the process, I learned a lot about patriarchy and heterosexism, not the least of which is their frustrating resilience.

These kinds of experiences are uncommon. Most of the men that I know don't have much praise for their fathers, particularly when it comes to sexism. Indeed, more than a few define their anti-sexism in deliberate opposition to their dads. Even as that demonstrates, though, fathers are so often central to our formative experiences as men around gender and sexuality. Many of us have our first run-ins with patriarchy through the older men in our lives, frequently our dads. Consciously and unconsciously, lovingly and punitively, they teach and model 'being male' for children who are expected to identify as boys and unquestioningly accept prevailing notions of 'masculinity.'

In order to understand this perpetuation of patriarchy, we have to look first to those who most embody it—men, fathers and sons. As well, we have to try to grasp how we came to wear and display its indelible imprint. And yet we must also locate the unlikely chinks in its formidable armor: the sites of refusal and struggle in which men, often hesitantly, have challenged patriarchal privilege. Thus I think it's useful, perhaps crucial, to revisit our dads with both sincere compassion and unflinching criticism.

Here I'll start with my late father. I want to pay tribute to him. And I don't mean that in any kind of simple, celebratory way. Rather, this is a tribute worthy of him, one that brings together the good and the bad. In the real world, where domination and oppression intertwine with all aspects of our lives, there are no easy, uncom-

plicated sources of inspiration. But there are lessons. I look to my dad, then, for lessons about how to struggle against sexism and homophobia, as well as for lessons about the structures of patriarchy and heterosexism that lurked inside him and continue to lurk inside me. In his example, I find both inspiration and warning, inseparably tied.

Beginnings

My dad was born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1934, right in the middle of the Great Depression. His mother was young, seventeen-years-old at the time, and she had just married his father. Six months later they moved to California, where he would spend the rest of his childhood.

My dad grew up white, male, and working-class, an only child in a family constantly struggling to make ends meet. Along the way, he also inherited a healthy distrust of wealth and power, largely through his own troubled father, a self-identified socialist as well as an outright racist. Tellingly, his parents gave him the middle name "Eugene" for Eugene Debs, the turn-of-the-century radical labor leader. And though my dad came of age during the deeply conservative 1950s, he never lost his gut sense of egalitarian ethics. Decades later as I was becoming politicized, he would confess that, at heart, he was forever a socialist, convinced that the staggering inequalities of our society were fundamentally wrong. I suspect that this core ethic contributed to his acceptance of feminism.

Poverty and hard work framed my father's young adulthood. High school offered very little, so he skimmed through while also working as a gas station attendant. After graduating, he took a stint in the army, narrowly missing the Korean War. And finding nothing redeeming about military life, he then entered college, working his way through. During this time, he also entered his first marriage, which lasted just long enough to bear four children, my half-siblings. By the 1960s he was pursuing a career with the State of California.

At first glance, my dad's story looks deceptively like a 'bootstraps' tale of hard-won success and class mobility. But it isn't; his opportunities and identity were

clearly shaped by his access to white, male, and straight privilege, in particular. Without those, he would have likely followed a markedly different path. To some extent, my father realized this. He wasn't oblivious to the social movements of sixties and seventies or the openings that they created. Specifically, he would later recount, civil rights struggles forced him to clarify his values and consider his own position as a white person. Likewise, the women's liberation movement, burgeoning as he met my feminist mother in the early seventies, challenged him to rethink his manhood and, to a limited degree, his sexuality.

Inspiration

My parents married in 1973, on the cusp of a major shift in gender roles and relations that would come to alter kinship, parenting, sex, work, socialization, and much more. For sure, it was an incomplete shift, but a significant one nonetheless. And I sometimes wonder how my dad took it: as the patriarchal landscape around him shook, as some of his privileges as a straight man were called into question, what did it mean to him? How did he learn to change?

One way or another my father embraced some of it, for I grew up with and learned from a surprisingly nontraditional man. His contributions to household work, for instance, stretched far beyond occasionally barbecuing hamburgers or fixing broken appliances. And contrary to TV sitcoms, these weren't begrudging duties at the behest of my mother. My dad consistently prepared meals, he washed his share of dishes, and when it was time to clean house, he chipped in just like the rest of us. As well, he changed plenty of dirty diapers, cared for me when I was sick, and carted my brother and me around as my mom worked. Throughout—indeed even after my parents separated in 1994—my father was emphatically dedicated to what he called “co-parenting”: working together with my mother on equal terms in all parenting decisions. Thus, as American pop culture was ambivalently and belatedly coming to terms with “Mr. Mom,” my parents were figuring out—not always so easily—how to share chores, responsibilities, and decisions. Although seemingly inconsequential at the time, their innovations shaped how I've come to understand gender, work, and authority, among many other things.

More than once, I asked my father, “are you a feminist?” His reply was always the same: “yes.” For him, that choice transcended our home and his relationship with my mother; it also posed a more general challenge to ‘masculinity’ and men, himself included. In the late 1980s, his search for answers took him to the budding “men's movement,” a broad (and often contradictory) conglomeration of men's initiatives and organizations. His main participation was with a fairly progressive men's group, including both queers and straights, which met weekly to discuss issues like gender socialization, male role expectations, pornography, and homophobia.

This last topic was especially weighty for my dad, judging from the stories that he shared. When I was 9 or 10, for example, he told me about a meeting in which pairs of men in his group had taken turns holding each others' hands while walking around the block outside. Some of them simply couldn't. Their fear of touching other men—their internalized homophobia—was too deep-rooted. But my father said that he had been able to hold hands the whole way. I saw how scared he had been, and I was proud of him.

Some years later, when I was in my early teens, my dad invited me to attend a local men's conference with him. To this day, I still vividly remember the workshops. In the morning, we joined a discussion with lesbian activist and musician Libby Rodrick, who provided an historical overview of the feminist movement, pulling out lessons for us men to grapple with. “You all,” she offered conclusively, “have a lot of work to do among yourselves.” In the afternoon, we participated in a lively multigenerational

“dialogue between gay and straight men.” For me, still exploring my own sexuality, this was an eye-opening, exciting encounter. And our presence as a father-son duo was especially significant: for the dialogue, because we represented a tangible bridge between generations, and for me, because we momentarily moved outside the assumed heterosexuality that so often pervaded my family and my experience. As I look back, I realize that it took a lot of courage for my dad to participate.

Truth be told, many of my most inspirational moments with my father weren't during these major events, but throughout our daily experiences. I treasure memories of the time he explained homophobia to me or, later, our rich ongoing conversations about gender wherever



we went. At the airport with him, for instance, I remember watching and talking about gender roles in greetings and goodbyes: while men were expected to be 'calm and collected,' women were frequently tearful and openly affectionate. Of course, we couldn't, by ourselves, do away with such role limitations, but we found solace in one another as we looked and pushed at them. Altogether, these were enlightening, memorable times. In them, my dad, along with my mother, taught me a way of critically eyeing the world—a way that he carried courageously unto his last days.

Warning

There was also a flipside to my dad. That is, he was far from untouched by patriarchy or heterosexism. In fact, some of the more poignant lessons I take from him have to do with his failings. Mostly, they center on his worst demons, inextricably linked to the workings of our social order. At best, my father determinedly pushed at the boundaries of 'masculinity.' Yet for all of his critical self-awareness, he was still a man at times drowning in his own toxic socialization and entrenched in his privilege.

In the late nineties, for instance, my dad finally admitted to his life-long battle with alcoholism. And I have no doubt that this struggle was tied to his larger battles with 'manhood' itself. For most of my life he was largely dry due to my mom's prodding, though he still had his moments of slurred sentimentalities as well as sheer ferocity. For him, alcohol was a coping tool. Depending on the circumstances, it was a means for 'male bonding,' isolated withdrawal, emotional avoidance, and/or playful oblivion. In short, it was a copout, and a predictably masculine one at that.

Not unconnected was my father's volatile temper. In chilling detail, my mother sometimes tells horrendous stories of his most controlling, explosive states. By her accounts, his care and sensitivity were real, but they also concealed a capacity for intense rage and characteristically masculine entitlement. I definitely experienced pieces of this, but not the full brunt that my mom

endured. And as she points out, even as he tried to mend and reconcile in his last years, he never took authentic responsibility for it.

Certainly my dad should be understood within the larger context of a society founded upon structural inequalities, like patriarchy. Single lives cannot easily bypass institutional realities. However, in some areas of his life, my father worked to challenge this context. So, why the incongruity? I suspect that his failure to deal with his behavior stemmed, in part, from his difficulty reaching out and finding support. Despite his encouraging efforts with men's groups, he still relied heavily on the woman in his life—my mom—for emotional care-taking, a dynamic that many men are quick to fall back on. The gendered roles and expectations of the nuclear family—breadwinning father and nurturing mother—don't die so easily.



And while my dad generally frowned on such limited and limiting gender roles, he still sought a fixed 'masculinity,' essential, timeless, and natural. Indeed, he was bothered by my playfulness around gender and worked to police my incursions against gender boundaries. At fifteen, for example, I recall his hostility while explaining to my confused younger brother that my beautifully French-braided hair perhaps signaled that I was "gay, or even transsexual." My brother didn't understand that explanation too well; it was obviously directed at me and, consequently, devastating. The labels didn't bother me, but the contempt was biting. From then on, I was careful to keep my more 'transgressive' explorations of gender and sexuality safely away from my father.

Undergirding all of this was the basic fact that my dad's understanding of sexism and homophobia was regrettably shallow. He largely saw feminism as granting women 'rights' in a very public sense and deploring individual 'prejudicial' sexist acts. He saw 'gay rights' similarly. Yet he neglected many of the patriarchal and heterosexist structures and patterns inscribed in his own heart. Consequently, his approach to the men's movement, like that of many other men, focused mainly on the obstacles and suffering among us, not the privileges that we enjoy. Sadly, he never quite grasped the whole picture.

Lessons

My father's story has a natural conclusion: on a wintry day in December of 1999, he collapsed and died, stunning my whole family. But for me, this was less an end than a startling beginning. Since that fateful day, I've come to reflect on my dad in all of his flesh-and-blood complexity, strengthening my connection with him while also creating my own sense of closure and farewell. The process is tricky, for he was full of pointed contradictions: a pro-feminist who angrily vented upon my mother, a gender role skeptic who nonetheless reinforced gender boundaries, an anti-sexist who failed to confront some of his most sexist patterns, a sensitive, reflective man who fled from his own feelings, long using alcohol to aid his flight. Only in recognizing these can I piece him together.

On one hand, then, I acknowledge his successes and the inspirational role he has played in my life. Simply put, I would not be the person that I am today without him. He helped equip me with some essential reflective tools for challenging systems of oppression. He embodied a (not entirely) different way of 'being a man.' And he taught me basic things: to confront my own homophobia, to contribute equally in household responsibilities, to never forget how to cry. In this sense, I carry him with me.

On the other hand, I acknowledge my dad's failings. I love him, and the most sincere way I know of expressing my love (particularly in his absence) is by learning from his mistakes and accepting the responsibility of not repeating them. As a (mostly) straight man, the son of my father, I too have the capacity to dwell in my rage and entitlement, to sink myself into emotional avoidance and isolated withdrawal, to rely exclusively on the women in my life for my emotional care-taking. I too can choose to ignore my privilege. To forget any of this would be the greatest disrespect to my dad. In this sense as well, I carry him with me.

Somewhat optimistically, bell hooks recently noted, "we have for the first time a generation of men coming to adulthood who were not born into a world automatically submerged with sexist socialization that says that women are not the intellectual or work equals of men." I am of this generation of men. But for all the tremendous social shifts and major feminist successes, I, like others, haven't wholly escaped sexist or heterosexist socialization. This struggle will be a long one. I'm fortunate, though, because my father has left me with some inspiring tools and difficult lessons to help me along the way.

Thanks dad. ¶

forgiving our fathers

a poem by Dick Lourie

[taken from the movie "Smoke Signals"]

How do we forgive our fathers?
Maybe in a dream.

Do we forgive our fathers for leaving us too often
or forever when we were little?

Maybe for scaring us with unexpected rage
Or making us nervous because there never seemed
to be any rage there at all.

Do we forgive our fathers for marrying or not
marrying our mothers?

For divorcing or not divorcing our mothers?

And shall we forgive them for their excesses of
warmth or coldness?

Shall we forgive them for pushing or leaning,
for shutting doors, for speaking through walls,
or never speaking, or never being silent?

Do we forgive our fathers in our age or in theirs
Or in their deaths, saying it to them or not
saying it?

If we forgive our fathers, what is left?

faggot!!

written by
Donald Cavanaugh

IN APRIL 1954, I WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD, IN THIRD GRADE. I was half a year younger than my classmates, the result of having been born in November and starting school half a year early rather than half a year late. I didn't realize it completely, but I'd spent most of the previous five years as an object of scorn for my father. I knew we didn't have a very good relationship and he was frequently disgusted by the fact that I came home from school in tears because I'd been teased unmercifully by my classmates. But I didn't realize just what the problem was. I was about to find out.

My mother, who was busy with a new baby and already pregnant with a pair of twins that would soon dramatically change the family dynamic to everyone's disadvantage, had decided that my father should do his paternal duty and help guide me in the ways of manhood. After all, I would soon be receiving my first communion and it was time to understand the implications of one's sins as an adult. As a result, every Sunday my father was forced to endure my company from right after Mass until our weekly "family dinner" was served. "The women will get the dinner ready. You men should go off and spend time together," was my mother's insistence.

Since it was the least painful way to spend time with me, my father would take me for extended rides in his 1940 Dodge pickup truck along back roads and through forest lands on fire roads which were cut roughly through the woods. We spent most of those hours riding in silence but occasionally we had interesting adventures like the times we would pick lady slippers to take home to my mother or venture into a dark cedar swamp in search of mayflowers. My mother had informed me that this was a time when I could ask my father anything I wanted. "He's your father and he loves you," she would assert but her words rang hollow and for the most part, I had nothing to ask and Father had nothing to say. Most of our brief conversations, when they happened at all, were kept to such topics as horticulture and history.

One Thursday morning in this particular April I was in the schoolyard with my classmates. We were all jostling into position to line up for our daily march into the school building. Robby Barrister, a tow-headed boy on

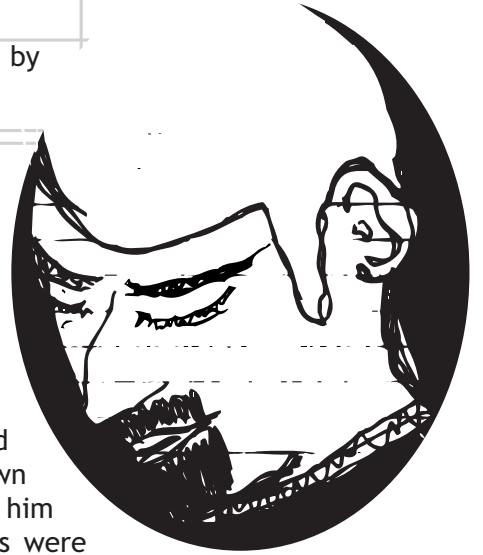
whom I had a crush (although I didn't know at the time what that was) dropped a pencil or some small object. I would have reached down and gotten it for him but my own arms were too full to permit such

motion. So, I stretched out my index finger and tapped him on the back of his arm to let him know he'd dropped something. He turned to see who had touched him. When he saw it was I, he pulled himself away from me shouting, "Keep your hands off me you fucking faggot!"

By the time I was 7 this sort of treatment no longer took me completely by surprise nor reduced me immediately to tears. But I was awestruck by the vitriolic tone in this beautiful boy's voice and demeanor. Immediately, other boys started intoning the mantra I would hear almost daily from then on — "Fucking faggot! Fucking faggot! Fucking faggot!" I'm not sure if any of them knew the meaning of the words any more than I did, but it had (and has) a certain odious ring that makes it a perfect epithet of antipathy. And, I certainly could feel my classmates' antipathy.

I was dumbstruck by the whole thing and completely baffled by those two words that had a magical power that could drive schoolboys to such a fanatical pitch. The mantra was repeated when I appeared the next day, Friday. I avoided the perpetrators as best I could, skulking around on the perimeter of the playground until the bell rang and we had to line up. The appearance of the teacher insured silence but I could still feel the incredible anger and hatred focused on me by my classmates.

With considerable trepidation I could hardly wait until Sunday. I had to understand the meaning of those words and I knew my father could tell me what they meant. My mother had assured me for months that I could "safely" ask my father anything when we were out on our "bonding (a term not used in 1954) treks"



and while the thought of broaching the subject of being called really negative names wasn't comforting, I had to know. I needed to understand what my classmates thought I was.

We'd gone to a regular spot to pick lady slippers. There was an old dirt road that ran along the rail road track near the reservoir. On one side was a narrow forest of scrub pines, perfect territory for lady slippers. On the other side was the railroad track bounded by a scrubby area cut through the forest to facilitate high power lines. The sun, even in April, beat down on the roughly open space with a certain intensity. We had gathered a bunch of flowers in the shade of the pines. I was holding them in my hand, half-enchanted by that inimitable woodsy perfume. We climbed into the sun-heated truck and headed for home. I had avoided asking the question for as long as I could. I knew I had but a few minutes on this dirt road before we hit the paved street and the last stretch to the house.

Scared out of my mind but desperate to know the worst I squeaked "Dad?"

"What?" he snorted in his usual tone, a mixture of disdain, anger and ennui.

"Uuuhh, what's a fucking faggot?"

My words were barely whispered but had I tossed a hot coal into his lap I couldn't have caused the response that followed my query. He slammed on the brakes so hard that he practically impaled himself on the steering wheel. I was thrown against the windshield and bounced back into the seat, landing in the corner, wedged between the seat and the door. The truck engine had died and the sudden silence was almost deafening. He was gasping for breath from the effects of the steering wheel but he still managed to scream at me through the silence of the woods "Why?!?! Did somebody call you that?!"

"Nnnnoo!" I wailed through tears of pain and frustration. The lady slippers were all over the cab of the truck and my head was producing a huge knot that hurt in front of the headache that was quickly growing in my skull. "I heard the kids call somebody else that in the school yard!" I screamed back, writhing to escape from my wedged-in state and hoping that my volume could drive away his anger and abject horror.

No such luck. He knew I was lying and he knew the truth but he knew only one response.

"Jesus Christ!" he screamed, hovering over me like a huge bear with arms raised as if to grab me and crush this fucking faggot before him. His eyes were bulging and the anger vein that popped out of his forehead was visibly throbbing. "Faggots are spawn of the devil!" he screeched, gasping for enough breath to bellow his fear. They're men who love other men! Or boys who love other boys!! They're anathema in the eyes of God! The deepest pits in hell are reserved for them! And that's where they belong! They're sinners and law breakers and they go to jail when they're caught."

Thus went the basic theme. It was repeated and repeated for about 10 minutes until he wore himself out. He then fell into the drivers position and slumped over the wheel muttering something to himself that I couldn't make out. My head hurt and my ears were ringing and my being was scorched with his hatred and venom. I was so confused I wanted to throw up but, whimpering, I gathered up the lady slippers and sat back in the seat waiting for what might happen next.

"You'd better not let me hear anyone call you a faggot," he finally said. "I'll kill 'em and you should kill 'em too." "And, you better not BE a faggot because everybody hates faggots; even God! And I hate faggots too!" He restarted the truck and we proceeded home in taut silence punctuated with an occasionally muttered "Jesus Christ" from him and an infrequent sob from me. When we arrived my mother wanted to know what happened to my forehead. My father said, tersely, "I had to slam on the breaks and he hit the windshield. He'll be ok." His words weren't a lie and I wasn't about to add any detail so the subject was dropped. My tears were assumed to be the result of the accident so I got no further attention as the women put the meal on the table. My father remained in a horrible frame of mind, though, and was less communicative than usual at the family dinner, scowling at anyone who addressed him and leaving the table early.

I asked permission to leave the table early, too, and I went off to my bed. My mother's parents had come to live with us at this time because they were unable to stay in their home and weren't "ready" for a nursing home. They had been given my bedroom and I was moved into the hall on the second floor where I had a bed and a small bureau. There was no privacy because the hallway was the route to the only bathroom in the house. I crawled onto the bed and buried my head in my pillow to weep over the horrible fate that I had just learned was mine.

I knew I found boys attractive. I didn't know that what I felt for Robby Barrister was a crush but I did know that it was evisceral and different than my liking for any of the girls I knew. And now I'd just found out that if the police learned of my thoughts I could be put in jail! My classmates were right. I was a fucking faggot. And according to my father, my classmates were right to hate me. By his own admission my father hated me and had authoritatively assured me that even God hated me because of my feelings that until the previous Thursday I hadn't known were so awful! What kind of evil lived inside me that I should have this happen. Why should I be born this way instead of whatever way was good?" What was wrong with this God I'd been taught was so loving. If he wanted people like me in hell why did he make us? And worse, I was going to have to make my first confession and tell the priest about this horrific sin. How could I do that? How could I walk into that little booth and tell the priest that I was a fucking faggot? What a quandary!

My grandfather came to my bed and tried to find out what was wrong. Of course, I couldn't tell him anymore than I could tell anyone. "Better not touch me," I thought, as I pulled away from his touch. "You might catch it from me." He tried valiantly but I was psychically so lacerated that his efforts only increased the suffering. And this was just the beginning. I believe that my father shared his fears with my mother that night when we kids were all in bed. She acted like she wanted to assure me that I was really OK and wasn't/couldn't be a fucking faggot but she couldn't let on that she knew anything for sure and seemed pretty obviously repulsed at the thought that one of her children was really spawn of Satan.

This event was the one that built my homosexual closet with a thick, solid door and a huge bolt lock. At first my parents controlled the lock and they kept it bolted down as hard as they could. My father started calling me a sissy which was followed by similar remarks from my mother and sisters. That was mild compared to the continued epithets from my classmates but it was enough to reinforce the wisdom of keeping that closet door shut and bolted. Although since I was going to hell anyway, what did it really matter. I guessed this was the way God prepared us evil ones for our eternal damnation. Constant harassment everywhere – even at home.

From third grade until sixth grade I endured non-stop battering, both physical and verbal, at the hands of my schoolmates. At home it was verbal and emotional and

it drove me further and further into my closet. I remember one incident that must have occurred in 1956. My parents had insisted that I join the Boy Scouts, hoping that it would help change me into a real boy. The local troop held its meetings in the basement of the Catholic Church that my family attended, across the street from our house. I was in the meeting being extremely ineffective at tying knots and the other boys were calling me "stupid faggot," and "girl." They were laughing and taunting me loudly. The scout masters attempted to bring order to the group but they themselves were so repulsed by the presence of a faggot that one of them finally threw his hands up in despair and said he'd better call my father to come get me. "He's disrupting the rest of the boys," he said to my father with a knowing look and an affected limp wrist. "You catch my meaning?" My father got the message and I was dragged from the church basement and across the street to our house where my father, in front of me, told my mother how embarrassed he had been although he never once spoke directly to me.

The twins mentioned above were born in December, 1954, 2 months premature and when the earlier baby was just 11 months old. The youngest twin, the boy, had an open heart and Down's Syndrome. His frailty and physical incapacity demanded my mother's complete attention so where there had been little succor in the past now there could be none and her need for the rest of us to fend for ourselves necessitated my getting deeper and deeper into my closet.

In the second semester of sixth grade the constant harassment finally took its toll. I flunked all but one course and in that one I merited a D. My mother, oblivious to or deliberately avoiding the real reason for my failure was so upset with the situation of my bad grades she put me into the Catholic schools in the nearby city. It took me two hours each way to get to and from school, so there was little time to socialize with any of my classmates outside of a 45-minute lunch period. I discovered that I could be the smartest one in the class with little fear of retribution from my classmates because they had so little opportunity to discover who I really was. Oh there was the occasional whispered "faggot" behind my back but I could ignore it with relative impunity. It was at this point that I took the keys for my closet from my parents and kept the closet closed and locked myself – completely and thoroughly.

My life progressed with various degrees of success and with the infrequent "faggot" whispered almost out of my hearing. I moved from my parents' home to New

York City with the intention of coming out but the locks on my closet door were so completely stuck in place that I ended up marrying a woman and throwing myself into my work. The marriage "lasted" for 20 years — actually 19 years but my ex-wife was so angry that she decided to sue me for divorce and that took another 18 months and lots and lots of money.

It took a year of therapy and almost a two-hour session with my therapist for me to get out the words "I'm gay." It took an additional three years of therapy to start to come to grips with my homosexuality and learn to live in and actually accept my skin. I have discarded Christianity and all of the formal religions which institutionalize the human torture and terrorism that I lived through as a child. They have a really sick god if what they propose is true. I'm sure my father has no recollection of the first conversation we had on this topic.

Nor would he remember the two other times when he spoke to me about sexuality, both of which ended with admonitions against loving other men.

I suppose I should be grateful that my closeted life probably saved me from the plague that struck the gay community so hard in the '80s and '90s and in some ways I am. But I am not grateful to the nation's definition of masculinity that resulted in my abuse and the abuse of so many others during childhood — including all those men who died from AIDS and who in their dying had to come out to family, friends and all of society but not on their own terms. Heterosexism and homophobia are frightening abuses of a minority by a majority. They steal childhood from children, adolescence from teenagers and full and rewarding lives from adults.

When will it ever end? ¶

"When confronted with the impact of male violence on women's lives I originally wanted to say, "It wasn't me," "I respect women," "I wouldn't hurt anyone." When confronted with the effects of racism on people of color I wanted to say, "My family didn't own slaves," "I have it hard, too," "I don't see color." Yet as I learned more about male violence it became all too clear that I participated in perpetuating the system of violence that engulfs and imprisons us. Sometimes it was through my actions; other times it was through my denial or complacency."

"I could no longer claim innocence or feign ignorance. Instead, I wanted to believe that I had quickly moved beyond those kinds of behaviors and was now "correct," During the first years of doing this work I wanted to believe I had stepped over some invisible line and was no longer abusive or controlling. Other men might be sexist, but I was liberated. Other white people might be racist, but I was now color-blind."

"After several years of doing community prevention and education work, it was hard to admit that I had more to learn. The persistence of my old patterns of behavior discouraged me. I was disappointed to realize that there is not some magic point beyond which we are free of violence, controlling behavior, and abusive attitudes and actions."

This excerpt was written by Paul Kivel in his book, Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart.



why i joined the navy

written by Tony Switzer

THE PANZER RUMBLED FORWARD RELENTLESSLY. FROZEN snow crunched and fallen branches snapped as the death machine rolled on. Sgt. Ernie Rock huffed frosty clouds as he squinted at the German tank. He bit down on the butt of his stogie muttering, "Easy Company is a sittin' duck if I don't stop dat Kraut joy machine."

Rock peered around at his three dead comrades and the 14 German soldiers that they had slain minutes before. He was the only survivor. "Ya dogfaces," Rock growled in a mixture of admiration and disgust, "Just like ya to die on me before da job is done." The burly sergeant with four days of scraggly beard picked up the bazooka from Smitty 10 feet away. "Dis oughta say hello to da Furrher." But the firing mechanism was hopelessly jammed. A search of the bodies turned up no grenades and only one clip of ammo for his M-1 rifle. The Panzer was now 40 yards away and the clanking of metal was growing louder.

Drawing himself to his full height and biting his stogie Rock broke into a trot toward the steel behemoth. Twenty yards away Rock opened fire with a blood curdling shout. "Die ya yellow bellies!" From somewhere in the tank a machine gun fired back. Clank-clankety-clank. Sarge was quickly out of ammunition. With 7mm machine gun rounds biting trees and throwing snow all around he dove behind a log. In a flash he snapped his bayonet into place. The thought jumped through the muscular man's mind that no one had ever been so foolish as to attack a tank with a bayonet. "OK, so I'm da first. I aint gonna let 'em get to Easy Company."

Sgt. Ernie Rock, Charlie Company, 4th Platoon, zigged and zagged, slowed and dodged bullets as he ran at the Panzer. "Eat death Nazi scum!" With one final burst Rock hurdled up onto the flank of the iron war wagon. Fanatically, he hacked and jabbed away. Argh! Grunt! Then a spark! A fire! Kabloom!!

Ten minutes later that seemed like ten hours the crusty sarge came to. The Panzer belched great clouds of black smoke. Easy Company was safe....for now. Rock wiped blood from his cheek and slowly lifted himself to his feet. He grinned, sighed, and reached for his helmet.

Wow! My ten year old fingers folded the comic book closed. What a man, I thought.

I saw a movie which portrayed heroics similar to this comic book story. To Hell and Back was a dramatization of the battlefield exploits of Audie Murphy. In World War II he was the most decorated soldier among US fighting forces. In the movie Murphy is given the Congressional Medal of Honor. I cried. This was a man, a brave man, a man I wanted to be like. To me a man worked hard, with his hands (that's what my dad did). He carried a lunch bucket. He had a wife and a couple of kids. But before starting a work life. A man was in the military, "the service". Some males didn't do their hitch. They were men, I guess, but it wasn't the same. Those guys came up short somehow.

As a man how could you know what the world was about if you had never been through boot camp? Never done KP? The experience of living in the barracks seemed essential to healthy adult male functioning.

These were the assumptions that paced my life into early adulthood. They were largely not learned as direct lessons, but absorbed as part of my blue collar working class family life. Even though less than one in five men in our country has been in the military I contend that all men in our society have been militarized by our cultural conditioning.

I am eager to debate this point, but that will e to wait for later. This is a subjective account of one man's path into the military. I offer it as a personal recollection, a reconstruction of the influences on my life that led to my enlistment in the Navy in 1968. My experiences certainly aren't universal, but I have talked with enough veterans and other men to know that they are shared by many others.

I envision three related purposes for writing this down. First, I would have men consider and compare their own experiences to mine. Do you recognize any of this? Second, I hope to convey to female readers unseen glimpses of what it is like to grow up male in our society. Third, and most importantly to me, I hope to embolden other veterans to share their stories. Too many of us have hidden away that part of our lives for

fear that: 1) we would be labeled violent, abnormal, sadistic, or worse; 2) we would be ignored, scorned or laughed at; or, 3) we would have to deal with our own unpleasant, sometimes traumatic memories.

I would like to bring the reader to think about the ways we raise young males, in our families, and in our culture as a whole. Do our values and childrearing practices promote adult males who will be sensitive to the needs of others? Can we hope for a future of peace if we continue to train warriors? Is this the best we can do?

It would be tidy if I could pinpoint one incident from my early youth that clearly initiated my conditioning toward being a sailor. Such is not the case, however. Instead, I have what seem to me rather conventional memories of toy soldiers, playing cowboys and indians and playing "war".

It seems so commonplace to me, but I'm sure I need to explain toy soldiers. Beginning at the age of four or five I spent many hours with my plastic figurines of combat infantrymen. They were only two inches tall and fixed in some posture of attack. Most were a green or green-brown, not quite khaki. Some stood firing rifles while others fired from a sprawled or kneeling position. There was a bazooka man and several machine gunners. But my personal favorite was always the guy throwing a grenade. He wore a determined grimace as he prepared to heave the three pound hunk of steel.

Your parents could purchase these "men" at any dime store in a sack containing some size of fighting unit. The smallest sack was a platoon, then a company followed by a battalion, regiment, division, and finally, an army. Thus, was I indoctrinated in military organization before I started first grade.

A battle could be concocted anywhere. You just dump the bag over and assemble the little fighters. Sometimes you would pit them against one another, but usually I spread them in some attack formation. Often, it was necessary to assault a fixed enemy position such as a machine gun nest or mountain fortress (played by a sugar bowl and an easy chair, respectively). The floor was the easiest all-weather venue for combat though I liked the lawn where "men" could hide in the grass. The bathroom was interesting for it's multi-level ambush possibilities.

Two or more could play "soldiers", but I spent most of my time alone. Playing solitaire I always picked one man to be me. Play proceeded by sheer imagination

and subjectively judged line-of-sight shots at the enemy. If someone was hit you tipped him over or dramatically gave him a sharp but controlled thump with the index finger.

The indispensable element of playing soldiers as well as the role-played war and cowboys and indians was the sound effects. The explosion of a mortar shell, the ubiquitous whine of rifle bullets zinging past, the guttural uh-uh-uh of the machine gun brought the battle to life. Without sound effects these childhood games would be drab and boring; it's like the difference between theory and practice.

Cowboys and indians and war (which for me meant re-enactment of WWII combat) were choreographed dramas acted out by 2-15 boys. Girls were seldom allowed. Usually, sides were chosen and good guys and bad guys designated. Military maneuvers commenced with some agreed or dictated plan of action. For instance, "OK, you guys walk down the path over by Tommy's house. We'll ambush you over there somewhere, OK?"

It was scripted or silently understood that being on the bad guys team meant that your side would be defeated. You might be devious Japanese fighters who just blew up a bus full of nurses in which case you would be expected to suffer quite a bit in imaginary death. The indian bad guys routinely died agonizingly as they were regarded as evil and uncivilized. These simulations of combat taught me not only the ways of violence and aggression, but also laid in unhealthy racial stereotypes.

Also starting very early as a young person I was influenced heavily by television and movies. The TV documentary Victory at Sea fascinated me. It featured real combat footage from WWII of naval battles, amphibious assaults (hitting the beach), and aerial bombing. The hours I spent fantasizing these battles! I thought about the celluloid sequences at home, at school, eating, doing homework, walking to school, talking to friends. I considered how my hometown might look after extensive bombing. My bored doodles on school papers were of tanks shelling rival soldiers or airplanes locked in a dogfight.

Other TV influences were Daniel Boone and The Lone Ranger. These two programs were not as violent as some others. However, they elaborated the violent themes of my youthful warrior training. The former revolved around subduing the hostile wilderness while the latter dealt with the solitary fight of one righteous man against the forces of evil. Several John Wayne movies

seized my imagination. His portrayal of Davy Crockett at the Alamo filled my eyes with tears. In *The Sands of Iwo Jima* his Sgt. Stryker defined the U.S. fighting man for me.

In the years before I turned 16—mid-‘50’s to mid-‘60’s—my experiences, the media, my family and all of society presented me with a constant message delivered with many variations. Remember WWII. It can happen again. In fact, it likely will happen again. You will have your war to fight. Be prepared young man. You will have your war to fight.

I used to look out the window of the car as we drove to Anderson, Missouri to see my grandma. It was about 100 miles in the days before Interstate Highways became common. We passed through lots of little towns in a wooded countryside dotted with farms and pastures.

As we went I imagined that I drove an Army jeep along parallel to the road. I had been given a mission to drive my jeep through enemy lines with a life-saving message—send reinforcements! Our regiment was cut-off, surrounded, doomed. My impossible mission was to somehow drive across 100 miles of enemy territory fighting my way out with the lives of thousands of my comrades at stake. The Krauts or Japs (the only bad guys I could conceive of at that point) were closing in, all radio communication was gone, food was running short.

It was a long shot, but the only alternative was certain death. It was suicide. I knew it and every brave soldier I left behind knew it.

Out the car window I saw the jeep crashing along across fields, through ravines, dodging the bullets of hundreds of angry enemy rifles. Grenades exploded, fire leapt around me as I raced through pastoral scenes turned to hell by war.

I had a pistol and a sub-machine gun and a limitless supply of ammunition (just like in the movies). But my task was driving; there was little time to shoot. I wore a flak jacket, a vest filled with lead sheets to stop bullets or shrapnel. Sometimes as dad drove the car down Highway 80 in my mind I would be wounded, near death, but I was tied to the wheel with a rope. And, by god, I wouldn’t be stopped.

When I set out on this suicide mission there was a gunner with me. A .38 caliber machine gun mounted atop a four foot iron pole was planted behind the passenger seat. The gunner stood in the back mowing down enemy

soldiers. He whipped the spitting death rod back and forth as he silenced the lousy, stinkin’ invaders front and back. We were a team. From his standing position he could see perils ahead—“Gully! Swerve right!”—and I could slow down abruptly or whip the wheel such that some sniper’s bullet wouldn’t hit my gunner.

But, this fantasy was mostly about solo heroism. Thus, the gunner, my noble buddy, didn’t last long. At times he would topple out of the jeep when hit. Other times his limp body landed on me gushing warm blood. The result was always the same. The gunner died leaving me completely, utterly alone against insurmountable odds.

Often at this imaginary point a lump would form in my throat and tears would come to my eyes. I was alone without support facing an impossible task. Death seemed inevitable. But, by god, I wouldn’t go down without a fight. I’d show them what kind of a man I was, the kind of a man the U.S. of A. produced.

From the lonely depths of this choked-up, end-of-the-line scenario I would bang my jeep into gear and stomp on the gas pedal. The battered vehicle leapt forward usually avoiding a grenade explosion.

The small towns on that road to Anderson, Mo. became treacherous hideouts for snipers. As we idled down Main Street I kept one hand on the wheel while the other nervously cradled an automatic pistol. Rooftops, alleys and overpasses were prime spots for enemy riflemen. As luck would have it when these hidden shooters revealed themselves my aim was miraculously accurate. They died; I lived. We reached the edge of town and the jeep sped on.

Most of this reverie-out-the-window trailed off into some mundane business in the present—asking my dad how much farther to go, quibbling with my younger brother, etc. Occasionally, the heroic climax of my rescue mission played through my mind. In it I arrived finally at the encampment of U.S. forces. Both my jeep and I were shot up beyond all recognition. Everyone was silently, but visibly astounded that any human could survive what I had come through. Usually, I passed the vital message I carried moments before dying. Sometimes I lived and was heaped with medals, becoming a legend, revered by my countryman.

Young people have fantasies that cast them as powerful, omnipotent in a world that is owned and operated by and for adults. My “jeep fantasy” has elements of this longing for power, but I think there is an even bigger

meaning to comprehend. Why would an eight year old boy daydream about war, killing, destruction, and his own death? This is not normal. Such imaginary scenarios aren't rational or sensible for a person of any age. However, it may be close to "normal" in that most men I have asked report similar fantasies of violence, heroism, combat, and death.

While planning our wedding my ex-wife, Rebecca, confronted me about my seeming indifference to the detailed plans she had conceived. In exasperation she asked, "What did you think your wedding would be like when you were growing up?" "I don't know, never gave it a thought", I replied. She was astounded. I knew marriage was always held out before girls and young women as an event of paramount importance. But, Rebecca's question alerted me to how much time and energy females expend contemplating a 20 to 90 minute wedding ceremony. I speculate that many young males spend at least as much time in combat fantasies as females spend in dreaming of wedding gowns, floral arrangements, and marital bliss. For us men and boys it is that central to our image of ourselves and it is that central to being able to fulfill our societally designated roles of protector and provider.

Thus, the meaning of my "jeep fantasy" was that by the age of eight (and probably before that) I had internalized images of the male as a soldier. Since men were soldiers, if I wanted to be a man, I too must be a soldier.

My only sibling, David, is three years younger than me. We were rivals for the scant attention available at our house so what we can both remember is competition from very early.

The refrain of our parents was "stop fighting!", "quit picking at your brother", "leave him alone". I suppose it was necessary in lieu of being able to give us the quality and quantity of attention that any child needs. But, I feel that dad pushed us along the path toward mutual resentment. He bought us boxing gloves.

Fourth grade was a tough year for me. We dragged our trailer house across seven states that year. I started the school year in South Dakota, did several months in Kansas City, and finished the year in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was the year that my eyes went bad and I had to get glasses. It was tough on David, too as he had a lingering sickness which eluded diagnosis. Moves are a major stressor; mom and dad surely had it hard also.

If you are my age or older you might remember the

Gillette Fight of the Week on TV, Friday nights, 8p.m. Dad watched "the fights" as everyone called them. So did I because I wanted to spend time with my daddy. Besides, if he liked the fights it must be something worthy of emulating. He talked about left hooks, jabs, combinations, uppercuts. This was didactic; later I received demonstration and instruction. I listened carefully asking some questions, mostly curious, but walloping people, and worse yet, being walloped, did not appeal to me.

During the hot summer Of '58 I witnessed Benny "Kid" Perret being mauled by his opponent (whose name I can almost remember) until he was limp and senseless. The Hispanic man was out on his feet trapped against the ropes hands at his sides as the other man energetically battered away. Not outraged, but naively curious I expected the fight to be stopped. Couldn't they see that this guy had had enough? I asked dad about it. He said something like, "the fight goes on unless your man is on the canvass."

Kid Perret died the next day never having regained consciousness. I was shocked and a little sad. I perceived something about being male from this episode—that it was dangerous, that men play for keeps, and that you better not be vulnerable because your opponent will keep attacking.

Somewhere around that time mom and dad started joking about getting boxing gloves so David and I could really settle our differences. It sounded ominous to me much like the parental threat "if you don't stop crying I'll give you something to cry about!" Mostly though it was a joke in the family about sibling rivalry.

But, on December 25 the joke became real. David and I eagerly tore into the gift wrapping around a medium-sized box that was fairly light. The tag said Santa had brought this one for both of us. My excited Christmas grin turned to a sick feeling in the stomach when we discovered two pair of boxing gloves. Mom wore a patronizing smile, but sounded vengeful and scolding telling us, "Now we will see how tough you two are." Dad looked happy and seemed curious that we weren't appreciative of the gift.

Somehow David and I escaped lacing up the gloves right there amidst the festive wrapping paper. It was later, perhaps after dinner, that dad wanted to give us a lesson in the "manly art of self-defense". We were both scared. Neither of us wanted to put on the gloves. Dad insisted as he herded us to our bedroom at the back of

the trailer. David was scared enough to be crying at the prospect of me wailing away at him with dad's blessing. Maybe he too had seen Kid Perret go down.

I protested feebly as my adult protector pushed my sweaty nine year old hands into the padded leather weapons. My cute, round faced little brother had stopped crying, but looked ready to pee his pants in terror. We were rivals, we did pick at each other, we squabbled a lot, but this was sadistic punishment. Today I look at pictures of us from that time and I mourn to think how I pounded David that Christmas day. It feels like I should have said "No! I'm not doing it dad" and thrown down the gloves.

Why didn't I refuse? Why did I do it? Basically, I caved in; or, more accurately I was overwhelmed by physical and emotional pressure from my father. I'm sorry, David, I didn't want to hurt you.

The physical pressure from him was overt. I don't know how many times he disciplined me with his belt; I estimate 10-12 times total. Were it only once, it was enough to strike terror into my heart. When displeased he could wrap his giant working man's hand around my scrawny, stick-like arm and lift me onto tiptoes to emphasize his point. It probably wasn't his intent, but dad conditioned me to cower from his angry voice, his heavy footsteps. When dad wanted me to beat on David that day my inherent power as a young person—the spunk, determination, and spirited refusal to acquiesce to injustice—had already been severely squashed by dad's violence and physical coercion. Sorry David.

Emotionally I felt the push of being the first born son. To refuse or hold back would have been to risk disappointing my primary role model. For me, as for most young boys, dad's approval felt like a life-giving substance. For me rebelling against the boxing gloves was an almost impossible act of heroism. I wasn't up to it at that point in my life. Sorry David. I hope you can forgive me.

My dad served in the Army from 1942 to 1945. He was away from home continuously for 3 ? years and he went around the world. Dad and his brother Donald belonged to the National Guard in Anderson, Mo. With a 10th grade education dad always put himself down as an uneducated hillbilly. But I admired him tremendously for his down-to-earth practicality and his journey around the world. "How many people", I asked myself, "even rich people, have gone around the world?" "My dad has", I answered. Occasionally, I had a chance to actually tell someone out loud. I dreamed

that someday I, too, would circle the globe.

I was captivated by the stories he told me. For instance, he served in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska for a year. He told me, "The saddest, most pitiful sight I ever saw was the bottom of the Golden Gate Bridge as we shipped out." After a pause and a grin he added the real-life punchline. "The most beautiful, glorious sight I ever saw was the bottom of the Golden Gate Bridge on the way back in."

Dad's unit was the 257th Coast Artillery. They saw little combat; at least dad and Uncle Don downplayed that. He was stationed in many parts of the US—Falfurrias, TX, Richmond, VA, Ft. Lewis, WA, Oklahoma, New Mexico. As I grew up we lived in several parts of the country and it seemed dad was always saying, "I passed through here on a troop train in '43."

Dad told of crossing the Pacific on a World War I-vintage troop transport nicknamed the "Kaiser's Coffin" because of it's age and state of repair. His description of being weeks at sea and motion sickness from the pitching, groaning ship gave me vivid images. The troop ship stopped in Sydney, Australia for several days before continuing on to Calcutta, India.

Uncle Don told of dad's drunken exploits on the sub-continent—falling into a village well as he fled from the military police. The two brothers flew crew on DC-3s ferrying supplies over the "the Hump"—the Himalaya Mountains—to Chinese forces fighting the Japanese. Also, dad told me a story that started me on a path of social activism. So many people were starving to death each night that the British ran trucks down the road at dawn to collect bodies so as to clear a path for traffic.

When the war ended dad flew from India to Egypt with a stop in Teheran. At a military base outside of Cairo dad tells the story of being insulted by an Italian prisoner of war. Enraged, he chased this man on foot, but fortunately didn't catch him. In my mind's eye I have always seen dad, the lanky farm boy, sprinting after a short swarthy man in prison clothes, the pair fading into the desert sun as they pass the Sphinx and the Great Pyramids.

After a week in Egypt the path home led to England with fueling stops on the tiny island of Malta (where my ship visited port 25 years later) and in France. After several days lay over in desolated, but victorious England dad spanned the Atlantic to Nova Scotia and then to Fort Dix, New Jersey.

The effect of these tales and travels on my young mind was profound. It was akin to the 1001 Arabian Nights—romance, adventure! They fired my imagination with visions of distant people and places and things to do, unknowable, desirable, adventurous. Like growing up itself dad's stories hinted at the delicious, unseen future waiting to unfold.

These stories were important in my development as a male. In my adolescence the military beckoned to me as a solution to the confusing task of becoming a man. I was at least as unconfident and awkward as the next guy. If the teen years are a time of doubt and confusion for all young men I didn't know it. I bought completely the locker room lies of my high school peers assuming that something must be wrong with me since: 1) I didn't get laid every weekend (actually not at all); 2) I didn't get drunk with the boys; and, 3) I didn't have a girlfriend. Thus, I felt awful about myself; I was not measuring up as a young man.

For males, including adolescents, there are three legitimate masculine identities—sports, womanizing, and he-man activities. Playing sports or being a rabid fan qualify one for admission into the man club. Having a letter jacket for track and cross country covered me in this area. But "just running around in your shorts" was way down the scale from real sports such as hockey, boxing, wrestling, or most of all, football.

In the second area of male legitimacy—women—I was a complete flop. It wasn't just that I didn't have a girlfriend, but I never even had a date in high school. It is indeed paradoxical that ones being considered a real man depends upon the females one can attract. But, at the same time a real man was certainly not supposed to be dependent on others (especially women).

The third legitimate identity is "he-man activity". These well known pass times include hunting, beer drinking, hard physical work (bonus points for long hours), anything dangerous, fist-fighting, weightlifting, and the military (especially combat). In high school I was generally considered a wimp because I was skinny, didn't drink or hunt, was bookish, and actively avoided fights. That made me woefully deficient in the he-man realm of legitimacy. The only thing that I had going for me was a mainstream attitude of support for the growing war in Vietnam.

Thus, my male quotient as I approached the end of high school was skimming the low end of the scale. Not coin-

centally my self esteem was also very low. By society's yardstick of masculinity I fell short. I thought I was a total failure. I suspect that many young men in their late teens are in similar shape, socially and emotionally.

The three realms of male legitimacy are clearly false criteria. When we pursue our self-esteem through these bogus avenues we funnel our lives and potentials into a narrow pathway. Any deviation from this rigidly defined role can leave us feeling less than fully male. Thus, we men have created—or more accurately have inherited—a system ready made to make us feel bad about ourselves.

Against such a background of adolescent vulnerability the military sucks up recruits. When I was 17 there was a recruiting poster for the Navy showing a cute and coy female in a sailor suit under the caption "Be a Man and Do It—Enlist". The military and its mystique appear as a magic solution to bedeviling problems of youth. Scrawny? Boot camp will toughen you up. Fuzzy cheeks? You'll shave twice a day. Love life? A girl in every port. Pimples? You won't have time to worry about them. Inexperienced? Drink this, it'll put hair on your chest. Unconfident? Be all you can be! The few, the proud, the Marines. Can't decide what to do? Just sign right here, son, we'll take care of the rest. If our families and society could produce a crop of emotionally secure 18 year olds who had decent economic alternatives, I believe the military would have little drawing power.

So, when dad told me of far off places and things I had never done nor even imagined my teenage brain was primed to respond. All I had to do was to survive boot camp. Then my masculinity would be validated permanently; things would get better on all fronts. My fear of women would evaporate when I got a little "experience" thanks to the well known aphrodisiac effect of a uniform. My timid, slouched posture would be replaced by a proud Navy swagger. All this and more, I believed, awaited me on the other side of enlistment.

Dad didn't like to talk about his experiences in World War II. In fact, once when assigned in 8th grade to write of the war he refused me an interview. I was puzzled and hurt. He was so keen on my education as were so many Depression-era school dropouts. Why wouldn't he tell me about the big war?

He denied ever being in combat. By dad's telling his unit worked in a supportive role. However, once dad did let slip the comment that despite the stereotype of Japanese as a short people "don't believe it because

every one on of those god damned Japanese Marines are at least 6'6"!" How would he know this? Perhaps his knowledge was second hand, a boozy boast told by some other soldier or an Army propaganda film. But, perhaps he knew first hand. It is not widely known that Japanese forces actually landed on U.S. territory in the Aleutians Islands early in the war. Since my father was stationed on this sweeping arc of barren Alaskan islands early in the war I wonder if he didn't fight Japanese Marines—regardless of their stature.

Another story makes it clear that if there was combat in dad's experience he may not have wanted to remember it. After my dad's death Uncle Don told me of the time they were in India. They flew as crew on airplanes ferrying supplies into China.

One day the two brothers were doing a rotation as ground support at the air base. A horribly shot up plane returned; two of it's four engines weren't functioning. It drooped to a landing and rolled to a stop at the end of the runway. Dad and Don were dispatched in an ambulance to the plane. Of seven crew only the pilot was alive. He had passed out from his own wounds after setting the plane onto the runway. Don sped away in the ambulance with the broken body of the pilot. "Your dad stayed to clean up the mess. That plane", Don shook his head, "was shot to hell. There was blood and the smell of death everywhere." After several hours in the sweltering heat, alone with six dead men, the plane was finally towed back to the hangar. "Tony, your dad was never the same after that day."

Don explained that as a young man dad was a happy-go-lucky, cocky soldier. After that day there was an edge of seriousness. In pictures of him I see a lean and handsome youth with a tightening around the mouth, the former energetic glint in his eyes has turned guarded, knowing. The words haunt me, "never the same".

The story is poignant. I shudder to think of my dad groping across those bodies, examining the red, sticky dog-tags. I imagine the stench. The young soldier wrestles limp bodies out of gun turrets and away from the tiny navigator's table. He drags them out and arrays them across the cargo deck of the aircraft. Six corpses in a row falling in for their last formation. Bob Switzer, Private First Class, 23 years old, is overcome with emotion and the odor as he beholds the scene. He gags, pukes, climbs out of the plane. Dragging on a cigarette he sits on the runway. In the steamy, tropical twilight he puts his head down and cries.

Dad, I can understand you not telling me as a teenager, but I wish you could have told me as a man. When you died I was 28 and on the civilian side of four years in the Navy. It could have brought us together if only a little. Did you ever tell anybody? Did you tell mom? I doubt it. Did you tell your work buddies? Was alcohol a release from that terrible remembrance? I'm sorry you had to carry that memory all your days.

Weeks after my 19th birthday I went into the U.S. Navy. The Tet Offensive, the bloodiest campaign of the Vietnam War, was raging on the other side of the world and on the nightly news. At that time I was only vaguely aware of the war as well as the domestic protest. For me there was no decision making process about going into the military. When I was 17 my dad told me, "Son, if I were a young man like you with a military obligation I would join the Air Force or the Navy so at night my bed would be right there with me and I wouldn't have to sleep in the mud or on the hard ground."

That little spiel left a lasting imprint on my thinking. Two things stood out. First, here was my dad telling me in a subtle, indirect way that I was "expected" to serve my country by joining the military. Obligated he said, as in owing a debt, as in living up to a promise or paying off a debt. Obligated as in something you have to do. I had never thought seriously about actually being in the military as opposed to my war hero fantasies. Now, here was my father, World War II veteran of the Aleutian Islands, India, and Burma, informing me that I had an "obligation" to go to war.

My first thoughts? Immediately I was disoriented and bemused. "Oh...I have a military obligation....well, yes, of course, if dad says so. Why didn't I think of that?" Dad's statement took me by surprise. The thought of joining the military was brand new to me. I neither agreed nor objected. But, I surely didn't want him to think I disagreed with his statement because I sought his approval. Therefore, my response was an appropriately serious look and a mumbled acknowledgement that I had heard.

The second message in dad's statement was in code that I came to appreciate only years later after he had died. The part about "having my bed right there with me" struck me as smart, common sense advice from a poor farmboy grown to be a construction worker. Although dad strongly supported the war I think his coded message about a bed was designed to steer me away from jungle combat in Southeast Asia. Sound advice. I took it and it may have saved my life.

What amazes me today is how I didn't question dad's assumptions about obligation. His attitude was "Uncle Sam is in a scrap with the communists over there". The rest was implied. Of course, young men had to go fight. He did in '42 and it was right. So I, too, would have to go because it was right. Men went to war when their country needed them. Those anti-war protesters were disgraceful, they were cowards, wimps, and chickens. Most of all they were non-men as revealed by the most virulent names hurled at them—"pussy", "girl", "queer", "faggot", and "fairy". To reject dad's assumptions about military obligation would have been to cast myself with anti-war lepers.

On February 25, 1968, I enlisted in the United States Navy.

I reported for my physical on a crisp Monday morning in Spokane, Washington. As I and several other scared, blustering teenagers approached the induction center we confronted the enemy. No, not the Viet Cong. Worse. Several anti-war protesters were handing out leaflets to passersby.

Immediately I felt panicked, intimidated. I had only seen these characters on the evening news. It was even more disconcerting that the two weren't stereotypes of funky hippies, but seemed like ordinary middle Americans. One man was in his 40's while the other was about 24. I was so confounded I couldn't speak. On the one hand, these two represented treason by all my traditional training to support my country, to fulfill my military obligation. I wanted to scream at them, better yet pound them into the ground. Yet, on the other hand, I wondered what their leaflets said. It impressed me that anyone would be out at 6:30 a.m. in the cold merely to express their unpopular opinions. I may have harbored doubts about the war in Vietnam, but that was far below the level of consciousness.

As we drew near the others made sarcastic remarks. I was too scared. Adrenaline pumped and emotions tore me one way then another. I tried to look straight ahead with tunnel vision not noticing them so I wouldn't have to decide whether to take one of their diabolical leaflets. At the last moment just as I came up beside

them the younger man subversively said, "Good morning" as he extended a piece of paper toward me. Reflexively I took it and stopped breathing at the same time. Read it! Punch him! Stick it in your pocket! Call him a traitor! Hesitating a split second, not breaking stride, I crumpled the paper and tossed it at his feet with a muffled half-hearted sneer.

Just as I might have thrown down the boxing gloves in refusal, but didn't, another watershed moment came and passed by. Of course, I couldn't see it as a potential turning point in 1968. Only much later do I have the luxury of speculation. What if I had stopped, read, conversed? Suppose the young man was persuasive? Maybe he had just lost a brother in Vietnam. What if I didn't go into the induction center? Didn't raise my right hand that day? Called the whole thing off? What if I showed up to leaflet with the "traitors"? Three months later me and the young man together along with 50,000 others marched on the Pentagon. What if?

But, just as had not the emotional strength and independence to refuse the boxing gloves when I was nine, likewise, I didn't have the strength to even consider an anti-war idea when I was 19. That is how strong my conditioning had been. Mom, dad, school, and society had all done their jobs well.

My training as a young male had taught me how to respond as men before me had responded, but I was not equipped to think for myself. I knew what was expected of a 19 year old male in wartime. I did not fail that expectation. Sociologists would say I acted in a role congruent manner. Doing what was designated as proper legitimized me. It felt good; I was proud of myself like I had never experienced.

For you see, my war, the one I had been groomed for, the one I had contemplated, fought a thousand times already, my ticket to manhood and the good life, waited on the other side of that induction center door. My brain was wired for the military by that time. Be a man and do it!!

Of course I didn't read that leaflet. ¶



target practice

written by Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

[previously printed in Compost]

i distinctly remember the weight of it: a big gun in my small hands at the age of four. the feel of it: shiny-silvery-smooth cold metal, n rough-ribbed black plastic. heavy, it weighed me down n scared me shitless. barely able ta hold it up, keep the barrel straight, my hands were sweaty, my ears red n throbbin, my stomach doin somersaults, cartwheels even. my eyes, as always, on the target: paper-thin black figure on a white background, pointin a similar gun back at me. *aim for the heart mijito. aim for the heart, then pull the trigger. aim for the heart.* i always do, daddy, i always do. only the targets, only the targets have changed, papi. that, n the ammunition used.



honey n vinegar/ my first butch

written by Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

for Vincent Villanueva & Yoseñio V. Lewis

[previously printed in the Brooklyn Review]

momma, u were the first butch i ever loved. many have come n gone since, but none can compare ta yr power, yr strength, yr ability ta command a room, walk within it n own it. u were always at the center of my thinking, the white elephant of my consciousness. it is around u i orbited, a satellite ta yr sun.

i am the woman u never could b. look at this hair, these nails, this skin, these teeth. this is what money can buy. this is what money did buy. yr money. yr life. i attract men like honey ta yr vinegar. i am the one stung by bees, not u. but it is not their mark i bear, but yrs.

i remember the nights i spent at yr feet, clippers in hand, emery board, bottle of jergens, rubbing the life back into yr toes, the fallen arches, the horny heels. it has always been this way with me: me at the feet of women, catching the crumbs that fall ta the floor, lifting them up ta my mouth, giving thanks n praise, while other boychildren ran about me; the girls, they too had their way. hairs unbraided, drifted down, side ta side motion, swaying, me, listening for clues.

from down below i could c yr legs, varicose-veined, ridges n craters, rivers bulging their banks, traversing yr terrain, thin-legged spiders crawling up towards yr crotch. is that where their nest lies, between yr legs? where their nest lies, where the rest, yr nest, lies. where i come from is like that. the wart on yr finger, rubbing yr rings, the golden wedding band, rubbed raw. rings, rings, ringlets, how i hated yr hair, the smell of chemicals, the beauty shops we went ta; how i hated yr hairdressers, permanents that never lasted being yr only ever-variable constant. how i wanted more than anything for u ta b beautiful: femme. small. soft. quiet. but, no, u remained big n butch, butch n hard, as hard as yr heels n as ugly, as loud as anything n as ferocious. u were the one i always ran from, the one i always ran ta, the one whose love n approval i needed most, n sometimes got.

u r not the kind found in card stores, no high-priced hallmarks hold yr image, no sitcom icons bear yr name. once i feared losing u, lost in a place without time or recorded history. now i fear neither death nor assimilation.

momma, i now know all that i ever needed ta know: i know that when u die, i will become u.

MY NAME IS BRIAN AND I AM A GUY LIVING IN A biologically female body. not only that but i am an alter in a multiple system. we are survivors of incest, ritual abuse, government abuse and a lot of other stuff. our mom was one of our main trainers and she sexually, physically and mentally abused us. when we were growing up our mom did a lot of stuff to "make a man" out of us because she felt powerless as a poor single mom. so we played a lot of roles.

this zine is supposed to be about dealing with different experiences of masculinity in an anti-sexist context. my understanding of sexism is that it's one way people try to control you and make you fit into society's role of who you are and what you do. so my anti-sexist context is fuck that. people have our autonomy that we can be who we are not who society tells us to be. sexism is another coffin to nail people in.

i know a lot of people might read this and think i am just some dumb working-class simpleton because i don't use fancy language to talk about things, but the fact is that you don't have to have a college degree to know that trying to control people using gender, sex, racism, intellectualism, money or any other means goes against our nature. i know that we did everything we could to deal with what i was born into (abuse) and now i am a man sharing a life with lots of other people in this body. i am angry about why i'm here and i'm speaking out to heal and make people aware so this doesn't happen to any more kids. thanks.

ma

don wanna be no lady's
husband
don wanna be at her
beck n call.

women
try an
take you
mold you
shape you
break you down
an build you up again.

i ain't no piece of clay.
i ain't no goddam piece of clay!

they try an
make like they the womb
an you the baby.
you can't DO that
to a person.
a person
is what you are
after you get outta that womb
in the first place.

husband
father
son
all rolled into one.
make me a man
break me a man.
not a girl anymore.

if you make me a man
you better call me mister.
if you break me
like you did
i'll make you call me
sir.

by brian
9.5.00



Through Capitalism,

PRODUCT

**Johnny saw the world
with new eyes.**

It's the day before I go to print with this zine and I'm looking at it, thinking I should explain a thing or two. hence these thoughts.

1. I began this project with the intent of talking about men's roles in ending sexism. I wanted to give the space for people of all genders to talk about their experiences with masculinity and sexism. i hoped that the two of those goals would blend together nicely here.

years ago, when i was unaware of the possibility that gender didn't have to exist in the two boxes known as man/boy and woman/girl, i believed strongly in talking about sexism as men perpetuating sexism and women receiving/resisting it. i now see a world where masculinity, femininity and many other gender ideas exist (androgyny, gender queer and the countless unnamed gender expressions). i believe that sexism needs to be defined to understand the way that patriarchy is manifested upon all the gender variant expressions of life.

in a world that doesn't see gender expression beyond man/boy and woman/girl, this is a zine for men against sexism. for the world that has gone beyond that limiting gender duality, this zine is more about masculinity and sexism and how the two intersect and all of our responsibility to interrupt sexism in it's many forms.

2. The group Men Stopping Violence defines sexism as "gender prejudice plus power." in their book Making the Peace, Paul Kivel and Allan Creighton define sexism as "systematic exploitation, mistreatment, and abuse of women by men." I wanted to put both of these definitions here because I think they are important — even though i don't completely agree with either of them.

My partner billie free-defined sexism as "the material manifestation of the philosophy of patriarchy." I like this one because it's broader; includes both of the other definitions; takes under it's wings things such as gender differences; and calls out patriarchy as a philosophy that is currently very powerful but still just a philosophy.

I believe that sexism takes on many forms, which include men's violence against women, men and people of all genders. I believe that sexism is tied tightly with all other oppressions. bell hooks neatly throws institutional oppression into one verbal package when talking about the systems we live under — calling it the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." I appreciate that articulation, and my partner billie would throw in the word "rationalist" to that. It gives me space to think about my experiences and

the experiences of people around me in a context where i can critically think about who has power over others, how do they/we manifest that power and how do we/others resist that oppression.

I was born male. Anatomically I was born with a penis, and that fact defined for so many people around me the context unto which they thought they could/should treat me. I was taught about violence, power, achievement, sex and everything about life with man glasses on — who i should be, how i should act, who i should fuck, how i should treat others, what rights i had.

i think about the fact that in the united states, 1,871 women are raped everyday and that 78% of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows (<http://ywcaid.org/rcc/stats.html>). this tells me that sexism is very much part of the lives of every one around me. i know this even more personally since i am currently working through a reconciliation process for sexually assaulting my partner.

i know that rape is as much a part of sexism as men thinking they have more important things to say than women as wage rates as domestic violence as the whole way of patriarchal values that (in my opinion) have devastated the loving human connection, community and sense of responsibility that people can have with each other and with the world around us. and this list goes on and on and on.

i believe that it is my responsibility to counteract patriarchy and to dismantle it. i believe that it is my responsibility to work toward the end of sexism.

3. when thinking about what bell hooks calls the "white supremacist capitalist [rationalist] patriarchy," i want to make sure to write specifically about the intersection of all oppression. being an arab-american man, i deal with racism constantly in my life and cannot separate this from my anti-sexist work. oppression affects me in specific ways as an arab man in the US. anyone who denies this fact is kidding themselves. just as angela davis deconstructed "the myth of the black male rapist" in her book Women, Race and Class, we need to make dismantling oppressive versions of masculinity a focus of anti-sexist work. i am not going to ignore the societal vilification i experience constantly and consistently because of my race, culture and gender. and i am not going to ignore my self chosen identities as genderQueer, polyamorous and pansexual. people are not tidy packages. on top of and adjacent to all this, i align myself with all people's struggles for liberation, autonomy and self-determination across the globe.

4. with all this in mind, i sit at my computer wondering if this zine will be inclusive enough. will people understand it? who will read it and what will you get out of it. will it give you perspectives into ending sexism. will it give you another look into masculinity? will it inspire you to create further dialogue about patriarchy and sexism? will this zine achieve it's goal.

by basil

a few good men

written by Loolwa Khazoom

MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ALSO AFFECTS MEN. When men do not recognize and responsibly address this violence, they leave women with the double burden of both its impact and its fallout. In this way, even the most non-violent, gentle men can participate in and contribute to the cycle of sexual violence.

"I don't want to pay for what other men have done to you," Brad emphatically said to me. I don't want to pay for it either. The male violence I experienced was not my doing or my fault. It is no more my burden and responsibility than it is the burden and responsibility of a man who comes into my life. When a man nonetheless cashes in on his illusion of escape and runs away, he leaves me not only to deal single-handedly with the pain of past male violence, but he adds to this pain a fresh layer of betrayal and despair.

According to The National Women's Study, 683,000 forcible rapes occur every year, which equals 56,916 per month; 1,871 per day; 78 per hour; and 1.3 per minute. (National Victim Center & Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, 1992) The majority of women have been touched by some form of male violence. I am no exception to this rule. My father sexually abused me when I was a child; countless men harassed me on the street me since I hit puberty; numerous dates molested me, and one boyfriend essentially raped me, over the past decade of my young adult life. There is nothing special about my story, except the fact that I neither accommodated nor made excuses for the violence or the violator, and I now speak about my experiences frankly and publicly.

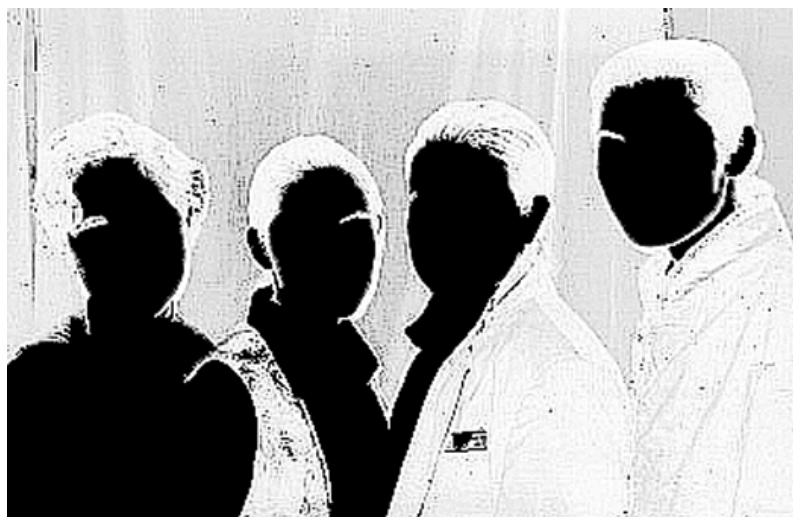
Based on the male violence in my life and in society - specifically, as a result of the fact that penises often have been instruments of violence against women - I have not had the friendliest feelings towards penises. One experience has reinforced another. When a man I dated did not given me the room to get comfortable with his penis before pushing it on me, he made me less comfortable with and less friendly towards the next penis I encountered. If the man attached to that next penis also did not give me time to adjust to his, he added yet another layer of animosity and fear to this male organ.

A while back, I had a beautiful experience getting

involved with a close friend, Ari. In the few months we were together, Ari's care for and attention to my body and feelings helped me heal deeply from years of sexual violations by many different men. I was amazed by how profoundly this experience changed my life. It transformed my relationship to sex, to the male body, to my body, to my past experiences of male violence, to my hopes for the future, and to my overall sense of potential for male-female relations. It takes just one good man, I realized, to significantly undo damage that countless men have done in the past.

I have done exceptional amounts of healing on my own - through rage release, self-defense training, violence intervention, feminist activism, art, reading, writing, yoga, meditation, massage, therapy, and so on. Though I successfully have transformed my life and the world around me, there is a limit to how much I or any other woman can do alone or with each other, to heal the impact of male violence. Given the nature of the beast, men need to be at our sides, offering their love, support, and activism as some of the most powerful forces of healing and change. Women cannot work in a vacuum. Male violence is not just something of the past or something unique to an individual woman's life. It is an ongoing social disease that confronts women each and every day. Even on the days this violence is not in our face, the threat of it is.

For this reason, I believe there is no middle ground for men to walk when face-to-face with the impact this violence has on the women in their lives. Whatever choice



men make in responding to it, they either will reinforce the impact of the violence or help transform it.

A few months before I got involved with Ari, my friend Rinat - also a survivor of incest - got involved with Eric. Rinat and Eric were inspirational in how they dealt with Rinat's sexual triggers: At random moments during sexual intimacy, Rinat physically would re-experience the trauma of being molested - something common to survivors of sexual violence. In response, she would shut down completely and need physical distance from Eric; she would become very frightened and need to be held like a baby; or she just would need a moment to pause and tell Eric what was going on. The problem Rinat and Eric would encounter was that in the moment of being triggered, Rinat would be least able to communicate her space and her needs. Eric would not know which way to respond to her, since her various needs were in opposition to each other.

Rinat and Eric developed code words and behaviors for immediate communication during these moments. Scared meant "pause sexual activity and check in, physical contact OK." Stop meant "stop everything immediately, break off all physical contact, and move several inches over." And on a non-verbal level, sudden physical immobility communicated the same thing as stop.

I was impressed deeply by Rinat's courage to put out her needs and by Eric's commitment to having only emotionally safe sex with Rinat. With this model of such a caring sexual relationship, I felt a new sense not only of hope, but of entitlement - that I had the right to expect this kind of treatment and nothing less.

Ari's behavior during our sexual intimacy reinforced this vision of the possible. I used the same codes as Rinat, tailoring them to suit my own needs, and I added a few codes of my own: When I proclaimed Station Identification Break! Ari and I paused from being sexual; and Ari told me his name and said to me, "I am not your father." He also added additional tidbits of information about himself that made me laugh. These "station identification breaks" were full of love and humor, a part of the way we connected and were goofy with each other. They themselves became a part of our intimacy.

Ari also intuitively knew what to do, before I even knew what I needed. I remember the first time I said "scared" to him while we were together. He immediately stopped being sexual with me. Gently and swiftly, he spooned me from behind, scooped me up around my knees in the

fetal position, and held me tightly in his strong arms. I felt so loved! I giggled with the delight of a baby.

When a man chooses to hold hands with a woman and face the impact of sexual violence together, he can participate in a journey of healing that is full of love, playfulness, and heightened intimacy. He can become part of the solution to violence against women. To the contrary, when a man chooses to run away from a woman because he does not want to deal with that violence, he can reinforce the impact it has on the woman's life. He can become part of the problem.

Shortly after my relationship with Ari, I met and became involved with Brad. Brad and I shared an immediate and intense physical, emotional, and spiritual connection. I felt safe with him from the get-go, which combined with everything else made our union really rare. I felt myself open with this fire, deeply desiring to explore his and my sexuality together. The sex with him felt natural, organic, and real to me. It was a breath of fresh air. I was really into Brad's body. I loved his skin, his eyes, his teeth, his hands...and yes, even his penis. Not only did I not feel threatened by Brad's penis, but I desired to touch it, the way I desired to touch the rest of his body. I fantasized about giving him oral sex - something I never even wanted to think about in the past.

Brad and I moved quickly and within two weeks reached a place where our sexual comfort levels were imbalanced. Quite simply, I wanted to take my time in getting to know his body. I wanted to relish in our sex one step at a time, especially in doing that which was new or rare for me - whether on the physical or emotional levels. I wanted Brad to know about my sexual history and choices, so that we really could be together. And I wanted Brad to know my comfort levels with his body, so he could make informed choices about how sexual he wanted to be with me at any given moment.

Our sexual connection excelled past the speed of our emotional development, so for a slew of complicated reasons, I felt unable to tell Brad what I really wanted to say to him. Instead, all I could utter was, "I'm afraid of penises." In the past, it had been true. As a general rule, it still was true. But it was not true with him. I was not afraid of his penis. Regardless, I said what I did, informing him that I was a survivor of sexual abuse. Brad took the information in stride, suggesting that we simply slow down sexually. I agreed, and everything seemed to be fine. We made plans just to paint and watch a video the next evening.

That night, Brad coincidentally read my article, "Get Your Hand Off That Thing!" which explores the ways penises have been used as weapons in our society and the ways this use has damaged women's ability to trust men. The next evening when we got together, Brad not only wanted to slow down, but he essentially wanted out.

In the emotional drama that followed the next two months, I learned that Brad's life had been impacted deeply and negatively by male violence and other forms of sexist oppression. His sister was sexually abused by his uncle when she was a child. His girlfriend of five years had been raped before getting involved with him. His serious girlfriend before her was bulimic. In high school, a close male friend of his was sexually abused by a male teacher who also made advances at Brad.

Each of these experiences of oppression had painful consequences for Brad's life: His sister's experience of sexual abuse drove her to alcoholism. Her alcoholism in turn made her volatile, lashing out at Brad when he would do something as innocent as saying, "I love you." Brad's x-girlfriend of five years took out on Brad her feelings of violation and rage, so that again when Brad would reach out in love, he would be met with anger. Brad's previous girlfriend was so disgusted with her body that she frequently would not want Brad to touch her at all. And Brad's male friend became seriously messed up and involved with drugs after his experience with the teacher. As a result, Brad lost a good friend.

Through these experiences, Brad learned to feel awful about his male body. Sadly enough, he did not use the gift and wisdom of his pain to become an activist fighting child sexual abuse; to become a peer educator teaching men and boys about responsible sexual behavior; or to become a pro-feminist man supporting individual women's struggles. To the contrary, he made it his mission to steer clear of the fallout of sexual violence, so the impact would not be in his face; so he could live in the illusion it is not as bad as "the feminists" make it seem.

But it is that bad. And that is exactly why Brad and other "good men" like him want to run: The fallout was, still is, and will continue to be all around them, whether they bolt from it or not.

Brad was decidedly non-feminist, clearly priding himself on his stance. He resisted learning about basic facts of the staggering levels of male violence in this society, yet insisted that the figures I claimed were impossible.

Every eight seconds that Brad and I battled over his denial, some man somewhere beat some woman. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Violence Against Women National Crime Victimization Survey Report, January 1994, NCJ-145325) And every night that I returned home exhausted and angry from our conversations, I hesitated to go on a walk to clear my mind, because in doing so, I risked the threat of a man attacking me.

It was maddening irony.

I feel it is no less that the basic responsibility of each man in this society to find out the facts about male violence against women and to learn what men can do to help heal it - whether by becoming activists or simply not getting in the way of people who are. This violence is everyone's problem. And the more men resist dealing with it, the worse they make it.

A few days after our last night together, I took the risk of writing Brad a long letter in which I communicated to him everything I had wanted to say about my sexual history and choices and about where I was emotionally and sexually with him. I communicated that to the contrary of being afraid of him or his penis, I felt uniquely safe, comfortable, and excited with him. I shared that being with him sparked a wonderful, opening fire in me.

I struggled with sending the letter. On the one hand, it was important to me to communicate the truth and clear up the misunderstandings between us. On the other hand, I wanted to be careful not to cross the fine line into trying to convince him to come back to me - especially since I found his reasons for leaving to be problematic. I sat with the letter and decided it would be tragic if our relationship fell apart on the basis of a misunderstanding. So I sent it.

It turned out Brad's issue was not with my feelings about his body, but with the fact that I had any negative feelings about any male body, period. He objected to the fact that I saw the penis as frequently being used as a weapon. He even objected to my excitement about having a new set of positive experiences with a penis to counter the negative ones.

So essentially what Brad objected to was the fact that my life had been touched by male violence and that I did not shut up about it, so he could continue to pretend it was not there. Ironically enough, Brad in effect was the one to equate The Male Body with the violence. I saw a clear distinction between the male body and what

was done with it. I saw a clear distinction between a violent man and a gentle man. And I saw a clear distinction between the past and the present.

Of course, it does take time to heal from violence. Being with a safe and gentle man does not make all the past or surrounding violence just disappear. As I angrily and purposely said to Brad the night he pulled away from me, "I can't guarantee you I won't get triggered and start screaming when we're together." Regardless of whether such a situation ever would arise with Brad, I specifically did not want him to stick around if it was under the condition that I be mute.

It is the very ability to scream - to go to the depths of the pain and release it into the universe, to let it go - that is at the core of healing. The act of being this raw with a man is a profound sign of trust and value for him. What, after all, could be a more risky and precious gift than welcoming someone to the depths of our soul, to a place where we are most open and vulnerable?

A few times when I was with Ari, intense body memories came up, and I wanted to scream to release the feelings. Each time, I checked in with Ari to see if he was cool with my screaming, and each time he was. Sometimes he held me as I screamed, always he held me after. It is specifically because I trusted and felt safe with him and his body that I was able to be this fully present with him, and we could heal the old traumas together.

But Brad seemed to confuse the process of healing with some kind of a sign of hatred for him or all men, implicating him as evil because of other men's violence. I found out later that my statement about screaming contributed to his running away, as did every other reminder that I had been touched by male violence. Oh well. As Ani DiFranco put it, "We'll see what you're made of by what you make of me."⁴

I think Brad was fundamentally terrified about getting into another situation where he would feel horrible about his body. Of course it is legitimate for everyone to seek out sexually satisfying relationships. But I think Brad ran away from the root of the problem instead of facing it head on and transforming it. From what I gathered in our long, intense conversations, he did not feel bad about his body because some individual woman was screwed up and laid some trip on him. Rather, he felt bad about his body as a result of the male sexual violence in this society, its impact on the people he loved, and its resulting impact on him.

And yet Brad did nothing to end this violence and seemingly did not do much to heal from the impact it had on his life. He specifically rejected the notion that he had any responsibility in this matter. Instead, he made it his mission to find a woman who did not bear the scars (good luck). And so Brad continued to bear the scars himself. As smitten as he was by me, as much as he and I may have been partner material, he could not be involved with me because of other men's violence. In effect, he not only gave this violence the power over him, but he also gave it the power over me - thus the double burden of both the violence and the fallout - for I too was prevented from being with someone with whom I was smitten, for a reason that was no fault of my own.

Whatever choice a man makes in responding to the impact of violence against women, he must be conscious that his actions will take a stand somewhere in relation to the cycle of that violence. I feel it is perfectly legitimate for a man to say, "I don't want to deal with your trauma and triggers, because I want a more relaxed sexual experience." We all have the right to go after what we want and get out of what we do not want.

And yet a man must be conscious that by leaving a woman because of the sexual violence done to her, he is at that moment and in that situation letting her alone bear the burden of violence against women; he is not helping her ease that burden by going into the fire with her and contributing a different ending to the same old story. The woman probably does not want to deal with the trauma and triggers either. She never asked for the violence in the first place. So who is going to be left holding the bag? The answer to this question is the result of a deliberate decision, one which must be made consciously and responsibly.

I feel that every time a man runs away to a more sexually accessible woman, he encourages the woman he leaves to be silent about her pain or her needs the next time around. He adds to the pressure on her to give in, give up, and shut up about

the impact of the violence. Who, after all, wants to risk losing yet another lover - especially when the more traumatized we are, the more affection we may need? How much easier just to deny whatever is bubbling under our surface, pretend it is not there?

From what I have experienced, witnessed, and heard as a female in this society, it seems most women are silent about the male violence we have experienced. I would guess that many of us have not even considered the possibility of involving our lovers in a deep sexual healing process. So when a man runs to a more sexually accessible woman, he actually may run to a woman who also bares the scars of male violence but simply does not open them for him to see.

As long as men leave women who open the scars, women may not open them. As long as women are silent about the violence against us, men may run to them. And as long as men run to silent women, women may remain silent. None of this cycle will help heal the violence. So as a general rule, I think women need to talk more, and men need to stay more.

This issue of course touches on our social conceptualization of sexual relationships: Do we want to be with the person, or do we want the sex? If we want the sex, what kind of sex do we want and expect? Do we hold the act of sex as more important than the person we are with?

As powerful as it can be when a man goes through sexual healing with a woman, I do not think it is healthy for him to stick around if he truly does not want to. If his heart is not in it, it will not do anyone any good. I do think, nonetheless, that each man needs to raise his consciousness about how violence against women impacts his life. And I do think that each man needs to do something about it - whether personally, socially, or politically, as a lover or as a friend.

Women of course need to do our healing too. Brad's ex-girlfriend purportedly did not do her part in dealing with her past trauma. My guess is it did neither of them any good for Brad to absorb the rage she apparently projected at him, when he was not her perpetrator. As with anyone who is taking out on us something that is not our fault, I feel we need to extract ourselves lovingly from the situation, gently guide that person in the direction of healing - even support that person in the process - but not accept abusive behavior.

I blame the social disease of male violence against

women as the force that ultimately destroyed the great potential between Brad and me. Our spiritual, emotional, and physical connections simply were not powerful enough to sustain the impact of this violence. The destruction of our relationship is just one of the many ways this violence has fucked up our lives - mine as a woman, his as a man, and ours as a couple that cannot be. I consider a situation like this to be no less than tragic and call on all of us to use our power to prevent it from happening in anyone else's life.

I may have no control over an individual man's choice of how to deal with the impact of sexual violence, but I personally will not let this violence get in the way of my life. I will not let the violation sit in my body like tar twisting through and tainting all my sensations. I will not let the abuse sit like a gag in my throat, making me mute. I neither will pretend the pain is not there nor let the pain prevent me from experiencing joy. I will not be denied my story, my voice, my power, my sensuality, my sexuality...any part of my full and vibrant being.

I will see the violence. I will feel its impact. I will name it. I will grab it by the wrist, hold it up, and proclaim for all to hear, "This is the violence that has affected my life. Here it is. This is what it tastes like, this is what it looks like, this is what it feels like. This is how it impacts you as a man and me as a woman right here, right now. Deal with it."

This, I believe, is what healing is all about - not forgetting about the violence, not "getting over it," not shutting up about it, and not checking out of our bodies so we can follow socially-proscribed formulas for sex and look OK. I believe that true healing is about being, really being, feeling, living in the moment, experiencing, using all our sensation to propel us through the crazy shit into a new and beautiful reality - both on the personal and social levels.

I invite conscious men to join conscious women in the exciting and revolutionary process of transforming sexual violence into powerful love - by thinking with us about the problem, instead of fighting against us (to resist it) or running away from us (to avoid it); by holding hands with us and going into the fire together; by showing us just how beautiful and positive the male body can be, through soothing away the scars that other male bodies have left behind.

We must not let the violent men ruin it for the rest of us. I am looking for a few good men to fight this war with love. Will you join me? ¶

just a few days ago, written by basil i was attacked

"You fuckin faggot! You fuckin faggot!"

I was standing with my bicycle on the corner of Rainier and Martin Luther King Jr. blvd., waiting for an open spot in traffic. Usually, I ride on the other side of the street, exchanging words with the Nation of Islam guys selling bean pies, papers and incense. Today I decided to try something new.



"You fuckin faggot!" these guys yelled menacingly from their car as they pelted me with a baseball and some eggs. The attack was so sudden and over so fast that by the time I figured out what happened, they were gone.

I dissociated when I was hit. I could feel the stinging sensations of being struck both physically and verbally, but didn't move, blink or say anything — I might as well have been a statue. Afterward, I continued doing exactly as I was doing before the attack and didn't acknowledge what had happened. This isn't the first time I've been queer bashed.

I rode for three blocks, before I felt my wounds and noticed the sticky trail of raw egg on my back. I felt really embarrassed — actually, totally humiliated.

I rode the rest of the way home and took a shower; washed my clothes and called a friend for support. Now I was starting to process. My mind raced back and forth between admitting that I had been assaulted and dealing with my feelings, to nursing my own internalized homophobia by rationalizing my assailants' behavior and giving myself no space to heal.

Coincidentally, I'm reading a book written by Eliana Gil called "Outgrowing the pain: A book for and about adults abused as children." It's a great book that talks about many aspects of healing from abuse, and although its focus is on adults who were abused as children, the proposed methods of healing from traumatic incidents are universal.

Gil says, "It's very important for you to understand that all types of abuse are important on an individual basis. The crucial aspect of the abuse is not what occurred, but what impact it had on you, how you explained it to yourself and others and how it affected your life."

This advice has been crucial for me right now because I've been spending a lot of thinking being attacked. What could I have done differently? What are the larger political and social contexts of queer bashing in

general and this incident in particular? Who's to blame? What are the causes, uses and effects of violence? I spent so much time thinking about what happened that I kept getting ungrounded and stopped paying attention to how it all felt.

I'm spending a lot of time right now trying to figure out how this assault affected me — trying to figure out how I'm explaining it to myself. When I got hit I acted like stone. I didn't want those guys to see the whirlwind of emotions raging inside me. In the safety of my home I could feel my anger rise. It brought me back to a time when I was younger and being abused. All of the past assaults on my selfhood rose up in me and I felt a culmination of everything that ever took power over me. I remembered teachers holding me down and cutting my hair for being too feminine; white people using anti-Arab racism against me; people who had power in my life being emotionally abusive; being physically assaulted over and over in my youth.

Over the next couple days I raced a mental Indy 500. From calculated complex analysis to fear, sadness and anger, I became a contradiction. I wanted to take care of myself and be a martyr at the same time.

I kept telling myself that I was glad it happened to me instead of anyone else because I had a good political analysis of power and oppression. I kept telling myself to stop rationalizing, minimizing and denying the powerful impact this experience had on me.

Fortunately, my attackers could not take my power because it is in my emotions — I was now expressing that. I was feeling a peak in my anger and a depth in my despair. For the next couple days I was connected to the ways in which the world seems unsafe. I was connected to the pain of being assaulted. I was healing.

As a boy I was taught to hold still and concentrate when being assailed. I was taught that the less power you give to others, the less they can take from you. I wasn't taught, however, that power over others isn't the only kind of power. And I wasn't taught healthy ways to deal with the pain of the world.

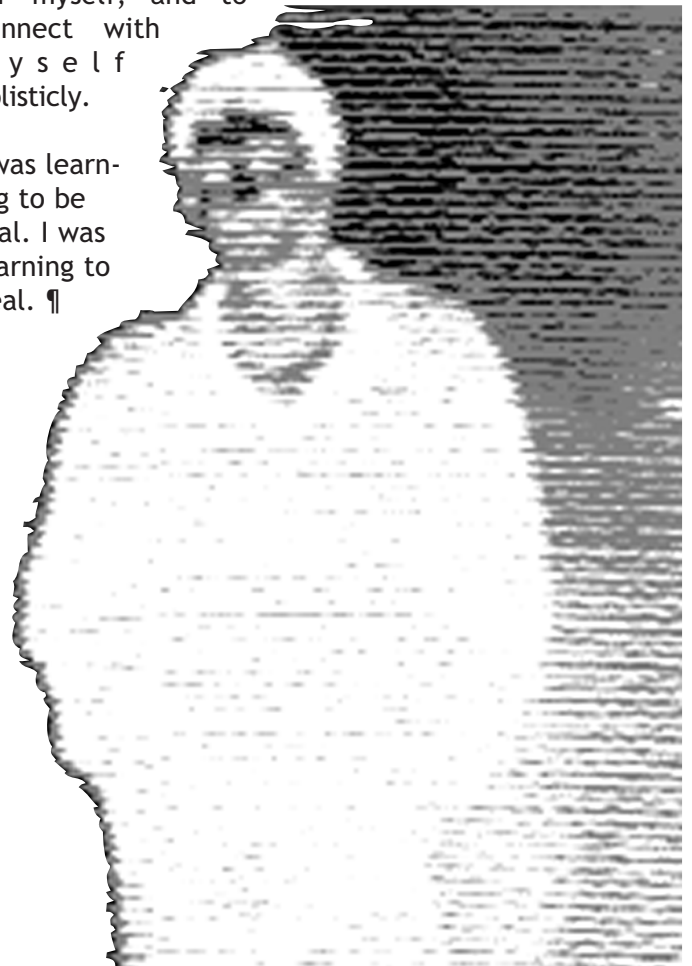
If I were John Wayne or Superman, I could have won again. I could have pulled out my gun or super strength and used it to show that I have power over my attackers — in all situations.

As a mere man dealing with this experience, I held still while under attack. I didn't validate my assailants by confirmation that what they were doing had any affect on me. I acted strongly from the lessons of my childhood. What was different this time, however, was what I did afterwards.

I let the experience sink into me and let my feelings come out. I didn't follow my childhood lessons of squelching the pain. I didn't pretend to be John Wayne or Superman. I didn't try to come across as a winner and I worked hard at not using my socialization to try and one up my attackers.

This queer bashing incident has been a humbling and growth-filled experience for me. As a man involved with anti-sexist activism for 6 years now, I was able to challenge myself to be grounded. I used the skills I have learned from feminism to create a safe and healing space for myself; and to connect with myself holistically.

I was learning to be real. I was learning to heal. ¶





tools for white guys

written by
Chris Crass

*who are working for social change
and other people socialized in a society based on domination*

1. Practice noticing who's in the room at meetings — how many men, how many women, how many white people, how many people of color, is it majority heterosexual, are there out queers, what are people's class backgrounds. Don't assume to know people, but also work at being more aware.

2a. Count how many times you speak and keep track of how long you speak.

2b. Count how many times other people speak and keep track of how long they speak.

3. Be conscious of how often you are actively listening to what other people are saying as opposed to just waiting your turn and/or thinking about what you'll say next.

4. Practice going to meetings focused on listening and learning; go to some meetings and do not speak at all.

5a. Count how many times you put ideas out to the group.

5b. Count how many times you support other people's ideas for the group.

6. Practice supporting people by asking them to expand on ideas and get more in-depth, before you decide to support the idea or not.

7a. Think about whose work and contribution to the group gets recognized.

7b. Practice recognizing more people for the work they do and try to do it more often.

8. Practice asking more people what they think about meetings, ideas, actions, strategy and vision. White guys tend to talk amongst themselves and develop strong bonds that manifest in organizing. This creates an internal organizing culture that is alienating for most

people. Developing respect and solidarity across race, class, gender and sexuality is complex and difficult, but absolutely critical - and liberating.

9. Be aware of how often you ask people to do something as opposed to asking other people "what needs to be done".

10. Think about and struggle with the saying, "you will be needed in the movement when you realize that you are not needed in the movement".

11. Struggle with and work with the model of group leadership that says that the responsibility of leaders is to help develop more leaders, and think about what this means to you.

12. Remember that social change is a process, and that our individual transformation and individual liberation is intimately interconnected with social transformation and social liberation. Life is profoundly complex and there are many contradictions. Remember that the path we travel is guided by love, dignity and respect — even when it is bumpy and difficult to navigate.

13. This list is not limited to white guys, nor is it intended to reduce all white guys into one category. This list is intended to disrupt patterns of domination which hurt our movement and hurt each other. White guys have a lot of work to do, but it is the kind of work that makes life worth living.

14. Day-to-day patterns of domination are the glue that maintain systems of domination. The struggle against capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism and the state, is also the struggle towards collective liberation.

15. No one is free until all of us are free. ¶

everyday anti-sexism

written by Michael Flood

SEXISM IS ALL AROUND US, AND SOMETIMES WE TRY TO DO something about it. Sometimes this doesn't work, sometimes it does.

CASE: It's the middle of the city, Saturday night. David walks around the corner. There's a man and woman, he's pushing her, slapping her crying face. It's fast, scary, violent.

David calls out, "Is everything alright?" "Fuck off!" the man shouts. Again, but to the woman, "Are you okay, do you need a taxi?" David stands there, heart pounding, sweating. The man and woman are quiet now, they walk off. In David's mind, "Will he take her home and bash her some more, should I get the police?"

* Make some attempt to intervene when you come across men directly oppressing women. Call out, ask what's going on, just be there. This can slow down what's happening. Make the man feel noticed, and offer practical assistance to the woman. If she's being bashed, get the police.

CASE: Andre is visiting a good friend, John. They're catching up over morning coffee, chatting away. John's talking. "Yeah, work is going really well, but my boss is being a real cunt, he keeps giving me the boring jobs." Andre notices the word, is a little uncomfortable, but nothing is said.

Later that day, John again, "My old Fiat has broken down again, it's a cunt of a car!"

Andre responds, in a tone of amazement and curiosity, "Hang on, your car was being a 'cunt'? What, all soft and hairy like a vagina?!" They both laugh.

Andre goes on, "It's weird using the word 'cunt' like that, it's like it's putting down women's bodies. I reckon it's a bit offensive." John listens pretty well, "Yeah, it is weird. I just picked it up, I think it's a bit off too".

* Break down sexist language like using the word 'cunt' in this negative way, by being 'curious' about the mean-

ing of the words and the connections being made; by using humour; and by stating that you reckon it's putting down women and it's offensive.

CASE: Grahame is listening to the news with a friend, Steve. A woman has been raped, Steve comments "She asked for it".

Grahame explodes, "That's fucked! You can't say women 'ask' to be raped, that's sexist!" Steve - "Look, she was out drinking with those guys, probably flirting away. She wouldn't have minded." Grahame, now louder, angrier, "No way! You've been sucked in by all the myths mate, what a load of shit".

There's a tense silence, Steve starts talking about something else.

* When people say things like this it can really 'push our buttons'. We explode, leap down their throats with morality and accusation. It's hard to resist this habit, this temptation. But this sort of response to our friends' sexism rarely works. Grahame could have responded in some other ways;

"That's my sister you're talking about". By this, Grahame could imply that this woman is just like my sister, a real person, or this person could be Steve's or his sister, ie. making the rape and the woman much more real to Steve.

Grahame could have said "A good friend of mine was raped, it's a terrible experience, no woman ever deserves to be raped or wants to be raped." He could have asked "How can someone ask to be raped?".

* When your friends or colleagues are trivialising things like rape, or gay-bashing, or AIDS;

i) Make the oppression more real. Personalise it, describe the experiences of people you know or people you've read about and could know.

ii) Ask them what they mean, listen really well, and

calmly. Even start off by agreeing with them or sympathising with them. Try to understand why they may be saying the things they are.

iii) Provide the person with information about the oppression, expose the facts and undermine the myths.

iv) Show emotion and passion. Show that you're deeply affected by what was said or done, it makes you sad, angry, etc.

Challenging sexism is taking risks. We're being brave, questioning the norm, speaking out, going public with our beliefs and emotions. It's scary stuff. We risk being seen as weird, attacked as gay or ostracised. And we fear being bashed.

There are times when it's more dangerous or difficult to interrupt another man's sexism. When he's a stranger, he's drunk, he's in a pub being loud, when there are lots of them. The danger of course is that you'll be bashed.

There are times when it's easier or more useful to do the challenging later. When I'm in conversation with a guy about something and he makes a sexist comment unrelated to the conversation, I might let it pass and deal with it later - "Just by the way, a little while ago you said something really weird -".

Challenging our male friends' sexism is always worth it, as ultimately it builds closeness and trust. If you continue to bite your lip when he's making AIDS or rape jokes, you're distant and tense, your friendship is blocked and awkward. And, if you do try to deal with the jokes or whatever in a fair and caring way and he won't listen, is he worth being your good friend anyway?

Some sorts of responses to sexism never work. Accusatory and full-on moralistic responses don't work. Angry name-calling and heavy guilt-tripping will hardly allow the other person to thoughtfully consider your thoughts. They make him 'shut down', stop listening and turn away. I confess, when it comes to anti-sexism, sometimes I've behaved like Fred Nile on speed, but I'm getting better.

Sexism is all around us, and every day we make efforts at shifting it, undermining it. This is courageous work. Challenging sexism is a project we must affirm, explore and refine.

Non-sexism and anti-sexism

I/we do not have to be non-sexist in order to be anti-sexist. Men can not wait for that never-never day when we'll be blameless enough to speak.

To say to ourselves that we each must first become 'non-sexist' is to confuse trying to appear non-sexist with actively working to eliminate sexism. Trying to appear not sexist makes us deny our sexism, and therefore exclude the possibility of change.

(Thank you to Elly Bulkin for these insights, originally applied to anti-racism. She is quoted by Terry Wolverton in "Unlearning Complicity, Remembering Resistance: White Women's Anti-Racism Education", in a book whose title I can't remember.)

Practical work on everyday anti-sexism

Men are whittling away at the patriarchy all the time. I didn't really know this until a workshop at the 1990 Men's Festival; I heard seven others tell stories from work and play, about the daily little things they do. We were warmed, happy, proud of these struggles and victories. I realised that many men have skills and strategies that we use every day, vital experiences of what works and what doesn't. But these are hidden.

In the 'men's movement' there is almost no discussion of the 'how' of undermining sexism. Why don't we apply our practical and productive male minds and hearts to the task? This absence is also evident in the masculinity literature - even in a book called Beyond patriarchy (although it's a good book!). It's only in the early works such as For men against sexism (1977) that there's exploration of the practicalities of challenging sexism and patriarchy.

It's easy to feel isolated - that I'm the only man trying to stop the sexism, no one else cares. This is also a sort of arrogance and cynicism - "men are all bastards" etc. But it's clearer to me now that at least some men are doing something.

Workshop plan

1. Introduce the workshop, do some sort of names exercise
2. Give a brief and simple definition of 'sexism' and/or

of 'homophobia', eg. "behaviours and beliefs that put down women, or gays & lesbians".

3. When was there a time that I stood up against sexism/homophobia?

The facilitator gives several examples of his own, and then invites everyone else to share their stories. After this general sharing (eg. for 45 minutes or so), the facilitator introduces some ideas about what seems to work or not, and about what sorts of issues exist. Have general discussion of these, eg. of different sorts of strategies, and of issues such as taking risks. The facilitator should affirm that challenging sexism/homophobia is hard and scary.

The workshop could end with this discussion, or you could include other exercises such as the following;

* When was there a time that I colluded in sexism/homophobia?

Have a general sharing of stories. Why did we collude, what stopped us from speaking up or resisting?

These stories could be retold as fantasies the way they should have happened.

* Do a role-play of interrupting sexism.

For example, role-play a conversation in which one man begins making anti-gay or rape jokes, the other man must try to respond. Discuss what's hard about challenging what's going on. Which responses are useful and productive?

At the end of the workshop, the facilitator can make the point that we don't have to be non-sexist in order to be anti-sexist (or non-homophobic to act against homophobia). And the facilitator can affirm the daily struggles we engage in.

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<http://www.anu.edu.au/~a112465/XY/xyf.htm>

***where have you
perpetrated violence?
who deserves your apology?
who do you
make reconciliation to?***



demands from women

THESE ARE A LIST OF DEMANDS FROM WOMEN THAT AROSE from discussions at a recent statewide gender liberation conference held for the activist community. Men should read this list carefully, reflect on how items on it may correspond to our own sexist behavior, become aware of when we engage in those behaviors and work to eliminate them from our relationships with women in our everyday lives and in the activist community.

submitted by Chris Crass

- Give us more mad props
- Don't sexually objectify us
- Don't judge women
- Stay focused on sexism, not your gender role socialization
- Recognize women for all work that is done, even yours
- Share secretarial and clean-up work in activism
- Actively combat sexism
- Take reproductive responsibility
- Back up women when they're being attacked
- Do housekeeping stuff
- Don't be egotistical because you're "better" than mainstream guys
- Respect women as activists
- Be more self-sufficient; nurture each other
- Don't be defensive
- Take sexism on as your struggle
- Don't act as if you can understand our oppression
- Take action against sexism in your own communities
- Remember that equality is the standard of which to judge yourself by, not the current state of things
- Don't trivialize women's issues
- Learn how to have one healthy relationship before having more
- Women don't want to be represented and referred to as partners of men
- Don't judge women for being "girly"
- Fight sexual violence in your community
- Realize that women don't hate men
- Honor women for non-activist stuff they do
- Take part in intimate relationships without sex
- Don't force women to be "nags"
- Realize that when you're off traveling and train-hopping, women are the ones staying at home and building community
- Make childcare a priority
- Don't force women into polyamory
- Even when dealing with your own gender role socialization, address sexism
- We want an immediate commitment to fighting sexism
- Write stuff down!
- Get over your ego
- Realize that sexism runs really deep and always plays itself out
- Don't gawk at our body parts
- See us as activists; don't focus on our sexuality
- Don't make excuses for your sexism, deal with it
- Be proactive, not reactive

- Don't expect us to wait for you to be comfortable with your oppression of us before we make demands
 - Don't force us to take on traditional gender roles
 - Respect our womanhood
 - Realize that men are still the oppressors; it's your job to stop it, not just understand it
 - Don't make it so hard to be friends
 - Realize that women don't always feel comfortable or empowered enough to stand up for themselves
 - Realize that sexual violence is prevalent in this community
 - Be accountable for your actions
 - Stand up to each other
 - Don't ask us to cuddle if we're in a platonic relationship
 - Be mindful of the language you use (i.e., girls, boys, guys, women, men)
 - Realize that we are not representative of all women
 - Don't just be "not surprised" about our Silent Witness
 - Listen to women, even the "hard asses"
 - Give equal consideration to our wants and needs
 - Think through your actions
 - Don't assume that you're the ones who define "radical"
 - Recognize who's not here [at the gender conference]
 - Combat size-ism; acknowledge it as a problem
 - Take all of our views into account
 - Realize that our activism is restricted
 - Don't force guys' projects on us, while ignoring women's
 - Don't belittle our projects until a guy takes them on
 - Realize that we deal with harassment constantly
 - Recognize that sometimes we are physically not as strong; encourage us to do stuff, even teach us how
 - Believe and support us
 - Realize that "youth gone wild" is not necessarily radical
 - Admit when you fuck up
 - Encourage women to do adventurous stuff
 - Don't act like your "oppression" as men is comparable to ours as women
 - Realize that we [the women] may disagree on some of these points, but that does not at all invalidate us or them
 - Create an atmosphere that is dynamic and empowering
 - Realize that we will support you
 - Realize that we will help you with your mistakes
 - Notice that we interact awesomely and respectfully with each other
 - Realize that we do care about your gender issues, but it's just not comparable to sexism
 - Communicate in intimate relationships
 - Take notice of the fact that several women mentioned specific instances of sexism in our community
 - Take notice of the fact that several women spoke of incidents when men didn't have their back
- remember: This list is not complete or all encompassing. How do you participate in sexism in your community, family, individual lives? What steps can you do to change your actions?

SELECTED resources

resource lists like this can never be complete. also, not completely endorsed either. here are some groups, websites, and other resources for you to look into. hopefully you'll find what you're looking for.

Men Against Violence Webring

The sites in the Men Against Violence Webring give examples of how men can get involved in the struggle to end rape and sexual assault. Sites are by men and women who recognize that rape and sexual assault are not merely a 'Woman's Issue' but everyone's issue. Men are perpetrators, survivors, and friends of survivors, and need to get involved.

<http://www.interactivetheatre.org/mav/>

TransFeminism.org

This web site was established to facilitate communication between intersex and trans people who are feminists and their allies.

<http://www.transfeminism.org>

National Organization for Men Against Sexism

An activist organization of men and women supporting positive changes for men. NOMAS advocates a perspective that is pro-feminist, gay-affirmative, anti-racist, and committed to justice on a broad range of social issues including class, age, religion, and physical abilities. We affirm that working to make this nation's ideals of equality for all people a reality is the finest expression of what it means to be men.

NOMAS • P.O. Box 455 • Louisville, CO 80027-0455 • usa
303-666-7043 • www.nomas.org

National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization

Dedicated to a safe world, we are an organization of diverse individuals committed through research, education, advocacy, and activism to the prevention, treatment and elimination of all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men.

1-800-738-4181 • <http://www.nomsv.org/>

ProFeminist.org

There is hope. Patriarchy has not existed forever and will not continue into eternity. Men are not naturally aggressive and warlike beings, just as women are not naturally peacemaking and passive. Patriarchy will continue to exist only as long as we perpetuate it and validate its premises. No system that derives its power

from fear and oppression can survive for long.
<http://www.profeminist.org/>

deal with it

a journal currently put out by anti-sexist anarchist men in support of the struggle to end sexist oppression, deconstruct gender, overthrow patriarchy, and achieve total liberation.

P.O. Box 5841 • Eugene, Or 97405 • usa

<http://www.fruitiondesign.com/dealwithit>

planting seeds community awareness project

a group of people collectively working for non-violent social change. our goal is to play a significant role in rebuilding human society based on principles of respect, love, communalism and an end to oppression. we facilitate men against sexism (as well as other anti-oppression) workshops and publish this zine.

post office box 84171 • seattle, wa 98124 • usa

<http://www.pscap.org>

Men Can Stop Rape

Men Can Stop Rape empowers male youth and the institutions that serve them to work as allies with women in preventing rape and other forms of men's violence. Through awareness-to-action education and community organizing, we promote gender equity and build men's capacity to be strong without being violent.

P.O. Box 57144 • Washington, DC 20037 • usa

www.mencanstoprape.org

Oakland Men's Project

Conducts workshops on understanding the roots of male violence, including racism, sexism, sexual harassment, and heterosexism, in order to change abusive behavior and break the cycle of violence.

1203 Preservation Park Way, Suite 200

Oakland, CA 94612

(510) 835-2433

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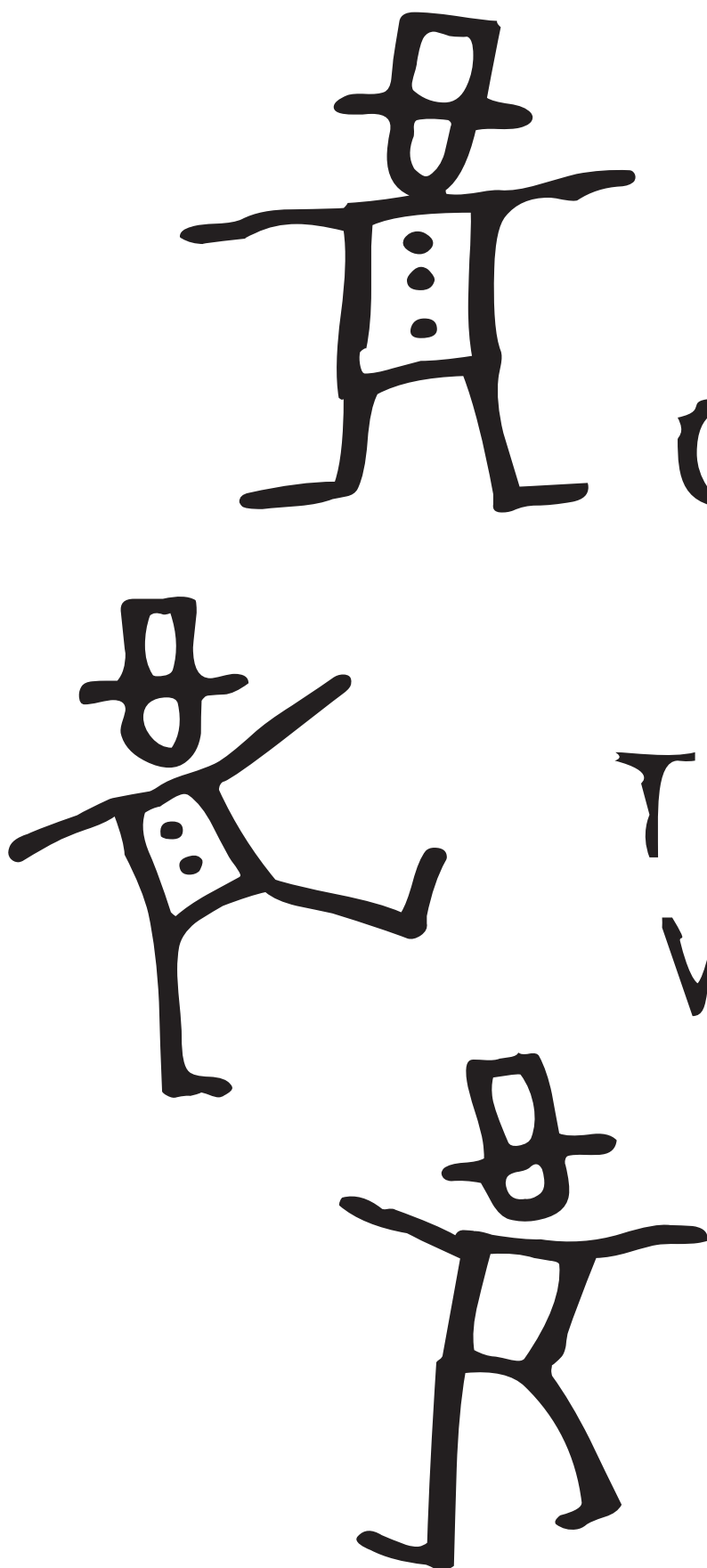
<http://www.panderzinedistro.com/>

The Men's Bibliography

A comprehensive bibliography of writing on men, masculinities and sexualities. Compiled by Michael Flood. First published in 1992. Updated December 7, 2001.

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<http://www.anu.edu.au/~a112465/mensbiblio/mensbibliomenu.html>



THE
ROOTS
OF WAR
ARE IN
THE WAY
WE LIVE
OUR
DAILY
LIVES.

— Thich Nhat Hanh