

From The Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz

CHAPTER ONE

Violence Against Women Is a Men's Issue



Most people think violence against women is a women's issue. And why wouldn't they? Just about every woman in this society thinks about it every day. If they are not getting harassed on the street, living in an abusive relationship, recovering from a rape, or in therapy to deal with the sexual abuse they suffered as children, they are ordering their daily lives around the threat of men's violence.

* But it is a mistake to call *men's* violence a *women's* issue. Take the subject of rape. Many people reflexively consider rape to be a women's issue. But let's take a closer look. What percentage of rape is committed by women? Is it 10 percent, 5 percent? No. *Less than 1 percent of rape is committed by women.* Let's state this another way: over 99 percent of rape is perpetrated by men. Whether the victims are female or male, men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators. But we call it a women's issue? Shouldn't that tell us something?

✓ A major premise of this book is that the long-running American tragedy of sexual and domestic violence—including rape, battering, sexual harassment, and the sexual exploitation of women and girls—is arguably more revealing about *men* than it is about women. Men, after all, are the ones committing the vast majority of the violence. Men are the ones doing most of the battering and almost all of the raping. Men are the ones paying the prostitutes (and killing them in video games), going to strip clubs, renting sexually degrading pornography, writing and performing misogynistic music. ✓

When men's role in gender violence is discussed—in newspaper articles, sensational TV news coverage, or everyday conversation—the focus is typically on men as perpetrators or potential perpetrators. These days, you don't

have to look far to see evidence of the pain and suffering these men cause. But it is rare to find any in-depth discussion about the culture that's producing these violent men. It's almost like the perpetrators are strange aliens who landed here from another planet. It is rarer still to hear thoughtful discussions about the ways that our culture defines "manhood," and how that definition might be linked to the endless string of stories about husbands killing wives, or groups of young men raping girls (and sometimes videotaping the rape) that we hear about on a regular basis.

Why isn't there more conversation about the underlying social factors that contribute to the pandemic of violence against women? Why aren't men's attitudes and behaviors toward women the focus of more critical scrutiny and coordinated action? These days, the 24/7 news cycle brings us a steady stream of gender-violence tragedies: serial killers on the loose, men abducting young girls, domestic-violence homicides, periodic sexual abuse scandals in powerful institutions like the Catholic Church and the Air Force Academy. You can barely turn on the news these days without coming across another gruesome sex crime—whether it's a group of boys gang-raping a girl in a middle school bathroom or a young pregnant woman who turns up missing, and whose husband emerges a few days later as the primary suspect.

Isn't it about time we had a national conversation about the male causes of this violence, instead of endlessly lingering on its consequences in the lives of women? Thanks to the battered women's and rape crisis movements in the U.S., it is no longer taboo to discuss women's experiences of sexual and domestic violence. This is a significant achievement. To an unprecedented extent, American women today expect to be supported—not condemned—when they disclose what men have done to them (unless the man is popular, wealthy, or well-connected, in which case all bets are off.)

This is all for the good. Victims of violence and abuse—whether they're women or men—should be heard and respected. Their needs come first. But let's not mistake concern for victims with the political will to change the conditions that led to their victimization in the first place. On talk shows, in brutally honest memoirs, at Take Back the Night rallies, and even in celebrity interviews, our society now grants many women the platform to discuss the sexual abuse and mistreatment that have sadly been a part of women's lives here and around the world for millennia. But when was the last time you heard someone, in public or private, talk about violence against women in a way that went beyond the standard victim fixation and put a sustained spotlight on men—either as perpetrators or bystanders? It is one thing to focus on the "against women" part of the phrase; but someone's responsible for doing it, and (almost) everyone

knows that it's overwhelming. Is it realistic to talk about one even wants to say out loud

For the past two decades, I've in North America and around the world against women by focusing on male-peer culture—that provide a corrective behavior. This movement is together men from both privilege and disadvantage. This is challenging work that requires rapid results. For example, there are class, and sexual orientation divisions. It's true that it takes time to change the structures of gender and power. We've had our successes: there are arguments about violence against women

Make no mistake. Women are in the position to do this work for women. The battered women's movements in local, state, and federal government amount over the past generation. The number of women is at an all-time high. The number of victims and survivors of men's violence is nonetheless historically unprecedented.

There was some good news that showed that family violence declined as it was, the study had its limitations. Former boyfriends and girlfriends of the study did not include sexual violence. Ongoing efforts but remain clear in preventing perpetration. In the hundreds of thousands of physically violent acts—boys and men each year—behaviors on a continuum that range from sexually enslaving them in human trafficking to the female victims of these acts. Tougher enforcement of rape, domestic violence, and incarcerate even more men before and after the fact. It is essentially

knows that it's overwhelmingly men. Why aren't people talking about this? Is it realistic to talk about preventing violence against women if no one even wants to say out loud who's responsible for it?

For the past two decades, I've been part of a growing movement of men, in North America and around the world, whose aim is to reduce violence against women by focusing on those aspects of male culture—especially male-peer culture—that provide active or tacit support for some men's abusive behavior. This movement is racially and ethnically diverse, and it brings together men from both privileged and poor communities, and everyone in between. This is challenging work on many levels, and no one should expect rapid results. For example, there is no way to gloss over some of the race, class, and sexual orientation divisions between and among us men. It is also true that it takes time to change social norms that are so deeply rooted in structures of gender and power. Even so, there is room for optimism. We've had our successes: there are arguably more men today who are actively confronting violence against women than at any time in human history.

Make no mistake. Women blazed the trail that we are riding down. Men are in the position to do this work precisely because of the great leadership of women. The battered women's and rape crisis movements and their allies in local, state, and federal government have accomplished a phenomenal amount over the past generation. Public awareness about violence against women is at an all-time high. The level of services available today for female victims and survivors of men's violence is—while not yet adequate—nonetheless historically unprecedented.

There was some good news in 2005. A Department of Justice report showed that family violence declined by about half from 1993 to 2002, similar to the overall drop in violent crime during the past decade. But encouraging as it was, the study had its limitations. For example, crime between current or former boyfriends and girlfriends was not considered "family" violence. And the study did not include sexual violence. Still, we can cheer the success of our ongoing efforts but remain clear that our society still has a very long way to go in preventing perpetration. In the United States, we continue to produce hundreds of thousands of physically and emotionally abusive—and sexually dangerous—boys and men each year. Millions more men participate in sexist behaviors on a continuum that ranges from mildly objectifying women to literally enslaving them in human trafficking syndicates. We can provide services to the female victims of these men until the cows come home. We can toughen enforcement of rape, domestic-violence, and stalking laws, and arrest and incarcerate even more men than we do currently; but this is all reactive and after the fact. It is essentially an admission of failure.

What I am proposing in this book is that we adopt a much more ambitious approach. If we are going to bring down dramatically the rates of violence against women—not just at the margins—we will need a far-reaching cultural revolution. At its heart, this revolution must be about changing the sexist social norms in male culture, from the elementary school playground to the common room in retirement communities—and every locker room, pool hall, and boardroom in between. For us to have any hope of achieving historic reductions in incidents of violence against women, at a minimum we will need to dream big and act boldly. It almost goes without saying that we will need the help of a lot more men—at all levels of power and influence—than are currently involved. Obviously we have our work cut out for us. As a measure of just how far we have to go, consider that in spite of the misogyny and sexist brutality all around us, millions of non-violent men today fail to see gender violence as their issue. “I’m a good guy,” they will say. “This isn’t my problem.”



For years, women of every conceivable ethnic, racial, and religious background have been trying to get men around them—and men in power—to do more about violence against women. They have asked nicely and they have demanded angrily. Some women have done this on a one-to-one basis with boyfriends and husbands, fathers and sons. They have patiently explained to the men they care about how much they—and all women—have been harmed by men’s violence. Others have gone public with their grievances. They have committed, in Gloria Steinem’s memorable phrase, “outrageous acts and everyday rebellions.” They have written songs and slam poetry. They have produced brilliant academic research. They have made connections between racism and sexism. They have organized speak-outs on college campuses, and in communities large and small. They have marched. They have advocated for legal and political reform at the state and national level. On both a micro and a macro level, women in this era have successfully broken through the historical silence about violence against women and found their voice—here in the U.S. and around the world.

Yet even with all of these achievements, women continue to face an uphill struggle in trying to make meaningful inroads into male culture. Their goal has not been simply to get men to listen to women’s stories and truly hear them—although that is a critical first step. The truly vexing challenge has been getting men to actually go out and *do something* about the problem, in the form of educating and organizing *other men* in numbers great enough to prompt a real cultural shift. Some activist women—even those who have had great faith in men as allies—have been beating their heads against the wall

for a long time, and are frustrated. I have been working with my colleagues and friends.

My work is dedicated to fighting against women, and thus it is that I focus on is not law enforcement of sexual and domestic violence—*including violence against women*—and around the world have been touched by the issue. *For all of us.* We talk about the problem is not just personal. We try to show them that violence against women is not just a personal issue. We try to show them that violence against women is not just a personal issue. We try to show them that violence against women is not just a personal issue.

We also make it clear that violence against women is not just a personal issue. We also make it clear that violence against women is not just a personal issue. We also make it clear that violence against women is not just a personal issue. We also make it clear that violence against women is not just a personal issue.

Nonetheless, convincing men to take responsibility is not an easy sell. Some men, in some areas, we need to begin by recognizing that violence against women is not just a personal issue. *domestic violence.* However, we need to convince them that they actually have a role to play at the very least, that men have a role to play about women but also about violence against women.

There is no point in being afraid of men. It is difficult time convincing men to take responsibility. In spite of significant social change, men are still growing up with, and are socialized into a culture, where violence against women is disturbingly common. *It's not just a personal issue.* of women is such a pervasive problem for men, to a greater or lesser extent. It gives us a strong incentive to

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for a long time, and are frankly burned out on the effort. I know this because I have been working with many of these women for a long time. They are my colleagues and friends.

My work is dedicated to getting more men to take on the issue of violence against women, and thus to build on what women have achieved. The area that I focus on is not law enforcement or offender treatment, but the *prevention* of sexual and domestic violence and all their related social pathologies—including violence against children. To do this, I and other men here and around the world have been trying to get our fellow men to see that this problem is not just personal for a small number of men who happen to have been touched by the issue. We try to show them that it is personal for them, too. *For all of us.* We talk about men not only as perpetrators but as victims. ✓ We try to show them that violence by men against each other—from simple assaults to gay-bashing—is linked to the same structures of gender and power that produce so much men's violence against women.

We also make it clear that these issues are not just personal, to be dealt with as private family matters. They are political as well, with repercussions that reverberate throughout our lives and communities in all sorts of meaningful and disturbing ways. For example, according to a 2003 report by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, domestic violence was a primary cause of homelessness in almost half of the twenty-five cities surveyed. And worldwide, sexual coercion and other abusive behavior by men plays an important role in the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Nonetheless, convincing other men to make gender violence issues a priority is not an easy sell. Sometimes when men engage with other men in this area, we need to begin by reassuring them that men of character and conscience need not flee in terror when they hear the words "*sexism*," "*rape*," or "*domestic violence*." However cynical it sounds, sometimes we need to convince them that they actually have a self-interest in taking on these topics; or at the very least, that men have something very valuable to learn not only about women but also about themselves.

There is no point in being naïve about why women have had such a difficult time convincing men to make violence against women a men's issue. In spite of significant social change in recent decades, men continue to grow up with, and are socialized into, a deeply misogynistic, male-dominated culture, where violence against women—from the subtle to the homicidal—is disturbingly common. *It's normal.* And precisely because the mistreatment of women is such a pervasive characteristic of our patriarchal culture, most men, to a greater or lesser extent, have played a role in its perpetuation. This gives us a strong incentive to avert our eyes.

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Women, of course, have also been socialized into this misogynistic culture. Some of them resist and fight back. In fact, women's ongoing resistance to their subordinate status is one of the most momentous developments in human civilization over the past two centuries. Just the same, plenty of women show little appetite for delving deeply into the cultural roots of sexist violence. It's much less daunting simply to blame "sick" individuals for the problem. You hear women explaining away men's bad behavior as the result of individual pathology all the time: "Oh, he just had a bad childhood," or "He's an angry drunk. The booze gets to him. He's never been able to handle it."

But regardless of how difficult it can be to show some women that violence against women is a social problem that runs deeper than the abusive behavior of individual men, it is still much easier to convince women that dramatic change is in their best interest than it is to convince men. In fact, many people would argue that, since men are the dominant sex and violence serves to reinforce this dominance, that it is not in men's best interests to reduce violence against women, and that the very attempt to enlist a critical mass of men in this effort amounts to a fool's errand.

For those of us who reject this line of reasoning, the big question then is how do we reach men? We know we're not going to transform, overnight or over many decades, certain structures of male power and privilege that have developed over thousands of years. Nevertheless, how are we going to bring more men—many more men—into a conversation about sexism and violence against women? And how are we going to do this without turning them off, without berating them, without blaming them for centuries of sexist oppression? Moreover, how are we going to move beyond talk and get substantial numbers of men to partner *with* women in reducing men's violence, instead of working *against* them in some sort of fruitless and counterproductive gender struggle?

That is the \$64,000 question in the growing field of gender-violence prevention in the first decade of the twenty-first century: how to get more men to stand up and be counted. Esta Soler, the executive director of the Family Violence Prevention Fund and an influential leader in the domestic-violence movement, says that activating men is "the next frontier" in the women-led movement. "In the end," she says, "we cannot change society unless we put more men at the table, amplify men's voices in the debate, enlist men to help change social norms on the issue, and convince men to teach their children that violence against women is always wrong."

Call me a starry-eyed optimist, but I have long been convinced that there are millions of men in our society who are ready to respond well to a positive

message about this subject. If pointed ("Stop treating women this way"), they will respond. But if you approach Abraham Lincoln's famous words, "You can't lead a horse to water," surprising numbers of them will resist.

For me, this is not just an issue of progress in confronting the violence against women *just in my lifetime* (VAWA). It is the most fundamental subject. Federal funds have encouraged prevention efforts that target men, but encouraging developments on the national level. Not the least of these positions is that young men today "get" the concept of working against men's violence.

I understand the skepticism expressed by men's complacency about living free from the threat of violence. They are active in gender-violence prevention, a number of men. I would not give men supports everything that they want for, but an awful lot of men privilege their own comfort, but now there is a growing body of evidence that confirms it empirically.

Social norms theory begins by recognizing the extent to which their perceptions of certain behaviors. In the absence of social norms, they are likely to be influenced by what they see, not what they *actually* think and do. Some research in the early 1990s, had to do with how much they were influenced by how much they saw. They found that when students realize that their school's "party school" reputation is based on binge drink in order to measure

Social norms theory has also been applied to men's violence against women. In the past several years that demonstrate that men are uncomfortable with the way some women are treated. But since few men in our society are willing to matter, many men think they are

message about this subject. If you go to a group of men with your finger pointed ("Stop treating women so badly!") you'll often get a defensive response. But if you approach the same group of men by appealing, in Abraham Lincoln's famous words, to "the better angels of their nature," surprising numbers of them will rise to the occasion.

For me, this is not just an article of faith. Our society has made real progress in confronting the long-standing problem of men's violence against women *just in my lifetime*. Take the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). It is the most far-reaching piece of legislation ever on the subject. Federal funds have enabled all sorts of new initiatives, including prevention efforts that target men and boys. There have been many other encouraging developments on both the institutional and the individual levels. Not the least of these positive developments is the fact that so many young men today "get" the concept of gender equality—and are actively working against men's violence.

I understand the skepticism of women who for years have been frustrated by men's complacency about something as basic as a woman's right to live free from the threat of violence. But I am convinced that men who are active in gender-violence prevention today speak for a much larger number of men. I would not go so far as to say that a silent majority of men supports everything that gender-violence prevention activists stand for, but an awful lot of men privately cheer us on. I have long felt this way, but now there is a growing body of research—in social norms theory—that confirms it empirically.

Social norms theory begins with the premise that people often misperceive the extent to which their peers hold certain attitudes or participate in certain behaviors. In the absence of accurate knowledge, they are more likely to be influenced by what they *think* people think and do, rather than what they *actually* think and do. Some of the early work in social norms theory, in the early 1990s, had to do with how the drinking habits of college students were influenced by how much they thought their peers drank. Researchers found that when students realized that their fellow students didn't drink as much as their school's "party school" label suggested, they were less likely to binge drink in order to measure up.

Social norms theory has also been applied to men's attitudes about sexism, sex, and men's violence against women. There have been a number of studies in the past several years that demonstrate that significant numbers of men are uncomfortable with the way some of their male peers talk about and treat women. But since few men in our society have dared to talk publicly about such matters, many men think they are the only ones who feel uncomfortable.

Because they feel isolated and alone in their discomfort, they do not say anything. Their silence, in turn, simply reinforces the false perception that few men are uncomfortable with sexist attitudes and behaviors. It is a vicious cycle that keeps a lot of caring men silent.

I meet men all the time who thank me—or my fellow activists and colleagues—for publicly taking on the subject of men's violence. I frequently meet men who are receptive to the paradigm-shifting idea that men's violence against women has to be understood as a men's issue, as their issue. These men come from every demographic and geographic category. They include thousands of men who would not fit neatly into simplistic stereotypes about the kind of man who would be involved in "that touchy-feely stuff."

Still, it is an uphill fight. Truly lasting change is only going to happen as new generations of women come of age and demand equal treatment with men in every realm, and new generations of men work with them to reject the sexist attitudes and behaviors of their predecessors. This will take decades, and the outcome is hardly predetermined. But along with tens of thousands of activist women and men who continue to fight the good fight, I believe that it is possible to achieve something much closer to gender equality, and a dramatic reduction in the level of men's violence against women, both here and around the world. And there is a lot at stake. If sexism and violence against women do not subside considerably in the twenty-first century, it will not just be bad news for women. It will also say something truly ugly and tragic about the future of our species.

WOMEN'S ISSUES/MEN'S ISSUES

If you are a woman and you are reading this, you know that violence against women is one of the critical "women's issues" of our time. A major national poll released in 2003 by the New York-based Center for the Advancement of Women found that 92 percent of women named "reducing domestic violence and sexual assault" as a top priority for women's movements—outpolling all other issues.

If you are a man and you are reading this, you probably agree that violence against women is a significant problem—for women. Few men tell pollsters that "reducing domestic and sexual violence" is a priority for men. Barring a recent family tragedy, it is unlikely that men would even register these issues as ones we should be concerned with. This hardly ennobles us, but is it fair to expect otherwise? Most men—and women—see these as "women's issues."

As I have stated, calling violence against women a "women's issue" is misleading at best, and is even at some level dishonest. In fact, I think the very

act of calling it a "women's issue" has reasons why:

1. It gives men an excuse.

The way we talk about a subject like rape, battering, and sexual assault is a broad shifting of responsibility onto its female victims. This is like saying that a man should convey subtle but powerful messages to his female victims about their job to prevent—or avoid—being assaulted. They should not expect a lot of help from men. It's more insidious: they need no help from men as you do not assault women. It's the whole thing.

The simple phrase "women's issues" is what guys hear. "Women's issues" are for girls, for women. I'm not a girl or a woman. Men and boys have been conditioned to see violence—as something they are forced to do so, usually by a woman.

When did you last hear a man say "violence against women not in spite of men's issues"? Implicit in the notion that violence against women is a men's issue is the assumption that all women should be concerned because all women have an interest in it, even if they haven't been assaulted. Men should be concerned, not necessarily because they've executed these crimes, but simply because they've committed them.

This conclusion does not flow naturally from the way we're currently understood. But there are a lot of reasons why violence against women is a men's issue. I am going to explore these in a subsequent chapter. Still, most people don't know why men are, and should be, concerned about violence against women. Few people even mention them.

A lot of men (and women) are concerned about violence against women. They use the "women's issues" label because they feel somehow unfairly treated. They have a desire to probe any deeper. When you use the same sentence as "violence," they

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act of calling it a “women’s issue” is itself part of the problem. Here are four reasons why:

① *It gives men an excuse not to pay attention.*

The way we talk about a subject is the way we think about it. When people call rape, battering, and sexual harassment “women’s issues”—and many people do this without a second thought—they contribute to a broad shifting of responsibility from the male perpetrators of violence to its female victims. This is likely not intentional, but words nonetheless convey subtle but powerful messages. The message to women is that it is their job to prevent—or avoid—sexual and domestic violence, and they should not expect a lot of help from men. The message to men is even more insidious: they need not tune this in. It is women’s burden. As long as you do not assault women yourself, you can pretty much ignore the whole thing.

The simple phrase “women’s issues” eloquently reinforces this point. Guys hear “women’s issues” and not surprisingly think: *Hey, that’s stuff’s for girls, for women. I’m not a girl or a woman. It’s not my concern.* Generations of men and boys have been conditioned to think about sexism—including gender violence—as something they need only concern themselves with when forced to do so, usually by a woman in their life.

When did you last hear a man say he was concerned about violence against women not *in spite* of the fact that he is a man but *because* of it? Implicit in the notion that violence against women is a “women’s issue” is the assumption that all women should be concerned *because they’re women*, because all women have an interest in preventing violence against their sex, even if they haven’t been assaulted themselves. It is equally true that men should be concerned, not necessarily because they have perpetrated or prosecuted these crimes, but simply *because they are men*.

This conclusion does not flow naturally from the way the subject is currently understood. But there are numerous reasons why violence against women is a men’s issue. I am going to address some of the personal ones in a subsequent chapter. Still, most of the personal and professional reasons why men are, and should be, concerned are not part of the public discourse. Few people even mention them.

A lot of men (and women) are not even conscious of *how* they think about violence against women. But it’s a safe bet that some men consciously use the “women’s issues” label as an excuse not to pay attention. It’s not that they feel somehow unfairly excluded; more realistically they have no desire to probe any deeper. When some men hear the word “gender” in the same sentence as “violence,” they automatically shut down. *Not that unpleasant*

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subject again. Still others respond to the term “women’s issues” like they do TV commercials for feminine hygiene products. They would rather not go there. Better just to turn up the music and tune it out.

Unfortunately, few men pay any discernible price for this averting of our eyes. In part, this is because we’re not expected to do much or even care much about these issues—unless something happens to a woman or girl close to us. Most guys will say, “I’m a good guy. These aren’t my problems.” The trouble is, for a culture with as much gender violence as ours, the bar for being considered a “good guy” is set awfully low.

In fact, a lot of women actually feel grateful when men they know emerge as strong allies. When a man—in a group of friends, in a classroom, in the media—voices an objection to sexist portrayals of women in pornography, pop music, or other forms of media, or if he speaks out in support of the victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, women will often praise his sensitivity and thank him for caring. This speaks volumes about how low women’s expectations are of the average guy! In this country—perhaps in all of Western culture—in the early twenty-first century, a guy can become an instant hero merely for doing what any decent person should be doing. I know that many of my friends and colleagues who do anti-sexist “men’s work,” myself included, are often embarrassed by this, and by the way some women shower us with gratitude for any minimal effort we put forth.

Of course, not all women are so easily impressed; some women do have higher expectations of men. Consider the case of a woman lawyer who is an acquaintance of mine. When she was in law school, she came home one day, excited to share with her boyfriend some things she’d learned about sexual-assault prevention in a workshop on gender violence. He was completely silent and uninterested. So she called him on it. “You don’t seem to care,” she said.

“I’m not really into that stuff; sort of like how you aren’t interested in economics,” he explained matter-of-factly. She was taken aback. She wondered, if the guy she’s seeing is not “interested” in what her daily life is like as a woman, how could he possibly be interested in her? She said that the moment he uttered those words she knew they were through.

2. “Women’s issues” are personal for men, too.

If you are a man, I have a question for you: Is there a woman in your life that you love dearly? A mother, daughter, sister, wife, girlfriend, or close woman friend? Are there many women and girls that you care about very deeply? Okay, then isn’t it true that every issue which affects the women and girls that you care about affects you—by definition? Now think about all of the men who are the fathers, brothers, sons, and lovers of women and girls who have

been assaulted by men. Much younger, but who still feel they were raped in college. Men who are watching their fathers or other relatives fall into one or another of the categories. Nonetheless, it is a struggle of silence toward women because of language and otherwise—either through a dichotomous approach between the sexes. Us and them is about them. Isn’t that why there are some issues that affect others where men as a sex class are in evolutionary biology to make it live in the world together. Our men have familial, platonic, and can something that affects women.

3. Men are the primary perpetrators.

Contrary to the disinformation of the “men’s rights” movement, the men who do not lie. The vast majority of women do not lie. The vast majority of men in criminology, and public health, and intimate-partner violence and terrorism, including the sexual abuse of children, do assault their male partners, most notably the sociologist Murray. The field against men is a more significant field recognize or acknowledge. It is used for purposes other than serving a pattern of power and control through a range of issues, from domestic violence to harassment, there is no symmetry against each other, no equivalence of problem were women assaulting men as we are now? Would they be constantly asking: why do men? Somehow I don’t think so. I think honing in on the source of the problem.

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 ler violence as ours, the bar for
 ow.

When men they know emerge
 friends, in a classroom, in the
 als of women in pornography,
 eaks out in support of the vic-
 omen will often praise his sen-
 eaks volumes about how low
 in this country—perhaps in all
 century, a guy can become an
 ent person should be doing. I
 es who do anti-sexist "men's
 l by this, and by the way some
 imal effort we put forth.

pressed; some women do have
 of a woman lawyer who is an
 hool, she came home one day,
 gs she'd learned about sexual-
 lence. He was completely silent
 don't seem to care," she said.
 ow you aren't interested in eco-
 as taken aback. She wondered,
 what her daily life is like as a
 ed in her? She said that the
 y were through.

1, too.

here a woman in your life that
 ife, girlfriend, or close woman
 t you care about very deeply?
 ffects the women and girls that
 ow think about all of the men
 of women and girls who have

been assaulted by men. Men whose wives were raped when they were
 younger, but who still feel the aftershocks. Men who have daughters who are
 raped in college. Men who—as little boys—experienced the trauma of
 watching their fathers or other men assault their mothers. Millions of men
 fall into one or another of these categories.

Nonetheless, it is a struggle to get men to confront each other about vio-
 lence toward women because so many of us have been conditioned—in our
 language and otherwise—either to avoid the subject altogether or to look at
 it through a dichotomous and competitive lens: *Men vs. women. Battle*
between the sexes. Us and them. And this is definitely one of those issues that
 is about *them*. Isn't that why they call it a "women's issue"? But it is more than
 that. There are some issues that primarily affect women as a sex class, and
 others where men as a sex class are more concerned. You do not need a PhD
 in evolutionary biology to make that observation. But it is just as true that we
 live in the world together. Our lives are lived in relation to others. Women and
 men have familial, platonic, and sexual relationships with each other. How
 can something that affects women not affect men—and vice versa? ✓

3. Men are the primary perpetrators.

Contrary to the disinformation promulgated in recent years by the so-called
 "men's rights" movement, the most important statistics about violence against
 women do not lie. The vast majority of credible researchers in sociology,
 criminology, and public health confirm that men commit the most serious
 intimate-partner violence and the overwhelming amount of sexual violence,
 including the sexual abuse of children. Some women in heterosexual rela-
 tionships do assault their male partners, and a small number of researchers,
 most notably the sociologist Murray Straus, maintain that women's violence
 against men is a more significant social problem than many people in the
 field recognize or acknowledge. But while women's violence is wrong—if
 used for purposes other than self-defense—it is rarely part of a systematic
 pattern of power and control through force or the threat of force. On a wide
 range of issues, from domestic violence and rape to stalking and sexual
 harassment, there is no symmetry between men's and women's violence
 against each other, no equivalence. If the tables were turned, and the primary
 problem were women assaulting men, would we be as likely to blame the
 victim as we are now? Would the general public be endlessly focused on
 men's experience of victimization at the hands of women? Would people
 constantly be asking: why do men stay with the women who beat them?
 Somehow I don't think so. I think most of us—especially men—would be
 honing in on the source of the problem—women's behavior. We would ask, ✓

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rightly, “What the hell is going on with women? How are we going to get them to stop assaulting us?”

But with the situation reversed, we focus not on the perpetrator class but on the victims. There’s some history behind this, and some language. Ever since women succeeded at breaking silence around the historic reality of their experience of violence at the hands of men, Western and other world cultures have framed gender violence as a “women’s issue.” This act of framing/naming has had a profound impact on our collective consciousness, both positive and negative. On the one hand, thinking about gender violence as a women’s issue has contributed to a foregrounding of the needs of female victims and survivors. The dramatic growth over the past three decades in public understanding about how violence against women harms women—how it is a violation of their basic human rights—is one of the great achievements of modern multicultural feminism.

On the other hand, focusing on what happens *to women* has helped obscure the role played *by men*—and male culture—in the ongoing violence. After all, men are not only the primary perpetrators of gender violence. We are also the not-so-innocent bystanders. As we will discuss in this book, men hold a disproportionate amount of economic, social, and political power. This means we’re more responsible for those aspects of our culture that promote and encourage violence against women. It also means we’re more responsible for what we do or do not prioritize in terms of prevention—including the prevention of gender violence.

On a personal level, men who are not abusive toward women nonetheless play important roles in the lives of men who are. Men who physically and sexually abuse women are not monsters who live apart from the civilized world. They are in our families and friendship circles. They are our fathers, our sons, our brothers, and our best friends. They are our fishing partners, drinking buddies, teammates, fraternity brothers, and colleagues. We too easily let them and ourselves off the hook when we call their violence a “women’s issue.” Do we do it intentionally? I don’t know. But whether conscious or unconscious, it’s an effective strategy to avoid accountability.

4. *Until more men join the fight, there is no chance that the violence will be dramatically reduced.*

Men already play important roles in almost every aspect of these issues, from the personal to the professional to the political. For example, men are friends and family members of women who have been victims past or present. We’re also the friends and family members of violent boys and men. In a professional context, we’re rape-prevention educators and batterer-intervention

counselors. We’re sex crim and girls who have been women in custody battles. We’re therapists who treat at the door when someone who write legislation to fu attention to unmet needs. V to strengthen protections fo

Until now the gynocent tortured the role that men are bad. But I wouldn’t be pressi men’s positive contribution about than the hurt feelings. The fact is that the current harassment women’s issues a to it, how many more wo (however inspiring they mig women isn’t caused by wom what women can do to chan

Women, of course, have fight against all forms of se been identified with women and boys is to talk about rap ment as *our* issues. Of course concerned about women’s i women. But regardless of wh that very few men have histor the fight against gender viol That is why we need the para transformation, we simply m words of the famous Apple C with this new thinking will th al, and political time and effo

What are the stakes? Wit ment, there is every reason t men’s violence against wome indefinitely. The only meanin; funding for victim services, justice versus community-ba other words, organized respon

counselors. We're sex crimes prosecutors. We're doctors who treat women and girls who have been assaulted. We're lawyers who represent battered women in custody battles. We're judges who hear domestic violence cases. We're therapists who treat rape-trauma survivors. We're cops who show up at the door when someone calls 911. In political terms, we're policy makers who write legislation to fund women's programs. We're activists who call attention to unmet needs. We're politicians who support changes in the law to strengthen protections for rape, battering, and stalking victims.

Until now the gynocentric nature of the "women's issues" label has distorted the role that men are already playing in these issues—both good and bad. But I wouldn't be pressing this point if it were simply about appreciating men's positive contributions. We have far more serious things to worry about than the hurt feelings of some men who might feel unacknowledged. The fact is that the current practice of calling rape, battering, and sexual harassment women's issues actually hampers prevention efforts. To cut right to it, how many more woman-as-survivor stories do we need to hear (however inspiring they might be) before we figure out that violence against women isn't caused by women, and that it won't be stopped by focusing on what women can do to change their lives?

Women, of course, have been and will continue to be the leaders of the fight against all forms of sexism. But because anti-sexism has for so long been identified with women, one of the first steps in motivating more men and boys is to talk about rape, sexual assault, battering, and sexual harassment as *our* issues. Of course it could be argued that men should *already* be concerned about women's issues because we *should* be concerned about women. But regardless of whether we should be concerned, the fact remains that very few men have historically committed time, energy, and resources to the fight against gender violence. It has not been a priority for most men. That is why we need the paradigm shift. In order to occasion a true cultural transformation, we simply must convince a sizable group of men to—in the words of the famous Apple Computer campaign—"Think Different." Only with this new thinking will they be willing to invest the personal, professional, and political time and effort necessary to get the job done.

What are the stakes? Without more active male support and involvement, there is every reason to believe that the outrageously high rates of men's violence against women that we've grown accustomed to will persist indefinitely. The only meaningful debates will be about appropriate levels of funding for victim services, along with ongoing debates about criminal justice versus community-based ways to hold offenders accountable. In other words, organized response to gender violence will continue indefinitely

in clean-up-after-the-fact mode, quite possibly for decades.

True and lasting change will require—at a minimum—a critical and multicultural mass of men emerging to partner with women in confronting men's violence on both a personal and an institutional level. There are signs that this is beginning to happen. Both nationally and internationally, the number of men and men's organizations that are willing to grapple with men's roles in ending violence is growing. But this is a movement that is still in its infancy.



In my mixed-gender speeches and trainings, I try to introduce this subject matter gently, in a non-threatening way, by starting with an interactive exercise. I ask the men—just the men—to participate in a little demonstration. “By a show of hands,” I ask, “how many of you have either a mother, daughter, sister, wife, girlfriend, close female friend, or another woman or girl that you care deeply about?” This usually prompts laughter and some grumbling, but eventually most guys put up their hands. (I can tell that I am in for a long night when more than a smattering of men choose to signal their unhappiness at having to attend a talk about women's issues by refusing to raise their hands.)

At a talk I once gave on a college campus, there was a middle-aged white man and woman seated in the front row, looking out of place. I assumed they were married. When I asked the men to raise their hands if they had a woman close to them, the guy didn't budge. He sat there ten feet away from me with his arms folded and the hint of a scowl on his face. His posture distracted me the entire night. I kept glancing down at them and wondering: What is going on in their relationship? How did she get him to come out and hear my talk? What will they be talking about in the car ride home?

Okay, so the guy might not have liked the slightly manipulative quality of the exercise. Regardless, its message was clear: every issue which affects the women and girls that we care about affects us. Our lives are inextricably interwoven. We live in the world together, share the same beds, and eat at the same breakfast tables. We make babies together, have daughters together.

Everything that happens to women happens to men, too.

key
✓*



“If a man is offered a fact which he does not wish to believe, he will distort it, twist it, or even ignore it, unless the evidence is so overwhelming that he is forced to accept it in accordance to his instincts.”
—Bertrand Russell, *Proposed*

One of the most memorable lines from Jack Nichols' *Men*, when Jack Nichols says, “the truth!” at the young prospect from Nicholson's volcanic position is indignant at having to answer by a much younger and less wise man. The metaphor for the danger of admonition is really an attack on the “real man” should be able to face reality. In reality, “real men” can be expected to confront. Until recently, the fight against gender violence against women is a pre-existing personal, social, and institutional issue. It is to understand and ultimately to engage in a great fight. This introspection can be especially true for betrayers and bystanders, they are