

Jackson Katz, Ph.D.

Tough Guise: *Bringing Up Boys of Character*

April 29 & 30, 2014, Part 1 of 2

"In the end, what will hurt the most is not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends"

- Martin Luther King (as quoted by Dr. Katz).

Jackson Katz, Ph.D., is an anti-sexist activist and expert on violence, media and masculinities. An author, filmmaker, educator and social theorist, Katz works in gender violence prevention with diverse groups of men and boys in sports culture and the military. Katz is the creator and co-founder of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program, which advocates the 'bystander approach' to sexual and domestic violence prevention. He also starred in the award-winning documentary *MissRepresentation*.

NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT: Dr. Katz promotes what he terms a 'paradigm-shifting perspective' on the issues of gender violence. Gender violence includes issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, relationship abuse, sexual harassment and child abuse. According to Katz, "These issues have traditionally been seen as women's issues that some good men help out with." He argues that these should be considered men's issues as most of the perpetrators are men.

THE TYPICAL PERPETRATOR: Katz has been collecting data on gender violence for 15 years. He states that the typical perpetrator of gender violence is a regular guy. After a violent incident is made public, Katz notes the quotes from the perpetrator's neighbors, friends and co-workers. They all say, "We had no idea he could do such a thing." "It seems so out of character for him." Katz believes that we all would be comforted if the regular perp is instead a crazy sociopath, because then it is easier to disassociate ourselves. However, since the average individual who commits sexual violence is 'normal' in every other respect, we need to ask ourselves - what is normal? What are our societal norms and what we are doing to perpetrate this 'normalcy'? How are we shaping our sons? Katz believes that media culture – including pornography – needs to be under critical scrutiny.

ROLE OF THE MEDIA: Katz does not claim that the media is causing the violence. Rather he sees the effects of media as much deeper and longer-term. Katz encourages a focus instead on the social-normative effect of the media's portrayal of masculinity. Using his documentary, Tough Guise 2 (<http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=237>), Katz demonstrates the increasing brutality in the representations of masculinity over the past generation.

- In MOVIES: In 1964's True Grit, John Wayne only needed his fists and pistol to make a point, but by 2009, Avatar required military-style weaponry. Also seen with action heroes – in the 1950's, Superman and Batman were ordinary guys running around in tights and capes. Today, the Dark Knight has a bulked-up, toned and muscular body. And, over the past 50 years, the biceps of action figure G.I. Joe in real-life equivalents have increased from 12.2" to 26.8".
- In VIDEO GAMES: We have moved from the benign aggression of Pac Man, Asteroids and Space Invaders to the unimaginable and hyper-realistic blood bath that is Mortal Kombat.
- In SPORTS: We have gone from the comparatively orderly sport of boxing to the street-fighting viciousness of Mixed Martial Arts and Cage Fighting.
- In PORN CULTURE: We have seen porn culture go from the soft-core sexism of Hugh Heifner's brand of hedonistic masculinity to the hard-core, misogyny and sexualized brutality of gonzo porn.

MEDIA'S MESSAGE TO MEN: The media creates and perpetuates a cultural narrative that says that being a man is about sexual conquest. The message to young men is that actually caring about girls and women is unmanly and 'gay'. What most discussions about violence miss is how interconnected this larger story about manhood is – how it creates a kind of all-pervasive cultural script that says sexual conquest, physical toughness, force and violence are legitimate ways for men to achieve and maintain power and control. We are accustomed to seeing the glamorization of hyper-masculine posturing; we are not nearly as accustomed to thinking about the unglamorous, ugly, mean-spirited and violent ways these images play out in the real world.

REVERSAL OF OUR THINKING ABOUT LEARNED v. TAUGHT BEHAVIOR

When we talk about taught behavior instead of learned behavior, we shift the responsibility onto those of us who are teaching our sons what it means to be a man. Unfortunately, the pressure on boys and young men does not just come from their peer groups. Fathers, coaches, and older male role models take it upon themselves to school young men in what it takes to measure up to a patriarchal ideology that being a man is about domination, aggression, power and control. The rules: You can't show any emotions except anger; you can't think too much or seem too intellectual; you can't back down when someone disrespects you; you have to show that you're tough enough to inflict physical pain; and that you should be sexually aggressive with women. Guys are put into a box that turns out to be the perfect breeding ground for violence.

WHICH INDUSTRY IS REALLY TO BLAME – GUNS OR ENTERTAINMENT? BOTH.

For decades, experts and government officials have been arguing that we need to take a closer look at the relationship between violence in culture and violence in the real world. This focus on a culture of violence in America took on new and bipartisan urgency in the wake of Adam Lanza's cold-blooded murders in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012. Unfortunately, it quickly descended into a distracting and false debate between defenders of the gun industry and defenders of the entertainment industry. On one side, the gun industry blames movies and video games and, on the other side, the entertainment industry faults the NRA and guns. What both sides have failed to mention is that for many years they have been mutually reinforcing parts of the same culture of violence and have profited substantially from one another.

CHALLENGES AHEAD – LEADERSHIP NEEDED

- These issues need to be seen as men's issues AND as leadership issues. Ultimately the responsibility of taking a stand on these issues shouldn't be on teenage boys in high school, or even on college men. It should be placed on adult men with power. These adult men need to be encouraged to prioritize these issues and act as leaders. When a professional coach makes a sexist/racist comment, there is talk about how he needs 'sensitivity training' – he instead needs to acknowledge his failure as a leader!
- Caring deeply is not enough – we need more men with the guts, courage, strength and moral integrity to break the complicit silence and to challenge each other.
- An example of leadership can be seen in Lieutenant General David Morrison of the Australian Army's handling of the unacceptable behavior of a group of men within its ranks producing and distributing degrading material. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaqpoeVgr8U>



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THE BY-STANDER APPROACH

1. A by-stander is anybody who is neither a perpetrator nor a victim in a given situation (e.g. friends, teammates, colleagues, siblings, etc.).
2. Instead of viewing violence prevention as a binary issue – with men as perpetrators and women as victims, or vice-versa – the focus is on all of us as by-standers.
3. The role of the by-stander is to speak up and not remain silent in the face of abuse.
4. The bystander who speaks up is seen as a LEADER who stands with strength and integrity – not a soft, wimpy person.

IMPLEMENTING THE BY-STANDER APPROACH

- Goal: Get men who are NOT abusive to challenge those who are.
- Men need to acknowledge that their silence is a form of consent and complicity.
- Men need to create a peer culture where men who act out in sexist ways will lose status as a result. According to Katz: “Not just because it’s illegal, but because it’s morally wrong and becomes unacceptable in peer culture.”
- Men need to interrupt each other when a sexist thing is said – even at a poker game with no women present. Lines to use: “Hey, that’s not funny” or “I don’t appreciate that kind of talk” or “That could be my sister you’re talking about – can you joke about something else?” or simply, “Let’s change the subject.”
- When these changes are implemented, there will be a radical diminution of the abuse, because, according to Katz, “the normal perpetrator is not sick and twisted, he’s actually a regular guy in every other way.”
- We know so much about the prevention of gender violence. Colleges and universities should incorporate these lessons into the curriculum – especially for athletes.
- Men with power in ALL institutions need to prioritize how funding is allocated and promote gender violence prevention education.

KATZ'S FINAL WORDS TO MEN: STAND WITH WOMEN – NOT AGAINST THEM

- We owe it to women, but we also owe it to our sons. We owe it to young men. These boys did not make the choice to be a man in a culture that tells them that manhood is a certain way.
- We, that have a choice, have an opportunity and a responsibility to them.
- Men and women working together can begin a transformation that can prevent future generations from experiencing the level of tragedy that we deal with on a daily basis.

The Man Prayer - words by Eve Ensler, film by Tony Stroebel - <http://vimeo.com/58120733>

May I be a man. • Whose confidence comes from the depth of my giving. • Who understands that vulnerability is my greatest strength. • Who creates space rather than dominates it. • Who appreciates listening more than knowing. • Who seeks kindness over control. • Who cries when the grief is too much. • Who refuses the slap, the gun, the choke, the insult, the punch. • May I not be afraid to get lost. • May I cherish touch more than performance. • And the experience more than getting there. • May I move slowly not abruptly. • May I be brave enough to share my fear and shame. • And gather the other men to do the same. • May I stop pretending and open the parts of me that have long been numb. • May I cherish, respect and love my mother. • May the resonance of that love translate into loving all women and living things. • Love.

10 Things Men Can Do To Prevent Gender Violence*

1. APPROACH GENDER VIOLENCE AS A MEN'S ISSUE. Men involved are of all different ages, socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. View men not only as perpetrators or possible offenders, but as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.
2. DON'T REMAIN SILENT. If a brother, friend, classmate or teammate is abusing his female partner – or is disrespectful to girls and women in general – don't look the other way. If you feel comfortable doing so, try to talk to him about it. Urge him to seek help. Or if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, parent, professor or counselor.
3. HAVE THE COURAGE TO LOOK INWARD. Question your own attitudes. Don't be defensive when something you do or say ends up hurting someone else. Try hard to understand how your own attitudes and actions might inadvertently perpetuate sexism and violence, and work toward changing them.
4. OFFER ASSISTANCE. If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help.
5. SEEK HELP IF NECESSARY. If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically or sexually abusive to women, or have been in the past, seek professional help NOW.
6. BE AN ALLY TO WOMEN. Support the work of campus-based women's centers. Attend "Take Back The Night" rallies and other public events. Raise money for community-based rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters. If you belong to a team or fraternity, or another study group, organize a fundraiser.
7. RECOGNIZE AND SPEAK OUT AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND GAY-BASHING. Discrimination and violence against LGBTQ people are wrong in and of themselves. This abuse also has direct links to sexism (e.g. the sexual orientation of men who speak out against sexism is often questioned, a conscious or unconscious strategy intended to silence them. This is a key reason few men do so.)
8. EDUCATE YOURSELF. Attend programs, take courses, watch films, and read articles and books about multicultural masculinities, gender inequality and root causes of gender violence. Educate yourself and others about how larger social forces affect the conflicts between individual men and women.
9. DON'T FUND SEXISM. Refuse to purchase any magazine, rent any video, subscribe to any Web site, or buy any music that portrays girls or women in sexually degrading or abusive manner. Speak out about cyber-sexism and misogynist attacks against women on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. Protest sexism in new and old media.
10. LEAD BY EXAMPLE. Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women (or men). Volunteer to work with gender violence prevention programs, including anti-sexist men's programs.

* Produced by MVP Strategies, a gender violence prevention education and training organization.