

*The Oprah Winfrey Show* recently featured [Jean Kilbourne](#), Ed.D and used clips from two Media Education Foundation videos to expose the media and cultural forces that pressure young people into experiences of teen dating abuse and violence, either as victims or as perpetrators. On her national syndicated television show that aired on February 28, 2002, Oprah showed footage from [What a Girl Wants](#), produced by Elizabeth Massie for CHC Productions and distributed by MEF, and from [Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity](#), directed by MEF executive director Sut Jhally.

The video segments from [What a Girl Wants](#) included interviews with teenage girls who spoke candidly about their experiences of being controlled, bullied, and even abused by their boyfriends, as well as images of boys playing violent video games, as shown in [Tough Guise](#). Oprah's discussion with her audience and guests centered on the causes of low self-esteem in girls who choose to date "bad boys," as well as on the pressure boys feel to be tough, in control, aggressive, and violent. When people are presented in their lifetimes with 200,000 acts of violence, 40,000 murders, and one-quarter million sex acts in movies, TV, video games, commercials, and print ads, it is easy to see that sexual violence is normalized by the media.

Jean Kilbourne played a central role on *The Oprah Show* by showing slides of images of violence against women and girls in advertising. Kilbourne is a world-renown expert on the effects of the media – especially the kinds of images and messages that contribute to teen dating violence.

The teen dating abuse theme of [The Oprah Show](#), along with Oprah's use of MEF videos which are critical of the media, created a powerful commentary to help alert today's parents to why boys abuse and why girls let them. While girls are encouraged to be passive, silent, and sexy, boys are trained to be "bad" in order to be desirable. The enlightening programming seemed ironic when contrasted with the violent imagery in commercial cutaways that day which interspersed Oprah and Jean's comments during the broadcast.

**Jean Kilbourne**, Ed.D., the award-winning creator of the [Killing Us Softly](#) film series, has twice been named lecturer of the Year by the National Association of Campus Activities. She is a widely published writer and appears frequently on national interview programs. She has spent many years researching and compiling examples of media images and their effects on young people, especially women. Her book, *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising*, was published in 1999. The paperback version, *Can't Buy My Love*, is available from Simon and Schuster.

The [February 28 broadcast of The Oprah Show](#) reached 10 million viewers, including approximately 1 million mothers.