

# TOUGH GUISE 2

## Violence, Manhood & American Culture

[Abridged Clean Version Transcript]

### [VIDEO CLIPS – News Montage]

**Various news anchors:** *There has been a shooting... Once again, a mass shooting... 26 people, including twenty children, were killed... The deadliest mass shooting in American history... If you're just joining us, two young men apparently dressed in long black trench coats, opened fire at a high school just outside of Denver in Littleton, Colorado...*

**Jackson Katz:** When it comes to violence, it's almost like there are two Americas.

### [VIDEO CLIP]

**Shooting survivor:** *It was horrific. I can't even put it into words.*

**Jackson Katz:** There's the America that recoils in horror whenever a brutal mass shooting erupts onto our television screens, shocked by the level of destruction and suffering that just a few individuals are capable of visiting upon so many innocent people.

### [VIDEO CLIP]

**News anchor:** *Police say that the gunman opened fire in a theater during a showing of that latest Batman movie, "The Dark Knight Rises."*

**Jackson Katz:** And then there's the America that can't seem to get enough of violence as a form of entertainment and ritual, a seemingly endless appetite for ever-intensifying spectacles of all-out brutality and carnage.

The question is what sort of relationship, if any, these two Americas have to one another.

And if we're serious about answering that question, we need to stop chasing symptoms and take a good look at a truth that's been hiding in plain sight all along: that when we talk about violence in America, whether it's real or imaginary, we're almost always talking about violent masculinity.

### [TITLE SCREEN]

Tough Guise 2  
Violence, Manhood & American Culture  
Featuring Jackson Katz

**Jackson Katz:** I'm Jackson Katz, and for more than 25 years, I've worked on both a personal and an institutional level to engage men directly in the effort to prevent men's violence against women and children.

The reason I work with and focus on men is simple: because, for the most part, violence is a *men's* issue.

The statistics tell the story:

- 86% of armed robberies are committed by men.
- 77% of aggravated assaults are committed by men.
- 87% of stalkers are men.
- 86% of domestic violence incidents resulting in physical injury are perpetrated by men.
- 99% of rapes are committed by men.
- Men commit approximately 90% of murder.
- And over the past 30 years, 61 of the last 62 mass shootings have been committed by men.

But while these numbers are striking, they rarely if ever come into play in mainstream discussions about violence.

**[VIDEO CLIP – CNN]**

**Anderson Cooper:** *After every event like this, the questions always are the same, "What causes this kind of a shooting? How can this happen? How can they be stopped?"*

**Jackson Katz:** During hours and hours of exhaustive reporting, commentators seem to go out of their way to find gender-neutral ways to talk about this violence.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – News montage]**

**Various news anchors and pundits:** *The shooters in Aurora, the shooters in Newtown... The Connecticut shooter... The Aurora shooter... The alleged shooter... Teen-aged psychopath... Mass murders... The suspect... That kid... This punk... This murderer...*

**Jackson Katz:** The male perpetrators become shooters or murderers or assailants or killers or suspects or psychopaths..

**[VIDEO CLIP – Dateline]**

**Lester Holt:** *It's kids killing kids in the heart of America.*

**Jackson Katz:** Violence committed by boys becomes “kids killing kids” and “youth violence.”

**[VIDEO CLIP]**

**News anchor:** *Here is a revealing and, frankly, horrifying picture of youth violence in America.*

**Jackson Katz:** It doesn't seem to matter that girls are kids and youths too, but only commit a fraction of these kinds of crimes.-And this baseline failure to acknowledge gender has a big effect when the discussion turns to other supposed causes of violence.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – News montage]**

**Various news anchors and pundits:** *Violence in the entertainment culture... Bloody games, gory movies, brutal TV shows... Call of Duty or Halo... Mental health issues, the faith issues...*

*Autism or Asperger Syndrome... You're blaming the gun... Their mom and their dad... Substance abuse... Mental health, violent games, violent movies... I want to blame the real culprit. Suicide pills! Mass murder pills!*

**Jackson Katz:** We hear very little – if anything – about why it is that girls and women also live in a culture saturated with guns and media violence, also suffer from mental illness, also come from dysfunctional families and have substance abuse problems, yet don't commit anywhere near the amount of violence boys and men do. In other cases, the perpetrators disappear altogether.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – News montage]**

**Various news anchors:** *Violence against women... Violence against women... Violence against women...*

**Jackson Katz:** You see this a lot in the mainstream discussion about so-called "violence against women." The fact that men are responsible for somewhere around 98% of this violence simply evaporates. We hear about women being harassed, abused, assaulted, or raped. Men are nowhere to be found. And the result of all this, is that instead of seeing men's violence against women as a men's issue, we see it as a women's issue, and focus most of our attention on how to help victims and survivors after the fact; a failure all the more glaring given that mainstream media outlets have no problem at all taking gender seriously when women are the ones doing the violence.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – News montage]**

**Various news anchors and reporters:** *Teenaged girls involved in violent fights... A fight between two young girls breaks out on the playground... More and more teenaged girls are getting involved in violent fights.*

**Jackson Katz:** When girls and women act out violently, their gender *becomes* the story. The same way race becomes the story with men of color.

**[VIDEO CLIP – The O'Reilly Factor]**

**Bill O'Reilly:** *The horrific murder rate in Chicago. Does it have to do with guns? Or race?*

**Jackson Katz:** When men of color rape women or shoot people or blow things up, race and culture move to the forefront of the story, crowding out the fact that the vast majority of the perpetrators under consideration, no matter what color they are, are men. All of this shows how we conceal the power of dominant groups.

For example, when we hear the word "race" in the United States, we tend to immediately think of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, South Asians. When we hear the term "sexual orientation," we tend to think of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. And when we hear the term "gender," we tend to think of women.

In each case, the dominant group – white people, heterosexual people, men – don't get examined. As if white people don't belong to some racial grouping? As if heterosexual people don't have

some sort of sexual orientation? As if men don't have a gender? In other words, we always focus on the subordinated group and not the dominant one, and that's one of the ways the power of dominant groups isn't questioned – by remaining invisible.

**[VIDEO CLIP] Dr. Phil:** *There are young men involved in these things. There's a lot of testosterone there.*

**Jackson Katz:** And on those rare occasions when the subject of men does make its way into mainstream discussions about violence, there's this common refrain that men's violence is all about testosterone and our prehistoric role as hunter-warriors. We're just programmed to be violent.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – News montage]**

**CNN Don Lemon:** *What is it about the testosterone of being a young man that makes this come to this gun violence head, so often?*

**Commentator:** *Really it goes back to hunter-gatherer days.*

**Jackson Katz:** You hear another version of this in the common refrain “boys will be boys.”

**[VIDEO CLIP – Fox "The Five"]**

**FOX anchor Kimberly Guilfoyle:** *Let boys be boys. They want to play rough. Don't try and overmedicate them and, you know, turn them into girls. They're boys!*

**The Five pundit:** *A six-year-old boy goes like this and he's suspended. And we end up having to talk about it because they are just unable to let boys be boys.*

**Jackson Katz:** No one would deny that there are biological factors that sometimes come into play with violence. The problem is when biological arguments lead people to conclude that men are just beasts who are overcome by hormonal urges they can't control, that men are incapable of making moral and ethical decisions, that boys are born hardwired to bully, rape, and murder. But perhaps the most damaging thing this kind of thinking does is that it blinds us to the fundamental role that cultural systems play in all of this.

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## A TAUGHT BEHAVIOR

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### [VIDEO CLIP – Congressional Panel]

**Speaker:** This is a document signed by six of the major public health organizations saying that the violence in the entertainment level we've attained today is causing increased aggressive behavior among some children.

**Jackson Katz:** For decades, experts and government officials have been arguing that we need to take a closer look at the relationship between violence in the culture and violence in the real world.

### [VIDEO CLIP – President Obama press statement]

**President Obama:** *In the days since the heartbreaking tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, I also tasked the Vice President with leading an effort to come up with a comprehensive set of serious proposals to keep our children safe, including strengthening school safety, improving mental health care, and addressing a culture that too often glorifies guns and violence.*

**Jackson Katz:** This focus on the culture of violence in America took on new, and bipartisan, urgency in the wake of Adam Lanza's cold-blooded murder of 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012.

But unfortunately, it quickly descended into a distracting, and false, debate between defenders of the gun industry and defenders of the entertainment industry.

### [VIDEO CLIP – National Rifle Association press statement]

**NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre:** *There exists in this country, sadly, a callous, corrupt, and corrupting shadow industry that sells and stows violence against its own people through vicious, violent video games.*

**Jackson Katz:** On one side, we've had the gun industry blaming movies and video games.

### [VIDEO CLIP – National Rifle Association press statement]

**NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre:** *We have blood-soaked films out there like, "American Psycho" and "Natural Born Killers", that are aired like propaganda loops on Splatter-days, and everyday.*

**Jackson Katz:** On the other side of the debate, we've had the entertainment industry blaming the NRA and guns.

### [VIDEO CLIP – CNN]

**MPAA Chief Chris Dodd:** *Can we not do a better job of controlling the weapons of violence that get into the wrong hands?*

**Jackson Katz:** What both sides have failed to mention is how, for years, they've been mutually reinforcing parts of the same culture of violence, and have profited handsomely from one another.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Video game industry promotional video]**

**Presenter from Medal of Honor:** *We are here at the 2012 international photo shoot for Medal of Honor Warfighter. I'm here with Drake Clark from Magpul [firearms company], a great partner. They brought CTRs. We got PMAGS. We got EMAGS.*

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Call of Duty” ad]**

**Soldier #1:** *Watch and learn.*

**Jackson Katz:** And the reason this matters so much is that while we've been debating whether guns or movies and video games are more to blame for violence, we've missed what the culture teaches boys about what it means to be a man.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Call of Duty” ad]**

**Soldier #2:** *Awesome!*

**Jackson Katz:** We often talk about violence being a learned behavior, but it's more to the point to say that it's a taught behavior. And by shifting the focus from "learned" to "taught," we shift the onus of responsibility onto those of us who are teaching our sons what it means to be a man.

Since the 1970s, sociologists & other researchers have identified a consistent set of messages the culture sends boys about what it means to be a real man. William Pollack introduced the idea of a "boy code," in which boys are taught from a very early age to act tough and not show their feelings.

Michael Kimmel extended the reach of the boy code into late adolescence and young adulthood, where he describes a "guy code," in which young men police each other into conformity with dictates about manhood that come with an implicit and sometimes explicit warning: Don't slip up or you risk being unmasked and found out as someone who doesn't measure up.

The result is that guys are put into a box that turns out to be the perfect breeding ground for violence.

We can't show any emotion except anger. We can't think too much or seem too intellectual. We can't back down when someone disrespects us. We have to show we're tough enough to inflict physical pain and take it in turn. We're supposed to be sexually aggressive with women.

And then we're taught that if we step out of this box, we risk being seen as soft, weak, feminine, or gay.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Full Metal Jacket"]**

**Drill Sergeant Hartman:** *You're so ugly you could be a modern art masterpiece! What's your name, fat body?*

**Lawrence:** *Sir, Leonard Lawrence, sir!*

**Drill Sergeant Hartman:** *Lawrence? Lawrence what? Of Arabia?*

**Lawrence:** *Sir, no, sir!*

**Drill Sergeant Hartman:** *I don't like the name Lawrence. Only ----- and sailors are called Lawrence. From now on you're Gomer Pyle.*

**Lawrence:** *Sir, yes, sir!*

**Jackson Katz:** Anything short of full-scale emotional shutdown becomes a source of humiliation and shame. And in response, young men learn to adopt what I call the "tough guise" – the front so many young men put up to shield their vulnerabilities and avoid being ridiculed.

As sociologist C.J. Pascoe details in her harrowing book "Dude, You're a Fag," the day-to-day humiliation boys and young men are subject to on a daily basis in our schools borders on criminal, their every move relentlessly and brutally scrutinized for anything with even a whiff of femininity or weakness by peers who take it upon themselves to serve as gender cops.

[VIDEO CLIP – "A History of Violence"]

**Boy #1:** *Who you calling stupid?*

**Boy #2:** *No, I said gym class was stupid.*

**Boy #1:** [mocking Boy #2] *"No, I said gym class." Listen to this little -----!*

**Jackson Katz:** But it doesn't just come from their peer groups. It comes from fathers, coaches, and older male role models as well.

[VIDEO CLIP – "The Tree of Life"]

**Father:** *Hit me! C'mon, hit me! C'mon. C'mon, Jack! Hit me! Hit me, hit me. C'mon. C'mon. Here it is. Here it is. C'mon, son. C'mon. Son? Left! What are you doing?*

**Jackson Katz:** A pair of animated films shows very clearly how this process is passed down inter-generationally.

[VIDEO CLIP – "Shark Tale"]

**Don Lino:** *Lenny, you see something, you kill it, you eat it. Period. That's what sharks do. That's a fine tradition. Right here, in front of me now, eat this.*

**Jackson Katz:** In "Shark Tale," the father shark makes it clear to his son, who is a vegetarian, that he has no choice but to conform to shark norms and become carnivorous and aggressive.

[VIDEO CLIP – "Shark Tale"]

**Don Lino:** *Frankie, I want you to take Lenny out, show him the ropes.*

**Frankie:** *Aww, c'mon, pops.*

**Don Lino:** *Son, you're gonna learn how to be a shark, whether you like it or not.*

**Jackson Katz:** Similarly, in "How to Train Your Dragon," the son of a Viking leader runs into problems when he refuses to act violently. And the unwillingness of the boy to use violence causes a crisis in his relationship with his warrior father...

**[VIDEO CLIP – "How to Train Your Dragon"]**

**Hiccup:** *I don't want to fight dragons.*

**Stoic the Vast:** *Oh, come on, yes you do.*

**Jackson Katz:** ...who can't even comprehend that his son might not want to follow in his violent footsteps.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "How to Train Your Dragon"]**

**Stoic the Vast:** *You're not a Viking. You're not my son.*

**Jackson Katz:** Qualities like compassion, caring, empathy, intellectual curiosity, fear, vulnerability, even love – basic human qualities that boys have inside them every bit as much as girls do – get methodically driven out of them by a sexist and homophobic culture that labels these things "unmanly," "feminine," "womanly," and "gay," and teaches boys to avoid them at all costs.

And, most importantly, they're taught that real men turn to violence not as a last resort, but as the go-to method of resolving disputes – and also as the primary means of winning respect and establishing masculine credibility.

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## THE COOL POSE

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### [VIDEO CLIP – "Smoke Signals"]

**Randy Prone:** *Good morning. This is Randy Peone on KREZ radio. The voice of the Coeur d'Alene Indian reservation.*

**Jackson Katz:** In the groundbreaking film *Smoke Signals*, one of the first features produced by Native Americans, there's this memorable scene where an older kid tries to teach a younger kid how to be a real-life Hollywood Indian.

### [VIDEO CLIP – "Smoke Signals"]

**Victor:** *First of all, quit grinning like an idiot. Indians ain't supposed to smile like that. Get stoic! No! Like this. You gotta look mean or people won't respect you. White people will run all over you if you don't look mean. You gotta look like a warrior. You gotta look like you just came back from killing a buffalo.*

**Thomas:** *But our tribe never hunted buffalo. We were fisherman!*

**Victor:** *What!? You want to look like you just came back from catching a fish?*

**Jackson Katz:** The scene is funny, but it also shows how the pressure to conform to ideals of violent masculinity cuts across racial, ethnic, and class lines.

As the sociologist Richard Majors has pointed out, African-American and other men of color in urban areas often adopt a hyper-masculine, menacing persona he calls the cool pose to signal that they're still men, regardless of what else has been stripped from them.

This is also true with Latino men...

### [VIDEO CLIP – "End of Watch"]

- *Checkmate...*

**Jackson Katz:** ...who are disproportionately portrayed in Hollywood as gangbangers, Mexican drug lords, and thugs in the barrio – images that are crude stereotypes, but which nonetheless have become symbols of toughness to some poor and working class Latinos whose manhood has been undermined by class exploitation and ethnic discrimination.

And we see the same thing when it comes to Asian masculinity.

### [VIDEO CLIP- "Sixteen Candles"]

-I have a wonderful idea! Would you like to go to the dance with Sam?

[GONG SOUND EFFECT]

**Jackson Katz:** In American popular culture, Asian men have long been emasculated, stereotyped as ineffectual, de-sexualized, and unmanly.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Breakfast at Tiffany’s”]**

*-Uh! That a more better.*

**[VIDEO CLIP – “The Hangover”]**

*- I want my purse back.*

*- What? Your purse?*

*- That's not a purse. It's a satchel!*

*- It's a purse. Okay?*

**Jackson Katz:** But since the early 1970s, running counter to this long line of neutered stereotypes is the highly stylized physicality and violence of the martial arts.

But young Asian-American men don't just have to look to Bruce Lee for cues. Increasingly we've seen the phenomenon of Asian guys adopting the tough-guy street styles of African-American and Latino men to establish their masculine credentials.

**[VIDEO CLIP – YouTube]**

**Speaker:** *Hey homie. I don't know what you had heard. But I ain't trying to act like no motherfucking black person, y'know what I'm sayin'? This is me. This is all OG. This is all the original shit that you going to get ever in your life.*

**Jackson Katz:** And this holds true for a lot of white guys as well.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Can’t Hardly Wait”]**

*- True yo, I'm just flossin' while those two --- over there scratch it out about who gets to knock the boots with me! You know what I'm saying?*

**Jackson Katz:** Many people have commented on the strange phenomenon of white suburban middle class kids “acting black.”

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Can’t Hardly Wait”]**

*- Damn, woman. Why you gotta be such a raging' -----?*

*- Oh, please. Listen to you. Look, there's a mirror right there. Why don't you take a look, okay? You're white!*

**Jackson Katz:** Middle class white boys may not have a lot of experience with the kind of real-world, inner-city conditions that gave rise to the cool pose, but the culture tells them if they take on this black, urban hard-guy pose they'll somehow be more real, more of a man.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “The Wire”]**

*- You happen to be white. I'm talking raised on Rippola Street white. Where your momma used to drag you down to Saint Kazmir's just like all the other little piss pants on the block.*

**Jackson Katz:** What makes this even more interesting is that a lot of the very guys they see as models of authenticity are themselves projecting an image they picked up from the culture.

**[VIDEO CLIP- “The Godfather”]**

-Be my friend?

**Jackson Katz:** As the writer Nathan McCall has said, he and some of his African-American male cohorts got some of their ideas of manhood from *The Godfather* and other gangster films that featured tough, ruthless, white Italian gangsters.

**[VIDEO CLIPS–The Godfather & Hip-Hop remake by “Geto Boys”]**

**Marlon Brando:** Someday, and that day might never come, I'll call upon you to do a service for me. But until that day, accept this justice as a gift on my daughter's wedding day.

**Rapper Scarface:** One day, and that day may never come, I'm gonna call you to do something for me. But until then, take this justice as a gift. All right?

**Actor:** Thank you, Godfather.

**Jackson Katz:** And you hear the same kind of thing about “Scarface.”

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Origins of a Hip-Hop Classic”]**

**Various hip-hop and rap entertainers:** *It's one of the hottest movies ever made... This is the all-time greatest movie... I've never seen nothing like that...I watched this movie sixty-three times... As a comic book lover, you loved Batman. If you was out in the streets, you loved Scarface...*

**Tony Montana:** *Say goodnight to the bad guy.*

**Jackson Katz:** So we have this interesting phenomenon where we have white middle class males emulating poor urban black males who in turn are getting part of their idea about manhood from gangster films featuring white men who are playing Cuban-American gangsters.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Scarface”]**

- *Now are we made, or are we made, man?*

**Jackson Katz:** The paradox is that the test of being real somehow comes down to how well you live up to a made-up script.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Spring Breakers”]**

- *I got Scarface on repeat. Constant, y'all!*

**Jackson Katz:** And it's a script that has become increasingly violent over time.

## UPPING THE ANTE

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**Jackson Katz:** The American ideal of the real man owes a lot to the Hollywood western, and the ultimate icon of white American masculinity, John Wayne.

**[VIDEO CLIP – John Wayne]**

**Wayne:** *Young fella, if you're looking for trouble, I'll accommodate you.*

**Jackson Katz:** While other men talked a lot, thought too much, equivocated and showed emotion, John Wayne made the world bend to his will with just a stare, a few words, his fists, and his guns.

**[VIDEO CLIP – John Wayne]**

**Wayne:** *I haven't lost my temper in forty years. But, Pilgrim, you caused a lot of trouble this morning that might have got somebody killed. And somebody ought to belt you in the mouth. But I won't. I won't. The hell I won't!*

**[VIDEO CLIP – “White Heat”]**

- *You won't get away with it, Cody.*

- *Cody, huh? You've got a good memory for names! Too good.*

**Jackson Katz:** And then there's Hollywood gangster films with cinematic tough guys like James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart...

**[VIDEO CLIP – “High Sierra”]**

**Bogart:** *One move out of you son, and I'll fill your pants full of lead. Get over there.*

**Jackson Katz:** ...men hardened by the world who knew the power of a few clipped words and a few rounds of ammunition.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Scarface”]**

**Tony Montana:** *Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, they teach me to talk. I like those guys.*

**Jackson Katz:** And this equation between toughness, manhood, and violence has continued and in many ways intensified over time.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Scarface”]**

**Tony Montana:** *Say hello to my little friend!*

**Jackson Katz:** there's no question that over the past few decades there's been a ratcheting up of what it takes to be considered a real man.

Look at our action heroes. In the 1950s, Superman was the equivalent of an ordinary guy running around in tights and a cape. And today, he's pumped up and ripped.

Or look at Batman. The body of Adam West as Batman in the 1960s is a far cry from the more imposing Dark Knight of the 21st century.

Pro wrestlers' bodies in the 1960s were more flabby. In the 21st century, they're way more sculpted, pumped up, and ripped.

And look at toy action figures. If you look at the Star Wars toy figurines that kids played with in the 1970s and contrast them with the Star Wars toy figurines that are being marketed to kids today, you see a dramatic shift.

Or look at the body of GI Joe. A study done in the late '90s found that over the past fifty years, the size of GI Joe's biceps, in real life equivalence, increased from 12.2 inches in 1964, to 15.2 inches in 1974, to 16.4 inches in 1994, and up to 26.8 inches by 1998. If you wanted a comparison to a real person, the biceps of someone like The Rock are reportedly only about 20 inches.

We can see a similar pattern in the changing levels of violence itself over time. We've gone from pistols in the 1940s, to larger weaponry in the 1970s, to the increasing militarization of these weapons in the 80s and 90s, to the larger-than-life heavy-metal killing machines we have today.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Inception”]**

*- You mustn't be afraid to dream a little bigger, darling.*

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Kick-Ass”]**

*- Say hello to my little friend!*

**Jackson Katz:** We've seen video game violence go from the benign aggressions of Pac Man, Space Invaders, and Asteroids to the unimaginable and hyper-realistic bloodbaths of today's games.

We've gone from the comparatively orderly sport of boxing to today's number one fighting sport, the street-fighting viciousness of mixed martial arts and cage fighting.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Spike TV]**

**Presenter:** *Oh. Wow. Wake up kid. We are underway. This place is deafening.*

**[VIDEO CLIP- “Project X”]**

*- How do you not see the point? There's the point. There's the point. Ok? There's two more fucking points right there.*

**Jackson Katz:** Then, on a parallel track, you have a longstanding cultural narrative that says being a man is about sexual conquest.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Fired Up!”]**

*-Okay, I'll be right there!*

*-Right behind him!*

**Jackson Katz:** The message to young men here is that actually caring about girls and women is unmanly and gay.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Fired Up!”]**

*-I need a little bit more time with Carly. There I said it. Okay? And I know you think that's lame, but can you please just give me one more day?*

*-That's not lame, bro. That's gay.*

**Jackson Katz:** 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're used to seeing the glamorization of hyper-masculine posturing. We're not nearly as used to thinking about the unglamorous, ugly, mean-spirited, and violent ways these images play out in the real world.

**[VIDEO CLIP – CNN]**

**News anchor:** *Two star high school football players in Steubenville, Ohio, have been found guilty of raping a West Virginia teenager...*

**Jackson Katz:** Take the Steubenville, Ohio case, where two adolescent boys were convicted of raping a drunk and unconscious 16-year-old girl at a party.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Cell phone footage from Steubenville case]**

**Male partygoer:** *How do you feel on a dead girl?*

**Male partygoer:** *You don't need any foreplay with a dead girl.*

**Jackson Katz:** One video in particular made the night of the rape by a group of guys in Steubenville showed just how normalized this kind of sexism and misogyny have become in a lot of male peer cultures.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Cell phone footage from Steubenville case]**

**Male partygoer:** *She's at least a "14" dead. She's deader than a doornail.*

**Jackson Katz:** For this guy and his friends, who had just witnessed or heard what had happened and weren't even sure if the young woman was alive, the whole thing was an occasion to bond and get some laughs with their buddies.

**Jackson Katz:** As sick as this seems, this case is just another example of something that sexual assault researchers have been saying for a long time. It doesn't matter whether it's at a party in middle America, on a bus in New Delhi ...

**[VIDEO CLIP – CNN News]**

**News anchor:** *In India, the young woman gang-raped on a New Delhi bus has died.*

**Jackson Katz:** ...or even more brazenly in the public space of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, gang rape is often a twisted kind of group ritual in male culture in which otherwise “regular” guys perform for and bond with each other by dehumanizing and abusing women – and also an expression of a patriarchal ideology that says being a man is about domination, power, aggression, and control.

You also see this with domestic violence. One of the key insights of the battered women’s movement is that most domestic violence is not an anger-management problem, but about men using force to establish or maintain control over the women in their lives.

**[VIDEO CLIP – ABC News]**

**News anchor:** *Thousands of marchers hit the streets of New York to protest a string of attacks on gay men, including a murder. Marchers chanted and carried signs in memory of 32-year-old Mark Carson.*

**Jackson Katz:** And the troubling rise in violent attacks on gay people demonstrates how way too many men – of all racial and ethnic backgrounds – take it upon themselves to serve as gender cops

The key here with all of this is that this isn’t just about deviant individuals. It’s about the much more disturbing possibility that our social norms about manhood are implicated as well.

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## A CULTURE IN RETREAT

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### [VIDEO CLIP]

*--Whatever happened to men? Guys used to drink real tequila, and talk about sports. Now guys drink poser tequila and talk about what: hair tinting?*

**Jackson Katz:**—There's no doubt we're in the throes of some kind of a crisis of masculinity. But rather than questioning whether it's our inability to move beyond the straightjacket of traditional masculinity that might be the source of this crisis, across the cultural and political landscape there's been a growing movement to reclaim and reassert traditional manhood.

### [VIDEO CLIP – Fox News]

**Fox pundit:** *We need to toughen up and stand up for ourselves and learn to be a lot tougher than yoga's gonna teach us to do all by ourselves.*

### [COMMERCIAL CLIP – “Miller Lite”]

**Male bar patron:** *Ah, light beer, please.*

**Female bartender:** *Sure. Do you care how it tastes?*

**Male bar patron:** *Nah. I don't care how it tastes.*

**Female bartender:** *Okay. Well, when you start caring, put down your purse and I'll give you a Miller Lite.*

**Male bar patron:** *It's a carryall.*

**Female bartender:** *No, it's not.*

**Narrator:** *Man Up!*

**Jackson Katz:** The basic idea is that men are in crisis because women, have been waging a full-scale war on traditional manhood.

### [VIDEO CLIPS – FOX News]

**FOX Red Eye Commentator:** *We've been so emasculated by a so-called women's movement, at this point. Even our strongest men are acting girly.*

**Various news pundits:** *The whole culture's being feminized, in my opinion... There's a certain emasculation that's happening in our culture... Part of the problem is we've sort of feminized schools... I think she's right. It's a hundred percent. We're wussifying America... Is this the wussification of America?... Yes. This is one more step in the wussification of America... Is this the latest in the wussification of America?*

**Jackson Katz:** The result is a narrative that tells men that the best way to respond to change is not to adapt, but to re-claim traditional masculine control and dominance from the forces of feminization.

### [VIDEO CLIP – Brad Stine]



**Stine:** *The founding fathers were men. Not wussies. It's the wussification of America that's killing us!*

**Jackson Katz:** And as it turns out, this is an old pattern in American history. Take the Boy Scouts

**[ARCHIVAL CLIP – Boy Scouts clip]**

**Presenter:** *Boy Scouting is one of the few institutions to balance the rather softening effect of our modern way of life.*

**[ARCHIVAL CLIP – Boy Scouts]**

**Lord Baden Powell:** *I will do my best to do my duty to God and the king.*

**Jackson Katz:** It turns out that Lord Baden Powell, founded the Boy Scouts for a very explicit reason: to counteract what he perceived as a decline in the manly virtues. In his influential book "Rovering to Success: A Guide to Young Manhood," Powell was quite explicit about this: *"God made men to be men," he wrote, "Civilization with its town life, buses, hot and cold water laid on, everything done for you, tends to make men soft and feckless beings. We badly need training for our lads if we are to keep up manliness in our race, instead of lapsing into a nation of soft, sloppy, cigarette-suckers."*

**[ARCHIVAL CLIP – Boy Scouts]**

**Presenter:** *The Scout program is designed to help our sons, cousins, and younger brothers develop the initiative, the resourcefulness, the character, the quick-thinking, and the leadership they really need in this somewhat jittery, insecure world in which we live.*

**Jackson Katz:** And this backlash has only accelerated exponentially since the 1960's, when the Civil Rights movement, the Women's Movement, the Gay and Lesbian Equality movements, and the anti-war movement rose up to challenge traditional masculine authority like never before – especially the authority of straight white men.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Ronald Reagan]**

**Reagan:** *The plain truth is, this has to stop, and it has to stop like the day before yesterday.*

**[VIDEO CLIP- Rush Limbaugh]**

**Limbaugh:** *Feminism was established so that unattractive, ugly broads could have easy access to the mainstream, right?*

**Jackson Katz:** Look at our political culture, where the game is all about establishing your manly credentials by butching yourself up and methodically feminizing and taking apart the manhood of your opponents.

**[VIDEO CLIP- 2004 Republican National Convention]**

**Schwarzenegger:** And to those critics who are so pessimistic about our economy, I say don't be economic girly-men.

**Jackson Katz:** There was no clearer depiction of this backlash phenomenon than the film *Fight Club*.

**[VIDEO CLIP -- "Fight Club"]**

- *Like so many others, I had become a slave to the Ikea nesting instinct.*

- *Yes, I'd like to order the Erika Pekkari dust ruffles.*

- *Please hold.*

**Jackson Katz:** The movie portrayed the emasculation of young men by the consumer culture...

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Fight Club"]**

- *We're still men?*

- *Yes, we're men. Men is what we are.*

**Jackson Katz:** ...and offered up bare-knuckled violence as a way for men to reclaim their manhood.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Fight Club" – fight ensues]**

**Jackson Katz:** Regardless of whether we see this film as a glamorization or a satire of backlash masculinity, backyard fight clubs have proliferated in the years since the film's release.

**Jackson Katz:** And at the base of all of this is the belief that the best way for men to restore their dwindling manhood is through violence.

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## ALL THE WRONG LESSONS

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**Jackson Katz:** In his fascinating study of violence, the psychiatrist James Gilligan interviewed hundreds of violent criminals in American prisons and found that the single most powerful reason they turned to violence was because they felt shamed, humiliated, or disrespected as men.

“The more time I spent with him,” Gilligan writes about one of the hundreds of violent criminals he has interviewed over the course of his research, “the clearer it became that his character served as a defense against the threat of being treated with scorn and disrespect, of being perceived as a weakling, not a real man, someone who could be laughed at.”

We may not hear about it much in mainstream coverage of violence, but again and again we’ve seen exactly this dynamic: young men using violence to overcome the shame of not being seen and respected as real men.

### [VIDEO CLIP – News montage on Pearl High shooting]

**News reporter:** *16-year-old Luke Woodham entered the commons area of Pearl High and fired off several shots.*

**News anchor:** *Woodham opened fire at Pearl High School, killing two students.*

**Jackson Katz:** Consider Luke Woodham, who carried out a school shooting in Pearl, Mississippi in the late 1990s, Woodham wrote a letter before he went on his rampage explaining himself this way:

*“I am not insane, I am angry. I killed because people like me are mistreated every day. All throughout my life, I was ridiculed, always beaten, always hated. If I can't do it through pacifism, if I can't show you through the displaying of intelligence, then I will do it with a bullet. Murder is not weak and slow-witted, murder is gutsy and daring.”*

### [VIDEO CLIP – News montage on Virginia Tech shooting]

**News reporter:** *Just minutes after firing two fatal shots at the Virginia Tech dormitory on Monday, Cho Seung-Hui returned to his own dorm room and made the final preparations to mail what appears to be a video confession.*

**Jackson Katz:** Or consider Seung-Hui Cho, who committed one of the worst mass shootings in American history, when he went on a shooting spree at Virginia Tech University in 2007, killing 32 people. Cho was a socially isolated, troubled young man with a history of mental health problems, who had clearly bought into a cultural narrative that says the way to reclaim manhood is through projecting an image of menace and toughness, instilling fear in others, and using violence.

### [VIDEO CLIP – Seung-Hui Cho home video]

**Cho:** *I didn't have to do this. I could have left. I could have fled. But no. I will no longer run.*

**Jackson Katz:** Before he committed the Virginia Tech massacre, he wrote, produced, and starred in his own video, demonstrating how thoroughly he had bought into this Hollywood script.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Seung-Hui Cho home video]**

**Cho:** *You had a hundred billion chances and ways to have avoided today, but you decided to spill my blood. You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off.*

**Jackson Katz:** Cho isn't the only mass murderer whose violent actions enabled him to rewrite the script of his life in order to place him back in the manly starring role.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Columbine High School shooting]**

**Columbine student:** *[crying] All you hear is, like, firecrackers... And then I looked out the window, and there's a kid with a trench coat and a shotgun throwing pipe bombs in the parking lot.*

**Jackson Katz:** The Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold left behind written diaries that provide insight into how their murder of 12 classmates and a teacher was part of a conscious strategy to settle scores. In his journal, Klebold writes that he and Harris will take revenge on society. And toward the end of his own journal, Harris writes, "everyone is always making fun of me because of how I look, how weak I am. Well, I will get you all back. I hate people, and they better fear me if they know what's good for 'em."

**[VIDEO CLIP – News]**

**Reporter:** *The shooter was 36-year-old Andrew Engeldinger, an employee of the small company who had recently lost his job.*

**Jackson Katz:** And this isn't just about young men. Again and again, we've seen the same thing with older men who commit mass shootings.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News]**

**Reporter:** *A troubled ex-husband is under arrest in a Southern California hair salon shooting that left 8 people dead.*

**Jackson Katz:** In case after case, these men have faced grief, bitter disappointment, and feelings of failure.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News]**

**Reporter:** *The shooter, Richard Farley, was obsessed with a female colleague. He had also been laid off.*

**Jackson Katz:** They are either chronically unemployed, have been left by their wives or girlfriends, been fired from their jobs, or have suffered some other kind of serious blow to their self-worth as men.

Nothing can excuse the pathetic and cowardly way men like these use violence, and destroy the lives of innocent people, to make some kind of a statement. But we're kidding ourselves if we think these killings will stop unless and until we identify and transform the larger cultural belief systems that underlie them.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News clip]**

**News reporter:** *From the mass shooting in Tucson aimed at former congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to the Colorado movie theater massacre, killers in many recent mass killings suffered mental illness.*

**Jackson Katz:** Of course, there's no question that mental illness has played a role in a lot of rampage killings and mass shootings. But what never seems to get discussed is why it is that somewhere around 98% of school shootings and rampage killings have been committed by men, even though there are plenty of young women who suffer from mental illness as well.

What this tells us is that violence cannot be reduced to mental illness on its own, especially since the majority of people with mental illness are not violent at all. The bottom line is that even men who are mentally ill live and operate within a culture that has normalized violent masculinity and defined manhood in exceedingly narrow ways.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News clip]**

**Reporter:** *It's been widely reported school-shooter Adam Lanza suffered some kind of personality disorder.*

**Jackson Katz:** The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooter, Adam Lanza, may have been mentally ill, but he played out a familiar script.

**[VIDEO CLIP – CNN]**

**Analyst on telephone:** *He was bullied severely, brutally bullied, when he was in elementary school at Sandy Hook.*

**Jackson Katz:** By all accounts he was a socially awkward boy who didn't fit in and appears to have been mercilessly bullied.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The War Room"]**

**Jennifer Granholm:** *That's a clip of the video game "Call of Duty." It's also the game that Adam Lanza used to play.*

**Jackson Katz:** He developed a revenge fantasy, secured firearms, and then killed his own mother before carrying out one of the most brutal and ruthless mass killings in American history. In his own delusional and twisted way, he would recapture the sense of respect that seemed to have eluded him his whole life.

The children of Newtown – like so many other innocent victims of men's violence – became theatrical props in the performance of an aggrieved, angry, and likely self-hating young man who

absorbed all the wrong lessons about what it means to be a tough, strong man from the world around him.

Just take a look at the ad campaign the Bushmaster Firearms Company ran prior to the Newtown massacre for the very AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle Lanza used during his killing spree.

What all of this amounts to is that our violence problem seems to be a lot less about lone wolves and monsters who fail to conform to society's norms than it is about too many men, in a sense, over-conforming to our norms and ideals of manhood out of fear of not being seen as men.

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## BEYOND THE TOUGH GUISE

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**Jackson Katz:** When we talk about men's violence and dominant ideas of violent masculinity, there's a temptation to frame things in terms of the damage men do to others. But we need to look also at the devastating harm these norms do to men themselves.

This is certainly true of gun violence. Every year in this country, over 30,000 people are killed by guns, something like 85 per day. The vast majority of these victims are men – approximately 86 percent. But while we're used to thinking about gun violence in terms of mass shootings and urban crime, we really don't talk a lot about how most gun deaths are the result of men and boys shooting themselves.

Suicide – which is really violence turned inward – accounts for close to two-thirds of all gun deaths. The vast majority of people who kill themselves with a gun are men. And white men comprise over 80 percent of these firearm suicides.

Violence doesn't just leave physical scars. It also leaves emotional scars. Look at the cost to African-American boys and young men of living in and around violence. Violence is the leading cause of death of African-American men between the ages of 15 and 30, but they also have much higher than average rates of depression, school dropout, mental health problems linked to perpetual stress, substance abuse.

And just look at the terrible toll violence has taken on the psyches of men who serve in combat zones.

### [VIDEO CLIP – News report]

**Reporter:** *In the five years between 2006 and 2009, more than 1,100 members of the armed services took their own lives.*

**Jackson Katz:** Something like half of the U.S. service members who have done tours in Iraq and Afghanistan have signs of trauma – depression, flashbacks, alcohol and drug problems.

In her landmark study "Trauma and Recovery," Judith Herman draws a powerful connection between the experience of male combat veterans and women who are the victims of domestic and sexual violence. The sources of the violence and their context might vary, but the unifying theme is that human beings – young and old, women and men – suffer when their physical and sexual boundaries are violated.

But in the case of men, this pain gets compounded by a cultural belief system that equates manhood with invulnerability and ridicules and shames men who admit to being in emotional pain.

In his classic work, "I Don't Want to Talk About It," the therapist Terry Real identifies the widespread phenomenon of what he calls "covert depression," a condition that roughly three-

quarters of American men suffer in silence out of fear of seeming like less than a real man. For many of these men, childhood trauma and other experiences of violence play a role in this depression, which then can affect not only their ability to take care of themselves physically and emotionally, but also hinder their ability to sustain healthy relationships in adult life.

Despite predictable arguments that equate trying to understand or prevent violence with weakness, the bottom line is that we have to have the strength to ask these kinds of questions if we want to move beyond the never-ending cycle of violence. And that starts with examining the dominant stories we tell ourselves as a culture about manhood and violence, and demanding more honest and accurate representations of the personal and societal consequences of violent masculinity.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – "Saving Private Ryan"]**

**Jackson Katz:** In recent years, we've seen important examples of just this. War movies like "Saving Private Ryan" showed not only the awe-inspiring courage of the men who stormed the beaches in Normandy and fought totalitarianism during World War II. The film also captured the panic, anxiety, and sheer terror of the young men who experienced that war.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Hurt Locker"]**

**Soldier:** *There's too many locks. I can't do it. I can't get it off. I'm sorry, okay? You understand? I'm sorry.*

**Jackson Katz:** More recently, *The Hurt Locker* explored another devastating effect of battlefield trauma...

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Hurt Locker"]**

**Soldier:** *Get down, now! [Explosion]*

**Jackson Katz:** ...showing how the intensity and violence of war make it difficult for many veterans to adjust back to civilian life.

And we saw the same kind of honest and tragic portrayal of dominant masculinity in the film "The Wrestler," starring Mickey Rourke as an over-the-hill professional wrestler whose body was ravaged by physical injury and who was so emotionally damaged by violence that he couldn't imagine life outside the glamor of the arena.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Wrestler"]**

**Rourke:** *My heart's still ticking.*

**Pam:** *Yeah, but the doctor said...*

**Rourke:** *Listen. I know what I'm doing. The only place I get hurt is out there. The world don't give a ---- about me. You hear them? This is where I get belong.*

**Jackson Katz:** Similarly, intensely realistic shows like HBO's "The Wire" have refused to glamorize urban street life and violent crime, directly confronting the costs young men of color



too often pay for their investment in the idea that respect comes only at the business end of a Glock.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Wire"]**

**Bodie:** *You're wetting your pants like you're a little boy. Be a man! Stand up like a man!*

**Wallace:** *You're my -----, yo.*

**Bodie:** *You said you were a man. Stand up straight.*

**Wallace:** *It's us, man.*

[Gun shot]

**Jackson Katz:** And we've seen emotionally complex shows like "The Sopranos," which centered on brutal mob boss Tony Soprano, a ruthless killer who intimidated everyone around him...

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Sopranos"]**

- *You want to just calm down.*

- *I'm perfectly calm?*

- *We can talk about whatever's bothering you. Tony, this is crazy. Tony!*

**Jackson Katz:** ...But also portrayed him as a deeply troubled man who had recurring panic attacks, and who had to battle his own anxiety and self-doubt when he turned to a woman therapist for help.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Sopranos"]**

**Tony Soprano:** *Whatever happened to Gary Cooper, the strong silent type? That was an American. He wasn't in touch with his feelings. He just did what he had to do. See, what they didn't know was that once they got Gary Cooper in touch with his feelings, that they wouldn't be able to shut him up! And then it's "dysfunction-this" and "dysfunction-that" and "dysfunction vaffancul!"*

**Jackson Katz:** And then there's Good Will Hunting, which catapulted Matt Damon to fame, with Damon playing the role of an intellectually gifted working-class tough guy who relieves the trauma of his abusive childhood by hardening himself to the world and fighting anyone who challenges him...

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Good Will Hunting"]**

**Will:** Hey, Carmine. It's me, Will. Remember? We went to Kindergarten together. [Will throws a punch]

**Jackson Katz:** ...And who then, with the support of a woman who loves him and a therapist he comes to trust, finds the courage to battle through his defenses, look inside himself, and let go of his bottled-up rage.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Good Will Hunting"]**

**Therapist:** *It's not your fault.*

**Will:** *I know.*

**Therapist:** *It's not your fault.*

**Will:** *Alright.*

**Therapist:** *It's not your fault. [Repeats] It's not your fault.*

**Will:** *Don't ---- with me.*

**Therapist:** *It's not your fault.*

**Will:** *Don't ---- with me, alright! Don't ---- with me, Sean. Not you.*

**Therapist:** *It's not your fault.*

**Jackson Katz:** This is an incredibly powerful illustration of the kind of courage it takes for men to break through the defensive shield of the tough guise and become better men.

After the Newtown massacre, there was a lot of tough-guy talk about how the cure for our violence problem is more violence.

**[VIDEO CLIP – National Rifle Association press statement]**

**NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre:** *The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.*

**Jackson Katz:** But there were other men who spoke in the wake of Newtown as well. Men like Neil Heslin, whose six-year-old son Jesse was among the 20 children gunned down that tragic day.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Neil Heslin press statement]**

**Heslin:** *He was my son. He was my buddy. He was my best friend.*

**Jackson Katz:** What was so important about this man's testimony was that he went beyond expressing grief for his son and directly challenged the culture of violence.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Neil Heslin press statement]**

**Heslin:** *We're not living in the Wild West. We're not a Third World nation. We have the strongest military in the world. We don't need to defend our homes with weapons like that. I just hope that everybody in this room, as I've said before, can support change.*

**Jackson Katz:** This was an act of courage in a culture that so often romanticizes violent masculinity and silences the voices of men who don't buy into these myths. Too often, we define masculine strength by who can blow away the most people, who can flex the most muscle, who can impose their will and inflict the most damage. But this cheapens the real definition of strength and toughness.

We respect the toughness of firefighters who rush into burning buildings when others are rushing out, police officers and other first responders who put their lives on the line, and our men and women in the armed services who show courage under fire – not because they're out to prove something, but because they steel themselves in the face of danger and face down their fears in service to others.

For the same reason, we should respect the toughness and strength of men who challenge the myth that being a real man requires putting up a false front, disrespecting others, and engaging in violent and self-destructive behavior.

We should respect all the men out there who aren't threatened by women's equality, who have the confidence to listen to women, learn from them, and grow in the process, who refuse to engage in homophobic abuse and bullying to prove they're one of the guys, who show empathy for others rather than joining in or remaining silent when other guys prop themselves up at the expense of others, and who meet change and difference with a willingness to make change and a difference themselves.

Strength is about adapting to change, not about retreating from it and lashing back with violence out of fear. And it's high time we had a definition of manhood capable of meeting that challenge.

[END]