

# TOUGH GUISE 2

Violence, Manhood & American Culture

[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 been studying the causes of violence, with a special focus on how cultural ideas about manhood contribute to interpersonal and relationship violence and also shape U.S. political culture.

In addition to researching, writing, and lecturing about manhood and violence, 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.

My colleagues and I work closely with men from across the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic spectrum, in the sports culture, in the U.S. military, and in schools, colleges, and a variety of other settings.

And as I've done this work, I've been consistently impressed by the thoughtful and sometimes courageous ways men are willing to confront the issue of men's violence – when they actually have a supportive environment and a chance to talk about it.

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

Whether we're talking about the horrifying, high-profile mass shootings we've seen over recent decades, the far greater rates of murder and gun violence we see on a day-to-day basis that barely register in the national news, or the epidemic of sexual violence and domestic violence, the vast majority of this violence is committed by men, young men, and boys.

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.

## HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

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### [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:** Look at media coverage of mass shootings. 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, and any number of other genderless beings.

### [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. The issue gets framed as a kids' issue and a problem with youth in general.

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:** Over and over again, we hear experts trying to explain violence in America by speculating about everything from guns and drugs and video games to dysfunctional families and even lead paint.

But 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, also live in houses with lead paint, yet don't commit anywhere near the amount of violence boys and men do.

An article in the New York Times a while back provides a classic and typical example of how this kind of de-gendering works. It was this long piece that sifted through every possible theory, trying to make sense of the wave of school shootings, and in one parentheses it said all these shootings were done by boys. So you have a whole article trying to pull together all the different factors that might shed light on these shootings, and the one that's maybe the most important ends up in parentheses.

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."

We call it "violence against women" as though nobody's actually committing the violence, like it's something bad that just happens to women – like the weather. They're just experiencing it. 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 of this is that instead of seeing men's violence against women as a men's issue, and taking a serious and sustained look at why it is that so many men are doing so much violence to women, we see it as a women's issue and focus most of our attention on how to help victims and survivors after the fact.

And this has been true across the board. No matter what kind of violence is under scrutiny, there's been a systematic failure to focus on men, as men – 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...

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

**Bill O'Reilly:** *Is there a racial situation?*

**Alan Colmes:** *Not necessarily.*

**Jackson Katz:** ...crowding out the fact that the vast majority of the perpetrators under consideration, no matter what color they are, are men.

All of this is partly a function of how dominant ideologies work linguistically to 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.

And when it comes to masculinity, this invisibility often runs across the political spectrum.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Bowling for Columbine"]**

**Michael Moore:** *I'm here to open up an account.*

**Bank teller:** *Okay. What type of account would you like?*

**Michael Moore:** *I want the account where I can get the free gun.*

**Bank teller:** *Okay.*

**Jackson Katz:** So in "Bowling for Columbine," which is widely considered one of the definitive documentaries about gun violence in America, left-wing filmmaker Michael

Moore explores multiple reasons for America's continuing love affair with guns – including white fears of black crime – but somehow manages to avoid mentioning that the white “people” he focuses on throughout are overwhelmingly men.

And on those rare occasions when the subject of men does make its way into mainstream discussions about violence, the conversation is usually less about men's identity than it is about their genes.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – News montage]**

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

**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?*

**FOX News Anchor:** *Why does it seem that these mass shooters are boys and not girls?*

**FOX Psychiatrist Keith Ablow:** *Well, I think... You know what, there's probably some gender difference there. Maybe there's some insulation from, you know, things ... endocrine, whether it's the estrogen level or who knows what...*

**Jackson Katz:** There's this common refrain that biology and evolutionary history are destiny – that men's violence is all about testosterone and our prehistoric role as hunter-warriors. We're just programmed to be violent.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News]**

**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:** And it all amounts to pretty much the same thing: Men's violence is somehow inevitable. We should just all throw up our hands and let the criminal justice system sort it out.

**[VIDEO CLIP – CSPAN]**

**Panelist:** *One thing we can say for certain is that men are more violent than women. This is a natural phenomenon. There's a close association between hormonal balances and levels of violence. I think this is fairly clear.*

**Jackson Katz:** No one would deny that biological factors 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.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News]**

**Commentator:** *The area of the brain that's responsible for aggression is larger in general in men, and so men's natural tendency is towards being aggressive.*

**Jackson Katz:** The fact is that human behavior is a product of a complex set of biological and environmental factors. And it's the height of male bashing to suggest otherwise, to imply 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 – Congressional Panel]

**Speaker:** Does anyone disagree with that conclusion, that violence in films propagates violent conduct on behalf of the children?

**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.

### [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:** 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, Natural Born Killers, that are aired like propaganda loops on splatter days and every single day.*

**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.*

**Jackson Katz:** It's a dirty little secret that the video game industry and the Hollywood film industry get paid by the firearms industry to feature popular gun brands in their games and movies, and that the American military uses Call of Duty and other video games in their recruitment and training.

**[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 how both of these industries have combined to glorify not only violence, but a particular brand of violent masculinity.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “Call of Duty” ad]**

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

**Jackson Katz:** The fact is that when we talk about a “culture of violence” in America, we're almost always talking about a culture of violent masculinity. And when we talk about a culture of violent masculinity, we're talking about what the culture teaches boys about what it means to be a man.

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.

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:** *Where in the hell are you from, anyway, Private?*

**Private:** *Sir, Texas, sir!*

**Drill Sergeant Hartman:** *Holy dog shit, Texas! Only steers and queers come from Texas, Private Cowboy. And you don't much look like a steer to me, so that kinda narrows it down!*

**Jackson Katz:** It may be an extreme case, but I don't think there's a guy out there who can't relate on a gut level to the excruciating scenes in the classic film Full Metal Jacket when Drill Sergeant Hartman goes to work driving basic human qualities out of the young recruits in order to turn them into men.

**[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 faggots 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 pussies, punks, fags, and an endless list of other sexist and homophobic putdowns.

**[VIDEO CLIPS – Movie montage]**

**Various speakers:** *Faggot; faggot; faggots; queer; fairy; sissy bitch; bitch; bitch; bitch; homo; pussy; pussy; pussy; pussy.*

**Jackson Katz:** 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 faggot!*

**Jackson Katz:** But it doesn't just come from their peer groups. It comes from fathers, coaches, and older male role models as well, who take it upon themselves to school young men about what it takes to measure up to a patriarchal ideology that says being a man is about domination, power, aggression, and control.

**[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:** This was captured brilliantly in the Clint Eastwood film "Gran Torino."

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Gran Torino"]**

**Clint Eastwood (to Kid):** *Now you're just gonna learn how guys talk.*

**Clint Eastwood (to Martin):** *How you doing Martin, you crazy Italian prick?*

**Martin:** *Who's the Nip?*

**Clint Eastwood:** *Oh, he's a pussy kid from next door. I'm just trying to man him up a little bit. See, kid? Now that's how guys talk to one another.*

**Kid:** *They do?*

**Clint Eastwood:** *Now go on out and come back in and talk to him like a man. Like a real man.*

**Jackson Katz:** Eastwood's character, like so many fathers, father figures, coaches, and other men in boys' lives, assumes the role of the director and proceeds to evaluate how well the young man performs his role.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Gran Torino"]**

**Kid [imitating Eastwood]:** *What's up, you old Italian prick?*

**Clint Eastwood:** *What the hell are you doing? Have you lost your mind?*

**Kid:** *That's what you said! That's what you said men say!*

**Clint Eastwood:** *You don't just come in and insult a man in his own shop.*

**Kid:** *What should I have said then?*

**Clint Eastwood:** *It ain't rocket science for Christ 's sake.*

**Jackson Katz:** It doesn't matter how unnatural, complicated, or ridiculous the role is, boys are expected to learn their lines and master the "tough guise," or else risk being shamed as less than a man.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Gran Torino"]**

**Clint Eastwood:** *Just turn around and go.*

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

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Shark Tale"]**

**Don Lino:** *It's a fish-eat-fish world. You either take or you get taken.*

**Jackson Katz:** In "Shark Tale," the father shark explains to his son that violence is the way of the world.

**[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. What's the matter with you? Right here in front of me now, eat this!*  
**Shrimp:** *Oh, oh!*

**Jackson Katz:** He then 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.*

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

**Hiccup:** *I'm gonna kill you, dragon. I'm gonna... I'm gonna cut out your heart and take it to my father. I'm a Viking. I'm a Viking!*

**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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## AN AMERICAN IDEAL

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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:** So in the wildly popular remake of the 1932 gangster film "Scarface," starring Al Pacino, it's all about the projection of toughness and the use of violence to achieve respect and success as a man.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Scarface"]**

**Tony Montana:** *In this country, you gotta make the money first. Then when you get the money, you get the power. Then when you get the power, then you get the women.*

**Jackson Katz:** Tony Montana's goal is to redeem his peasant childhood and his status as a Cuban exile by striking fear in others and becoming master of his own universe.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Scarface"]**

**Tony Montana:** *Get up! Get up!*

**Jackson Katz:** And remorseless violence is the means to that end.

The movie remains more popular today than ever, maintaining its cult status with young men across generations and racial and ethnic lines.

Some of our most cherished embodiments of tough guy masculinity are a collection of rogue cops, vigilantes, and glorified psychopaths who see a broken world of bureaucracy and inefficiency and unfairness around them and decide to take matters into their own hands.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Taken"]**

*- I will look for you. I will find you, and I will kill you.*

**Jackson Katz:** And there's a whole range of other iconic representations of American manhood that regularly show up on popular lists of all-time greatest guy flicks, all of these films, to a number, linking being a man with using violence or the threat of violence to command respect and achieve power.

There's Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry dishing out justice at the end of the barrel of a long gun.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Dirty Harry"]**

**Eastwood:** *You got to ask yourself a question. Do I feel lucky? Well, do you punk?*

**Jackson Katz:** Sylvester Stallone as John Rambo killing his way through Vietnam to do the job our feckless American government is incapable of doing by bringing our POWs home.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Rambo"]**

**Enemy:** *Do you really think you have a chance against us, mister cowboy?*

**Stallone:** *Yippee Ki-Yay, motherfucker!*

**Jackson Katz:** Bruce Willis as John McLane restoring order to a disordered world in the Die Hard movies.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Die Hard"]**

**Willis:** *Happy trails, Hans.*

**Jackson Katz:** The Dark Knight doing battle against the psychotic, terroristic ruthlessness of the Joker.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Dark Knight" – Joker chuckling]**

**Jackson Katz:** And Ryan Gosling as a kind of post-apocalyptic John Wayne, setting out to save the town and the damsel in distress by visiting sociopathic rage and violence on anyone who gets in his way.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Drive" – Ryan Gosling acting violently]**

**Jackson Katz:** Running through all of this is the glorification of a kind of warrior masculinity that blurs the line between being a man and using violence to prove you're a man. Some directors have made a career out of this kind of thing.

Mel Gibson has made a string of movies that amount to pageants of tough-guy warrior masculinity, going so far as to turn Jesus Christ into the ultimate real man...

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Passion of the Christ"]**

**Jackson Katz:** ...treating viewers to a two-hour torture-fest to drive the point home that Jesus was not just the prophet of peace and kindness, but tough enough to endure levels of pain that would put today's ultimate fighters to shame.

And Quentin Tarantino's body of work can be read as a kind of tribute to this cinematic tradition of badass tough guys, from the stylized violence of Pulp Fiction to his re-write of the American western as a slave revenge tale.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Django Unchained" – Django acting violently]**

**Jackson Katz:** And we see the same glorification of violence as a legitimate tool for settling scores and expressing manhood even in kids' movies.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe"]**

- *Peter said get out of here!*  
- *Peter's not king yet!*

**Jackson Katz:** Then, on a parallel track, you have the endless slate of films that glamorize male sexual aggression...

**[VIDEO CLIP – Movie montage]**

- *Stop being a pussy and nail her, okay?*  
- *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:** ...A longstanding cultural narrative that says being a man is about sexual conquest.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “The Girl Next Door”]**

- *So, did you bang her?*

- *Oh yeah, yeah. I banged her.*

- *That's what a man does, okay?*

**Jackson Katz:** The clear and deeply entrenched message to young men here, reinforced again and again over time, is that actually caring about girls and women is for pussies and fags.

**[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:** The actual living, breathing humanity of girls and women matters a lot less than turning them into trophies to prove you're a real man and win the approval of your friends.

Hollywood movies are one of the great teaching forces of our time. But it's not just movies. Look at violent video games, which provide guys with an immersive and interactive experience that allows them to master their environment and impose their will through violence. Or the rise of 24-7 Internet pornography, a multibillion-dollar industry that sexualizes men's control and dominance over women. Look at popular men's sports that often seem to be less about healthy competition than about proving toughness through physical force and violence, and dominating and humiliating the opposition. Look at the world of advertising, which sells products by exploiting men's anxieties about not measuring up. And look at our political culture, where the game is all about establishing your manly credentials by butchering yourself up and methodically feminizing and taking apart the manhood of your opponents.

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

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

**Jackson Katz:** What most discussions about violence miss is how pervasive and interconnected this larger story about manhood is, how it creates a kind of all-pervasive cultural script that says physical toughness, force, and violence are legitimate ways for men to achieve and maintain power and control – a script that men and boys are expected to adhere to whether they want to or not.

## 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:** *Don't you even know how to be a real Indian?*

**Thomas:** *I guess not.*

**Victor:** *I guess I'll have to teach you then. 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? This ain't Dances With Salmon, you know. Thomas, you gotta look like a warrior. There, that's better.*

**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. In fact, in a lot of ways the pressure to conform is more acute among men whose power and identity are under threat in the real world from things like racism and growing economic inequality.

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, puto...*

**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?*

**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 tough-guy image of Bruce Lee, and stars like Jackie Chan and Jet Li, who re-masculinized the image of Asian and Asian-American men with 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've 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 pausing while those two hos 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' bitch?*

- *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.

**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:** *Some day, 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... Nigga, that shit was the fucking bible... 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 Italian and 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's only become increasingly violent over time.

## UPPING THE ANTE

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### [VIDEO CLIP – “Pain & Gain”]

- I'm hot. I'm big... All this began because it was time to push myself harder... Oh, there you go... I gotta get a pump.

- That's it. That's good. It hurts. I know it does. That's it. Get it!

**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.

Meanwhile, women have been taking up less symbolic space. Whereas full-figured women like Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield represented ideal female beauty in the 1950s, today that ideal has become much smaller, thinner, younger, more girlish, and more waifish.

Over the same time period, there's been a ratcheting up of violence itself. In the films of the '50s and '60s, a few punches was all it took to establish a man's tough-guy cred. Today, the level of brutality is like a different world.

**Jackson Katz:** 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.*

**Jackson Katz:** We've gone from iconic tough guys who armed themselves with pistols and the occasional machine gun 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.

**[VIDEO GAME MONTAGE]**

**Jackson Katz:** And in a much more disturbing shift, we've seen porn culture go from the soft-core sexism of Hugh Hefner's brand of hedonistic masculinity in the 1950s to the hard-core misogyny, anger, aggression, and sexualized brutality of the men featured in the gonzo porn that's so popular with guys today.

But despite this ratcheting up of violent masculinity, over the past few years we've been hearing exactly the opposite: not that men are too violent, but that they've gone soft.

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## A CULTURE IN RETREAT

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### [VIDEO CLIPS – News pundit montage]

**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? Right back.*

**Jackson Katz:** The heart of this argument is that men are in crisis because women, especially feminists and other forces of so-called political correctness, 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 girlie.*

### [VIDEO CLIPS – Brad Stine]

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

**Jackson Katz:** Now there's no doubt we're in the throes of some kind of a crisis of masculinity. There's rightfully been a lot of attention paid in recent years to how boys are lagging behind girls in our schools, how men are experiencing heightened job insecurity and alienation in the global economy, and how more and more men seem to be lost and acting out violently and self-destructively.

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.*

**Jackson Katz:** ... from the recent avalanche of books and magazines celebrating throwback modes of manhood to the wave of reality programs obsessed with the kind of manly physical labor that in real reality has been disappearing with America's manufacturing base over the past three or four decades...

### [VIDEO CLIP – Reality TV montage]

*- Eat, sleep, carve. It's what we do.*

- *Whatever happened to men?*

**Jackson Katz:** ... to the never-ending barrage of hyper-masculine, sexist ads full of men obsessed with proving their manhood...

**[COMMERCIAL CLIP – "Dr. Pepper Ten"]**

**Male speaker:** *So keep the reality TV and lady drinks, we're good.*

**Narrator:** *Dr. Pepper Ten. It's not for women.*

**Jackson Katz:** ... and shot through with borderline hysteria about the possibility of being perceived as feminine.

**[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:** 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, to a lot of young men it's served as a model of manhood – as backyard fight clubs have proliferated in the years since the film's release.



We're witnessing a culture in retreat – 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.

And as it turns out, this is an old pattern in American history.

As the scholar Jane Tompkins has shown, the western dime novels of the late 1800s and early 1900s that helped create the romantic myth of the “wild west,” burnishing the idea of a real man as a rugged individualist armed and ready to defend himself at a moment's notice, were themselves a direct response to women's challenges to men's dominance and control.

According to Tompkins, it's no coincidence that westerns became popular at the exact moment the frontier was closing, men's work was moving inside factory walls, and women were organizing a temperance movement to get men out of bars and force them to take responsibility for their families, and also beginning to agitate for the right to vote.

The saloons and violence of the dime novels of the Old West provided an imaginary refuge for men who were threatened by a shifting economic landscape and the prospect of women's equality, a fantasy world that could help them shore up their increasingly anxious masculinity.

And you see these same foundational anxieties at the heart of yet another iconic example of traditional masculinity: 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.*

**Jackson Katz:** ...which, for all its virtue as an organization, has made headlines in recent years for refusing to allow gay kids to become scouts.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Fox News]**

**Boy Scouts representative:** *There's a lot of people who don't want their kids to go camping, you know, out deep into the woods for days on end with guys who are avowed, open gays.*

**Jackson Katz:** The Boy Scouts are looked to with nostalgia today as a throwback to simpler, more traditional times untouched by change and the forces of equality. But here again, the past turns out to be more complicated than it seems.

**[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, a highly decorated officer in the British Army, founded the Boy Scouts as an organization of paramilitary socialization in 1908 for a very explicit reason: to counteract what he perceived as a decline in the manly virtues due

to the growth of urban industrial culture, the increasing women's education and calls for women's suffrage, and the emergence of homosexuality for the first time as a recognized category of human sexuality.

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."*

Building on and borrowing from Baden Powell's ideas, the Boy Scouts of America was founded in 1910 for the same reason: to reassert traditional ideas of masculinity in the face of social change.

### **[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:** Again and again, at key moments in American history, you see men reacting to change in just this way – by retreating into a hyper-masculine fantasy world. You see it in the rise of popular men's magazines of the 1940's, filled with stories about breathtaking manly adventures, sports, and sex. These magazines may look retro to us today, but what's important to remember is that they were just as retro in their own time.

As the lives of men grew more sedentary during the consumer boom of the post-war years, as women moved into the workplace in unprecedented numbers, and the women's movement gained traction, these magazines offered men a way to hit back at what Ralph Daigh, the editorial director of True magazine, describes as "the perils of creeping equality." Men were turning to his magazine in "unprecedented numbers," Daigh explained to a group of men in his speech, *"because it stimulates his masculine ego at a time when man wants to fight back against women's efforts to usurp his traditional role as head of the family."* In other words, these hyper-masculine fantasies and images were explicitly designed to keep alive the traditional equation between masculinity, dominance, and control at a time of democratization and change.

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.

These struggles unleashed a fierce cultural and political backlash that has sought to reassert the traditional order by reasserting traditional manhood.

On the political front, no figure has been more important to this project of regressive, national masculinization than President Ronald Reagan. Reagan, a former Hollywood actor

and matinee idol, rose to political power opposing all the progressive gains of the 1960s and 70s.

**[ARCHIVAL CLIP – Ronald Reagan on the campaign trail]**

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

**Jackson Katz:** He led the fight against every major piece of Civil Rights legislation, the Women's movement, the Gay and Lesbian Liberation movements, and the student movement that opposed the war in Vietnam.

**[ARCHIVAL CLIP – Ronald Reagan on the campaign trail]**

**Reagan:** *I was picketed a few days ago in California by some youngsters that had signs that said, "Make love, not war." Trouble is, they didn't look like they were capable of doing either. [Audience laughter] The fella that was doing the talking had a haircut like Tarzan, he walked like Jane, and he smelled like Cheeta.*

**Jackson Katz:** And when he ran for president in 1980, he proved to be a master of political symbolism, tapping deep into the myth of the American cowboy, presenting himself as a throwback version of the strong, silent type, riding into town to rescue a country emasculated by the equality movements of the '60s and the weak leadership of President Jimmy Carter. John Wayne wasn't available. Ronald Reagan was the next best thing.

The manly image of rugged individualism Reagan mobilized to turn people against the government and eviscerate the social safety net in the 1980s has been kept alive by his proud political heirs today.

**[AUDIO CLIP – Rush Limbaugh's radio show]**

**Limbaugh:** *One of the objectives of the feminazi's over the last 20-25 years has been to dominate the public education system so as to remove the competitive nature of boys. There's a crisis of young man-boy education in the schools. And they did this on purpose: to eliminate male competition in the workforce. This is part of feminazi grand-plan.*

**Jackson Katz:** Talk radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh wield huge influence in the American political system, especially with white men who have been fleeing the Democratic Party in droves since the 1960s and voting Republican. And one of the primary ways he's achieved this success is by appealing to white men as victims of the feminist movement.

**[AUDIO CLIP – Rush Limbaugh's radio show]**

**Limbaugh:** *These kinds of women, who have been attacking testosterone, who have been attacking traditional male roles, to whom the idea of a "real guy" is some metrosexual...*

**Jackson Katz:** To the older working class and white men who make up the bulk of Limbaugh's audience, the message is clear: the anxieties you're feeling have nothing to do with things like structural economic change or corporate greed or rising inequality. Your

problems are somehow the result of women and people of color and gay people and liberals of all types undermining the country's values and taking away your manhood.

**[AUDIO CLIP – Rush Limbaugh's radio show]**

**Limbaugh:** *It's a bunch of metrosexuals. I mean, these are a bunch of guys – you wouldn't want one of them in a foxhole with you.*

**Jackson Katz:** Rush Limbaugh, like so many of his colleagues in the right-wing talk radio universe, may have dodged the draft in Vietnam by claiming that an "anal boil" rendered him unfit for service, and he may have lived for years in the liberal epicenter of New York City in an \$11-million-dollar penthouse apartment decorated like a 16<sup>th</sup>-century French chateau, but all that matters is that he talks tough and plays a real man on the radio. But Limbaugh is just the most public face of an increasingly toxic strain of masculine paranoia and victimization.

**[VIDEO CLIP – CNN]**

**Alex Jones:** *You think you're a tough guy? Well, have me back with a boxing ring in here and I'll wear red, white, and blue, and you can wear your Jolly Roger...*

**Jackson Katz:** Talk radio hosts like Alex Jones have become heroes to their largely white male audiences by stoking fears of masculine dissolution.

**[VIDEO CLIP – The Alex Jones radio show]**

**Jones:** *The reason there's so many gay people now is because it's a chemical warfare operation. I have the government documents where they said they're going to encourage homosexuality with chemicals so that people don't have children. I even catch myself, Bob, drinking out of these estrogen-mimickers. 'Cuz after you're done drinking your little juices, you're ready to go out and have a baby! You're ready to put makeup on! You're ready to wear a short skirt! You're ready to go put together a garden of roses or something. You're ready to put lipstick on. I mean, look at this.*

**Jackson Katz:** And at the base of all of this is the belief the best way for men to restore their dwindling manhood and restore order is through what the cultural historian Richard Slotkin has called the "frontier myth of regenerative violence."

**[VIDEO CLIP – The Alex Jones radio show]**

**Jones:** *Most people understand that guns make you safer, especially because society is degenerating. There's going to be a lot of craziness going on, and so we need guns to protect ourselves.*

**Jackson Katz:** What this shows is that a whole lot of men out there fear they're losing control and are convinced that violence might be the only way left for them to protect what's theirs.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Gun Gripes" on YouTube]**

**Gun Gripes host:** *We're the most powerful nation in the world, and I think it's crazy, looking at all these armed Americans and our resolve in dealing with things and how, despite all that, there's still people crossing our borders. Why the hell are you people on the borders not firing at these people, shooting 'em, or dealing with 'em? That's the thing that gets me. If I lived on the border, and some brown man came running through my backyard that looks like he didn't belong there, I'm gonna fire some traces at his ass. So why aren't people doing that?*

**Jackson Katz:** The basic idea is that the best way to regain power and control is through the barrel of a gun – or as many guns as possible.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Gun Gripes" on YouTube]**

**Gun Gripe host:** [unpacking guns] *They're accurate. They're dependable.*

**Co-host:** *Yes, they are – super dependable.*

**Gun Gripe host:** [continues unpacking guns from coat] *They are extremely well made. You can carry plenty of them on your person at all times.*

**Jackson Katz:** A recent study on gun ownership in America by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council made headlines when it found that there are somewhere around 300 million guns in America, or roughly one gun per citizen – as much as half of all the civilian-owned guns in the world.

But what received less attention was that nearly two-thirds of these guns are owned by just 20% of the population, that older white men living in rural areas own most of these guns, and the number one reason for owning guns has shifted over the past few years from hunting and recreation to protection and self-defense.

**[VIDEO CLIP – FOX's Glenn Beck]**

**Beck:** *Our leaders don't get it, and that's why you're going to need all the help you can get. That's why you need to be prepared.*

**Jackson Katz:** This white male paranoia and siege mentality have fueled the increasingly aggressive effort to block even the most sensible gun policies.

**[VIDEO CLIP – FOX's Glenn Beck]**

**Beck:** *When the system is overwhelmed, and I mean the system on the entire planet, somebody had better be prepared to protect their selves, their families, their neighborhoods, and the freedom of all mankind. Never let them take your Second Amendment right, ever.*

**Jackson Katz:** This siege mentality has also fueled the rise of hate groups and militias over the past quarter-century.

**[VIDEO CLIP – CNN's "The Situation Room"]**

**Wolf Blitzer:** *They're not branches of Al-Qaeda. They're right-wing extremists with lots of guns and an axe to grind against the U.S. government.*

**Hate Group leader, unidentified:** *Listen people. Things are bad. Things are real bad, and it's going to get a lot worse. So basically, people need to wake up. Start buying some of these. See?*

**Jackson Katz:** Groups like these are often described as white supremacist hate groups, which they usually are. But they can also be seen as a kind of reactionary men's movement, an organized expression of white male anxiety and aggrieved entitlement that relies on violence as the preferred means of attaining its goals.

**[VIDEO CLIP – News]**

**News anchor:** *Recovery crews are still searching the waters around an island where a gunman opened fire on young people attending a summer camp.*

**Jackson Katz:** In recent years, perhaps the most disgusting and morally bankrupt expression of this kind of threatened entitlement was the massacre of 77 people, including 69 teenagers, perpetrated by the Norwegian right-wing fanatic Anders Breivik, a former customer service representative who had been declared unfit for service in the Norwegian Army.

In his 1,500-page manifesto explaining his reasons for the attack, Breivik ranted against Islam and multiculturalism, but he reserved special venom for feminism's role in emasculating Western men. According to Breivik, *"Feminist ideology and political correctness have been responsible for transforming a patriarchy into a matriarchy and intend to deny the intrinsic worth of native, Christian, heterosexual males, and by now men have been reduced to an emasculated, touchy-feely subspecies."*

But this isn't just about extremists who stockpile weapons. All too often, a similar logic is at work with a lot of the violence committed by ordinary guys.

## ALL THE WRONG LESSONS

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### [VIDEO CLIP – “Borat”]

**Sacha Baron Cohen:** *Can you open this, please?*

**Frat guy:** *Oh, sure.*

**Sacha Baron Cohen:** *Thank you very much.*

**Frat guy:** *So, you like the bitches out there in the fucking old Russia, there? Bitches in old Russia! The fucking hos, baby! The fucking girls! You fuck the shit out of 'em, and you never call 'em again!*

**Sacha Baron Cohen:** *Why you not call them? Because they do not have a telephone, yes?*

**Frat guy:** *No, not 'cuz of that. They don't have my respect, you know what I mean?*

**Jackson Katz:** Sacha Baron Cohen, who's emerged as a kind of pop punk anthropologist for the study of amped-up and violent American masculinity, has used a series of ingenious disguises to infiltrate male subcultures and chronicle the sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and violence that so many ordinary men use to forge bonds with one another and prove they're real men.

### [VIDEO CLIP – “Bruno”]

**Presenter:** *Ready for a little ass-kicking tonight? Make some noise everybody, put your hands together, and make some noise. The host of this brand new TV show, “Straight Dave’s Man-Slamming Maxout.” Give it up for Straight Dave!*

**Jackson Katz:** Cohen’s tactics are ridiculous, funny, controversial, and maybe even questionable at times. But like all great satirists, all he’s really done is hold up a mirror to us. And that’s exactly why this stuff can be so uncomfortable to watch.

### [VIDEO CLIP – “Bruno”]

**Cohen:** *Are you ready for some man-slamming action? Who's ready for an old-fashioned hetero-fest? Let me hear you say, "Straight pride!"*

**Audience:** *[chanting] Straight pride!*

**Cohen:** *Straight pride!*

**Audience:** *[chanting] Straight pride!*

**Cohen:** *It's great to have an evening with straight people. It's great not to have any fags here.*

**Audience member:** *You're a faggot!*

**Cohen:** *Who called me a faggot? Whoever called me a faggot, come up here and I'll beat your ass!*

**Jackson Katz:** 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 – “Bruno”]

**Cohen:** *Let him in. Who wants to see me beat this fag's ass? [Audience cheering] Who wants me to beat this... [Fight ensues]*

**Jackson Katz:** We laugh at this kind of behavior when it's presented out of context and given a kind of mocking attention by someone like Sacha Baron Cohen. But the reality is that violence often has less to do with guys stepping out of line than with guys toeing the line and conforming to cultural norms.

**[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. The boys were popular high school football players, and a number of kids shared pictures and video on social media of the passed out girl during the course of the night.

**[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. If it ain't wet now, it ain't ever gonna be wet.*

**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.

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

**Male partygoer:** *They raped her harder than that cop raped Marsellus Wallace in "Pulp Fiction." They raped her quicker than Mike Tyson raped that one girl. She is so raped right now. [Laughter]*

**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 an expression of 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 – all in order to prove to their friends that they’re real men.

And other research has found that the more invested guys are in traditional ideas about manhood, the more likely they are to be homophobic.

**[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, who was shot and killed over the weekend.*

**Jackson Katz:** 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. Running through all of this is a stunning lack of empathy for anybody who isn’t part of the boys club.

This lack of empathy was on full and disturbing display a few years back when news broke that homeless people around the country were being brutally attacked by groups of young men. Here again, the narrative was familiar.

**[VIDEO CLIP – Courtroom footage]**

**Reporter:** *Thomas, was that you on the video tape? Why would you beat up homeless people?*

**Jackson Katz:** A bunch of seemingly normal young men somehow convinced themselves it would be a good idea, and a good time, to go out and beat up defenseless homeless men.

**[VIDEO CLIP – “60 Minutes”]**

**Incarcerated teenage boy:** *Chris had brought up a 2x4 with a nail through it and hit the guy in the top of the head with it.*

**Journalist:** *With the nail?*

**Incarcerated teenage boy:** *With the nail.*

**Journalist:** *Why did you do all this?*

**Incarcerated teenage boy:** *I guess for fun.*

**Jackson Katz:** What became clear later in interviews, with some of the young men who were convicted of murder for these attacks, was that the pain they inflicted on these men mattered a lot less at the time than the importance of having fun with the boys and bonding with their friends. When a “60 Minutes” piece revealed that a lot of these cases were directly connected to a video series called “Bumfights,” one of the most shocking things, again, was just how normal and funny it all seemed to the producer of these videos when questioned by Ed Bradley.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "60 Minutes"]**

**Ed Bradley:** *We showed this to McPherson. [Plays "Bum Fights" clip] How do you defend that?*

**Ryen McPherson, "Bumfights" creator:** *It's a skit.*

**Jackson Katz:** It was like he had no idea what all the fuss was about.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "60 Minutes"]**

**Bradley:** *You're sneaking up on them in their sleep and assaulting them. It doesn't look like a skit. It doesn't say, "Hey, this is staged, this is acted."*

**McPherson:** *Oh no, no, no. I'm not saying it's staged. I'm saying that just the way it's set up -- it's, I don't know. [Laughs] I mean, The Bum Hunter is not an easy thing to defend but...*

**Bradley:** *But you're defending it.*

**McPherson:** *Well, I'm trying to. It's just hard to make sense of things when they're just so absurd. I mean, it's just so absurd. These guys tying up homeless people, you know, and we're trying to defend the notion that we're responsible for the deaths of homeless people.*

**Jackson Katz:** As easy as it is to vilify this one guy, and deservedly so, this producer made millions of dollars selling copies of these DVDs to a willing audience of young men.

**[VIDEO CLIP – "Bumfights"]**

**Jackson Katz:** 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. And it's about how men too often turn to violence out of fear that they don't measure up to our rigid cultural codes of manhood.

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 – Boston Marathon bombing – moment of explosion]**

**Jackson Katz:** And look at the Boston Marathon bombing. The mainstream discussion focused on the religious motivations of the bombers. But what was also clearly at work here also was the fact that the bombing was masterminded by a young man in his twenties, a former boxer whose life hadn't turned out like he had planned, and who found in jihadist teachings a rationale for committing an act of redemptive violence.

**[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 fucking weak I am and shit. Well, I will get you all back. I hate people, and they better fucking fear me if they know what’s good for ‘em.”

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 Gabriel Giffords to the Colorado movie theater massacre, killers in many recent mass killings suffered mental illness.*

**Jackson Katz:** Now, 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 can’t be reduced to mental illness on its own – especially since the vast majority of mentally ill people are not violent at all.

The bottom line is that even young 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 spent countless hours playing war-themed video games. 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. He surely knew that slaughtering schoolchildren would send an unmistakable message to the world that he was in terrible pain. Rather than simply kill himself, he would make others suffer along with him. And, 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.

As uncomfortable as it may be for us to think about Lanza as anything but an unhinged lunatic, we need to confront the larger day-to-day cultural belief system about manhood that's a normal part of young men's lives.

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.

The takeaway from this isn't that ads like these made Adam Lanza violent. That's way too reductive and simplistic. Individual ads, or movies, or video games, don't make guys go out and shoot people. The real takeaway is that we live in a culture that connects manhood to guns and a willingness to use violence at the deepest levels of men's identity, telling young men that violence, far from being the last resort for resolving disputes, is the first, and preferred, method of proving you're a man – especially when you're feeling your masculinity is under attack.

**[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.

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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### [VIDEO CLIP – YouTube video of a fight]

**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 and women 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 symptoms of PTSD. And we see the same thing when it comes to Vietnam. In addition to the 58,000 men who lost their lives there, and the more than 300,000 wounded, millions of men who came home from that war showed signs of trauma – depression, flashbacks, alcohol and drug problems. They also had to contend with a masculine ethos that told men to suck it up and deal with it. In fact, many more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since the war ended than were killed during the war itself.

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.

#### [VIDEO CLIP – "Saving Private Ryan"]

**Jackson Katz:** 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 shit 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 fucking pants like you're a little boy. Be a man! Stand up like a motherfucking man!*

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

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

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

**Poot:** *Do it, goddamn it!* [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 fuck with me.*

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

**Will:** *Don't fuck with me, alright! Don't fuck 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 steer 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]