

# MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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## **Generation M** *Misogyny in Media & Culture*

### Transcript

**MALE STUDENT 1:** Hey, what are you working on, man?

**MALE STUDENT 2:** I got to write this paper for this one class I'm taking. I'm writing about sexism.

**MALE STUDENT 1:** Dude, that sucks, man. Why are you taking a women's studies class?

## I. INTRODUCTION

**TOM KEITH:** You know, I've been asked by some people, including colleagues, "why would a philosophy professor, especially a man, make a film about misogyny in media and culture?" If you think about it, it's unfortunate that anyone would even ask such a question, let alone expect me to defend the idea that men should care about women. I guess, in some ways, this tells us just how far we still have to go.

Misogyny is the hatred of women. Now the hatred of women can be accomplished in a number of ways: turning women into objects, specifically turning women into sexual objects, treating women poorly or as second-class citizens, and of course, actual violence against women.

But I hope this film sheds some light on how women continue to be treated and depicted in our society, at a time when many believe that equality has already been achieved. So to begin, let's ask the following question: "What counts as female empowerment?"

## II. FEMALE EMPOWERMENT?

**FEMALE STUDENT:** I think the song that stands out the most to me that just recently came out is that "Promiscuous Girl" song. I think it's a terrible message that the song is sending, but I can't get over how the beat is. I put it on, and I just want to sing to it. I want to dance to it, but I hate the message. It's basically saying that it's okay for girls to be slutty, and that it's a good thing to be a promiscuous girl.

**JEAN KILBOURNE:** I think it's a terrible mistake – a sad mistake – to see sexualized images of young women as some kind of liberation or empowerment.

**TOM KEITH:** And yet that seems to be the message coming from many media sources. Women are told that their empowerment comes through their appearance and the use of sex, and that those women who do not measure up will be subject to scrutiny and ridicule.

**WOMAN IN PARIS HILTON FILM:** You're the president of the Gamma Gamma house and the ultimate role model for every college girl on the face of the earth.

**TOM KEITH:** Well, there is a point to be made here. Girls look up to role models just as guys do. And so we should ask, "Who are the role models young women look up to in our society?" Now role models come from many sources of course. But one of the more prominent vehicles is music. Kids don't just listen to music; they watch it. They dress like the stars they look up to. They strive to emulate these people, which begs the question: Do music stars have a responsibility to their fans with regard to their lyrics and behavior? One of the biggest record producers in the music industry responds.

**RICHIE ZITO:** Once the spotlight's on you and people are emulating you, of course, whether you like it or not, you have the ability and power to influence lots of people. Young athletes have that power and that's why they always get stuck on cheerios boxes because – I want to be just like him.

**TOM KEITH:** Okay, so think about the female music stars who have the spotlight on them. What are they saying? How are they presenting themselves? What message do they have for the young girls who look up to them? In other words, what is the product they want young girls to buy?

**KIMBERLY SALTER:** Well, I think it depends on what you're selling. Are you selling good music? Or are you selling sex?

### **(MUSIC VIDEO MONTAGE)**

**JEAN KILBOURNE:** There still playing out such a pornographic image of female sexuality, such a cliché, such a stereotype. It doesn't have anything to do with real female sexual desire or sexual agency, and it's happening in a culture where there is still such a terrible double standard. Women who are sexually active and have many different partners are still labeled sluts. Women still feel often that they need to be drunk in order to have any kind of sexual activity. So it's not as if there is real sexual freedom or real sexual agency for women and girls today. There isn't. What there is is a whole new opportunity for them to participate in their own exploitation.

### **(PINK "STUPID GIRLS" MUSIC VIDEO)**

**TOM KEITH:** While Pink tries to make us aware that girls have important decisions to make, we have to wonder whether her message isn't drowned out by all the hypersexual messages of other female artists? Teenage girls look to groups like Pussycat Dolls to figure out how they

should look and act in order to be accepted by their peers. Is Pink fighting a losing battle in the war over the minds of teenage girls?

**NANCY GRUVER:** Teenage girls are at age when they need to be exploring their own feelings about sex, about sexuality, about who they are, what it means in their life, and yet they are being bombarded by messages telling them that there is only a certain way to experience their own sexuality. If I think about Christina Aguilera or I think about Britney Spears or the Pussycat Dolls, the message that I feel is being given is the way for women to be powerful is to exert some sort of sexual power over men. And I don't think that's real empowerment.

### **(ADVERTISEMENT MONTAGE)**

**TOM KEITH:** Advertisers certainly get involved in sexism – with the notorious ads by Carl's Jr., Hooters, Go Daddy, Miller Lite, Pepsi, and Axe body Wash, to name a few. These ads don't just play to young boys and men. They help define femininity to young girls and women.

Recently, Dove soap launched the campaign “Real Beauty,” which stressed natural beauty over the artificiality of extreme makeup. Here, the model is shown taking off her makeup to reveal the beauty underneath. Dove received praise for this approach. However, when it was revealed that both Dove and Axe are produced by the same British company, Unilever, their sincerity was challenged. The ads for Axe depict women as mindlessly sexual in the presence of Axe Body Wash. So, which message is filtering through to young girls and women?

Knowing that there are pressures to being a young girl today, we asked if we could film four friends, ages 11 and 12, as they were getting ready to go to the mall, a ritual they told us they do each week. The transformation took about 2 hours.

Now it's remarkable to realize that this preteen scenario is playing itself out across cities all over America. But the pressures for girls to look older and sexual can be intense. Everywhere they turn they are told to be sexual, and to conform the images they see in magazines, videos, television, and movies. And with the bombardment of all these sexual images aimed at girls, is it also the case that girls and women today are more sexual and adult than girls and women of the past?

### **(IMAGES OF WOMEN MONTAGE)**

**TOM KEITH:** It's funny to see the ways in which women have changed in appearance over the years. But if you look at the way that TV images of women have changed, you can't help but notice the stark differences between the depiction of young women then and now.

### **(TEEN SHOWS MONTAGE)**

**FEMALE:** Yeah, she may look all nice and innocent, but I'm not buying it. As long as those two stay out of my life, we'll be okay. She's such a slut.

**MALES:** The girls who play fair, dude, I play fair. But they don't play fair. They're bloodsuckers.

**TOM KEITH:** This last comment illustrates nicely a central message about women through the lens of television – that women are treacherous, self-serving people who use sex as a tool to get what they want, and that women should think of each other as rivals, as seen here in an episode of *Desperate Housewives*.

**FEMALE 1:** Isn't this wonderful? Good food, pleasant conversation. It really is a very special night.

**FEMALE 2:** I feel the same way.

**MALE 1:** So Peter, is it growing?

**MALE 2:** What?

**TOM KEITH:** In many respects, the sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's afforded women the opportunity to express their sexuality for the first time without the shame and condemnation attached to this sort of expression. And while we cannot be blind to the fact that a double-standard still exists when it comes to the sexual expression of women as opposed to men, it is worth noting that actresses began to get roles where they were sexual, while still being smart, articulate, multi-dimensional, and more autonomous than at any other time in the past.

The worry today is that media show only this sexual side of women, label it as "female empowerment," and ignore other valuable traits that women possess. And so, with all these sexual images, and constant reinforcement that women should obsess about their appearance, how are girls and young women being trained to think about themselves?

**JACKSON KATZ:** Another generation of women and girls is being trained to please men to do whatever they can to not make men unhappy, to stroke men's egos, and to know their second class status and not complain about it.

**TOM KEITH:** And so turning to our four friends.... We know they have big challenges ahead of them. There will be pressures on them to be adult and sexual in order to measure up, to fit in, and we can only hope they make good choices.

### III. THE DOLL WARS

**COMMERCIAL:** Everyone knows that beautiful hair makes a girl look beautiful. This is Beautiful Crissy.

**TOM KEITH:** You probably don't remember when dolls and doll ads looked and sounded like this. It's fairly comical by today's standards. But one thing that hasn't changed is the fact that the companies that make dolls and the ads that promote them target young girls.

Today, when you think about dolls, Barbie is probably the doll that comes to mind. Created in 1959 by Mattel Toys, over one billion Barbie Dolls have been sold worldwide. In fact, according to Mattel, every second three Barbie Dolls are sold. For generations, girls have played with and wished they could look and live like Barbie. Hers was an idyllic life according to our culture. Recently, Mattel made some changes to Barbie, introducing Lingerie Barbie. Check out the transformation.

### **(BARBIE IMAGE MONTAGE)**

**TOM KEITH:** Lingerie Barbie was a reaction by Mattel Toys to AMG Entertainment's "Bratz Dolls," after Bratz cut deeply into the market. Mattel's response: make Barbie more sexual by clothing her in lingerie in what could be called a race to the bottom. In 2005, Mattel sued the makers of Bratz Dolls. Now, Barbie's transformation has met with a great deal of criticism, such as the piece in the Washington Post, which reads:

This kind of deliberate targeting of younger and younger children and teenagers with sophisticated, adult-oriented messages has been a merchandising coup on a grand scale. But of all lines that have been crossed in our culture, none is more dangerous and sad than this one.

Now whether Barbie or Bratz, the message being sent to young girls is that girls should care primarily about the way they look and of course:

**ANIMATED BRATZ:** Shopping!

**TOM KEITH:** That's right. Shopping. By the time young girls become young women, they are collectively spending billions of dollars on their appearance, whether it has to do with fashion, diets, cosmetics and cosmetic surgery. Today, more doll designs are hitting the market, such as the lollipop girls. In fact, Hasbro Toys recently decided to scrap the introduction of a doll based on the group Pussycat Dolls once criticism became overwhelming.

Over the past decade, there has also been the emergence of anime images, cartoons, and films. Started in Japan by filmmakers who experimented with animation techniques, anime was accepted as mainstream entertainment in Japan by the 1980's. Today, anime enjoys enormous success in the United States, where anime conventions and expos are popping up around the nation. It has been in the last decade, however, that anime has taken a decidedly sexual turn, which has attracted many teens and college-age adults to it. In fact, it is common to see a young woman's MySpace page adorned by an anime image very much like those you see here. And yet you could say that anime has caused the Barbie-Bratz controversy to pale by comparison. Anime has even been adopted by some U.S. companies for use as promotional materials.

With the flood of grownup sexual images targeting children, it shouldn't be surprising that beauty pageants for very little girls have sprung up around the country. In some cases, attempting to turn little girls into adults, and this at a time when our culture has been taking a more serious approach to pedophiles. Yet for between four and five hundred dollars, parents can pay

photographers to photograph their children in makeup, and then subject the image to digital processing, where the child literally becomes a doll.

So we leave the doll wars pondering the question, “What’s next?” What images, toys, products, and cartoons will corporations and media craft to attract kids?

#### **IV. IDEALIZED BEAUTY**

**TOM KEITH:** Girls today are raised around images of idealized beauty in magazines, where airbrushed perfection inform girls of the standards of beauty in our society. And it is also no accident that the words, ‘sexy’ and ‘hot’ appear on almost every cover of a teen magazine aimed at girls. And, where makeover tips are found throughout.

It is against this background of idealized beauty, and the beauty industry’s insistence that girls and young women have many imperfections, that this beauty industry thrives. The billions of dollars spent by teens and young women on beauty supplies and services create a market where the industry has a vested interest in seeing to it that women feel bad about the way they currently look. But that perfection is possible through diets, cosmetics, and surgery.

The cosmetics industry is flourishing, and that’s putting it mildly. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 10 thousand stores are now in business only to sell beauty supplies, collectively employing over 100 thousand people in the United States.

One of the most tragic sides of idealized beauty is the emergence of eating disorders. Young girls are pressured to be very thin. And these pressures lead more and more girls to adopt dangerous lifestyles and practices in the quest for perfection.

By the way, remember our examination of Barbie? What would Barbie’s measurements be if brought to scale? Height: 6 ft, Weight: 101 lbs, Dress Size: 4, and Measurements: 39-19-33.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** 75% of college-age women consider themselves overweight, even though most are within a normal weight range, and 45% are actually underweight.

**SHELLY NELSON:** I had a couple of a-ha moments and one of them was – I had just gotten out of the hospital because I had heart problems from my eating disorder, and I was standing in front of a full length body mirror. I was just in my underwear, and I remember I had just been yelled at by my mom, and I looked at myself, and I got really scared because, for that moment, I could see myself and I wasn’t – I don’t even know how I could be said that I was a human because I didn’t look human at all. I had bones sticking out where they shouldn’t be sticking out, and I just started crying. But maybe fifteen minutes later, that was gone and I was fat again, at least in my head.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** By 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 80% of California girls have been on their first diet.

**SHELLY NELSON:** I wanted my family to love me. I wanted boys to love me. I wanted to be looked at and seen as someone pretty, and if it meant losing a lot of weight, if it meant changing my hair color, if it meant trying new makeup products, then I was going to do it, just to see. And it was never enough. There was never any makeup product that made me look just like someone in the magazines, or I didn't lose enough weight to look like someone in the magazines, and there was no clothes that made me have this attention from men that I wanted – the right attention. And in the magazines, it just portrayed that and it doesn't happen in real life.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** Eating disorders kill with the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

**SHELLY NELSON:** Well, hearing about people with eating disorders in the film industry or music industry or anything like that, it just made it more normal. It made it more okay to be anorexic or to have an eating disorder.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** Approximately 95% of people with eating disorders are women.

**CAROLYN COSTIN:** Why is it that it's 95 percent or so female? Well, if you look at those targeted as far as fashion magazines and the thinness ideal – it's women. More and more, it's become a cultural norm as a female to diet. You have young girls who – these days – they grow up, and they hear their mothers talk about dieting, and their mother's mothers talk about dieting. So it's part of being female to get on a scale to count calories, to weigh your food, to count grams. In a way that it didn't use to be, it just wasn't. Also, the whole diet food industry is a huge thing and that's promoted to the public. It's young girls – you're five and you're drinking diet coke, or you're buying non-fat yogurt, or just the words and the way they are inculcated into us – and particularly females.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** Do media contribute to the problem?

**CAROLYN COSTIN:** Does the media affect young girls in terms of dieting and disordered eating? To me, that's sort of the end all story - hello? What's bigger than that? Oh okay, this is fabulous. You're going to love this. Fiji is this two thousand-however-year-old culture that predominately – you are attractive if you are large – it meant you were healthy and you had status. Fiji didn't know dieting. It didn't know eating disorders. In 1995, television was introduced to the Figian islands. Within three years, you now have the Figian girls who were interviewed are not only dieting but somewhere around eleven percent are vomiting to lose weight. Now this is just from watching television, the only introduction into this culture. In fact, the woman, Anne Becker, who did the study actually thought she was going to set out to prove the culture, the media can't have that big of an effect on a culture like Fiji, and she was completely shocked at what happened, completely shocked.

**TOM KEITH:** Today, between 8 to 10 million women a year opt for cosmetic surgery to deal with physical traits they find displeasing about themselves. Many of these experiences can be quite positive, others not so. What isn't controversial is that the number of women of are choosing surgery has quadrupled over the past decade. Since 1997, cosmetic surgery is up 444 percent in this country. This rise in cosmetic surgery is due, in part, because surgical procedures have improved in quality, while the costs have become increasingly affordable. But there is more

to the story than this. Since women have been trained from an early age to place their identities in the way they look, many women attach their sense of self-esteem and self-value to their appearance as well.

**FEMALE:** I really like my new boobs. They're really cute. I feel girly and feminine. I feel confident wearing cute shirts and bikinis and bras. I just feel really good about myself now.

**TOM KEITH:** And just to reinforce the fact that female patients dominate elective cosmetic surgery, The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reports that: 91 percent of all procedures undertaken are by women, while only 9 percent by men. Now, knowing that cosmetic surgery has enjoyed incredible success, and that women are seeking to surgically alter their appearance in greater numbers than at any time in the past, I asked world-renowned cosmetic surgeon Francis Palmer, who has worked with dozens of celebrities and film stars, whether he might share some of his insights with us.

**FRANCIS PALMER:** I think that it is the fashion industry that is telling these women, the young women, that almost waif is good because it's not guys. There are no 14, 16, 18, 20 year old men who look at women that have no breasts, completely flat, really thin arms, bones sticking out in their back because they're so thin, their head looks so big because they basically haven't had a meal. That's not attractive to men, so I'm confused as well. I don't know what these people, what their motivation is. Clearly, I think they're associating with popular celebrities and saying she's really popular, I really like her. Oh she looks that way, so maybe I should look that way.

**TOM KEITH:** And many young women do want to look as perfect as celebrities, right?

**FRANCIS PALMER:** I've worked on celebrities that didn't look the way that you finally saw them. I worked on them, I told them do this, do that, do this, do that. It is an illusion. This stuff is an illusion. Take it for what it is. So it's okay not to be perfect. We don't need to be perfect. We don't need our kids to be perfect. We shouldn't teach them that. That's a real problem.

**TOM KEITH:** But the truth is, the quest for perfection is not going away any time soon. As long as young women continue to be told that their happiness is inextricably linked to the way they look. And let's face it, media and culture conspire to instruct young women that their appearance should be their top priority.

### **(LOCAL NEWS)**

**Man:** You look slimmer, you look younger, you look rested, you look feminine. What else do you want?

**Woman:** Nothing.

**SHELLY NELSON:** What's real are everyday people like you and I, and magazines sell stuff that sell an ideal that's not attainable, and if anything they hold a huge responsibility towards people striving to be that perfect person, and have the perfect body, and to be happy. Happiness is attained through so many different things that having a perfect body isn't going to do.

## V. THE PINK-BLUE DICHOTOMY

**HOMER SIMPSON:** Lisa, if the Bible has taught us nothing else, and it hasn't, it's that girls should stick to girls' sports, such as hot-oil wrestling, foxy boxing, and such-and-such.

**TOM KEITH:** Sports is a good place to begin when considering how much young boys and girls are trained, at the earliest ages, to seek out so-called boy activities...

### (BOY ACTIVITIES MONTAGE)

**TOM KEITH:** And girl activities.

### (GIRL ACTIVITIES MONTAGE)

**TOM KEITH:** Gender training is part of what is called "Socialization," the process by which one adapts or conforms to the standards and expectations of a social group. Now this process of socialization starts when we are children, so that by the time we reach adulthood, we have had 18 years of programming on how to conform to the standards of femininity or masculinity that our culture and media have told us are acceptable. In fact, think how early this training begins.

**FEMALE STUDENT:** It's how you're raised. You can see how people act, how people describe. Like, if you put a little boy baby on the floor – we did this in Sociology – and had people write down like describe what he was doing. They'd be like, "oh he was adventuring, he was exploring" you know, stuff like that, like those really masculine qualities. They put the same baby, they put like a pink diaper on it, put it on the floor, had people describe the same thing and it was, "oh she's trying to get back to her mommy," you know, "she needs help, she can't do it."

**JEAN KILBOURNE:** A lot of the images of women throughout the media express a real kind of contempt for women. But not only a contempt for women, a contempt for qualities that are considered feminine. And this to me is one of the great tragedies that when human qualities, qualities that we all share, and that we all need, and that we all have the potential to develop, get divided up and polarized and get labeled "masculine" and "feminine." And then we're told that you can only have one set of qualities, so that women are told, for example, that the feminine qualities are compassion, empathy, nurturance, sensitivity, also passivity, dependence, powerlessness. And this leaves women to devalue ourselves and each other, and it also causes men to devalue not only women but also all these qualities that get labeled "feminine" by the culture. So men are encouraged to repress these human qualities in themselves, which I think does enormous harm to men. Because in an ideal world, we'd have human beings who shared the whole range of human qualities, so that we could be within each of us both strong, and gentle, powerful and nurturing, logical and intuitive. And we wouldn't have this arbitrary split between masculine and feminine. The truth is human qualities are human. There is no such thing as gender attached to a quality.

**TOM KEITH:** Yet media continue to split the genders up in a deeply contrasted way. Here, in Meet the Parents, Robert DeNiro's character makes Ben Stiller's character uncomfortable for his being a registered nurse.

**PAM:** So, uh, Greg, how's your job?

**GREG:** Um, good, Pam. Thanks for asking. I recently got transferred to triage.

**PAM'S MOTHER:** Oh, is that better than a nurse?

**PAM:** No, mom. Triage is a unit of the ER. It's where all the top nurses work.

**PAM'S FATHER:** Not many men in your profession, are there Greg?

**GREG:** No, Jack. Not traditionally

**TOM KEITH:** Now granted, this is a comedy, and a funny one at that, but think about it, how many men in our society would be ridiculed for choosing nursing as a career, or any profession where nurturing or caring are involved? The truth is: a man who chooses these occupations will likely have his sexual orientation called into question, as though compassion and caring are not masculine traits. But let's back up. The gender training of men and women begins when we are little boys and girls with the toys and activities we are told are acceptable by our parents and the rest of society.

**KAREN STERNHEIMER:** Even at a time where we think that we've become more egalitarian in terms of gender, we really, especially for kids, try really hard to police very traditional gender boundaries. So, we have toys that are marketed explicitly for girls and they're hyper-feminine kinds of toys. Even looking at a toy store, the packaging, it lets you know right away which aisle you should be in if you're a girl or a boy. And so, what's interesting is why it is, at this point where we are so much closer in many ways to having more egalitarian notions of gender that we still try and impose a very limited sense of masculinity and femininity on kids.

**TOM KEITH:** In addition to toys marketed strictly for girls and those for boys, we see the same thing with the depiction of images in games and even superheroes. Is it any wonder why girls and boys grow up with drastically different ideas about what it means to be male and female?

**KIM SALTER:** Well, we see it everywhere. If you go to the grade school campus and watch the boys playing and the girls playing and who gets most of the handball courts, who gets to sit at the lunch tables, it's very much the girls here the boys there, and that plays itself all through all the different levels of school, and then you go into corporate America and who are the majority of CEO's, who are the majority of CFO's, who are the majority of people on boards in corporate America, and then who are the majority of people on boards in non-profit. And so there's very much still sexist attitudes about what men and women can and can't do as far as abilities.

**TOM KEITH:** However, there is a criticism I have been hearing for years. The objection that boys and girls are "just different," "that's the way it is." Now whether a critic of this kind realizes it or not, this objection is an appeal to what is called "Behavioral Genetics." It is the science of determining whether, or to what extent, biology has an influence on behavior. For instance, in the pioneering book entitled *The Alchemy of Love and Lust*, author and physician

Theresa Crenshaw investigates and supports the idea that hormones such as DHEA, pheromones, oxytocin, PEA, testosterone, estrogen, and others influence our sex drive and might also explain why boys are more aggressive and girls are more passive. But even in Dr. Crenshaw's book, she writes, "Environment and culture go a long way in explaining our behavior." And so while it may be true that biochemical influences can be significant with respect to mood swings and sex drive, there is no justification to claim that hormones cause women to behave sexually and men to behave violently. Instead, a more reasonable position is to look toward the way kids are socialized. Girls are taught to be cute and passive, while boys are taught to be tough and aggressive. Now, fast-forward to adulthood. Is it really that mysterious why so many young women obsess about their looks, while young men try to get respect by acting tough?

The way a child is raised has tremendous consequences for the way that child will ultimately turn out, how they will come to think of themselves, how they will treat others. Think of it this way – you can take a puppy and train it to be a loving, family dog, or you can train it to be a vicious guard dog. Are people really that much different? Don't we do the same thing with our kids? Here's another example: for centuries, women were told that they couldn't go to college because quote, "women just aren't cut out for that sort of thing." Well, we now know that that is complete rubbish. In fact, today women outnumber men as students in colleges and universities nationwide. Women are also graduating at higher rates. So obviously, the "that's the way it is" myth was and is just that – a myth.

So, why do some people, mainly men, end up violent, aggressive, antisocial, looking at life through steel bars while others succeed? Well, rewind the tape. Ask about their influences, their family, friends, culture, and the media they consume.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** 7 million people in jail, prison, or on probation in America. Federal prisons operating at 34% above capacity. Over 10,000 hate crimes in America each year. 90% of all violent crime is committed by boys and men. Battered women account for the majority of women in prison. 94% of state prison inmates are men.

## VI. MISOGYNY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

**TOM KEITH:** Where heroes are violent criminals. Where dealers, pimps, and violent men are respected. And where women are bitches and hoes.

**ANTHONY HALE:** It is the case – coming where I come from – it is the case if you're not cursing or repping where you're from or doing this and that, you know you're gong to be called soft. And yeah, it's kind of like you have to, if you don't, it's like, you're not real. That's one of the main things. If you're not disrespecting her or Mad Dog and him, you're not real.

**TOM KEITH:** There is pressure on many young men to not show weakness. And part of that tough-guy image is to show other men that women mean nothing to you, that women are really good for only one thing.

**EMINEM:** Yeah! We saved the best for motherfuckin' last.

**TOM KEITH:** For those who say, “you’re taking it too seriously. It is meant to be satirical.” Well, check out this very realistic rampage in the song “Kim.”

**(EMINEM “KIM”)**

Sit down, Bitch, You move again I’ll beat the shit out of you!  
 Don't make me wake this baby, she don't need to see what I'm 'bout to do.  
 Quit crying bitch, why you always make me shout at you?  
 How could you, just leave me and love him out the blue.  
 Aww, what's the matter Kim, am i too loud for you?  
 Too bad bitch, you're gonna finally hear me out this time.  
 At first I'm like, aight, you wanna throw me out that's fine.  
 But not for him to take my place, are you outcha mind?  
 This couch, this TV, this whole house is mine!  
 How could you let him sleep in our bed?  
 Look at Kim, look at your husband now, I SAID LOOK AT HIM, he ain't so hot now is he?  
 Little punk.

Kim: Why are you doing this?

Eminem: SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Kim: You're drunk, you're never gonna get away with this.

Eminem: You think I give a fuck? Come on, were going for a ride bitch.

Kim: NO!

Eminem: Sit up front.

Kim: We can't just leave Hailie alone, what if she wakes up?

Eminem: We'll be right back. Well I will, you'll be in the trunk.

**JACKSON KATZ:** So when Eminem write lyrics about, you know, ‘put anthrax on your Tampax and slap you ‘till you can’t stand,’ and talks about kicking bitches in the stomach, and this pregnant bitch, all this just rolling off his tongue. The cultural context in which he’s producing these lyrics and presenting them and performing them is a culture in which the level of men’s violence against women is pandemic.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** 5.3 million cases of domestic violence each year. 1300 resulting in death. Over 200,000 cases of rape annually. 44% of victims under age 18. 1 in 6 American women will be victims of physical or sexual assault in their lifetimes.

**JACKSON KATZ:** Again, using an analogy, if Eminem, a white rapper were to write lyrics about beating up, cutting up, sexually assaulting people of color, do you think he would be winning Grammy Awards and Oscars, and would he be feted as this great cultural messenger who’s bringing comic art and lyrical sophistication to new levels? I don’t think so, because people would say, it doesn’t matter how talented he is, it doesn’t matter how creative his lyrics are, it doesn’t matter that there are catchy backbeats and the incredibly interesting production values. None of that matters if what you’re doing is in the service of racism, and stoking the flames of racism. He’s doing all of that, but the object of his aggression are women and gay

people. And so many people, including people who consider themselves sophisticated, progressive people, defend him and make excuses for him, and rationalize, and say “you don’t understand, it’s more complicated than that. There’s more, there’s subtle layers of meaning, you’re not supposed to take it literally. All these kinds of things, they would never say if the object of his aggression were people of color.

**TOM KEITH:** Imagine Eminem making fun of black Americans or rapping about African Americans in hostile and demeaning ways. What would happen to his career as a rapper? It’s true, Eminem won’t use the n-word in his rhymes. But this can’t be surprising to anyone.

**BYRON HURT:** I think that Eminem, as an artist, is smart enough to know that if he were to use the n-word in his music, in his lyrics, that that would be pretty much the end of his promise as a profitable MC. As a profitable rap artist, you know? I also think it’s revealing that he is knowledgeable enough to know that it’s wrong to use the n-word but that using the b-word is OK. That using the b-word or the h-word is still socially acceptable, that he can get away with doing that. He can use that in a way that’s still going to be commercially profitable and keep him commercially viable in a way that using the n-word would not be.

**TOM KEITH:** Think about the firestorm of controversy that erupted after comedian Michael Richards used the n-word in a conflict with an audience member during his performance at a comedy club.

**MICHAEL RICHARDS:** He’s a n----! He’s a n----! He’s a n----! A n----! Look, it’s a n----! Ooooooh! All right, you see. It shocks you, it shocks you, you see, to see what’s buried beneath you stupid motherf--!

**TOM KEITH:** Richards later apologized profusely. But what matters is that men like Eminem and others say vulgar and violent things about women with almost no repercussions, or in fact are praised for such verbal assaults. We obviously live in a culture of double standards.

**JACKSON KATZ:** Eminem himself has said that as a white person, that he won’t use the n-word, because he knows the power of words to hurt and to harm, and yet the guy every other sentence is using the b-word and the h-word and trashing women and girls. It’s incredible hypocrisy, but it does say something about how deep sexism still is. If even women are making excuses for Eminem’s misogyny, you’re not going to hear many people of color making excuses for white people’s use of racist epithets and lyrics, right? Very few people of color will, but you hear women making excuses for and rationalizing Eminem’s misogyny. That just shows you how deep sexism is and how far we have to go.

**TOM KEITH:** Jackson Katz highlights one more important point about Eminem. In addition to being sold as a musical icon, he is also sold as a sexual icon. This means that many women will find him to be attractive. And rather than viewing him, and men like him, with scorn, women will be attracted to men like this, which programs both men and women. Men are taught to be the bad boy, while women are taught to want the bad boy.

**BYRON HURT:** There were a couple of young boys at a film screening – one of my film screenings – who actually raised that point, who said a lot of girls that they try to kick it to want to be with the bad guy – just like you said. They want to be, you know, they don't want guys who they are going to be soft you know. And I told them, I said, “listen man, you want to be with somebody who's going to allow you to be who you are, you know what I mean? You know, on all levels, you know? Who's going to allow you to show every aspect of who you are.” And if she's not down with that, then that's good for you. You just keep on walking and move on to the next, you know, the next girl, the next woman. You know what I mean? Who's going to accept you for who you are. And I think that keeps us in the box too, the way that we think that women perceive us. You know, yeah?

**TOM KEITH:** If you look around at middle school, high school, and college campuses, you can see boys trying to look and act tough in an attempt to be cool, and to get the attention of girls. This is a great example of imitated belief and action. Kids see artists acting tough. They, then, adopt the same look and attitude, while girls are then socialized to view guys like this as being attractive, creating a cycle of reinforcement. But the reinforcement extends far beyond musical artists. For example, listen to radio personality Tom Leykis as he explains to young men the purpose of dating.

**TOM LEYKIS:** The ongoing adult-education course that teaches men how to get more tail for less money. More importantly we teach women how men think. I am your professor, this is my classroom, class is in session. Know why we date. Dating equals porking. We're not going on dates to make new friends or try new restaurants. We go on a date to get laid. Boys, if you've been brainwashed into believing that a date is anything less than for intercourse, the purpose of dating is to get laid.

**TOM KEITH:** In 1993, Leykis was arrested for felony assault and battery against his then fourth wife. Charges were dropped only after he attended domestic violence classes.

**TOM KEITH:** Here, Sacha Baron Cohen, as Borat, gets a lesson in dating by some would-be Leykis disciples.

**MALE IN *BORAT*:** You like the bitches out there in fucking old Russia? Bitches in old Russia! How are the women? Some fucking hoes baby. The fucking girls! You fuck the shit out of them, and then you never call them again.

**BORAT:** Why you don't call them, because they do not have a telephone, yes?

**MALE IN *BORAT*:** No, not because of that. They don't have respect, you know I mean?

**TOM KEITH:** Now imagine raising a daughter in our society and tuning into Leykis ranting about dating merely as a means to get sex. And knowing that many young men listen to this guy. Or take conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh. This is what Limbaugh has to say about the victims of sexual harassment.

**RUSH LIMBAUGH:** Some these babes, I tell you, like the sexual harassment crowd. They're out there protesting what they actually wish would happen to them sometimes.

**TOM KEITH:** And so Limbaugh ridicules the victims of sexual harassment, implying to men that their sexual advances and demeaning comments are secretly desired. To demonstrate the depths of Limbaugh's contempt for women, he has taken to calling MSNBC, PMS-NBC and routinely ridicules House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for having gone, in his words, "hormonal." Now if you hold political differences with someone, why not argue out those differences? Why attack Nancy Pelosi and NBC by using derisively sexist language unless you have contempt for women? I mean, think about it. Do you really think Limbaugh would attack a male political opponent by saying that he was "too masculine" or make some insulting comment about his being a man?

**BETTINA CASAD:** And the double standard where a woman in power would be described as aggressive. Whereas if a man was doing the same thing, he's be more assertive, or competitive, or has business smarts. And so the same exact behaviors are interpreted differently depending on if it's a man or a woman.

**TOM KEITH:** But then Limbaugh has never been shy about his contempt for the women's movement, which has fought against the sexism that often occurs in the workplace.

**RUSH LIMBAUGH:** Feminism was established so as to allow unattractive women easier access to the mainstream society and even to this day people poo-poo this, and say it's insensitive. "How could you possibly say something like that," well because I mean it.

**TOM KEITH:** Televangelist, and fellow conservative, Pat Robertson echoes Limbaugh's views and takes it to the next level when he states:

"Feminism is a socialist, anti-family, political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, and become lesbians."

Now while it is tempting to not respond to such stupidity, it is important to respond, since feminism continues to be misrepresented in sometimes-outrageous ways. These distortions serve to turn many people off to feminism. But distortions aside, if you look to what the movement actually represents, you'll see women in all walks of life, achieving and succeeding where they were once told they could never succeed. Feminism is simply assuring women the same rights that men have always taken for granted, while also demonstrating that women can do anything they set out to do. And of course, that woman are far more than sexual beings who serve in a secondary role to men. And yet, look at the amount of media that depicts women in demeaning ways. Examine commercial ads, TV, newscasts, film, music, and even games. Take a critical eye, and really pay attention to the ways women are depicted as opposed to men. For instance, think about news anchors. Now it's terrific that more women are getting the opportunity to work in what was once the exclusive domain of men. However, we should not be blind to the fact that female anchors must concern themselves with their looks far more than their male counterparts. And while older men continue to appear in newscasts, older women are almost nonexistent. Let me give you one concrete example. This is LA news anchor Lauren Sanchez. She has anchored

the Channel 13 News in LA for a number of years, where their slogan used to be “Get it on.” Now imagine a quote “respected male news anchor” having to endure such a ridiculous slogan.

Yet another area of media entertainment that celebrates violent misogyny is video games. One of the biggest selling series of games on the market is Rockstar Games’ Grand Theft Auto. Now Grand Theft Auto, or GTA, has already been criticized soundly for its hyper-violence and racism. But sometimes missing from the criticism is the exposure of brutality towards women that is offered as a choice for young gamers who play GTA.

**GRAND THEFT AUTO:** You got to love CJ, girl. Now say thank you, bitch. Oh, you’re with me. Come on take it. I’m a career criminal.

**TOM KEITH:** I asked the head of public relations for Rockstar Games, Rodney Walker, to come on camera and defend GTA, but he refused. Instead, Mr. Walker suggested that we ask gamers why they love playing GTA so much.

**GAMER:** I think when Grand Theft Auto came out, that was a really fun game. You can do whatever you want, and the power you had you know, you could just randomly just shoot someone in the head.

**CAMERAMAN:** So what makes the violence and the mayhem so appealing?

**GAMER:** The freedom, the power, something you can’t do in everyday life.

**CAMERAMAN:** So there’s no consequence.

**GAMER:** Exactly.

**TOM KEITH:** Now this sort of response was incredibly common. That GTA allows you to do outrageous and taboo things you would never do in real life.

But think how empty that answer is. There are many things that are outrageous and taboo that teenage boys would never play as a video game. For instance, just try to imagine Rockstar Games releasing this game.

**GRAPHIC:** Rockstar Games “Pedophile.” Seduce children! Collect child porn! Lead double life!

**TOM KEITH:** Not your cup of tea? How about this?

**GRAPHIC:** Rockstar Games “Lynch ‘Em.” Burn crosses! Wear sheets! Create White Nation!

**TOM KEITH:** Now let’s be real, and I’m certainly not making light of these things. But Rockstar Games will not make these games only because there is no money in it. If they thought they could make millions on games like these, they would. Now what this tells us is that once again we have a double standard. Our society rightfully condemns pedophiles and racists, but

sexism and misogyny are free to be exploited. Yet, I have to ask, are we really that surprised? Along with gay rights, women's rights have always lagged behind. It wasn't until 1920 that the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment gave women the right to vote.

Perhaps the biggest problem of all is that the issues we have raised in this film are rarely, if ever, discussed. And if you don't discuss these issues, they are free to go on unchecked and unchallenged. Here's another thing I would ask that you think about. If you buy sexist media, then you are supporting those messages. Just like the artist makes choices, so do you. We all make choices, right?

## **BONUS CHAPTER: MEDIA LITERACY, EDUCATION, AND CHOICE**

**TESSA JOLLS:** Well, there's a formal definition for media literacy, which is that media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in all of its forms, whether it's print, video, or the internet. I think we can extend the definition of media literacy to also say that media literacy really helps us understand the role and our relationship to media in society. And that's a really important skill for citizenship for being a wise consumer, as well as a responsible producer.

So the first question is: Who sent this message? Knowing who the author is, knowing what's behind making a message, and the fact that messages are made by someone who makes choice about the message. And the second question is: What techniques are used to attract my attention? And knowing about the arts and how the arts contribute to attractiveness of media, and that's why we're so interested. Media certainly is a beautiful thing, as well as sometimes perhaps a dangerous thing. So again, we have to really learn to understand those techniques and the power that they have over us. The third question is: How might other people understand this message differently from me? Because we know that different people will always understand a movie differently, for example. And at the same time, audiences are also targeted by advertisers, because advertisers know that different people understand messages differently. The fourth question is: What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message? And there, we're really looking at the value system that a media producer is projecting out to us. And again, we have to make our decisions about what we want to accept or don't want to accept. And also we have to recognize that many points of view are left out. And so, there really isn't any media message that is objective. There always is a point of view, even though the author and the producer may try to represent different viewpoints. There will always be someone left out. And then the fifth question is: Why was this message sent? And we have what's called a core concept behind that question that says, all media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. And we use power in its broadest sense of influence over someone's thinking. And again, there's nothing wrong with profit. There's nothing wrong with power. It depends on our own understanding of it and how it's used.

**JW WILEY:** The problem is our educational system is flawed. That's the problem. We continue to turn out teachers every year that are clueless about their racism, their sexism, their ableism, their classism, their homophobia. They're clueless about it because we have not immersed our children in an educational system or process where they are learning about respect of differences.

That's the largest problem that we're having here. And so, the manufacturers of these games, the people who are making these films, if they're not understanding how complicit they are in advancing problematic isms like racism and all that, what will make them change? They're not going to wake up and have some epiphany. It's all a part of our educational system.

**KIM SALTER:** I think that, as in most issues, inhumanity - we're all human beings, we're all living here together, we're all trying to do this thing called life, and try to make sense of it - so the more we work together, as opposed to at odds with each other, I think the quicker we're going to come to solutions, the more easily we're going to understand issues or patterns and be able to correct them so that it's healthier for everyone. I think whenever we segregate, and make it a black issue or a brown issue or an Indian issue or a women's issue, then we're not working together. So we're not using the best of what we have, and we're not putting all of the brains to work on it so that it will get solved or get taken to the next level to benefit everybody.

**ALVIN POUSSAINT:** I think that the junk values she's talking about is an emphasis on materialism. Getting things, and also an emphasis of junk values on eating food that's not nutritional. That's high caloric, high fat. That leads to obesity. So they're actually teaching values around eating food, and what kind of food you should eat, as well as trying to sell them things frequently that they don't need. And making them feel that part of being somebody, or feeling good, is to buy these items. So she feels that's the wrong emphasis. We feel it's the wrong emphasis in terms of what you're trying to teach children about values, interactions with other people. Many of them end up judging other people by what they have, what clothes they wear, what kind of designer labels. This is an enormous problem among teenagers. But it also begins in the elementary school grades, in terms of clothes and sneakers. And we feel that much of this comes from really a punked-up kind of advertising and targeting of children in all kinds of ways by the media to sell them things.

**TESSA JOLLS:** We are participators. We are contributors. We are not just passive viewers. We can really do a lot to put out the kind of media messages that we want to see.

[END]