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TOUGH GUISE: FULL VERSION
VIOLENCE, MEDIA & THE CRISIS IN MASCULINITY

TOUGH GUISE
Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity

(FULL LENGTH version)

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INTRODUCTION

[Montage of images and clips from mainstream entertainment and news media]

-- *We're going to murder those lousy Hun bastards by the bushel.*
-- *Never show weakness. The only pain that matters is the pain you inflict.*
-- *It's the roughest and toughest show on TV: The American Gladiators.*
-- *You gotta out-tough people when you get down there, its man-on-man out there.*
-- *Police say boys ages thirteen and eleven were arrested near the school carrying guns and wearing camouflage.*
-- *Two in three million Americans are battered in their home every year…*

[Pearl Jam song: Better Man]
Talkin' to herself, there's no one else who needs to know...
She tells herself, oh...
Memories back when she was bold and strong
And waiting for the world to come along...
Swears she knew it, now she swears he's gone
She lies and says she's in love with him, can't find a better man...
She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can't find a better man...
She lies and says she still loves him, can't find a better man...
She dreams in color, she dreams in red, can't find a better man...
Can't find a better man…

[Movie: The Wizard of Oz]
Oz has spoken!
-- Who are you?
I am the great and powerful Wizard of Oz.
-- You're a very bad man.
Oh no, my dear, I'm a very good man. I'm just a very bad wizard.

JACKSON KATZ: The climactic scene where Toto pulls back the curtain to reveal a nervous, tragic man, pretending to be the great and powerful Oz, represents more than just the classic moment in American cinematic history, rather, it also gave us a metaphor for looking at masculinity in a new way. Not as a fixed, inevitable state of being, but rather as a projection, a pose, a guise, an act, a mask that men often wear to shield our vulnerability and hide our humanity.

This mask can take a lot of forms but one that's really important for us to look at in our culture at the millennium is what I call the Tough Guise. The front that many men put up that's based on an extreme notion of masculinity that emphasizes toughness and physical strength and gaining the respect and admiration of others through violence or the implicit threat of it.

Boys and young men learn early on that being a so-called "real man" means you have to take on the "tough guise," in other words you have to show the world only certain parts of

yourself that the dominant culture has defined as manly. You can find out what those qualities are if you just listen to young men themselves:

YOUNG MEN:
-- A real man is physical.
-- Strong.
-- Independent.
-- Intimidating.
-- Powerful.
-- Strong.
-- Independent.
-- In control.
-- Rugged.
-- Scares people.
-- Powerful.
-- Respected.
-- Hard.
-- A stud.
-- Athletic.
-- Muscular.
-- A real man is tough.
-- Tough.
-- Tough.

JACKSON KATZ: And just as most young men know what our culture expects of a "real man," they also know very well what you get called if you don't measure up:

YOUNG MEN:
-- You get a called a pussy.
-- A bitch.
-- A fag.
-- Queer.
-- Soft.
-- You're a little momma's boy.
-- Emotional.
-- Girly.
-- A wimp.
-- Bitch.
-- Queer.
-- You get called weak.
-- Wuss.
-- Sissy.
-- A fag.
-- A fag.
-- Fag.
-- You're a fag.

JACKSON KATZ: So for boys, and this is true for every racial and ethnic background, and every socioeconomic group, to be a real man – to be tough, strong, independent, respected

– means fitting into this narrow box that defines manhood. The terms that are the opposite of that: wuss, wimp, fag, sissy are insults that are used to keep boys boxed in, so if you're a boy it's pretty clear there's a lot of pressure on you to conform, to put up the act, to be just one of the guys.

So the next question is, where do boys learn this? Obviously they learn it in many different places. They learn it from their families, their community, but one of the most important places they learn it is the powerful and pervasive media system which provides a steady stream of images that define manhood as connected with dominance, power and control.

This is true across all racial and ethnic groups but it's even more pronounced for men of color because there's so little diversity of images for them, to begin with – for example, Latino men are almost always presented either as boxers, criminals, or tough guys in the barrio, and Asian-American men are disproportionately portrayed as martial artists and violent criminals.

But transcending race, what the media do is help to construct violent masculinity as a cultural norm. In other words, violence isn't so much a deviation, but an accepted part of masculinity. We have to start examining this system, and offering alternatives because one of the major consequences of all of this, is that there's been a growing connection made in our society between being a man and being violent. In fact, some of the most serious problems in contemporary American society, especially those connected with violence, can be looked at as essentially problems in contemporary American masculinity.

For example, over 85% of the people who commit murder, are men, and the women that do, often do so as defense against men who are battering them. Ninety percent of people who commit violent physical assault are men. Ninety-five percent of serious domestic violence is perpetrated by males, and its been estimated that one in four men will use violence against a partner in their lifetime. Over 95% of dating violence is committed by men, and very often it's young men in their teens. Studies have found that men are responsible for between 85% and 95% of child sexual abuse whether the victim is female or male. And 99.8% of people in prison convicted of rape, are men.

What this shows is that an awful lot of boys and men are inflicting an incredible level of pain and suffering, both on themselves and on others. And we know that much of the violence is cyclical, that many boys who are abused as children grow up and become perpetrators themselves. So calling attention to the way that masculinity is connected to these problems is not anti-male – it's just being honest about what's going on in boys' and men's lives. And while women have been at the forefront of change and trying to talk about these issues in the culture, it's not just women who will benefit if men's lives are transformed. In fact, while men commit a shameful level of violence against women in our society, statistically speaking, the major victims of men's violence are other males. There are millions of male trauma survivors walking around today, men who were bullied as adolescents, or abused physically or sexually as children. Thousands more men and boys are murdered or assaulted every year – usually by other men. So, men have a stake in dealing with these problems, and not just those of us who have been victims, but also those men who are violent, or who have taken on the tough guise, they do so also at the expense of their emotional and relational lives.

[Young woman] Some of my friends, they just walk around like they're better than everybody, and their tough and all that stuff. And then I'll be alone with them, and they'll be like the biggest babies. If they have like a problem with a girlfriend or something, they'll be like crying and stuff, but when they're around a lot of people they've got that big front, they've gotta be tough.

JACKSON KATZ: I deal with this front all the time in my own work as an anti-violence educator. I've worked with literally thousands of boys and men on high school, college, and professional sports teams, in the United States military, in juvenile detention centers. I've seen an awful lot of men and young men put on this tough guise. In many ways, they're putting it on as a survival mechanism – they have to do it to survive in whatever peer culture they happen to be in. But putting on the tough guise comes with a cost and that is a cost in terms of damage to their psyches and their ability to be decent human beings. So it's in everyone's interest to examine masculinity, to pull back the curtain on the tough guy posing, and see what's really going on underneath.

[Movie: Raging Bull]
I want you to hit me with everything you've got.
-- You sure?
Yeah. Harder. Harder. Harder. Harder.
-- That's hard.
Harder. Harder.
-- What are you trying to prove? What does it prove?

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT MASCULINITY

HIDDEN – A Gender

[News] There is more details and a profile developing of kids who kill kids.

JACKSON KATZ: One of the things that happens in typical discussions about social problems is that the very way we talk about the problems, tends to obscure some of the root causes. For example, violence is not typically talked about as a gender issue, but the fact is that one gender, men, perpetrate approximately 90% of the violence. Now part of the reason for this is because men are the dominant group. And one of the ways dominance functions is through being unexamined. This is true for other areas as well.

For example, when we hear the word race in the United States we tend to immediately think African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, etc. When we hear the term sexual orientation, we tend to think gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. When we hear the term *gender*, we tend to think women. In each case the dominant group, white people, heterosexual people, men, don't get examined. As if men don't have a gender. As if white people don't belong to some racial grouping. As if heterosexual people don't have some sort of sexual orientation. In other words we focus always on the subordinated group and not on the dominant group. And that's one of the ways that the power of dominant groups isn't questioned – by remaining invisible.

There's a number of ways that this happens. For example, the linguist Julia Penelope talks about how the use of the passive voice when we talk about crimes against women, tends to shift our focus off of male perpetrators and on to female victims and survivors. For example we talk about how many girls *were raped* last year. How many women *were* assaulted? Or how many women *were* slain. As opposed to saying, how many men raped women or girls or how many boys or men assaulted and murdered women.

Another way in which we can see this idea about the invisibility of masculinity being played out is in the discussion about so-called "youth violence" You read headlines in newspapers all around the country about this problem of kids killing kids.

[News] But after ten school shootings in three years, there is more detail and a profile developing of kids who kill kids.

JACKSON KATZ: But this isn't kids killing kids. Overwhelmingly it's *boys* killing boys and *boys* killing girls.

An example of the way the media de-genders discussion of violence can be seen in the coverage of the Jonesboro, Arkansas massacre in the Spring of 1998. There were all these headlines about kids killing kids and children killing children and what's going on with our kids, etc. In fact, one article in the *New York Times*, a think piece that was a step back piece to try to discuss the whole issue of this range of school shootings, in one parentheses said, "All these shootings were done by boys" and then what was in the parentheses wasn't discussed in the rest of the article. So you have a whole article trying to pull together all the

different factors that are causing these shootings and the one most important, in my opinion, is in the parentheses and not discussed.

Some people will say, "Well, it's obvious that boys are doing these shootings." The reason why we don't say it, the reason why we say it's kids killing kids, everybody knows that boys are the one's doing the vast majority of the violence. You don't need to say it. But the fact is, if you don't say it, then in the subsequent discussion about the causes of the violence then you're going to leave out one of the key elements.

Another example: road rage. People don't typically think of road rage as a gendered phenomenon but one recent study showed that out of ten thousand cases of aggressive driving or road rage, over 95% were males, but you read the editorials in the newspapers throughout the country about road rage and the articles, essays, and opinion columns, and it's rarely talked about as a masculine or a male phenomenon. It's just a phenomenon on our roadways. If women were doing it, if 95% of the people doing it were women, you can bet that the single issue that would be talked about is, why are women, what is going on in the gender construction of women that cause them to act in that way?

When girls commit violence, that's always the subject. The gendered nature of the crime is always part of the discussion.

[CBS News] A sensational case goes on trial in Virginia tomorrow, involving a man who was sexually mutilated by his wife.

JACKSON KATZ: Now Lorena Bobbitt, her crime was brutal admittedly, and I understand believe me, as a man understand why people would be, especially men, would be very uncomfortable about that, but every day men are murdering and mutilating women and it doesn't cause as a great a national outcry.

One of the reasons why the film, *Thelma and Louise*, caused such a stir back in the early nineties was that women were the ones who were acting violently.

[Movie: Thelma and Louise]
Oh my god, oh my god.
-- Get in the car.
Oh Jesus Christ. Louise, you shot him.

JACKSON KATZ: In other words you have films all the time, go into any video store and walk down the aisles and look at all the films that feature violence against women including sexualized violence against women by men, and there's little outcry and little commentary by the movie critics for example, when they are reviewing these films. They don't talk about the fact that we have this huge epidemic of men assaulting women and we're making yet *another* film about an assault against women? Look at the recent remake of *Psycho*. That was not part of the discussion when *Psycho* re-released. We're yet again, going to show a sexualized image of a woman being assaulted and that's going to be considered great art? And people are going to go see it? Yet *Thelma and Louise* you had debates going on in the newspapers of the United States, "is this a bad trend?" It was similar to the outcry about Lorena Bobbitt.

What's happened is because violence has been gendered *masculine* we think it's unusual only when *women* do it. When men do it, it is so normal that its masculine character is unremarkable. In fact, it's invisible. So one of the things we have to do is to make it visible. Feminist scholars and activists have been trying to do this for years, but they've been largely ignored. Making masculinity visible is the first step to understanding how it operates in the culture and how definitions of manhood have been linked to dominance and control.

UPPING THE ANTE

JACKSON KATZ: Many cultural analysts would argue that if you want to understand the meaning of something in society, look at its representation in the media – what stories are being told about it in the popular culture. And if we look at images of men and masculinity over the last fifty years we'd see that there've been some dramatic and really interesting changes in what is considered to be masculine, especially in terms of the size of men's bodies. These changes tell us a story about what's going on in the culture.

For example if you compare the Superman of the 1950s with what we now think of as the Man of Steel you'll see a fairly dramatic difference. If you think of Batman, and Adam West as Batman in the 1960s and look at his body and compare it to the Batman of the movies of the nineties there's a fairly dramatic difference.

How about pro wrestling? Pro wrestlers' bodies in the 1960s were more flabby if you will. If you look at them in the eighties and nineties they've become much bigger and stronger and more rippled.

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 in the 1990s you see a dramatic shift. There really is something happening here. Something's going on.

Look at the way that the body of GI Joe, the doll that millions of boys play with, has changed over the last twenty years. Researchers had calculated in fact that the size of his biceps in real life equivalence has 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, Mark McGwire's biceps are only 20.0 inches. As I said something is really going on.

One of the interesting things is that if you compare this with the image of the female body, you'll see the reverse thing happening. Whereas full-figured women as Marilyn Monroe or Jayne Mansfield were the representation of ideal female beauty in the 1950s, by the eighties and nineties the ideal has become much thinner, more waifish, more girlish – so that today its Kate Moss or Tyra Banks and Calista Flockhart who reflect the beauty norm.

One of the ways to explain these shifts is that in an era when women have been challenging male power in business, the professions, education, and other areas of economic and social life, the images of women that have flooded the culture show women as less threatening. They're literally taking up less symbolic space. At the same time, images of men have gotten bigger, stronger, more muscular and more violent. In other words, one of the ways that men have responded to women's challenges is by overcompensating and placing greater value on size, strength and muscularity – and it terms of media images this means big beefy men have been taking up even more symbolic space.

We can see the same pattern if we look at the way gun imagery has changed over the last fifty years. If you look at images of Humphrey Bogart in the 1930s and the 1940s the way he's posed as a masculine figure and look at the size of the gun that he's holding, it's a very small gun and it's a very non-imposing pose, by contemporary standards.

If you move to the 1960s with Sean Connery as 007 the gun gets bigger, right, then if you move into the 1970s with Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry for example the pose gets more menacing and the gun gets bigger.

And if you move into the early eighties you have Sylvester Stallone as Rambo, not only is he holding big guns and presenting himself as really tough, his *body* is now a spectacle, his body is not one of the sites of his projection of power. The epitome of this historical progression is Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator, so its not just that his holding a big gun or has a big body but rather his whole *body* is literally a killing machine. There has been a ratcheting up of what it takes to be considered menacing and hyper masculine in the 1980s and nineties.

It's really important to remember that there is nothing natural about images – they don't just come about by accident. They're made by *someone*, and mostly in our culture it's been men that have been in charge when it comes to being the authors and creators of popular culture, so if these images are changing, they're reflecting what's going on in the psyches of these men. Actually what we're seeing in part, is their pathologies or anxieties being played out on the screen. But this isn't just happening inside the heads of some advertising gurus or Hollywood screenwriters. There's a historical context for all of this.

BACKLASH

JACKSON KATZ: These changes in the images of masculinity are in part a response to a perceived threat to the traditional or dominant idea of masculinity – that is of white, middle class, heterosexual masculinity. In fact the various social movements that arose in the 1960s represent an incredible threat to established power. The Civil Rights Movement had started in the 1950s and sixties to challenge the deeply entrenched system of White supremacy. The Women's Liberation Movement had catalyzed serious challenges to male power, winning court battles and making headlines all over the country in the 1960s and seventies. The gay and lesbian movements had been challenging and disrupting heterosexual power and privilege since the early 1970s. And the anti-war and student movements that opposed U.S. intervention in Vietnam disrupted the plans of political elites, especially as the U.S. suffered what many people regarded as its first military defeat.

All of these social movements that were taking place around the same time were a really serious challenge to the dominant white heterosexual masculinity that held social, political, economic and cultural power in the United States. Take the modern multicultural women's movement for example which is one of the most important social movements in history. This movement has given us a new way to think about gender relations and sexual relationships and identities, and as a result, many men in society have experimented with new personal styles as well as new attitudes and approaches towards things like relationships, work and parenting, and many other areas. And, as a result there are many young men today who are living lives that are very different from our fathers' and grandfathers' and who have incorporated these changes and who are thinking in a much more egalitarian way about relations between men and women, about sexual equality in the work place and a whole bunch of other areas of social life.

But some men have not reacted well to these changes and there has been a backlash. In fact, one of the best selling books of the 1990s was Susan Faludi's, *Backlash*, which argued that a lot of men were very, very disrupted and reacted very poorly to some of these changes.

A backlash is an angry and often violent reaction by groups who feel threatened by progressive changes in the culture. Look at the response to Andrew Dice Clay, one of the most popular hate comedians of our time. In fact, Andrew Dice Clay himself, is one of the most financially successful live comedic acts and his career peaked in the early 1990s and one of the key parts of his comedic act was verbal assaults against women.

[Andrew Dice Clay on stage] Don't marry her, man, how do you know where she's been? Let me tell you, I was out with this dishrag whore a couple of weeks ago, right? … And let me tell you something, actually you're a fucking dog, alright? So why don't you just, like I said, sit there and shut your fucking hole, do me a favor, stupid…

JACKSON KATZ: What's most interesting about Dice Clay is not necessarily what he's saying, although that is significant, but rather the audience reaction. The fact is, when this guy was articulating this anger towards women he would not have found an audience if there wasn't something going on in the culture that he was tapping into.

Another popular performer who's tapped into the same kind of anger against women and misogyny that Dice Clay did is Howard Stern. Stern is often portrayed in the popular discourse as this bad boy who's challenging traditional morality and transgressing against authority but that's such a superficial reading of what he's doing. What Stern actually does is simply reinforce, in crude fashion, some of the most tired, old fashioned conservative sexist values.

[TV: The Howard Stern Show]
You wearing panties today? Pull your pants off. What about your bra? Is that coming off? That bra's gotta come off. You gotta take that off.

[TV: The Howard Stern Show]
OK ladies, are you ready to disrobe? Ok, take off your shirts. Let me see, face me. They're not horrible, but I think they should be bigger. Do you have hair on your ass? Why don't you girls go to the gym and work out a little bit?

JACKSON KATZ: What Stern does is he creates a world for his largely young male audience, a world in which they can feel good about themselves by putting down and sexually degrading women. The gender world might be changing all around them, but on the Howard Stern Show, women are bimbos to be stared at and exploited. That is anything but transgressive. Howard Stern is no anti-authority rebel. His shtick absolutely reinforces traditional sexism.

[TV: The Howard Stern Show]
I see a six, nine, eight, ten. You're like a horse, you're like a fine horse.

JACKSON KATZ: A clear indication of how the supposedly lovable Howard embodies contempt for women is in his reaction to the tragic shootings at Columbine High School. When the news first broke about the horrific massacre being perpetrated by Harris and Klebold, the people that Stern identified with were not the boys and girls running for their lives out of the school, but with the male shooters, and what he would have done if he was them. On his radio show he said, and these are his very words "There were some really good-looking girls running out with their hands over their heads. Did those kids try to have sex with any of the good-looking girls? They didn't even do that? At least if you're going to kill yourself and kill all the kids, why wouldn't you have some sex? If I was going to kill some people, I'd take them out with sex." So Howard Stern took the Littleton tragedy as an opportunity to make a rape joke. What a rebel.

Another personality who has become popular by playing upon men's insecurities in the face of women's increased assertions of equality is Rush Limbaugh.

[TV clip: Limbaugh] *Feminism was established so that unattractive ugly broads could have easy access to the mainstream, right? Did you see it? Yes!*

JACKSON KATZ: To me, feminism is about equal rights, justice, fairness, and in that sense it's as American as apple pie. But if you listen to Limbaugh, you'll notice that he's almost obsessed with discrediting strong women. They seem to make him very nervous, even angry.

[TV clip: Limbaugh] A bunch of cows. Moo, moo…

JACKSON KATZ: The reason that Limbaugh uses such derisive and personally insulting terms is that it has the effect of shutting off thinking about the ideas that feminists represent – if you kill the messenger, you don't need to face squarely the implications of the message. And let's not kid ourselves – feminist ideas *are* threatening to the conservative, white, heterosexual male power structure that made someone like Rush Limbaugh a star in the first place.

You can see the desire of some men to retreat into a world where they can act like "real men" and not have to worry about treating women as equals in a lot of different places in the media system. Just recently there's been an upsurge in what's been called the men's shows, like the "X show" or "Happy Hour" or a show actually called the "Man Show" where these mostly white men sit around and talk about sports and beer and sex, and surround themselves with highly sexualized women out of some male fantasy world who are not at all threatening. In fact these shows are the fantasy world that some boys and men would like to live in – a world set in the past where men could be men and where women knew their job was to look good and not ask questions.

Around the same time the women's movement was challenging male power, the gay and lesbian movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s, began to challenge heterosexual power and disrupt heterosexual power and privilege. Many heterosexual people, men and women, responded very positively to these changes and welcomed the changes in their own families as well as in the culture, the more open culture.

[Man in parade] Hey, this is my son. I'm marching for his rights.

JACKSON KATZ: But many heterosexuals did not respond very well at all and in fact there was a backlash.

[Message left on answering machine of gay activist] Gay boy, gay boy, gay boy… I hope you die of AIDS.

[Message left on answering machine of gay activist] Go to hell you lousy homosexual. I hope you die of AIDS.

[Message left on answering machine of gay activist] I kill fags, you fucking losers. Die!

JACKSON KATZ: One of the most virulent aspects of that backlash is the level of violence being perpetrated by young, presumably heterosexual men against gay men, lesbians, and transgendered people.

[NBC News] It was one a.m. Wednesday morning, when Shepherd, a small man, was allegedly beaten with the butt of a pistol, burned with cigarette butts, and finally tied spread eagle to the fence and left to die. Today, two young men, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, who whispered an obscenity as he came into court, were charged.

JACKSON KATZ: The rise in anti-gay violence is one of the clearest indications that a lot of young men are very insecure and anxious about their sexual and gender identities as the

culture increasingly opens up. Why else would some of these young men target gay men for brutal violence? Is it supposed to show themselves, or their friends, that they're "real men"? Doesn't the very fact that they need to prove it by beating people up demonstrate the depths of their own anxieties and self-hatred? Violence, abuse, and harassment by young men directed towards gays harms the victims, first and foremost. And it keeps a lot of gay people in the closet out of fear. It also helps fuel the pain and self-loathing that accounts for the fact that nearly one third of all teens who kill themselves are gay. But it serve another function as well, and that is it sends a message to heterosexual males that they better not try on any style of manhood that breaks out of the accepted norm. Because they too might become the victims of violence and abuse.

[Movie] Doesn't this cafeteria have a no fags allowed rule?

[Movie] Unhappy, faggot?

[Movie] You a queer?

[Movie] Oh you're a big tough country faggot, ain't you?

[Movie] What do you faggots want?

JACKSON KATZ: A number of scholars have argued that on top of all the internal social movements that were transforming American life in the 1960s, there was an external aspect as well that is represented by the loss of the Vietnam War. And one way that some people responded to that was to say that we lost in Vietnam because we had lost our masculine pride. In fact the Sylvester Stallone character Rambo is based on this idea that if America reasserted its masculinity everything would be fine again.

Here was Rambo the ultimate in rugged individuals who took on whole armies. And what Rambo in some ways represented was macho, sort of American men saying that we didn't really lose in Vietnam, what really caused us the defeat was the wimpy anti-war movement and spineless politicians.

[Movie: Rambo] You wanted my war – you asked me, I didn't ask you. And I did what I had to do to win, but somebody wouldn't let us win.

JACKSON KATZ: But if a real man came in and kicked some butt then our problems would be solved. Well, Hollywood produced a series of films in the late 1970s, including Rambo and others, in the early 1980s, that sent the strong message that the reason why we lost is because we had lost our masculine will. We had lost that rugged individual ideal that we're going to go in and kick butt when we need too.

In addition to Rambo, there was another Stallone character that reflected the tensions that many men felt in response to some of the really big changes catalyzed by the various social movements of the 1960s, and that was Rocky Balboa. Like most of my friends, I love Rocky as an inspirational underdog story. I used to hum the theme song to myself when I'd go running to train for football. But the film can also be read as a metaphor for white working class men reasserting their authority against the challenges to that authority that had come from all these movements, especially the civil rights movement. So when Rocky takes on

Apollo Creed, the Mohammed Ali-like figure, he's also taking on what Mohammed Ali represented in the 1960s and 70s. In other words, a challenge to the system of white supremacy that had been a part of American culture for four hundred years. I don't think it's a big coincidence that Rocky emerged as a cultural icon right at the time when conservative politicians were using coded racist appeals to attract working class white male voters.

The ultimate political manifestation of the backlash against the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s came in the 1980 election of the arch conservative and former Hollywood actor, Ronald Reagan. His election was the culmination of the belief that the reason America had lost its way supposedly was because it had been too weak, too soft. In fact Ronald Reagan rose to political power opposing all the gains of the 60s and 70s. He was against every major piece of civil rights legislation, he was against the women's movement, he was against the gay and lesbian liberation movements, he was against the student movement that opposed the Vietnam war. His cowboy image and his right wing beliefs represented a vision of America rooted deep in the past, when blacks were not demanding equality, when gays were in the closet, when women knew their place was in the kitchen and the bedroom.

[old TV show]
And the dishwasher – now there's a machine that does away with a chore everybody hates. -- Golly, I'm so impressed!

JACKSON KATZ: But to really understand what Ronald Reagan represented culturally and politically, we have to understand the career of another very prominent and powerful movie actor, John Wayne. John Wayne is an incredibly important force in post-war American masculinity. Incredibly popular man.

[Movie] The pay is thirteen dollars a month, their diet beans and hay; maybe horsemeat before this campaign is over.

JACKSON KATZ: The idea of the John Wayne character, in other words, the strong, silent type riding into town and taking care of business because no one else will in a heroic way, that led into the appeal of Ronald Reagan in the late 1970s when a certain portion of the electorate was identifying the problems as the country has become kind of wimpy and emasculated. John Wayne wasn't available. Ronald Reagan was the next best thing.

It's important to remember when we talk about John Wayne that we're talking about an *actor* playing the role of John Wayne. We're not seeing the real person. John Wayne is the screen name of a man who was born with the feminine name of Marian Morrison. He, in fact, hated horses. He dressed in fancy business suits when he was off camera. He constructed the image of the John Wayne character for the cinematic screen.

If we wanted to demonstrate this disjuncture between John Wayne, the actual man, and John Wayne the actor, we can just look at what happened during the Second World War Wayne was of right age and was fit enough to serve, but he chose instead to remain in Hollywood to pursue his acting career, and that in fact lost him the respect of a lot of people who had bought into the tough manly patriotic image he had created on the big screen.

In fact, looking at the relationship between John Wayne and Ronald Reagan shows us a couple of really important things. First, that the ideal of manhood that was being offered as

an alternative to the changes of the 1960s and 70s came from the past, when racism, sexism and homophobia were the norm, and second that the image that people like Reagan were trying to reproduce was already a mask, an act, a pose, a tough guise which hid a different and much more complex masculinity underneath.

THE TOUGH GUISE

JACKSON KATZ: This idea that masculinity is not natural, that we're not just born with it, that we actually perform it in response to social and cultural pressures, is illustrated really clearly in the case of men of color adopting the tough guise. For example, in the film *Smoke Signals*, one of the first feature films produced by Native American filmmakers, there's a scene where a young man gives a lesson in how to be a "real Indian."

[Movie: Smoke Signals]
Don't you even know how to be a real Indian?
        -- I guess not.
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.
        -- But our tribe never hunted buffalo – we were fishermen.
What? You want to look like you just came back from catching a fish? This ain't "Dances with Salmon" you know. Thomas, you've got to look like a warrior. There, that's better.

JACKSON KATZ: This idea that men of color need to adopt this hyper masculine posture in order to get the respect they've been stripped of by the dominant culture is common in many groups of men of color. For example, Richard Majors has written a book called *Cool Pose* where he talks about the phenomena of urban poor African-American men kind of walking around like tough guys, because that's all they have going for them in terms of gaining the respect and validation of their manhood.

For example a lot of poor urban black males don't have access to a good education, or the expectation of a good career, or they don't have a lot of status in their community, and this is not their fault -- the social and economic structures of the society have systematically denied them the access and opportunities that middle class people take for granted. But one thing that hasn't been taken from them is the ability to use their own bodies and poses to scare people, to front like tough guys so that they can get respect.

Anyone who's worked with poor and working class boys over the past generation has seen this cool pose, this tough guise, over and over. Now one of the really interesting things that's happened in the last decade, largely as a result of the popularity of rap and hip-hop music, is that this urban black street style has made its way into the mainstream culture, especially through places like MTV, and as that's happened these images of the cool pose, the tough guise, have become glamorized and idealized so that at the present time one of the most powerful images of manhood that young men of all races and of all classes are looking to as an ideal or a model to emulate is the glamorized image of the hyper violent black male body and this urban street style.

Many people have commented on what seems to be a strange phenomena of white suburban middle class kids "acting black" -- but that shouldn't surprise us at all if we understand that there's nothing natural or inherent about masculinity, that it's largely about playing a role defined by broader structures. So that even if the lives of middle class white boys don't reflect the inner city conditions out of which the black cool pose arose as a response, they live in a culture that tells them that being a real man means taking on this black urban hard guy pose.

[Movie: Can't Hardly Wait]
Shouldn't you be getting your freak on by now, man?
-- Oh, I'm just pausing while those two hos over there scratch it out over who gets to knock the boots with me, you know what I'm sayin?

[Movie: 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, ok? You're white!

JACKSON KATZ: What this phenomenon of posing shows us is that an important part of masculinity is the very performance of it and that these white kids are learning this from the pop culture images they're exposed to every day of their lives. But we can take this back one step and ask if masculinity is a pose, where did urban blacks get the inspiration for their own performance? Of course people borrow from many places: their communities, their family histories, popular culture and many other places. And 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.

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

[Music Video: The Geto Boys "Gangsta Put Me Down"] *One day, and that day may never come, I'm gonna call you to do something for me. Until then, take this justice as a gift, alright?*
-- Thank you godfather.

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 Italian men.

This is a really clear illustration of this idea that masculinity is a pose, a performance. And its not just rap and hip-hop music and style that offers this story, but the culture in general that tells boys that you become real men through power and control, that respect is linked to physical strength and the threat of violence and the ability to scare people. We have to ask ourselves what is the effect on the society in general of training boys to become men in this really narrow and destructive way?

PART TWO: VIOLENT MASCULINITY IN ACTION

[Movie: Juice]
Big man! If you want respect, you gotta earn it.
-- You damn right! You gotta be ready to go down, stand up and die for that shit like Blizzard did. If you want the juice.

THE SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

[CBS News] It has happened again. Students run for their lives as gunmen open fire in an American high school.

[CBS News] How did it come to this? It's a question the nation keeps asking. We asked after this shooting in Pearl, Mississippi. We asked again two months later after this shooting in Paducah, Kentucky. Again, just a little more than a year ago in Jonesboro, Arkansas. And again less than a year ago in Springfield, Oregon. Before today the toll was fourteen dead, forty-four injured, four schools forever changed. And they're still counting in Littleton.

[BBC News] The faces of the mass murderers, boys from well-to-do homes but part of a group known as the "trench coat mafia," taunted by other students, angry and disaffected.

JACKSON KATZ: Now its really unwise to speculate on the particular circumstances that led Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold to commit that horrible massacre, and its tempting to look at them as sick individuals who acted out of their own twisted psyches. But one of the things that we know is that in the social system at Columbine they were outsiders who didn't fit in and saw themselves as being victimized and bullied by the jock culture that celebrated toughness and muscularity, and they weren't big and strong and muscular, but in guns they had the great equalizer, where they could actualize their revenge fantasy in a violent, physical way and finally gain a grotesque form of respect.

[News Interview] Everyone around me got shot and I begged him for ten minutes not to shoot me. He just put the gun in my face and started waving it everywhere and laughing and started saying that it was all because people were mean to him last year.

JACKSON KATZ: A lot of boys and young men find themselves harassed and bullied by the dominant male peer culture. Thank goodness the vast majority of them don't explode in murderous rages. But it's a mistake to dismiss the tragedy in Columbine as an aberration, because it does offer a number of lessons.

In fact a lot of the boys involved in this string of school shootings talked about taking revenge on people through violence and asserting their sense of their manhood. For example, Luke Woodham, who carried out the Pearl, Mississippi, shooting was quoted as saying "I killed because people like me are mistreated every day. Murder is not weak and slow-witted, murder is gutsy and daring."

We should be thinking of these school shootings in the same way that miners thought about the canaries they took down into the mine shafts to warm them of unseen dangers. The

school shootings are just the very tip of the iceberg. In fact fifteen kids every day in this country are shot dead by other kids and boys overwhelming are the victims and the shooters. That's like a Columbine happening every other day. Deadly violence involving young people has been a fact of life for years in communities of color, but the mainstream media just reports it matter of factly. But because it's happening now in white, middle class neighborhoods, all of a sudden it's a major national concern because now its quote unquote "normal" kids who are involved. That's what is shocking to a lot of people.

The Jonesboro, Arkansas case in the spring of 1998 is a good example of this.

[NBC News Channel 7] A teacher and four girls are dead, one was eleven years old, the rest of them twelve. The police say boys, aged thirteen and eleven were arrested near the school carrying guns and wearing camouflage.

JACKSON KATZ: These were two seemingly "normal" boys. They didn't meet any of the definitions of a pathological, sick killer. We're much more comfortable, many of us, thinking about violence being committed by sicko, psycho, types like the Freddy Kruger's, the Jason's, the Leather Faces. Because when you see kind of a really pathological male figure committing violence, it allows you to not pay attention to the social, political and economic institutions that produce on a daily basis "normal" males acting out violently.

Take for example the Glenridge rape case, where these White heterosexual middle class boys, many of whom were star athletes and popular guys, committed an act of serious brutality against a mentally retarded girl. The community itself was very, very slow to catch on to the fact that boys in their midst were acting violently, because they were so normal.

So one of the things that we have to do is to take our focus off of the pathological male as the perpetrator of violence and on to "normal" average looking guys. And secondly, we have to confront the fact that most violence is perpetrated by boys and men and, given that, figure out how we can change our definitions of manhood as a key step in reducing violence.

CONSTRUCTING VIOLENT MASCULINITY

JACKSON KATZ: The question that really comes out of this is "why are boys behaving in this way?" "Why is 90% of violence committed by boys and men?" There's been a lot of discussion of this recently where people have blamed violent video games, or Hollywood films, or even rock stars like Marylyn Manson. But that's such a narrow and wrong way to look at this. Sure video games and movies play a role, but they do it within a much larger cultural and social context where the constant message is that manhood is connected to power, control and violence. That is, it's not just in these few places (like video games or movies) but it's in what passes for *normal* culture. It is part of the normal training and conditioning and socializing of boys and men. That's a point that a lot of people don't want to hear, but if you look at the culture these kids are immersed in, violence is a normal, natural part, not just of the world, but of being masculine or being a male person in the world.

We can see this really clearly if we look at a childhood picture of Andrew Golden, one of the Jonesboro killers. From the earliest age, the link between guns and manhood is made clear to young boys.

Go into a video arcade. The interactivity of the violence that young boys are playing all across the United States, this is something we've never had in our culture. In other words, there's no experience of that level of interactivity technologically possible where boys can actually be pulling the trigger and a body is dying on-screen six inches away from them. We're only beginning to understand what effects this kind of interactive violent technology is having on the psyches of young boys who are growing up playing these games for hour after hour after hour.

One important part of the culture that teaches boys and men how to be men is the sports culture. Sports is an incredibly important institution, it's pervasive in our society and young boys and girls learn a whole lot from an early age about life, about teamwork. There's some positive lessons, certainly that young people playing sports learn from an early age. Some of the ways that the sports culture has grown increasingly aggressive and violent and we see that in hockey fights and baseball fights. We'd be naïve to think that the way grown men act on the field or off has no impact on how boys learn to think of themselves as men. But its important to remember that what's being taught in a lot of modern sports is not just violence and aggression, but the even more powerful idea that being a real man in connected with being intimidating and controlling. Just look at what happens when a basketball player does an "in your face" dunk over his opponent, and then rubs it in. The lesson about manhood is clear. You gain respect by disrespecting another person.

The same thing is the essence of professional wrestling, which is incredibly popular among boys and men. Look at the phenomenal growth in the popularity of pro wrestling. People can argue back and forth about whether its sports or just pure theatrics but one point that's hard to argue with is that what takes place both within the ring and outside of it is a celebration of dominance and the projection of power in a way that links being a man with being abusive and violent.

[TV: WWE announcer] Austin is telling the Undertaker that you better come get your man here, a great opportunity for the Undertaker to come
-- Wait a minute! Austin with a stunner! And the Undertaker's not budging.

JACKSON KATZ: So boys are being taught over and over again that real manhood is connected to size and strength and muscularity.

[TV ad: Soloflex] This could be your arm. This could be your chest. These could be your shoulders.

JACKSON KATZ: I think a lot of violence is as a result of men and boys compensating for not being big and strong and muscular. So in other words, if you're a young guy, sixteen or seventeen years old, but you don't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger and you want people to respect you on a bodily level and your definition of respect involves physical strength and physical respect, what can you do? Well one thing you can do is you can pack a Glock and all of a sudden your friends are backing up from you. All of a sudden you're a man.

[Interview with kids] They just wanna show it off. That's really all it is about around here, is like showing off.

[Interview with gun salesman] Nobody's confused in the room about who's who and what's what at that point in time and you solve a lot of social arguments instantly by just looking at one of these.

JACKSON KATZ: So if we take this broader view of media violence, we can see that significantly reducing violence involves much more than simply stopping young boys from playing violent video games or watching violent movies. Because the messages that link being a man with being violent, controlling and intimidating are everywhere in the culture – such as sports and wrestling – as well as the more obvious places like video games and films. If we want to deal seriously with reducing violence, we have to turn away from thinking about it as kids imitating violence and focus instead on all the different ways that we as a society are constructing violent masculinity as a cultural norm, not as something unusual or unexpected, but as one of the ways that boys become men.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Another aspect of violent masculinity and violence that kids are subject to on a daily basis really, is the really popular genre of films, the Slasher film. One of the things that happens in Slasher films typically, the violence is not just violent it's also sexualized violence. So you often have scenes for example of girls undressing or taking a shower or wearing sexy low cut dresses, sometimes even removing clothing at opportune moments, or being positioned in sexually provocative camera angles, deliberately designed to sexually arouse straight boys, and at the moment when the boys are aroused is when the girls are assaulted.

So what's happening is that boys are being sexually charged and turned on and then the murder takes place. So the sexualization of violence might be one of the areas we need to look at, when we talk about why are so many boys and men *sexually* assaulting girls and women. Because the rates of rape and sexual abuse and sexual assault perpetrated by men against girls and women as well as against boys, are just out of sight in our society. Even though crime rates in general have been coming down in recent years, the rape rate hasn't, the sexual abuse rate hasn't. We have to ask ourselves why not?

If fact men's violence against women is made to seem normal. Take the popular film *There's Something About Mary,* which is a film where the female lead played by Carmen Diaz is being stalked by at least three different men. Now I realize that in many ways this was a really funny film, and I have to admit it made me laugh, but very few people have commented on the fact that an entire film that's considered a romantic comedy is based on a situation where a group of men are stalking a woman.

[Movie: There's Something About Mary]
Oh yeah, here comes the money shot.

JACKSON KATZ: So the phenomenon of men harassing, abusing and hunting women is made invisible by making into a joke. At a time when over a million American women are stalked annually and one in twelve will be stalked in their lifetime, humor and comedy blind us to its seriousness, making it appear normal and fun, even romantic.

This normalization of sexual violence is the essence for example of a lot of pornography, which plays a really important role in male culture. Most of the critical discussion about pornography focuses rightly on the objectification and degradation of women, but because the massive pornography industry is overwhelmingly controlled by men, and the vast majority of consumers are men, we should also look at it for what it tells us about masculinity. And if we did, we'd see that the flip side of submissive femininity is a masculinity that is defined by power, control, dominance and sometimes violence.

One very serious consequence of teaching boys and men that masculinity is about power and control is the increasingly common phenomenon of teen dating violence. There's been a disturbing trend over the past decade where high school age boys have been acting out in controlling and abusive ways in relationships with their girlfriends – and college professionals are seeing this problem more frequently as well. This behavior isn't genetically programmed. It's a result of all of the messages in the culture that on the one hand link

being a man with always being in control and one-up on others, and on the other hand portray women as deserving to be under the control of men.

INVULNERABILITY

[Movie: Beautiful Girls]
What'd you do to her in that ice shack, Will?
-- I told you, we just talked.
You told her things didn't you?
-- What things?
You let her behind the curtain, didn't you?
-- Maybe she missed her boyfriend.
You let her behind the curtain. I know you did. You never let 'em behind the curtain, Will. You never let them see the little old man behind the curtain working the levers of the great and powerful Oz. They're all sisters Willy, they're not allowed back there. They mustn't see.

JACKSON KATZ: There is more to masculinity of course than just violence. Boys are also being taught, by the popular culture, that a real man is not only strong physically, but emotionally as well and that "real men" don't need other people, that they should make it on their own, that they are invulnerable from the forces of the society. This ideal is represented in popular culture by characters like John Wayne, and in the modern era by someone like Sylvester Stallone's Rambo. But perhaps no figure better tells this story of the Rugged Individualist than the Marlboro Man.

[TV ad: Marlboro] *Morning is forty miles behind you and tomorrow is forty miles up ahead. This is Marlboro country.*

JACKSON KATZ: The Marlboro Man is the most common advertising symbol in the world. The Marlboro Man embodies the idea of a real man as a quiet, stoic, rugged individual who doesn't do much talking or relating to other people. The message of the Marlboro Man is clear: interdependence, connection, and relationships are forms of weakness; that stuff's for women. A real man makes it on his own, and if he doesn't make it, it's his own fault. The rugged individualist ideal that men are being taught to live up to has enormous emotional and psychological costs because we are not rocks unto ourselves. We are in relation to other human beings. We are interdependent. One of the really interesting books, and there's been many books written about men's psychological and emotional lives and health, over the past decade, is by a man named Terry Real, who wrote about male depression. The name of his book is, *I Don't Want to Talk About It.* Even the name of the book is interesting because I don't want to talk about it is the way a lot of men deal with emotional and psychological issues. The vast majority of people in therapy are women. Is that because women have more problems than men? I don't think so. I think it's because there's more permission in the culture for women to get help and deal with some of their problems whereas men are being taught from the John Wayne, Marlboro Man ethos to suck it up.

[Football coach] *C'mon now. Suck it up now.*

[Football coach] *You gotta out-tough people when you get down there. It's man-on-man down there.*

[Movie: The Godfather] *You can act like a man! What's the matter with you? Is this how you turned out? A Hollywood finocchio that cries like a woman? (Mocking) What could I do?*

JACKSON KATZ: If at any given time young men forget that part of being a man means being invulnerable, not acknowledging weakness, it seems like there's always an adult man there to tell them how to act.

[TV: Southpark]
I can't.
        -- What the … what's wrong with you?
I don't want to shoot the bunny.
        -- What the hell are you talking about, you don't want to shoot the bunny? You're
        babbling. You're not making any sense. You're hysterical.
I'm not hysterical. I just don't want to shoot the bunny.
        -- No nephew of mine is gonna be a tree-hugger.

JACKSON KATZ: You see this in Little League coaches screaming at kids, or young football players who want to cry cause they got hurt, being told that big boys don't cry. Young boys learn this from an early age.

In the film *Varsity Blues* there's a scene that's been played out in thousands of locker rooms around the country, where a coach tells his players that showing pain or suffering is weak.

[Movie: Varsity Blues]
Pretty good running the ball, Wendell. Really not bad, boy. How are you feeling?
        -- Dog tired. It's my knee.
Never show weakness. Never show weakness. The only pain that matters is the pain you inflict.

JACKSON KATZ: You know a real man just deals with his problems, doesn't burden anybody else with it, just deals with it. But that comes at enormous costs according to Terry Real. A huge percentage of the American population, the American male population, suffers from what he terms "covert depression." Not so serious it would get somebody checked into a hospital, but something that does impair functioning on a daily basis.

This idea that "I am invulnerable" or that manhood means reckless disregard for personal health and safety, is often behind the kind of risky behaviors that boys and men take on as a way of proving their toughness. For example, look at the phenomenon of binge drinking that many young males in college and high school engage in because they think that's what real men do. While we know that many girls and young women have serious alcohol and drug problems, and that these are often linked to their gender in both obvious and complex ways, boys far outnumber girls in suffering from serious alcohol problems, at least in part because popular culture often glamorizes men's use of alcohol.

[TV beer ad] This is not gonna be your run of the mill, laundry doing, pizza eating kind of night. I will not be exercising tonight. Or philosophizing. Or organizing. What I am gonna do is look for women who look like trouble, and I'm going to flirt with them heavily. Because tonight, I'm not just drinking beer, I'm gulping life.

JACKSON KATZ: Or take driving accidents – again males far outnumber females in terms of reckless driving incidents and we have to ask ourselves why that is. What's going in the

broader cultural environment that suggests that driving recklessly and dangerously is cool and manly?

The notion of invulnerability gets a lot of young men killed. There's a lot of young men in graves and a lot of mourning families because young boys and young men have bought into this idea of manliness and not backing down and all this kind of stuff.

The unhealthy and risk-taking behaviors of young males, the damage they are doing to themselves, to others and to society, has led many people to label masculinity itself as a public health problem. One way of dealing with this is to intervene in the cultural environment that connects masculinity with invulnerability, we have to show that vulnerability, compassion and caring are also part of what it means to become a real man.

VULNERABILITY

JACKSON KATZ: One of the ways that we need to see more diversified images of masculinity is we need to see more honest portrayals of male vulnerability. Because the idea, again, that we're invulnerable is just a fiction and it's important that we see – that young boys in particular see – adult men acknowledging vulnerability and taking off of that cool pose.

Take Mark McGwire, the great St. Louis Cardinal slugger who just set an incredible record for home runs in a season. Mark McGwire who is very big and strong and muscular and in many ways visually he's like the embodiment of all the things we've been talking about in terms of the rugged individualist and the macho man. Mark McGwire however, is not like that in real life. He hits home runs, yes. But he's an emotionally sensitive guy.

For example, Mark McGwire at a press conference announced that he was donating a million dollars a year to a program that served boys and girls who had been sexually and physically abused. And when he was making the announcement, he actually started crying,

[TV press conference McGwire] It's going to be dealing with, hopefully with sexually and physically abused children. Children..uh…wow…At a time in my life that I want to help them out, so I will do everything in my power to start my foundation, to help them out.

JACKSON KATZ: …which stunned a lot of the reporters who were in the room at the time. Because it's very rare to see a man of that stature and that sort of powerful image to actually show vulnerability in front the cameras. It was a very powerful moment. Mark McGwire has also in many, many interviews acknowledged being in therapy and said how important therapy was to his growth as a human being, as well as an athlete. And that's a very powerful message that he's sending when he's saying that. The mighty Mark McGwire is vulnerable enough and strong enough to acknowledge that he needs some help. And, right on to Mark McGwire. We need more men with the kind of courage to step forward.

And other thing about McGwire's experience during the great home run year, was his relationship and friendship with Sammy Sosa, the great Dominican baseball player who hit an enormous amount of homeruns and almost matched McGwire step for step all along the way. Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire instead of *competing* with each other and being nasty with each other like is the experience of a lot of men who are vying for the same goal, it's what a lot of people take for granted is competition, were actually friendly and it was also across racial lines as well. They were not just modeling male cooperation in what many people saw as a competitive environment, but in fact, cross racial understanding and friendship.

Another recent example of the representation of male vulnerability in the media culture was the film *Full Monty*, which really caught on. And I think one of the reasons why it became so popular was because it showed men in real life situations who were in fact vulnerable.

[Movie: The Full Monty]
I was to be a stripper, right? Me and Gaz and some fellas thought we could make a buck or two out of taking our clothes off.

-- Strippers?
Only I couldn't, could I?
        -- Why not?
Well, look at me.
        -- So?
Jeannie, who wants to see this dance?
        -- Me Dave. I do.

JACKSON KATZ: It was a huge hit among both women, who have been, I think eager to see more examples of male vulnerability in the mainstream culture, but also a lot of men, because again a lot of men and boys feel very constrained and constricted by these artificial straight jackets that are put on us by the dominant culture. And the more that we open up the culture, the more that we show examples of men being vulnerable, the more healthy we're going to get as a society. And the more models that young boys are going to see of healthy manhood and masculinity.

I mean that scene when they were on that unemployment line and they were hearing the music and they started to dance to it, that was sort of a metaphorical representation of them breaking out of the traditional strictures of manhood and acknowledging that they have more to them, not just vulnerability but humanity in them.

Another example of male vulnerability that we can see is the example of Christopher Reeve the actor. Christopher Reeve made his fame playing Superman, the Man of Steel. Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, right? And yet, Christopher Reeve the real man, the actual authentic man, in a tragic accident became a quadriplegic. And Christopher Reeve is a great man and the things that he's done for the consciousness of the average person to the humanity of people with disabilities has been incredible. He's serving as an example of you don't have to be the man of steel to be a real man. It's about character. It's about quality of personhood.

[TV appearance: Christopher Reeve] *I think what we all want most in the world is for what we do to be useful. You know, to be recognized or to be able to make some kind of difference. And fortunately that has not been taken away from me. In fact, it's grown.*

JACKSON KATZ: Another really popular personality who exhibits vulnerability in character is Mohammed Ali who has developed over the years into an incredible ambassador for spiritual understanding and cooperation. Here is a man who was once a world-class athlete, with an incredibly strong and agile body, and now, well past his physical prime. And a really important part of the impact he has on people is due to the fact that he has the courage to let people see him with serious physical limitations. It's an extraordinary example from a man who for many years was considered the toughest guy on the planet.

One of the areas that we need to pay attention is how to encourage different representations for men of color, because the media images of them are even more narrowly defined (and concentrated around violence) than for white males. But there's a reason to be optimistic here as we're starting to diversify the range of ways that men of color can be shown. Take the example of the actor Avery Brooks in his role as Benjamin Sisko on *Deep Space Nine*. On the one hand he is portrayed as a strong leader yes, but he's also shown as a loving and nurturing father to his son – the show features some really moving scenes of affection and

love that we wouldn't have found even a few years ago where you actually see a father kissing his son.

And when people of color are given a chance to tell their own stories, to portray themselves, we see a much richer and more diverse range of representation. Take the case of the director John Singleton and his film *Boyz in the Hood* where we actually get to see the complexity and humanity of people who live in poor neighborhoods. In one scene with Cuba Gooding Jr. we actually see a young black male, crying and revealing vulnerability, which is popular culture is really unusual.

Or look at the example of the great actor Edward James Olmos who has been trying for the last twenty years has been trying to open up the way that Latinos are shown in the mainstream media – his character in *Stand and Deliver* for example is not a macho tough guy, but someone who shows their courage and their strength by stressing learning and education.

[Movie: Stand and Deliver] And the only thing I ask from you is desire. If you don't have the desire, I will give it to you because I am an expert.

Another interesting theme in *Stand and Deliver* is the struggle of the hard guy character played by Lou Diamond Phillips, who obviously has a more thoughtful and intelligent side, but the tough guise that he's caught up in won't allow it to be shown.

[Movie: Stand and Deliver]
You ain't got a C, don't give me that.
  -- Yeah I know about that, that was a mistake. I'm gonna fly straight. I got a little
  problem though.
Yeah, me.
  -- No, seriously…books. I can't have the homies see me haul them around.
Wouldn't want anyone to think you're intelligent, huh?
  -- So maybe I can have two books – keep one stashed at home?

JACKSON KATZ: Another area in the popular culture where we've seen some really positive, progressive and alternative images of masculinity is in popular music. From John Lennon in the 1960s right through to the present pop music has offered a range of different images of masculinity that go much deeper than the superficiality of the tough guise. Look at the huge and enduring popularity of soul music where classic male performers like Marvin Gaye, Al Green, and groups like the Temptations express a range of emotions. Look at the incredible career of Stevie Wonder who's been bringing positive energy and brilliant music for more than three decades. Or Q-tip from A Tribe Called Quest who has cultivated a thoughtful and emotionally complex image.

The popularity of these and other artists suggest that in spite of the hyper-masculine posturing of so many contemporary male performers, people seem to be longing for displays of manhood that move beyond the narrow confines of traditional masculinity. Look at men like the late Kurt Cobain, or Michael Stipe of REM or Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam. These guys have been vocal proponents of women's rights. And then look at the great and huge country star Garth Brooks.

[Garth Brooks Concert] I got friends in low places, where the whiskey drowns…

JACKSON KATZ: Garth Brooks is incredibly popular with both men and women and the style of masculinity in Garth Brooks' performance and his songs and in his public interviews is not hard guy, tough guy. It's soft and sensitive.

[TV: Garth Brooks] I grew up in a house that was just totally cool. You could live in that house. You could have a blast in the house. You could try things and stretch your imagination. A house that you could make mistakes in, and not be just totally killed for it.

JACKSON KATZ: If you listen to what Garth Brooks' songs say, a lot of them are very sensitive, thoughtful, lyrical examinations of relationships and all kinds of positive energy, not necessarily macho tough guy posing. Again, I think we need to ask ourselves why is Garth Brooks so incredibly popular? Obviously, I think, he's tapping into something really happening in the culture.

Another hopeful sign that people are ready – including men and women – are ready to look at new ways of envisioning manhood and masculinity is the overwhelming response to Steven Spielberg's film *Saving Private Ryan*, which is easily the most popular war movie of our time. One of the things that *Saving Private Ryan* did was it showed the real pain and suffering of war. It was an anti John Wayne kind of presentation of masculinity. Yes there was heroism but there was also pain and suffering and anxiety and terror. I think a lot of men are ready to face the reality of violent masculinity and to look behind that tough guy pose to the real humanity lying underneath. And I think that's a hopeful sign as we leave behind the twentieth century, which is the bloodiest century in the history of the human species. It's a hopeful sign that there is that energy that would support that new vision.

BETTER MEN

Our culture has opened up and become more diverse in gender, sexual and racial terms over the past few decades, and obviously that's a good thing. But we always have to be aware that anytime the culture opens up, there's always the risk that it will prompt a closing up and a retrenchment of certain threatened interests and while we may celebrate some of the positive and diverse ways that masculinities are being represented as well as men's lives are being lived out, there are some men out there who are really de-centered by all of this. There are also some political interests at stake.

For example the radical right wing militia movement can also be seen as the extreme wing of the men's rights movement, a backlash by men whose gender, racial, and sexual identities have been dramatically challenged over the past generation. Some men's violence against women can be seen as a response to women's increased assertions of their right to equality, with the violence being men's attempt to maintain the power and control they fear they're losing. We can see the rise in gay bashing as a direct result of the degree to which some men are panicked by a loosening up of the traditional strictures of manhood and an opening up of sexualities and different kinds of lifestyles among men.

So we have to be vigilant to protect the gains of the past generation but we also have to move forward and offer boys a more positive set of alternatives. Instituting these changes will take a lot of courage – more courage, and more intelligence, in fact than is required for putting on the tough guise. If we wanted to see what's at stake it's provided in the film *Good Will Hunting*, which I think is a really important film.

[Movie: Good Will Hunting]
…Unless you want to talk about you, who you are. Then I'm fascinated. I'm in. But you don't want to do that, do you sport? You're terrified of what you might say.

JACKSON KATZ: I think the reason that millions of American boys and men could identify with the Matt Damon character was that they could see themselves in him – that the hurts that he had suffered, the physical abuse, the loneliness he felt growing up as an orphan, had caused him to put up this really defensive shield. So he had all this bottled up rage that was expressed as anger and violence through the course of the film.

[Movie: Good Will Hunting]
I love you!
        -- Don't bullshit me. Don't you fucking bullshit me!

[Movie: Good Will Hunting]
It's not your fault.
        -- Don't fuck with me, alright? Don't fuck with me Shawn, not you.
It's not your fault.

JACKSON KATZ: So when Robin Williams as his therapist is telling him that it's not his fault, it takes real courage and character for him to give up the tough guise and admit that he is vulnerable and that he needs other people.

The reason why I think *Good Will Hunting* is such an important film is that it's a metaphor for the idea that it's a lot easier to put on the act, the tough guise, than is to do the real hard work of looking inward both as individuals and as a society.

Another film that shows the courage involved in this is *Boyz in the Hood*, where the Cuba Gooding Jr. character has just seen his best friend gunned down by a rival gang, and he's in the car searching for them, when he realizes that he has to break this cycle that connects manhood with anger, revenge and violence.

[Movie: Boyz in the Hood]
Let me out.

JACKSON KATZ: It takes more guts to get out of the car than perpetuate the same destructive patterns.

We don't just have to look to films for this kind of example – just look at three of the greatest political leaders of this century – Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. All three of these represented people that had suffered incredible violence and bloodshed at the hands of brutal oppressors, but instead of responding with violence they responded at key moments with peace and reconciliation. And it took a lot more guts to do that than the far easier path of violence.

We really have to define courage in a different way. Courage is about more than just physical courage. It's also about standing up for what's right, even when that might not be the most popular thing to do at the moment. For boys and men it means having the courage to not just be one of the guys, when being one of the guys means going along with harassing girls or bullying other boys.

[TV awards ceremony: Beastie Boys' Adam Horovitz speech] *All the musicians here: I think we can talk to the promoters and make sure that they're doing something about the safety of all the girls and the women who come to our shows. I think we can talk and work with the security people to make sure they know and understand about sexual harassment and rape and they know how to handle these situations, respectfully.*

JACKSON KATZ: It means having the guts to support girls and women and work with them in their striving for justice and equal treatment. It means speaking out against teen dating violence, sexual harassment, and the countless ways that some boys and men abuse and mistreat girls and women. For heterosexual people, male and female, it means having the courage to join gay/straight alliances, and in other ways support the aspirations of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people to be treated with dignity and respect. And to be free from the threat of violence.

All of this is going to take a lot of work. And it's not going to happen with just individual boys and men being more reflective about their choices. It's going to have to happen both on a personal and on an institutional level. And everyone has a role to play here, not just men. While girls and women are not responsible for men's violence, they too have an important role to play because the tough guise is attractive to men in part because they see many girls and women validating it. Girls and women have to show that they're looking for more in men than bad boy posturing and in particular that they value men who reject the tough guise.

We also have to work to change the *institutions* that create our present choices. For example, we need to break the monopoly of the media system that we've been looking at, where mostly rich white men dictate to the whole society the kinds of images and stories of manhood that surround us.

Many men today are searching for new, healthier, self-respecting ways of being men in a rapidly changing world. We need to hear their stories too, and learn from them. In different ways all of us have to struggle for real cultural and structural changes in the society if we want our sons and their sons to have a chance of being "better men."