

# Donald Trump may be vile – but at least he's forced men to talk about masculinity for once

[telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/donald-trump-may-be-vile--but-at-least-hes-forced-men-to-talk-ab/](http://telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/donald-trump-may-be-vile--but-at-least-hes-forced-men-to-talk-ab/)

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Donald Trump's presidential campaign was temporarily derailed with the leak of sexist comments from 2005

The crisis in masculinity and the US presidential election got hitched this weekend, thanks to Donald Trump. While a vast majority of men – this election season's silent majority – reject Mr. Trump's "locker room" ideas about manhood, many are reluctant to publicly say so. That may be changing.

Mr Trump's vile description of [how he treats women](#), and his subsequent disingenuous "apologies" may encourage men to speak out as the question of American masculinity takes centre stage in the campaign. Last night, the momentum continued apace, as two women [claimed that the Republican presidential nominee had groped and kissed them without their consent](#).

Ironically, the Republican candidate's attempt to downplay his behavior as locker room banter is having the opposite effect, highlighting a culture of sexual assault and rape that men need to play a greater role in uprooting.

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I have been part of a movement committed to transforming masculinity for three decades. The kind of manhood I

want to pass on to my son and grandsons, and the hopes and dreams I have for my daughters and granddaughter, could not be more different from Mr. Trump's, a man who is on tape admitting to sexually assaulting women. Ironically, through his vulgar remarks, he may well be advancing our cause.

Mr Trump exhibits virtually every negative trait about manhood the gender justice movement is challenging. Antagonistic. Boastful. Bullying. Conceited. Condescending. Crude. Defensive. Dishonest. Entitled. Inflexible. Juvenile. Lacking in self-awareness. Merciless. Obstinate. Predatory. Privileged. Rapacious. Sexist. Vindictive. All ingredients in a toxic masculinity sludge that men and women in scores of countries around the world are working to eradicate.



Donald Trump caught saying lewd and sexual comments Play! 00:46

One organization, the global [MenEngage Alliance](#) and its 650-members in 66 countries – including Great Britain – is committed to inoculating future generations of boys from the virulent strain of hate and misogyny Mr Trump is spreading. For decades, activist women have led the way in advancing gender justice; now men interested in equality for their mothers, wives, and daughters must help develop a social vaccine to protect against poisonous masculinity – as well as continuing to develop positive programs to raise healthy boys.

"Trump's ultimate contribution to the 2016 election may turn out to be the teachable moment before us. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, we can ill afford not to begin the dialogue"

When men hear a man degrade women the way Mr. Trump did on the tape, too often we walk away rather than confront the misogynist head on. Mr. Trump does not represent what most men think manhood is – or, more accurately – what humanness is.

All of us were born of mothers; none of us would want them, our daughters, our sisters to *ever* hear such revolting language, let alone be groped, or worse. I am ashamed to share the same gender with Mr Trump. And as a father, it is unfathomable to me how he spoke about his daughter. How can any other father or grandfather stand silently by when a presidential candidate describes his daughter as "hot", saying he'd consider dating her if she weren't of his own flesh and blood?

I am four years younger than Mr Trump; like him I am a husband, father, and grandfather. A lot of men believe that if they speak out against Mr Trump and his ilk – men who contend they can sexually assault women with impunity – that they'll be bullied, ostracized, labeled "weak." Is Mr. Trump unwittingly inviting them to speak up?

Trump and Hillary Clinton clashed in the second presidential debate on Sunday Credit: AP

When it comes to sexual assault, political affiliations are irrelevant. As men we must challenge each other about what we expect of one another – beginning with ourselves. We have to declare unambiguously that denigrating and assaulting women as just "guy talk" or "boys being boys," is indefensible, inexcusable, unforgivable. Mr Trump was 59 years old, newly married, and a father of three when he spoke so crudely, not some college frat boy.

By running for president, Mr Trump has given citizens in the US an unexpected opportunity to begin [a debate about contemporary masculinity](#). Imagine a coordinated conversation in classrooms in all 50 states; on our sports fields; among faith communities – a nationwide, multigenerational conversation about manhood, about boys becoming men.

Donald Trump's ultimate contribution to the 2016 election may turn out to be the teachable moment before us. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, we can ill afford not to begin the dialogue. We don't have to wait until November. We can start now.

***Rob Okun is editor and publisher of [Voice Male](#) magazine, and a former executive director of one of the earliest antiviolence, profeminist men's centers in the U.S. A new edition of his book, [Voice Male: The Untold Story of the Profeminist Men's Movement](#) is due out next year. A member of the steering committees of [North American MenEngage](#), and the [Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities](#), he can be reached at [rob@voicemalemagazine.org](mailto:rob@voicemalemagazine.org). [ne.org](#)***

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