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MEN'S COLLECTIVE STRUGGLES FOR GENDER JUSTICE

The Case of Antiviolence Activism

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Men's collective struggles for gender justice are an important aspect of contemporary contestations of gender. Groups and networks of men across the globe, often in collaboration with women, are engaged in public efforts in support of gender equality. Men's antiviolence activism is the most visible and well-developed aspect of such efforts. Among the range of groups and campaigns enacted by men in the name of progressive gender agendas over the last three decades, antiviolence work has been the most persistent focus, has attracted the largest involvements, and has achieved the greatest international participation. Men's antiviolence activism therefore is an important case study of male involvement in struggles for gender justice. What does this activism involve, why do men participate, and how do patriarchal inequalities shape both men's efforts and their reception?

Antisexist men's networks and campaigns are an instance of "masculinity politics"—"those mobilisations and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issue, and, with it, men's position in gender relations" (Connell,

1995, p. 205). Four other forms of masculinity politics currently visible among men include gay men's movements, men's groups and networks focused on "men's liberation" or "masculinity therapy," mythopoetic men's groups, and men's rights and fathers' rights groups engaged in a defense of patriarchal masculinity. These diverse forms of gendered activity are both symptoms of and contributors to a wider problematization of men and men's practices (Hearn, 2001, p. 85). A range of terms has been used to describe male political and intellectual endeavors sympathetic to feminism, from antisexist and antipatriarchal to profeminist.

Men's collective and profeminist mobilizations on gender issues are a delicate form of political activity, as they involve the mobilization of members of a privileged group in order to undermine that same privilege. Most if not all contemporary societies are characterized by men's institutional privilege (Messner, 1997, p. 5), such that men in general receive a "patriarchal dividend" from gendered structures of inequality (Connell, 1995, pp. 79-82). The danger, therefore, is that by mobilizing men collectively as

men and thus drawing on their shared interests, activists inadvertently will entrench gender privilege (Connell, 1995, pp. 234-238). This potential has been realized among men's rights and fathers' rights groups, which are energetically engaged in an antiwomen and antifeminist backlash (Flood, 1997, 1998).

However, men can be and are motivated by interests other than those associated with gender privilege. There are important resources in men's lives for the construction of nonviolent masculinities and forms of selfhood, such as men's concerns for children, intimacies with women, and ethical and political commitments. Furthermore, given the intersection of gender with other social divisions of race, class, sexuality, nation, and so on, men share very unequally in the fruits of gender privilege (Messner, 1997, p. 7), and men's material interests are multiple and complex. The argument that men have contradictory experiences of power, pioneered by Kaufman (1993), is influential in international discourses of male involvement in movements toward nonviolence and gender equality. Kaufman (2003, p. 14) argues that efforts to involve men in building gender equality must simultaneously challenge men's power and speak to men's pain.

The tension here between men's shared patriarchal interests and their interests in undermining patriarchy is one with which any men's activism for gender justice must reckon. This same tension is evident in the answers offered to the question "Why should men change?" There are two broad responses: Men ought to change, and it is in men's interests to change. First, given the fact of men's unjust privilege, there is an ethical obligation for men to act in support of the elimination of that privilege (Pease, 2002, pp. 167-168). The basis of profeminist men's politics is the moral imperative that men give up their unjust share of power (Brod, 1998, p. 199). Second, men themselves will benefit from supporting feminism and advancing toward gender equality. Although men's position brings power and status, it also involves burdens, such that men's self-interest can be served by supporting feminism (Kaufman, 2003, p. 13; Kilmartin, 2001, pp. 29-30; Pease, 2002, pp. 166-167).

This second reason is more contentious, as there are dangers of men asserting their interests at women's expense, denying male privilege and seeing themselves as victims. Yet to sustain their

involvement, it is important for men to see their stake in feminist futures. As Brod (1998, p. 199) argues, "self-sacrificing altruism is insufficient as the basis for a political movement" and there is "a moral imperative to go beyond mere moral imperatives." It is therefore vital that antisexist men invite men to see beyond prevailing patriarchal constructions of men's interests and articulate nonpatriarchal notions of what Pease (2002, p. 173) calls men's "emancipatory interests" and Brod (1998, p. 199) calls men's "long-term enlightened self-interest."

ANTIVIOLENCE ACTIVISM

Men's violence against women has been a key focus of antisexist men's groups since they first emerged in the early 1970s in response to the second wave of feminism. Violence against women is widely identified as a central element in gender injustice, as both an expression of men's power over women and a way to maintain that power. Men's antiviolence activism therefore addresses a paradigmatic expression of patriarchal power. This activism has intensified and spread since the early 1990s. In many countries, both developing and developed, groups of men have emerged whose agenda is to end men's violence against women and children. They share the fundamental premise that men must take responsibility for stopping men's violence. Taking responsibility begins with individual men taking personal steps to minimize their use of violence (Funk, 1993, pp. 95-111; Kimmel, 1993; Madhubuti, 1993; Warsaw, 1988, pp. 161-167; Weinberg & Biernbaum, 1993). But it goes beyond this, to public and collective action. Antiviolence men's groups engage in community education; hold rallies and marches; work with violent men; facilitate workshops in schools, prisons, and workplaces; and act in alliance with women's groups and organizations. There are at least two other ways in which men have been involved in antiviolence efforts: as the participants in programs for perpetrators of violence and as the targets of public education campaigns that aim to increase men's understanding of and opposition to violence against women. The discussion in this chapter focuses largely on efforts by men that are community based and often voluntary.

The best known example of men's antiviolence activism is the White Ribbon Campaign, a

grassroots education campaign that spans at least four continents and 35 countries. The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest collective effort in the world among men working to end men's violence against women. It began in 1991 on the second anniversary of one man's massacre of 14 women in Montreal, Canada, and it has spread to the United States, Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Australia. During White Ribbon Week, in November each year, men are encouraged to show their opposition to men's violence against women by purchasing and wearing a white ribbon. In pinning on the ribbon, men pledge themselves never to commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign also involves year-round educational strategies, including advertising campaigns, concerts, fathers' walks, and fund-raising for women's organizations. Monies raised by the campaign go to services for the victims and survivors of violence and to women's advocacy programs. In Canada, close to 180,000 ribbons were distributed in 2002 and 250,000 in 2001.

Alongside this international campaign, there are men's groups in at least a dozen countries that share the goal of ending men's violence against women. In Mumbai, India, the Men Against Abuse and Violence is a volunteer organization focused on ending domestic violence (Greig, Kimmel, & Lang, 2000, p. 12). A substantial educational campaign in Central America aimed at men and tackling domestic violence began in 1999. In Nicaragua, Puntos de Encuentro (Meeting Points) and the Asociación de Hombres Contra la Violencia (Men Against Violence) ran a large-scale campaign encouraging men to respect their partners, resolve conflicts peacefully, and seek help to avoid domestic violence (Solórzano & Montoya, 2001). In Namibia, a National Conference on Men Against Violence Against Women was held in February 2000 (Odendaal, 2001, pp. 90-91), and men are involved in networks against gender-based violence in Malawi, Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (Wainana, 2002). In Australia, Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) began in 1989, a national network of MASA groups was established over the period from 1989 to 1992, and at MASA's height, marches of 300 to 500 men were held in many capital cities (Fuller & Fisher, 1998, p. 3).

Men's antiviolenence groups appear to be most well established in North America. There are

more than 100 such groups in the United States, including Men Overcoming Violence (MOVE) in San Francisco, the Atlanta-based Men Stopping Violence, and the Men's Resource Centre in Massachusetts. Men Can Stop Rape in Washington, D.C., mobilizes young men across the United States to behave as allies to women in preventing rape and other forms of men's violence. Such groups share the belief that men must act to stop men's violence. As a full-page newspaper advertisement taken out by the Men's Resource Centre in November 1999 proclaimed, "We call on all men to reject the masculine culture of violence and to work with us to create a culture of connection, of cooperation and of safety for women, for men and for children" (*Daily Hampshire Gazette*, November 11, 1999, p. B7).

There is a growing international dialogue on men's involvement in stopping violence against women. From June to October 2002, 560 people from 46 countries participated in a Virtual Seminar Series on Men's Roles and Responsibilities in Ending Gender-Based Violence, hosted by the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). From May to July 2003, a similar online discussion series on "Building Partnerships to End Men's Violence" was sponsored by the United States-based Family Violence Prevention Fund.

Men's antiviolenence groups and organizations have adopted strategies of both violence prevention and violence intervention. Prevention aims to lessen the likelihood of men using violence in the first place by undermining the beliefs, values, and discourses that support violence, challenging the patriarchal power relations that promote and are maintained by violence, and promoting alternative constructions of masculinity, gender, and selfhood that foster nonviolence and gender justice. A recent example is Men Can Stop Rape's campaign called "My strength is not for hurting." The Strength Campaign includes presentations to high schools, posters for schools and buses, a handbook for teachers and school staff, and a youth magazine. All address men's role as women's allies in ending violence in dating relationships by encouraging men to practice consent and respect in their sexual relations.

Violence intervention refers to strategies focused on those people who have committed

acts of violence and those people who have been subject to violence. Some men's antiviolence groups work with male perpetrators of violence, including men who have volunteered to participate in counseling programs and men in court-mandated groups within the criminal justice system. Men's antiviolence activists share a commitment to the provision of appropriate resources and services for the victims and survivors of men's violence.

An important way in which antiviolence education has been conducted is to find examples of boys' and men's resistance to hegemonic and violent masculinities and evidence of their gender-equitable practice, then to foster communities of support with which to sustain and spread these. Among boys, an educator may identify already existing interests in and commitments to nonviolent relations with girls and women, find exceptions to dominant practices and narratives of masculinity, affirm and build on such histories, and identify significant others who can support them (Denborough, 1996). For example, in an action-research project in low-income settings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, young men who questioned prevailing violence-supportive views were trained as peer educators to foster gender-equitable relations in their communities (Barker, 2001).

Men's antiviolence work has involved a wide range of creative strategies, including the use of film in India to encourage men to reflect on their relations with women (Roy, 2001), "guerrilla theater" in South African bars to spark discussion, the distribution of pamphlets to men in community markets in Cambodia (Kaufman, 2003, p. 36), and a "Walk Across America" to raise community awareness about violence against women. Although men's antiviolence efforts often aim to shift men's attitudes in order to shift their behavior, some also work in the reverse direction. By inviting men to publicly commit to a course of action, such as by wearing a white ribbon or participating in an antirape rally, some strategies aim to increase men's private acceptance of the attitudes that support that behavior (Kilmartin, 2001, p. 70). Other strategies empower men to resist conformity to sexist peer norms. Men typically overestimate each other's comfort with coercive and derogatory comments about and behavior toward women, so that publicizing survey results documenting men's discomfort with other men's sexism can

undermine male approval of sexist behavior (Kilmartin, 2001, pp. 63-66).

Antirape education efforts directed at men have an increasing presence on university campuses, particularly in North America. Campus rape-prevention programs typically are conducted by male peer educators, among all-male groups, and address men's acceptance of violence-supportive myths and lack of empathy for victims of rape. Such efforts generally result in positive changes in men's attitudes and their intentions to commit rape and sexually coercive behavior (Earle, 1996; Foubert, 2000; Foubert & Marriott, 1997; Foubert & McEwen, 1998; Parrot, Cummings, & Marchell, 1994; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993, 1996; Smith & Welchans, 2000).

Boys and young men in schools are a particularly important target group for antiviolence efforts. Many males come to university, paid work, and other adult settings with proabuse attitudes already firmly in place, having grown up in home, school, and peer contexts that foster tolerance for violence against women (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Alvi, 2000, pp. 925-926). In antiviolence education, "starting young" is vital, because adolescence is a crucial period in terms of women's and men's formation of healthy, nonviolent relationships later in life (National Campaign Against Violence and Crime, 1998, p. 23). Recognizing that the formal and informal processes of schools have a critical role in either discouraging or encouraging violence, both men's groups and government agencies have developed programs for boys and young men in school settings (Cameron, 2000; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, pp. 222-251; Kaufman, 2003, pp. 27-28).

What motivates the men who are active in struggles against men's violence against women? What inspires men to question sexist cultural values and patriarchal power relations? John Stoltenberg (1990) offers an account of how men come to join the struggle for women's equality, and its themes are pertinent ones for these questions. Some men come to antisexist involvements because their loyalty and closeness to a particular woman in their lives—a mother, a partner, a friend, a sister—has forged an intimate understanding of the injustices suffered by women and the need for men to take action. Some men's advocacy is grounded in other forms of principled political activism, such as pacifism, economic justice, green

issues, or gay liberation. They have been exposed to feminist and related ideals through their political involvements, their workplaces, or their higher education. Others become involved through dealing with their own experience of sexual violence or sexual abuse from other men and sometimes women, perhaps as children or teenagers (Stoltenberg, 1990, pp. 11-12). Men's commitments to the movement against violence against women have blossomed in the same soil of deeply felt personal experiences; particular relationships, intimacies, and loyalties; and ethical and political involvements.

FOR GENDER JUSTICE

Men's antiviolence activism is significant in at least two ways. First, this activity symbolizes the growing recognition that violence against women will cease only when men join with women to put an end to it. Men are the overwhelming majority of the perpetrators of violence against women, a substantial minority of males accept violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs, and cultural constructions of masculinity inform men's use of physical and sexual violence against women. Profound changes in men's lives, gendered power relations, and the social construction of masculinity are necessary if violence against women is to be eliminated.

More widely, in working to transform the social structures, relationships, and ideologies on which gender inequality is based, it is vital to engage with men and boys (Kaufman, 2003, p. 1). Many men participate in sexist practices and the maintenance of unjust gender relations, men often play a crucial role as "gatekeepers" of the current gender order and as decision makers and community leaders, and men's own health and well-being are limited by contemporary constructions of manhood. Involving men in efforts toward achieving gender equality runs the risk of reinforcing men's existing power and jeopardizing resources and funding directed at women, so the goal of promoting gender justice must be central. Male participation is not a goal in itself, but a means to an end: healthy and non-violent relations for all.

The notion that it is desirable to involve men in the movements to stop violence against women and girls is rapidly becoming institutionalized in the philosophies and programs of

international organizations. The Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 recognized that "men's groups mobilising against gender violence are necessary allies for change," and this was reaffirmed and extended in the follow-up meeting in 2000 (Hayward, 2001, p. 49). In 1997, at the regional meeting titled "Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in South Asia," sponsored by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the 100 or so men present added the following statement to the Katmandu Commitment, issued at the meeting: "We men, realizing that no sustainable change can take place unless we give up the entrenched ideas of male superiority, commit ourselves to devising new role models of masculinity" (UNICEF, 1998; cited in Hayward, 1999, p. 9). Also in 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held an Expert Group Meeting in Oslo on "Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace." Participants emphasized that the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace depends on the development of more egalitarian and partnership-oriented forms of masculinity, as opposed to traditional forms premised on dominance, authority, control, and force (AVSC International and International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region, 1998, pp. 66-67).

Second, the existence of men's antiviolence activism demonstrates that men *can* take collective public action to oppose men's violence. The groups and campaigns I have described represent successful attempts to create among men, albeit sometimes small numbers of men, a public response to men's violence. More broadly, men can and do organize and agitate in support of gender justice. There are historical precedents in men's organized support for women's suffrage and equality in the 18th and 19th centuries (John & Eustance, 1997; Kimmel & Mosmiller, 1992; Strauss, 1982). In addition, contemporary men's antiviolence groups are one expression of a wider network of profeminist men's activism, represented for example by the National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) in the United States, the European Profeminist Men's Network, the Men for Change Network in the United Kingdom, and emergent progressive

men's networks in Africa and elsewhere. Thus, "it is not a question of whether men can take action but how" (Pease, 1997, p. 76).

PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS GENDER

Partnerships with women are central to men's antiviolence efforts. Most of the men's groups and organizations I have described conduct their efforts in alliance with women and women's groups involved in antiviolence campaigns or in services for the victims of violence. More radically, many profeminist men's groups position themselves as accountable to feminist constituencies: They consult with women's groups before initiating their campaigns, do not compete with women's groups for funding or other resources, and build strong lines of communication and trust (Funk, 1993, pp. 125-126, 132-134). There are debates over the processes through which accountability is established (Hall, 1994) and over *which* feminism one is accountable to, and given the diversity of feminisms, this is an ongoing issue.

Men's partnerships with antiviolence women's groups are critical. They enable men to learn from existing efforts and scholarship rather than "reinventing the wheel." They lessen the risk that men will collude in or comply with dominant and oppressive forms of masculinity. They are a powerful and practical demonstration of men's and women's shared interest in stopping violence. Men's partnerships with women are an inspiring example of cross-gender collaboration, a form of activism that reaches across and transforms gender inequalities.

Should men's efforts to end men's violence be linked to wider struggles for gender equality, social justice, and human rights? Michael Kaufman writes pragmatically that in order for large numbers of men to unite to end violence, they should put aside their differences over other issues of gender and justice such as abortion (Kaufman, 2000). Keith Pringle, on the other hand, firmly locates men's work against violence within a broader antioppressive practice. Men challenging violent masculinities must also address other dimensions of oppression that intersect with gendered domination (Pringle, 1995, p. 150). Support for Pringle's position comes from the scholarship on cross-cultural predictors of violence against women.

Levels of violence against women are higher in societies showing male economic and decision-making dominance in the family, and wife abuse is more likely in couples with a dominant husband and an economically dependent wife (Heise, 1998, pp. 270-271). Given that men's violence is fueled by and itself perpetuates gender inequalities (and other forms of injustice), antiviolence work should be situated within a broader project of gender justice.

Although men must take action in support of gender justice, this in no way means that women's groups and campaigns must include men. There continue to be reasons why "women's space," women-only, and women-focused campaigns are vital: to support those who are most disadvantaged by pervasive gender inequalities, to maintain women's solidarity and leadership, and to foster women's consciousness-raising and collective empowerment. Nor should growing attention to male involvement threaten resources for women and women's programs. At the same time, reaching men to reduce and prevent violence against women is, by definition, spending money to meet the interests and needs of women, and it will expand the financial and political support available to women's programs (Kaufman, 2003, p. 11).

Men's and mixed-sex antiviolence projects are important sites for the daily reconstruction of gender identities and relations. Antisexist men's consciousness-raising groups have been used since the early 1970s to facilitate a critical self-questioning of sexist practice, to build peer support for new ways of being, and to provide a basis for public activism. Antipatriarchal consciousness-raising can be effective in constructing profeminist subjectivities among men, and it is an important element in wider articulations of a collective profeminist politics (Pease, 2000, p. 55). For example, an American women's network that recruited male volunteers as antiviolence educators reports that it now has strong male allies, dedicated volunteers who are making a difference to its social change work (Mohan & Schultz, 2001, pp. 29-30). In another example, although men in a campus-based Men Against Violence network showed defensive homophobic responses to others' perceptions of gayness and effeminacy and espoused chivalric notions of themselves as protectors and defenders of women, they also engaged in a substantial

rejection or reformulation of key constructions of stereotypical masculinity (Hong, 2000).

Men's collective efforts to undermine patriarchal inequalities are themselves shaped by those same inequalities. Although many men's participation in antiviolence movements is informed by their critical distance from hegemonic masculinity, they also may struggle with complicity in patriarchal behaviors and attitudes. Many men have carried an "invisible backpack" of privilege, a taken-for-granted set of unearned benefits and assets (McIntosh, 1989). It is understandable, therefore, that feminist women have been hesitant about men's participation in campaigns against violence (DeKeseredy et al., 2000, p. 922). The American women's network mentioned above also encountered sexism, lack of empathy for survivors, and stereotypical expectations of their roles as women (Mohan & Schultz, 2001). When women and men work together, gendered norms of male-female interaction can hinder egalitarian relationships and drain women's labor and emotional energies. In ways that mirror the patterns of traditional heterosexual relationships (Duncombe & Marsden, 1995, p. 246), men may expect nurturance and emotional support from women, and women may comply with unequal relations because of their internalized sexism.

The public reception of men's antiviolence work also is shaped by patriarchal privilege. First, men's groups receive greater media attention and interest than similar groups of women (Luxton, 1993, p. 368). This is partly the result of the former's novelty, but it is also a function of the status and cultural legitimacy granted to men's voices in general. Second, men acting for gender justice receive praise and credit (especially from women) that often is out of proportion to their efforts. Any positive action by men may be seen as gratifying in the face of other men's apathy about and complicity in violence against women. Third, men are able to draw on their and other men's institutional privilege to attract levels of support and funding rarely granted to women (Landsberg, 2000, p. 15). This can, of course, be turned to strategic advantage in pursuing an end to men's violence.

Profeminist men's public challenge to dominant masculinities also attracts the ridicule, contempt, and anger of men who consider them to be wimps and sissies, gay, or traitors (Luxton, 1993, p. 360). For example, in response to my

articles on the profeminist Web site XYonline, one fathers' rights advocate wrote by e-mail that I was a "fucking faggot, feminazi pussy licker." This response, with its hostility toward and conflation of homosexuality and femininity, is typical of the coercive ways in which dominant constructions of masculinity are policed among boys and men in general. Homophobia is a key means of policing heterosexual masculinities (Epstein & Johnson, 1994, p. 204), and among adolescent boys, the term "gay" or other abusive synonyms is a "principal repository for unacceptable male 'otherness'" (Plummer, 1999, p. 81).

Men's collective activism is a vital element in the struggle to end violence against women. As with international efforts on other gender-related issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, poverty, and development, in working against violence it is critical to involve men. Men's participation must be guided by gender justice and gender partnership, as these principles are integral to men's ability to cultivate a lasting legacy of peace.

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