

TRANSITIONS

JOURNAL OF MEN'S PERSPECTIVES

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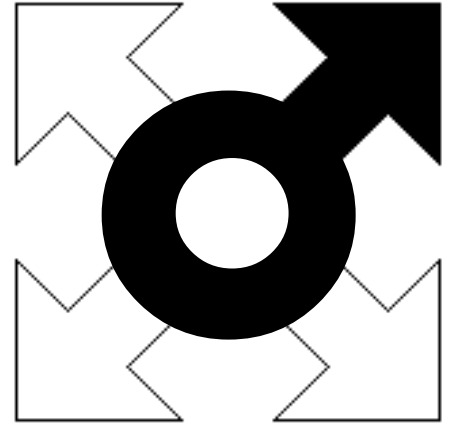
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Dads Who Take Their Own Lives

Courtesy of Men's Health America

[www.http://groups.yahoo.com/group/menshealth](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/menshealth)

About half of all American marriages end in divorce. It is well-known that divorce increases men's risk of suicide. Three studies have documented this phenomenon:

1. One study from the Centers for Disease Control analyzed suicides among elderly persons. The study found that in 1992, the rate for divorced/widowed men aged > 65 years was more than 17 times than for married women. The report concluded, "Sex- and marital status-specific suicide rates were highest for divorced/widowed men."¹
2. Rogers analyzed the effects of marriage on persons who died in 1986. He found that men who were divorced or separated had a far greater risk of suicide (odds ratio = 6.1) than divorced or separated women.²
3. Kposowa used a large, nationally-representative database to analyze the effects of marital status on suicide risk. He found that divorced men were more than twice as likely

to commit suicide as married men³ and almost 10 times more likely to kill themselves as divorced women.⁴

Based on Kposowa's research, it is possible to tally the number of divorced men in the United States who take their own lives. These calculations reveal that each year, more than 3,600 divorced men — about 10 every day — commit suicide.⁵

This figure is likely to be an underestimate because it does not include never-married men who had children and later lost custody, nor does it account for previously-divorced men who later remarried. Also, just because a man commits suicide while he is divorced does not necessarily mean he killed himself because of the divorce — other factors no doubt play a role.

Loss of Child Custody and Suicide Risk

Eighty-six percent of men have at least one child during their lifetimes.⁶ Using the 50% divorce rate figure, and knowing that fathers lose custody of their children about 80% of the time, it can be calculated that about 34% of American men will experience the loss of child custody sometime during their lives.⁷

It is well-known that non-custodial fathers often experience high levels of psychological distress. Social scientists have made observations such as these:

- Wallerstein noted that post-divorce visits with children "can lead to depression and sorrow in men who love their children."⁸
- Ross observed that many divorced fathers are "overwhelmed by feelings of failure and self-hatred," and as a result are "disengaging from

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Editor's Comment:**Missing My Father On Father's Day**

Welcome springtime! Broccoli, garlic, peas, and carrots are thriving in my garden with more planting to come. After a few fits and starts, spring seems to be consistently blossoming.

Before I proceed, I will acknowledge an error on the cover of our last edition. The headline of the March/April 2003 edition of *Transitions* reads:

The 2002 Annual Report
Of The Men's Health Network
By Men's Health America

I made a mistake. The Men's Health Network and Men's Health America are two distinct, and excellent organizations. Please accept my apology, gentlemen.

Fathers' Day has been on my mind quite a lot lately. I miss my dad, he died nearly thirty years ago, before I had matured

enough to get close to him. I envy those who have living fathers, even if estranged. A living father offers possibility of reconciliation and connection. A living father can answer personal and family history questions. I have so many forever unanswered questions about my dad for my dad. I can only make guesses now.

What can I do to support other fathers this year? That's something for me to chew on. Nothing is clear right now. Perhaps I'll ask a couple of men who have kids, they might have some ideas. Me being without children, I'm relatively clueless.

As I write this Mothers' Day approaches. I hear a lot about the Race for the Cure, a fundraising event to raise money for breast cancer research. As many women who die from breast cancer, a nearly equal

number of men die from prostate cancer. Where are our fundraisers? I know a man whose PSA (a blood test to detect cancer) was very high. He spent a week fearing he would never see his two children (3 and 5) grow up. A biopsy proved negative, for now. He is in new state of awareness. The Race for the Cure was created by breast cancer survivors and women who care about them. I admire that vision and execution. Where are the men organizing the same kind of effort to address prostate cancer? We have work to do.

For all you fathers who read this...Happy Fathers' Day! For all you survivors of prostate cancer...hang in there!

Jim Lovestar

Letters to the Editor

Editorial Policy: *The Transitions staff welcomes letters of opinion from readers and will print letters we have room for. We reserve the right to edit letters, for editorial style and space restrictions, but will continue to publish letters in their entirety as much as possible. Send letters to: Jim Lovestar, Transitions Editor, ncfm@consciousbody.info. Letters sent directly to the Editor will be addressed as such. Letters sent to our website, will be addressed "Dear NCFM."*

Dear Editor:

I have enjoyed the correspondence exchange between Francis Baumli and Rudolph Bold about homosexuality, which was featured in the last three issues of *Transitions*. It is good to see passionate, articulate dialogue about the issues that divide us, and I heartily support editor Jim Lovestar's decision to feature the debate in the pages of the newsletter.

In terms of the substance of the argument, while I generally find Mr. Baumli's position the more reasonable and convinc-

ing, I have recently been persuaded that there is more to conservative anti-gay sentiments than I had thought. In particular, the liberal values of diversity, tolerance and non-discrimination, while laudable, don't seem to touch the root of the issue for those who have problems with gay men.

Some light was shed on this for me by Howard Schwartz, author of *Revolt of the Primitive: An Inquiry into the Roots of Political Correctness*. [In my opinion, far and away the best book ever written about the sociopsychological roots of feminism, despite the difficulty I have with Freudian concepts. I genuinely recommend you check out a copy. It's fully worth the (high) purchase price.] He writes, in a footnote, "This term [homophobia] is actually quite interesting. The term phobia generally relates to an extreme aversive reaction, but one that is fairly well detached from the rest of the personality. It makes it seem as if an aversion to homosexuality is an isolated attitude, representing nothing more than narrow-minded bigotry and prejudice

against those who are unlike us in their choice of sexual partners. Yet, as I am trying to show here, aversion to homosexuality is an expression of the fragility of the male sexual identity and the role that emerges from it. It is by no means isolated. The current orthodoxy that equates sexual orientation with a mere matter of taste in partners simply denies that there is a male role associated with and arising from heterosexuality. The idea that aversion to homosexuality should simply be extinguished through public shaming is frightening in its own narrow-mindedness. Whether it will undermine the male role is an open question. But, as an expression of the toxic-man ideology, it seems dedicated to that purpose. The discrepancy between the simple-mindedness of the premise upon which this strategy rests, and the awesome complexity of the potential consequences, is simply stunning." [p.82]

For the context of this comment, I have to refer you to the book. I have read it four

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Letters

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times now, and I am still working out the issues in my own head. It has been a revelation for me, not least finding real explanatory power in Freudian concepts, which I had assumed to be largely mistaken.

Thank you for your willingness to air these issues in the pages of *Transitions*.

David Shackleton

Editor and Publisher

Everyman: A Men's Journal

PO Box 4617, Station E, Ottawa, ON

K1S 5H8, CANADA

<http://www.everyman.org>

Dear NCFM:

My name is Chuck Pederson. I am a teacher/coach/writer in Colorado completing my compilation book of letters regarding the state of public education in the USA and the world.

I have asked for comments regarding ideas and thoughts for overall educational betterment from world leaders, politicians, celebrities, Nobel laureates, etc. from around

the world. I have received an overwhelming amount of interesting responses. Education is, indeed, a passionate topic. I am interested in direct personal ideas from you regarding educational betterment. Some passionate contributions have referenced funding, state standardized testing, discipline, etc. I would very much appreciate a contribution from you even though you may be only peripherally involved in public education. I would like to hear heart-felt, "off the cuff" comments from you as concerned world citizens. I am not so much interested in referrals to other sources, public relations, web sites and the like as I am in direct comments from leaders like you. I am purposely vague in my request (not asking specific questions) so you may elaborate on a more personal level.

I thank you very much for a few minutes of your valuable time and look forward to an expedient reply.

Chuck Pederson

cpederson@garcoschools.org

WEBMASTER: *We examine the ways sex discriminations affects men and boys. Boys suffer worse from sex discrimination in school than do girls. It may have always been like that. Sociologist Patricia Sexton, as early as the 1960s, wrote about the "feminized" school. No matter what their disadvantages may have been, girls are less disciplined than boys for the same behavior, fewer drop out of high school, and fewer fail. Female high school graduates have out numbered boys for the past 40 years.*

For a time, more males were encouraged to go to college than girls. More boys were admitted, but that is no longer true. Moreover, while it is easy to find female-specific scholarships it is not nearly as easy to find ones specifically aimed at boys.

In our opinion Women's Studies at the college level has done a great deal of harm. It begins by teaching that females are some kind of special oppressed class and from there it teaches misunderstanding and even hate.

There is no equivalent understanding

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TRANSITIONS

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Washington, D.C. Chapter Holds Protest Against Martha Burk

By Stanley Gaver

On Saturday, March 8, the Washington DC chapter held a successful protest demonstration at the site of an annual feminist conference outside Washington, DC. The chapter was protesting against feminist Martha Burk, who was appearing as a featured speaker, and against the organization hosting the conference, The Women's Center of Vienna, Virginia.

Burk, as head of the National Council of Women's Organizations, is on a campaign to force the privately funded, male-only Augusta National Golf Club to accept women as members. The Women's Center is a 28-year old non-profit organization whose stated mission is "to provide information, education and counseling to women, and to advocate for women and girls." Despite the fact that the Women's Center receives upwards of a half million dollars in public funding from federal and county governments and the United Way, the organization almost exclusively serves only women, ignoring the needs of men.

The protest was held in front of the McLean Hilton hotel, a few miles outside Washington, and was organized to publicly protest Burk's hypocritical campaign against the men of Augusta, to draw attention to the double standards practiced by The Women's Center as it accepts public funds and corporate donations to serve a single gender, and to protest today's unreasonable feminist double standards that benefit only women, at the expense of men.

The idea for the protest was originally suggested by chapter member Stan Gaver, who had just happened to notice an article about the conference in a local paper, and was immediately and enthusiastically received by a number of other chapter members. The protest idea very quickly gained a life of its own, as members began to contribute many ideas and suggestions. Chapter members Jack Kammer and Tom Golden quickly joined in as "co-coordinators, and began a non-stop effort to plan, organize and announce the protest.

Jack was a fountain of ideas, and with

years in the men's rights trenches, served as an "activist advisor," and also took up the job of media relations coordinator. His mind never stopped and he came up with countless ideas. At the chapter's monthly meeting, Jack showed up with more than a dozen signs, and silver sashes labeled "Duffragettes," paying homage to both the original female suffragettes, as well as to the male (golf) duffers who are under Burk's assault.

Tom also provided an endless supply of ideas and suggestions, publicized the protest at several men's web sites and willingly stepped up to handle the myriad tasks that came up during planning. He also created perhaps two of the best signs for the

demonstration: "Choice for Men," and "Augusta Needs Burk Like a Fish Needs a Bicycle."

On Saturday morning, the day of the protest, we began setting up at 7 AM, in order to be ready for the more than 1,000 conference attendees who would be driving by our position at the hotel's main entrance, and within minutes were admonished by a hotel manager as to where we could stand (on a sidewalk in front), and where we could NOT go: anywhere on hotel property.

We did, however, receive our first pleasant surprise of the day. He leaned over to us and said, "Don't tell anyone, but I'm with you guys. Good luck!" (At which point, he was awarded a golf ball with Martha Burk's face

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Dads Who Take Their Lives

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a family that is no longer really theirs."⁹

- Umberson and Williams highlighted the sense of failure that these fathers experience. As a result, these men "exhibit substantially higher rates of psychological distress and alcohol consumption than do married men."¹⁰
- Blankenhorn described non-custodial fathers in this way: "These men are very angry. Indeed, their white-hot sense of injustice can sometimes produce in them the phenomenon of pressured speech, in which emotional intensity derails normal conversational rhythms."¹¹

So given the frequency and gravity of the problem, it is not surprising that numerous anecdotes have appeared in the popular press detailing non-custodial fathers who have resorted to killing themselves or others.^{12,13}

A Cruel Irony

Over the past 20 years, society has admonished fathers to become more attentive to their families. As more wives entered the workforce, this relieved some of the financial pressure on men, and has allowed fathers to devote more time to their children.

And during that same period of time, a series of laws have been enacted that have enabled wives to obtain court orders to exclude fathers from the household in order to prevent domestic violence. Once a precedent of paternal separation has been established, child custody is almost always awarded to the mother.

Hence, these domestic violence edicts have made it more difficult for fathers to maintain meaningful involvement with their children. In some cases, their own children have come to view their loving fathers with suspicion and distrust.

So non-custodial fathers have become increasingly frustrated and angered by the

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Any Excuse to Perform Circumci\$ion\$

By Dr. George Denniston

Circumcisers are always looking for an excuse to circumcise. Over the past 100 years, they have selected the most frightening current disease, and tried desperately to link it with lack of circumcision. Here is another case of the circumcisers ultimately being shown to be wrong, but not before millions are circumcised based on their "findings." Recently, the circumcisers tried to link to AIDS, but studies have now shown that most of the AIDS transmission in Africa is iatrogenic. It is caused by doctors using improper techniques, not sterilizing their instruments, and not by sexual transmission. What a tragedy! Africans lose their lives when doctors fail to apply simple sterile technique, but before they die, the doctors inappropriately remove half of the skin from their normal penis.

This statement is the result of three recent studies based on hundreds of studies

saying that 2/3 of Africa HIV cases are the result of contaminated implements and 1/3 from practicing risky sexual practices. All three studies look at all the purported ways HIV spreads including lack of circumcision. None of the studies concludes that ownership of a foreskin as a conduit for the virus. Brewer et. al. say in their article, "Recent empiric research casts doubt that [circumcision status] can sufficiently amplify the force of infectivity to account for observed trends in the sexual transmission of HIV in Africa."

Experts have incorrectly assumed that heterosexual sex transmitted 90% of HIV in Africa. The truth is HIV in Africa is associated with urban living, having a good education, and having a higher income - people who visit their doctor more often.

These articles point out that all 13 of the previous studies, which purported to prove

HIV can be prevented by circumcision, failed to consider this stunning 2/3 versus 1/3 fact. The end result is this, whether a man is circumcised or not is inconsequential. Ironically, circumcisions - whether done in a village ceremony or in a city hospital - may be aiding the spread of HIV because of unclean instruments.

Circumcision complications are not unknown. Activists claim a 100% complication rate. Circumcised men and their partners report less than satisfying sex. All circumcision results in scarring and removal of nerve endings, plus the amputation of the foreskin and its beneficial gliding action.

Dr. George Denniston can be reached at: 360-385-1882, gcd@u.washington.edu, <http://faculty.washington.edu/gcd/DOC/> - The article: Royal Society of Medicine, <http://www.rsm.ac.uk/new/pr126.htm> ♥

Dads Who Take Their Lives

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mixed messages that they are receiving. They find it incomprehensible that their basic human right to be a parent is being curtailed by a legal system that they perceive to be expensive, cloaked in secrecy, and unfair.

Is it any wonder that some fathers crack under the pressure?

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What's Happening?

National Coalition of Free Men News

By Tom Williamson

NEW GROUP

There are now several informal groups meeting that have associated themselves with NCFM. One meets at Bennigan's in Albuquerque, NM, Mondays at 8 PM (telephone (505) 830-1993, email: kenrlucero@juno.com).

The latest group that we expect to form is in Louisville, Kentucky. For more information contact Simon Sharp at veteransimon@msn.com, or call (270) 766-8151 between 8pm and 9pm EST.

HELP FOR VETERANS

Northern California chapter member Steve Deluca has stepped forward to create an NCFM information resource for veterans. He can be contacted through email: stevedeluca@adelphia.net. P.O. Box 1234, Mendocino, CA 95460. Telephone consultations are available by appointment. Steve can be contacted about such things as medical resources, disability benefits, obtaining loans, housing resources, educational resources and other benefits. Steve is also prepared to discuss psychological issues related to military duty. Steve is not a psychologist; he is a self-help advocate who has experienced some of the psychological trauma associated with military duty. Steve has had extensive military experience and a career as a bodyguard.

In the past Steve has chaired our Awards Committee, served on our Board of Directors, and has been interviewed over radio on our behalf.

NCFM STATE AGENTS

This past March, Edward Stephens, M.D., succeeded Tom Williamson as the agent for the Coalition of Free Men corporation in New York. A mighty welcome goes out to Edward Stephens. While we are on the topic we should acknowledge our other state agents. NCFM is now a legal entity in three states: New York, Minnesota and California. In Minnesota our corporate agent is Kyle Knutson and in California it is

Andrew Bokelman. The corporate agent is the person who receives any official notifications from a state government pertaining to internal administrative matters.

NEW RADIO SHOW ABOUT MEN'S ISSUES

On March 19th, men's rights columnist Glenn Sacks began a radio show to tell the men's side of gender issues. The name of the show is, "His Side." It airs over KRLA, 870 on the AM dial every Wednesday at midnight Pacific Time. The show can be heard nationally over the Internet and will

"The domestic violence shelter in Lancaster, CA is one of only a couple of shelters throughout the country to specifically help men."

be archived at <http://www.HisSide.com>.

Glenn's first guest was our own Marc Angelucci, Esq., President of our LA chapter. Marc talked about male victims of domestic violence. He discussed how Los Angeles County's Domestic Violence Council has been instrumental in ignoring and covering up the data on male victims. Marc also took the opportunity to discuss how the LA Domestic Violence Council ignored Patricia Overburg's complaint about how the other DV shelter directors abused her for helping male victims. Ms. Overburg runs the domestic violence shelter in Lancaster, CA. This shelter has been one of only a couple of shelters throughout the country to specifically help men.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS SUED

On March 13th, the LA chapter of NCFM brought suit against ten state-funded domestic violence shelters in California for

discrimination against men. More shelters will be named as time goes on. For more on this and other lawsuits go to <http://www.ncfmla.org>.

PATERNITY FRAUD

Last fall, Governor Gray Davis of California vetoed a bill that would protect men against paternity fraud. The bill (# AB 2240) which the NCFM Los Angeles chapter helped to write passed both houses of the state legislature. Rather than look at this as a defeat, members of the LA chapter began to review with whom they had made friends as a result of their involvement in this proposed legislation.

The fight for protection against women who falsely accuse men of paternity started up again in early 2003 when LA chapter member Jeff Kent found a State legislator who agreed to write a new anti-paternity fraud bill (# SB 1030). You can read it on the Internet at: http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/bill/sen/sb_1001-1050/sb_1030_bill_20030221_introduced.html.

The bill is now going through the legislative process and the primary organizational sponsor is NCFM-LA. Jeff Kent also got NCFM-LA onto a state committee ordered by Governor Davis to make recommendations to the State legislature about solutions to paternity fraud. On April 3rd, LA Chapter President Marc Angelucci and Jeff Kent traveled to Sacramento, the state capitol, to attend a committee hearing set up to review the issue of paternity fraud. There the LA chapter presented testimony and provided victims who testified about their situation. Feminists, of course, were heavily represented, but now they know that they have opposition. This is something brand new to them. The feminists' position is that paternity fraud should be allowed because, in their view, this is in the best interests of the child.

LETTER WRITING COMMITTEE

In February letter writers were asked to

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write two letters. The first went to the TV show America's Funniest Home Videos. Letter writers complained about the constant showing of men getting kicked in the groin in order to get a laugh. That is, they show a scene and then play back a recorded audience laughing.

Letter writers sent the second letter to their Representative and Senator. The subject revolves around Senate Bill 89, Universal National Service Act of 2003. This legislation, as yet unpassed, would require 2 years of national service on the part of those between the ages of 18 and 26. This bill is gender neutral and would replace the current selective service act which requires only males to register. Senate Bill 89 is a two edged sword. Letters writers were urged to form their own personal opinion and to express that when writing.

On the one hand the bill treats the sexes equally. This is a position that NCFM would support, especially because we are opposed to male only registration. However, Bill 89 allows the President to determine how the provisions within the bill would be enforced. This would probably mean that women would not get drafted. Under current law, Congress has the authority to draft men to perform any function they want. It is obvious that Congress does not want to force women to serve. So, the bill probably would not get enforced in a fair and equal way given the sentiments of our leadership. Secondly, Bill 89 goes beyond mere registration. It would require service. Some of us view a "draft," even a gender neutral draft, as unwilling forced servitude. In short, slavery.

If you would like to join with the voices of others and become part of our letter writing committee, write to NCFM to request being put on the mailing list:

NCFM Letter Writing Committee
P.O. Box 582023
Minneapolis, MN 55458-2023

Email is NOT used. All letters are sent out via surface mail. Participants are encouraged NOT to identify themselves as being part of an NCFM project. The campaign will have more effectiveness if it

appears that each person took the initiative to write on their own. When you join you will receive materials from NCFM to help you write an original letter. Letter Writing Committee Chairman is Robert McInnes and he is open to suggestions for campaigns made by letter writing participants. There is no requirement to join NCFM and signing up with the Letter Committee is free.

MILLION DADS MARCH

A series of marches, protests, and demonstrations were planned for the time around Father's Day. On June 14 and 15 a major march was planned to take place in Washington, DC. The primary purpose of this activity is to protest the unfair and discriminatory nature of divorce as it affects fathers. Some local groups who are planning activity, such as National Coalition of Free Men,

Los Angeles, have a broader men's agenda. For more information, contact Thomas Lessman at chairman@milliondads-march.org or Stephanie Jantzen at secretary@milliondads-march.org, phone: (785) 230-4546, or write: The Million Dads March Inc., 4124 NE Brier Rd., Topeka, KS 66616. For details online visit: <http://www.milliondads-march.org>.

To participate in Los Angeles, contact: Marc Angelucci, President, NCFM-LA, P.O. Box 236, 3010 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010, phone: (626) 359-3709.

ANOTHER FIRST WOMAN

Jo-Ann Venturella, 52, formerly from Dix Hills (Long Island), NY, has earned the distinction of being the first woman in the

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Special Thanks Due

Special thanks are in order to the following recent financial contributors. Your donations make a great deal of difference.

Carl Minie, CA
Rod Britten, CO
Jason Leatherman, MA
Francis Baumli, MO
Frank Cottone, NJ

We thank David and Dwight Decker for their very generous donation in memory of their parents: George W. and Marian D. Decker. We offer our sympathies and mourn their loss.

Male Self-Sacrifice Ensures Dreams

By Tom James (Twin Cities East)

Editor's Note: Tom James wrote the following in response to a comment he received to the effect that it is unseemly for men to advocate for men and that men are at their best when they self-sacrifice for the benefit of women and children. Since it seems like a concern that might also trouble NCFM or potential NCFM members, I thought I'd share Tom's thoughts on this subject here, as well.

"The true strength and power of male culture throughout history has been self-sacrifice...to ensure the dreams and safety of their children and families."

Truer words have rarely been written, and I also like the idea of channeling energy into ending child abuse. Unfortunately, I don't think we are going to be able to avoid addressing the problem of man-abuse head-on much longer.

My primary reason for saying this is that there are already a number of very-well-funded, high-membership organizations already occupying the child-abuse field. When I read their literature, however, they rarely, if ever, mention that child abuse is something that a woman can do. Published research tells us it is something that single mothers primarily do, but the organizations that actually take action on the issue are uncomfortable, to say the least, with that fact. For the most part, they avoid it by choosing to focus instead on sexual abuse—the one type of abuse which, although accounting for only a tiny fraction of all child abuse (occurring less frequently, according to at least one government study, than infanticide), is more often associated with men than with women.

The educational pamphlets and brochures published by child abuse organizations that I've read typically ascribe child abuse to males rather than females. For example, one asks, "Does your dad or step-dad get angry and hit you when you talk back to him?" Another one asks, "Does your father, step-father, uncle or brother touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable?" Another one advises children to tell a teacher or a policeman if they feel afraid of their father when he gets angry, or if a male relative touches them in an inappropriate way, but does not make the same recommendation for children who feel afraid of or uncomfortable with their mothers or a female relative.

Trudy W. Schuett's comment that "30

years ago you would not have had a pack of young women assaulting other people in the violent fashion as from the recent hazing episode in the Chicago area" is on-target, as usual. Both the archival and the research data agree that women—or at least younger women—are becoming much more violent than previous generations of women. Surveys of college-age women reveal that a shocking number of them, while strongly believing male violence against women is never justified for any reason, nevertheless believe that perpetrating violence against

men to maintain power and control over them is a "righteous" thing for a woman to do.

As I've said before, I don't think any of this is because women are inherently "meaner" than men. It all comes back to cultural conditioning. For the past 30 years, we've had a massive public education campaign to the effect that violence against women is never justified, while by omission implicitly (and often expressly) delivering

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July Press Conference and Demonstration

By Sim Hall

Deluded N.O.W. delegates are coming to suburban Washington DC for their annual conference on July 11-13. Following the fine example set last year by our Minnesota brothers, the NCFM-DC chapter will greet them with a media event and demonstration. In keeping with our motto "Giving Men a Voice" we aim to show the press that there is another side to gender issues.

Our preemptive strike will be a press conference featuring a panel of top-notch speakers on Thursday July 10, a day before the N.O.W. meeting begins. We reserved suitable space at the National Press Club from noon til four. Located in downtown DC near the White House, this facility is ideal for attracting media representatives, many of whom have offices in the same building.

The illustrious panel includes: Wendy McElroy, columnist at FoxNews.com and ifeminists.com editor; Dr. Lionel Tiger from Rutgers University, author of *The Decline of Males*; Dr. Stephen Baskerville from Howard University, spokesman for Men,

Fathers and Children International; and Carnell Smith, founder and director of U.S. Citizens Against Paternity Fraud. The main topics to be addressed are: gender relations in a post-feminist world; crisis of boys and men; corruption of family courts; paternity fraud.

Our coup de grace will be a demonstration near the Arlington, VA hotel hosting the N.O.W. conference. Tentatively set for Saturday July 12, the street demonstration, complete with signs, banners and catchy slogans, is also designed to attract media coverage. And it should be lots of fun.

To maximize the impact of this press conference and demonstration, we are encouraging NCFM members and supporters from around the country to join us. Can't get off during the week? Consider attending just the Saturday demonstration. If you need a place to stay in the DC area, contact Sim Hall at 703-847-0734. Several DC chapter members are opening their homes to out-of-town participants. Hope to see you there. ♥

Letters

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of the male role. By this I do not mean that one should teach hate. Rather courses on men could illuminate the ways males have been singled out by being designated the providers and protectors. If we were in charge of such courses we would use this opportunity to explore with boys the advantages they stand to get by advocating gender equality. From our perspective there are many instances where boys and men need equality with girls and women.

In conclusion, we would call for special men's studies courses. And, we would call for some examination of the educational atmosphere that is not meeting the needs of boys, such that they often fail, are poor readers and don't do well in other areas.

I hope this answers your questions. We would like a copy of any published material you create.

Dear NCFM:

If you believe men should have the same reproductive rights as women do then this message is intended for you.

A practical birth control pill for men now exists: N-butyldeoxyojirimycin or NB-DNJ. Read about it at *Science News Online*, week of Dec. 14, 2002; Vol. 162, No. 24 (<http://www.sciencenews.org/20021214/fob6.asp>).

I, like millions of other men, was forced into fatherhood and 18 years of child support by participating in recreational sex with a woman who lied about using birth control pills. I am currently writing a book that may help other men avoid my experience. It's not about me; it's about us. And that is exactly why the introduction of a male birth control pill in this nation is so paramount.

I can only hope and pray you use ALL

your resources and influence to investigate this new research and follow up with their progress, as I and others will.

We will have to fight a major political war to get the FDA to approve this drug. Because the women's groups will rise up and use ALL their resources and influence to stop men from having the same contraceptive they have enjoyed for over 30 years. But if we succeed, it will do for Men's rights what the female birth control pill did for women's rights.

It will change society and history forever.

Richard H. Garrison

Atlanta Ga.

ponceatl@netzero.com

WEBMASTER: *The prospects are exciting, but we would agree that the findings are at a beginning stage. What needs to be lobbied for is more research into the safety and effectiveness of this pill. Otherwise it will be forgotten.*

Protest Against Martha Burk

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on it.)

Everything was finally set up, and for the next two hours, car after car arrived to our gauntlet of clever signs, smiling faces, enthusiastic waves and shouts to "Tell Burk No." Many of the attendees simply drove by with straight faces or simply tried to ignore our presence — not possible — but some women smiled and waved as they passed by. One woman stopped her car, rolled down the window, and yelled out to us, "I'm on your side and I'm going to complain to her [Burk] about this."

The highlight of the day was the arrival of Martha Burk herself, shortly after 11 AM. She rolled up in a compact car (in contrast to the many Mercedes, Jags and other luxury cars driven by most attendees), rolled down her window and snapped a few pictures of us! (As we videotaped her, taking pictures of us.) One quick-thinking member, Ed Bartlett, managed to walk up to her and hand her a protest flyer he had created just for the occasion.

Examples of signs that conference attendees had the opportunity to read included

"HOORAY FOR HOOTIE (Just say NO to unreasonable feminists),"

"Save the Males — Draft Feminists," "NOTAGAAN (National Organization to Allow Guyness at Augusta) "National Sexist Conference" (with an arrow pointing to the hotel), "No More Mulligans," and "Hey, Martha! Practice what you preach!" (Pictures of many of the signs can be seen at URL <http://standyourground.com/men/images/>)

Perhaps the best sign — because it was brought by a woman who had heard about our protest on the Internet — said, "Burk's agenda is FASCIST not Feminist." (This sign was also prominently displayed in a local newspaper.)

As the demonstration drew to a close, boxes of one dozen Burk-faced golf balls were handed out as awards. Winners included long-time activist Dave Burroughs for "Farthest traveled" (Delaware) and Jack Kammer for "Most creative" (his "Duffragettes" outfit and his many signs).

In short, we had fun, we made a difference, and we made a small bit of history! ♥

Dear NCFM:

I need help to save my son from prison for something he did not do. Yes sir, we wish we could change the fact that he, Mark, had been there. What he is guilty of is being a young father, who cherished his two children (which she has seen to be lost), and for wanting them to spend time with their mother. This all stemmed from my son, Mark Cook, filing for divorce and obtaining custody of the two minor children.

Please, help us. Please read Mark Cook's story: <http://www.webspawner.com/users/jgcook/>.

Judy Cook

P.O. Box 136742

Ft Worth, TX 76136

Dear NCFM:

I'm an individual interested in men's issues and the promotion of equality among all genders. I've considered joining NCFM, but I am concerned about what stance the NCFM takes regarding homosexuality and varied definitions of the family. I have seen a number of statements throughout the site

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Letters

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that give me the impression that the NCFM promotes the idea the most important family organization is a man and a woman. Do you also accept the possibilities of gay families, where two men are the primary caretakers of a child, or the possibility of a lesbian family, where two women are the primary caretakers of a child? I believe that it is important that children have a male and female role-model, but that it is possible for those role-models to be outside the family unit. For example, a lesbian family could have a trusted male friend or relative who could be involved in the child's life, so that the child is exposed to a man as a member of society that they can trust. Does the NCFM take a position on this?

Sean

sharaya@bellsouth.net

WEBMASTER: *NCFM takes no position on gay issues one way or the other. Articles posted reflect the themes of the people who*

write them and to some degree the personal leanings of our leadership.

Dear NCFM:

If you saw the WaMu TV ad during the academy awards you know how awful it was. A man is struck in his genitals with a bowling ball and goes howling and hurting over to the side. I was so horrified I forget the exact details. A local WaMu loan officer said he saw it and thought it was funny, but appreciated my view, and, after I explained why the ad was awful, agreed I had a point. Usually, WaMu TV ads have been good. He said I should call WaMu Quality Service Management at 800-225-5497 and suggest others do the same. WaMu should definitely withdraw this ad.

Harv Whitten

sfoharv@juno.com

Dear NCFM:

We are researching a paper for our

sophomore college prep. American Citizen class. Our assignment is to write a bill on the topic of fathers' rights in the abortion process. We are wondering if you could please send us some information concerning the subject, and where you stand on the issue. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Aaron Kerouack
& Ashley Wheeler*

282 Windham Rd
Brooklyn, CT 06234

WEBMASTER: *First, the National Coalition of Free Men does not have a position on abortion rights. As an educational organization we want to explore all avenues. Clearly, abortion, as it affects men, has not been studied. No one is capable at this time of providing an intelligent answer to your question. For now, men will have many different reactions to this question. What is fair and what is in their best interests has never been debated. To date there is only one book on the subject and it was written in the 1980s and is now out of print. Moreover, this book, written by a man, argued for women's choice without men having any power to say anything about the outcome. Personally I don't subscribe to this view. I am apt to*

favor several little known lower court decisions in Iowa some 20 years ago that prevented two women from seeking an abortion. The two cases that I am aware of were successful because the men involved were able to demonstrate their strong desire to be fathers as well as their capability. So I would favor some third party arbitration. But the next question is, how do you enforce such a decision? As I recall, in the two Iowa cases one woman abided by the decision while the other did not. No sanctions were brought against the woman who did not comply.

Another question: How does abortion affect men? The one book that came out suggests that males are apt to grieve following an abortion. Should there be publicly

Letters Campaign

In recent years we have learned that writing letters to media people, advertisers of products, politicians, publishers, etc., can have an effect, especially if there is a group of letter writers willing to mobilize under the direction of a coordinator. We want you to write to our coordinator and volunteer to be contacted to write letters and we would appreciate knowing about any ideas you have for campaigns.

Please volunteer and write to:

Bob McInnes
NCFM
P.O. Box 582023
Minneapolis, Minnesota
55458-2023

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Poetry

By Roy U. Schenk

Impenetrable Barrier

©8/21/00, Roy U. Schenk

Reprinted from: *Breaking the Shackles*
MPC-BEP Press, Madison, WI., 2002.

Women are the good guys.
Men are the bad guys.
In our society, even worldwide,
This we've been taught, and know certainly.
And so, we focus on the hurtful things men
do,
While ignoring, excusing, even condoning,
The hurtful things that women do.
So confirming what we've been taught. Amazing,
isn't it!

Men learn from birth we are the bad guys,
Creating intense shame in men,
The Shame of Maleness, I call it.
Basic Male Shame, John Gagnon's term.
Need to compensate then drives men,
To do all the terrible things we men are
blamed for,
Our need to control, to overachieve, to amass
wealth, on and on.

And we dare not forget, shaming is violence,
Perhaps the most damaging kind, spiritual.
And men respond to this violence,
With violence of our own.
Men's violence increasing as the shaming
grows.

And so millions, billions perhaps, of sincere
people,
Devote themselves to building a better world.
While our belief in women's betterness, im-
penetrable barrier,
Blocks all hope of creating a world of joy and
bliss!

And all the while,
God loves us,
Totally.
As we are and everyone.

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Letters

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funded social services for men? Should we permit women to use abortion as a means of convenience and birth control? None of this has been explored intelligently in America.

The whole thing is a quagmire. Good luck on coming up with something that is fair. And thank you for considering men to be important enough to include in your discussions. But for now there is no easy solution and I don't believe we should articulate any policies for now. Instead, our

role is to ask questions and to challenge the status quo. Please send us a copy of your proposed bill. We would really be interested in seeing it.

Dear NCFM:

My name is Lauren Sganga, and I am currently researching men's studies for my composition class at the University of Central Florida. I was wondering if someone from your organization would be able to answer a couple of questions I have involving the number of members presently affili-

ated with the NCFM. Feel free to e-mail me back at your convenience. If you have any questions feel free to contact my professor at kowalski@mail.ucf.edu.

Lauren Sganga
Lexy110404@aol.com

WEBMASTER: We would be very happy to answer any questions you may have about our organization and about men's issues if

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Ordinary Men Are Well Portrayed in “Last Orders”

By J.R. Molloy

Last Orders is a small film about a cross-section of English society from the forties to the present. With the help of a stellar cast, director Fred Schepisi succeeds in showing that the life and death of a shopkeeper can be as moving as that of an epic hero.

The plot, based upon the Booker Award novel by Graham Swift, turns upon the dying request of Jack (Michael Caine) that his ashes be scattered off the pier at Margate (hence the title). Ray (Bob Hoskins) agrees to get Jack's son Vince (Ray Winstone) and two of his old pub friends—Vic (Tom Courtney) and Lenny (David Hemmings)—to make the trip. Amy (Helen Mirren), Jack's wife, refuses to go because she visits their severely retarded daughter every week on Thursday, and for fifty years Jack has declined to accompany her. The men set out, and the film follows them as they drive to Margate, a resort town where Jack had planned to retire. They stop frequently for pints and food or to visit a place important to Jack or a war memorial (all of them carry vivid memories of WWII). As they travel, they remember the previous years, and through flashbacks, the film explains how they became friends and why their relationships are the way they are. Finally, they reach Margate, and as the rain blows across the pier, they toss Jack's ashes into the sea. In parallel action, Amy says good-bye to her daughter, acknowledging that fifty years may be enough of taking care of someone who will never register her presence.

As the plot summary indicates, this is a film that explores the successes and failures of ordinary people over a span of half a century, and it's hard to imagine a better cast. Caine exhibits the raffish charm that has made him a perennial star, but here he adds to it a layer of warmth and stubbornness that gives it a different twist. He confides, on his death bed, to Ray that, “If you get the chance, go first. Going's easy. There's nothing to it. It's the ones that carry on that

have it hard.” And the other characters do their best at carrying on. Hoskins is superb, projecting a congenial character who met Jack during the war and remained his friend for life. His facade slips only once as he sits on a bench in Canterbury cathedral and remembers a too-brief six weeks many years ago. Hemmings, Modred in Camelot and the photographer who personified swinging London in Antonioni's Blow-up, is almost unrecognizable behind bushy brows, sagging jowls and a boxer's body gone badly to seed, but his acting has never been better. In the flashback scenes he is played by his son Owen. Courtney, in his youth portraying the misunderstood adolescents of Billy Liar and The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner and later demonstrating his acting ability in films such as *The Player*, plays

Vic, the successful undertaker and the only whiskey drinker of the group. He almost disappears into the character. Winstone, who held his own against Ben Kingsley in *Sexy Beast*, is fine as Jack's son who finds out the truth about himself long after he has rebelled against carrying on the family tradition. Mirren brings feeling and patience to the role of Amy that makes her worn-down character sometimes almost shine.

Last Orders, whose title also refers to the last call for drinks in the pub, is about loss and how the memories of that existence continue. It successfully captures how a life is made up of many small actions that are set in the details of everyday living; how each choice, sometimes even a trivial one, affects that life. Throughout the film Jack's love for Amy radiates, but he can't deal with

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NCFM News

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country to be arrested and convicted on federal charges of being a “deadbeat mom.” Her jury trial took place in U.S. District Court in Central Islip. Venturella was charged with failure to pay child support after quitting her job and traveling from New York to Florida. Venturella faces between 15 to 21 months in jail under sentencing guidelines. The story appeared on page A17 of Newsday (Long Island's daily newspaper) on February 15, 2003 and was ignored by most of the national media.

HELPING GROW MEMBERSHIP

GNY Chapter President Ed Stephens who is also co-director of the On Step Institute for Mental Health Research has generously agreed, through his institute, to subsidize student memberships in NCFM and the GNY Chapter. This will be to the tune of \$30 per student. This means that students

will need to pay just \$20 per year for their combined NCFM-national and GNY Chapter dues. Thank you, Edward!

WEB SITES TO WATCH

Last year the World Health Organization began a newsletter devoted exclusively to men's health issues. You can review the archive of past newsletters and subscribe to future ones by going to <http://www.univie.ac.at/wcmh/website/newsletter1.htm>. In October this organization will be sponsoring its third conference on men's health issues in Vienna, Austria (see our “events” page for more information at ncfm.org).

Critics of Title IX are beginning to speak out. Leo Kocher, head wrestling coach at the University of Chicago, has begun an ambitious public awareness cam-

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Book Review

By J. Steven Svoboda

Stories of Manhood: Journeys into the Hidden Hearts of Men.

Edited by Steve Biddulph.

Sydney, Australia: Finch Publishing, 2000. 196 pp. A\$16.00.
<http://www.finch.com.au>

Steve Biddulph, already probably Australia's premier men's movement author with *Manhood: An Action Plan for Changing Men's Lives and Raising Boys*, has crafted another stunning book. *Stories of Manhood: Journeys into the Hidden Hearts of Men*, billed as a companion volume to *Manhood*, may be all the more impressive for the fact that it is an edited volume. Certainly the book's virtually unequalled emotional and topical range is central to its undoubted strong appeal to anyone interested in men and in the dialectic now raging to establish a new balance of power between men and women.

Biddulph evidently possesses not only a keen voice of his own but also an uncanny knack at bringing together a set of authors who are exceedingly diverse in many dif-

ferent respects — background, topic, perspective, voice. Peter Carey contributes one of the most moving pieces I have ever read, "A Small Memorial" to some children of his who passed through his life and their lives all too quickly. Carey's honesty and spare yet emotionally expressive writing can hardly fail to bring a little mist to the reader's eyes.

Charles Fransen needs only one page to describe a small epiphany, in which he comes to realize that the happiness of an ailing daughter matters more than his boss's anger. Ian Hargreaves takes many of us as close as we may ever want to come to a vasectomy and — in the author's case — its aftermath, which proved painful in more than one way. The author maintains a light touch and avoids self-pity. Leo Schofield memorably sets forth not only abuse suffered in a "Christian Brothers" religious school but also a complex, even compassionate (if unforgiving) portrait of his abuser, a sexually and psychologically twisted instructor memorably nicknamed "Itchy."

Michael Pollard tells us how his "goofy

brother", his Big Brother, through some timely and tough-minded yet loving advice, helps him to stay out of jail and eventually set his life moving in a good direction. Nancy Lerner, evidently the only female lead contributor to this volume, also provides its longest piece, regaling us with intoxicating tales of her tribulations as a teacher in an all-boy school. She finds that with eccentricities of hair and dress restrained and the freedom from the inevitable pressure cooker of girls' presence, boys paradoxically found themselves freer to forge their own individual identities. Eccentric intellectual Kevin thrived, as did a superlatively competitive (and top-ranked) student who somehow learned to gracefully relinquish his premier position when an Asian genius joined the school. The school's boys learn to relate to and respect an extremely curvaceous and corresponding talented young female teacher.

Bob Ellis finds a way to come to terms with his aging mother's gradual (and lovingly detailed) departure from this world. Bill Brandt contributes a breath-catching photograph of a man home from the mines, bent over a bucket while his wife helps him in the no doubt vain struggle to clean himself. "The ancient partnership between men and women" is aptly captured in this haunting image.

The volume contains numerous other pieces, including a United Nations official's daring rescue of several East Timor natives, a man's gritty and compassionate story of caring for his own father despite the mixed relationship they had in earlier years, and a husband and wife's struggle in nineteenth century Scotland over the proper punishment for a child who stole some eggs. Many other noteworthy contributions are also included in *Stories of Manhood*, which benefits from Finch's usual top-of-the-line layout and production values. Even the cartoons give the reader periodic breaks that are very welcome. Since Finch ships worldwide, you may want to buy Steve Biddulph's delightful book and read all twenty-six of the pieces he has collected for yourselves! ♥

Letters

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it can be done quickly and off the top of our head. We do not do research for students, but we do point students in the right direction when doing term papers.

About your question regarding how many members we have, we simply don't make that information available to the public. Thanks for your interest.

Dear NCFM:

I assume you have all seen the reports about how Sears is treating its reservist employees who are called up? By law, they are required to hold their jobs open and available, but nothing more. Usually, people

take a big pay cut and lose benefits as a result of being called up. Sears is voluntarily paying the difference in salaries and maintaining all benefits, including medical insurance and bonus programs, for all called up reservist employees for up to two years. I submit that Sears is an exemplary corporate citizen and should be recognized for its contribution.

I suggest we all shop at Sears, and be sure to find a manager to tell them why we are there so the company gets the positive reinforcement it well deserves.

Dave Usher

drusher@swbell.net ♥

NCFM News

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paign. At issue is the discontinuance of male sports programs at universities resulting from formulas meant to prevent discrimination against women. See <http://www.savingsports.org>.

Visit [paternalinstinct.com](http://www.paternalinstinct.com). Paternal Instinct is edited by Greater New York Chapter President Edward Stephens, M.D. It is primarily aimed at psychologists and others in the helping professions. Recently a very important and candid editorial was brought to our attention. We urge everyone to read it. Go to <http://www.paternalinstinct.com/aboutsite/editorial.htm>.

SOME FACTS ABOUT AFRICA

The UN-sponsored Global Burden of Disease Study reported that in sub-Saharan Africa, men ages 15-60 are at substantially higher risk of death than women. In Rwanda, civilian men were targeted in the 1990s by the Rwandan Patriotic Army, resulting in a population that is now 30% male. In other African countries, boys who leave their villages to support their families often become victims of child trafficking. Many boys are forced to become child soldiers and required to detect landmines.

Despite this UNICEF (United Nations

International Children's Emergency Fund) released a statement last March proclaiming that, "Women and children must be at the center of response to Southern Africa's humanitarian crisis." On April 16, NCFM joined with other men's rights organizations (such as Men's Health America) to send out a press release protesting this one-sided form a sex discrimination which ignores men and boys.

NEWS ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY PETER ALLEMANO

Thanks largely to the efforts of NCFM members Stanley Green of College Place, WA, and Mark Rosenthal of Arlington, MA, significant progress is being made to bring domestic violence victim services to men in New York City. Along with GNY Chapter President Edward M. Stephens, M.D., these men were featured panelists in a workshop on male victims at the Queens Borough President's Task Force Against Domestic Violence conference last October.

As reported in New York Newsday on February 12, 2003, this workshop was the first time male victims of domestic violence have ever been discussed in a New York

City agency's public forum on domestic violence. On subsequent visits to New York, Green and Rosenthal have met with prominent members of the city's social services and academic communities who concern themselves with domestic violence — and have received overwhelmingly positive responses to these men's presentations of non-ideological perspectives on issues related to domestic violence.

In fact, as a direct result of these meetings, the Queens Borough President's office is asking their task force to ensure that gender-inclusive language be used in all written policies and procedures of New York City government affecting domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. Members of the GNY Chapter have been pleased to support Green's and Rosenthal's efforts, both through direct participation as well as through providing brass-tacks-level logistical support, including providing overnight accommodations for their colleagues from out-of-town. [One enthusiastic chapter member quipped humorously that, after having hosted both men on different occasions, he felt his living room sofa bed had become a historic artifact and ought to go on display one day in a yet-to-be-created Museum of the Men's Movement.] ♥

Poetry by Roy U. Schenk

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Heroic Absurdity

© 11/19/97, Roy U. Schenk

Reprinted from: *Breaking the Shackles*

MPC-BEP Press, Madison, WI., 2002.

Has anyone considered the absurdity, of 15
years threatened prison
For an affectionate pat on the behind?
Justified by shocked horror that man, surely
never woman,
Might have gotten twinge of erotic feelings.
But then, why not?

Absurdity is common in our laws today,
As brave legislators strive to protect
Our virtuous, innocent, helpless, deserving,
victim females,
From evil, lecherous, domineering, unworthy,
perpetrator males.
Pride must swell their breasts as legislators
find
Each new way to punish and imprison
More of those disgusting beasts.
Is it yet illegal, for men to look at women,
If woman decides she doesn't like the look?

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Poetry by Roy U. Schenk

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*Surely it should be so, if she feels the least
discomfort.*

*How dare a man do such a vile thing.
Sexual harassment is anything that makes
a woman*

the least bit uncomfortable.

*Stress caused to men must be declared
irrelevant.*

*Sexual assault charge must equal conviction,
no defense allowed.*

*Virtuous women never falsely accuse, more
than half the time.*

*Falsely accused man's stress/imprisonment
unworthy of concern.*

*After all false accuser no doubt experienced
some discomfort in the past.*

*More prisons please, more laws, and longer
prison terms for men.*

*Superior, virtuous women surely,
Deserve all this and more.*

*How fortunate we are to have, to celebrate
Shame-driven male legislators*

*Heroically making absurdity our society's
norm and claim to fame.*

Male Self-Sacrifice

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the message that violence against men is not only justified under certain circumstances, but can be a very good thing. Even women who are intelligent enough to go to college don't grow up in a vacuum.

Advocating for men is indeed a hard load to tow, and one does indeed encounter an enormous amount of resistance, not only from feminists but also from nearly every other segment of society, too. It is nevertheless a task that urgently needs to be done. A

dead man can do very little to ensure the safety and welfare of his children. Perhaps more to the point, a man who is excluded from his home by a woman who wants to be able to abuse her children without a man's intervention, will not be able to do anything at all to ensure his children's safety and welfare if society (judges, social service agencies, police, etc.) continues to believe (or continues to want to believe) that only men abuse.

The point about the advantages of female advocates has some merit. Just as blacks in pre-Emancipation days had to have white sponsors to speak their messages for them, so white male citizens could very well benefit from having a member of a preferred class speak for them in today's feminist-dominated world. On the other hand, women like Trudy Schuett and Wendy McElroy notwithstanding, not a whole lot of women have come forward to express an interest in advocating on behalf of abused men (or, as the newspapers would say, "men who claim to be abused.") Yet, if women won't do it for us, and we won't do it for ourselves, then who will? Our elected officials have certainly made it clear what their default position will be if nobody does.

Like it or not, at some point, men are simply going to have to start taking the burden upon themselves to insist on equality under the law—not necessarily for themselves, but for other men and, indirectly, their children. That highway can get real lonesome at times, but it's like the old folk song says: if nobody else will walk it for you, you don't get off the highway; you walk it by yourself.

Ordinary Men

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his daughter and refuses to see her. Vince stops to scatter some ashes at the hop field where Jack finally explained to him who he really was and Lenny, not knowing what it means to Vince, starts a fight with him. Every character has such strengths and weaknesses. Like most men, they are reluctant to discuss personal matters, and the phrase, "That'd be tellin,'" echoes throughout the film.

Some viewers may find the pacing slow and the cockney dialects too thick to follow.

I finally activated the English subtitles on the DVD because too many of the speeches were not intelligible. But these problems are outweighed by the film's virtues real people with their eccentricities, failures and successes. It's one of the few films that focuses on the lives of ordinary men talking, drinking and growing old together. Although it deals with a death, it is a death that not only ends some things but also provides possible beginnings. It's a balanced ending to a rich, deeply-felt film.



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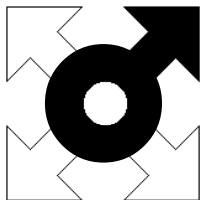
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