NOMAS MIDWINTER MEETING

All Are Welcome!
Friday, January 12, 7PM - Monday, January 15, 12:30PM
Stony Point Center, Stony Point, NY

Lodging and meals: single $280, double $220 – includes 3 nights lodging (check-in after 4PM) and nine meals: dinner on Friday at 6pm, breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday and Sunday and breakfast and lunch on Monday
Commuters: $100 site fees – includes lunch and dinner on Saturday and Sunday, lunch on Monday.
One-day (Saturday or Sunday): $35 per day

To register: please send check to VCS Community Change Project, 77 South Main St., New City, NY 10956
For information: call 845-634-5729 ext 306 or outside NY 1 800 634-7540

Airport transportation: one way charge from or to the locations below is $20 per person/per trip. (minimum of 2 people or $40). Call Stony Point Center at 845 786-5674 or 1 800 253-4285 to make arrangements.
♦ Newark, LaGuardia, White Plains and Newburgh/Stewart Airports
♦ Manhattan - 475 Riverside Drive
♦ Newark Train Station
♦ Montvale, NJ (Airbrook limo terminal)
♦ Tarrytown Hilton
♦ Croton-Harmon Train Station
One way charge from or to Kennedy Airport is $30 per person/per trip (minimum of 2 people or $60)

Other transportation information available! Just call us!

From the Editor

This is my first edition of BROTHER and I want to thank everyone who contributed and endured multiple editing sessions and the long delay in getting it out. There is no particular theme to this edition. We have a collection of thoughts and analyses, and a very poignant poem. We debated using the Columbine articles because it has been so long since that tragic event. However, like all of the NOMAS principles, the issue of men's violence seems timeless and unending in our patriarchal society so we have featured them.

We have tried to group articles under major headings relative to NOMAS principles. We will explore different ways of presenting material in future issues and welcome suggestions as well as submissions. Every reader, every member of NOMAS is a potential contributor and I urge you to think about topics you feel strongly about and want to share with like-minded people. Cartoons, poetry and other media are also welcome. Our e-mail and mailing addresses are on the masthead. We also invite letters to the editor about the contents and format of the magazine or any topic you feel strongly enough to write about.

In future editions I would love to have contributions from chapters and task groups and even use a task group topic as the theme for individual editions. If your task group has written any papers, sent letters to organizations or other publications, or organized an event (protest march, observance day, etc.) please let us know about them so we can share this information with everyone. BROTHER can be a significant force in promoting the NOMAS principles and the pro-feminist movement and we welcome your input.

Good reading!
Notes from the Co-Chair

Our previous issue of BROTHER, summer, 2000, was the abstract edition of the papers presented at the last Men’s Studies Association Meeting which was held in conjunction with the M&M25 at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, CO. The National Council and the Co-Chairs are dedicated to revitalizing the MSA as part of the overall effort to renew NOMAS’s position in the academic arena of our movement.

Re-Visioning/Membership
Speaking of renewal, I must say that the Re-Visioning Day that was held right after M&M25 was a huge success. Some 25 people, both new and old, joined in this all-day, facilitated program to determine the future of NOMAS. It was unanimously decided that the work of NOMAS is too important to society and to individual members not to keep it going. We received a number of pledges for financial assistance on that day and have already received several new memberships. We have sent out a mailing to our current list soliciting additional memberships and year-end donations. We are also installing software to support membership activities and plan to issue membership cards and notify members of renewal on an annual basis.

M&M25
The Silver Anniversary Men & Masculinity Conference was a wonderful success. Over 225 people registered and paid some fee to attend one or more events. Over 160 people attended for 2 or more days and people came from all over the United States to attend. We had over 50 workshops on every conceivable topic and a variety of keynotes including Michael Kimmel on the state of the men’s movement, Edgar Rodriguez, the first openly gay NYC police supervisor, Nick Sarchet, a Denver resident and transman who enlightened the audience on the complexity of issues surrounding gender identification and of course, Bob Brannon gave a compelling history of NOMAS and its position in the pro-feminist men’s movement. Geof Morgan and Peter Alsop provided entertainment and had anchor roles on the program and Chris Kilmartin performed his one-man show “Crimes Against Nature” which drew a large crowd from the local area. Other entertainment included local theater groups, films, and a traveling photograph exhibit on family diversity. As an added benefit, the Colorado College Campus was a beautiful setting and the meal service was outstanding.

M&M26/Chapters/MidWinter Meeting
The Colorado Chapter of NOMAS is investigating their ability to organize the next M&M. Everyone is also invited to attend the next mid-winter meeting in Nyack, NY. Information is available on page 1. We are looking forward to the 2002 M&M in Boston, coordinated by the newly founded chapter of NOMAS-Boston. If anyone is interested in forming a local chapter please contact me.

Looking Forward
As NOMAS is wrapping up a busy, exciting and affirming year we are looking forward to even more activity and excitement in 2001 and beyond. We will continue our membership drives and development of regional chapters across the United States. We are excited to welcome so many new members and to welcome back former members who have expressed renewed interest in the movement. We are continuing our educational programming with the production of numerous videos on issues of the pro-feminist men's movement and our ongoing publicity campaign to get the NOMAS name recognized as an activist organization with a unique voice.

Finally, Special Thanks
To the Gill Foundation’s Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado and the Women’s Foundation of Colorado for helping to fund the M&M25; to Mal Jones, The Jones Family Philanthropic Trust, The Kurtz Foundation, Zev Schuman and Barry Shapiro for special contributions to the NOMAS operating fund; and to Curtis Hart who did the design and development of our new website in time for the M&M25.

In brotherhood,
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**Did you know…? ...NOMAS has two divisions –**

**Men's Studies Association (MSA)**
The Men's Studies Association (MSA) is an interdisciplinary division of NOMAS that focuses a feminist-informed perspective on the ways in which the lives of men and women may be enhanced through critical study of the issues affecting men and masculinity. In conjunction with the NOMAS national M&M conference, the MSA holds an annual meeting that brings together sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, mental health workers, and other investigators to present studies and analyses on the social, cultural, and historical constructs of masculinities and male identity formation.

**Ending Men's Violence Network (EMV-Net)**
The Ending Men's Violence Network was created by NOMAS to provide an umbrella organization to support domestic violence, sexual assault and victim assistance groups working in their individual communities. EMV-net offers resources, training and support that would otherwise be unavailable to local organizations. Comprised of both men's and women's anti-violence groups, EMV-net offers additional credibility to the efforts of both on behalf of the common cause of ending men's violence.
Contributors:

David, Martin A. – a long-standing member of NOMAS, Martin has published a wide variety of non-fiction including The Dancer’s Audition Book (Sterling – NY, London) and hundreds of articles for publications such as the Los Angeles Times. His short stories and poetry appear in magazines and electronically. Karpstein Was Hiding is his first published novel.

Corben, Allen – a graduate student of theology, multi-culturalism, and gender, works at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena California. He sings in an a cappella ensemble; is husband to Margery (a pastor) and father to Mallory. He has been on the NOMAS leadership collective for four years.

Johnson, Don, PhD – is a psychotherapist and a national lecturer on the developmental issues of gay and lesbian youth. He was a founder of the Boulder County AIDS project and a member of governor’s advisory council on AIDS.

Kimmel, Michael S., PhD – is a sociologist and author who has received international recognition for his work on men and masculinity. His innovative course, "Sociology of Masculinity," examines men’s lives from a pro-feminist perspective. He is an educator and lecturer on sexual assault and harassment, gender equality and more.

Klocke, Brian – is a PhD candidate at CU-Boulder. His area of focus is social resistance and corporate domination of culture. He teaches a course titled, "Men and Masculinities" and has experience in anti-racist, and anti-sexist peer education. Brian served on the M&M25 Planning Committee and presented three workshops at the conference.

Rozdzial, Moshe, PhD – Current Co-Chair of the NOMAS National Council, Moshe is a Psychotherapist and counselor and former research scientist with the University Health Sciences Center, Denver, CO; Advisory Board Member of Voices of Faith at Equality Colorado, and past board member of the Speakers Project to End Discrimination (SPED).

In Memoriam

Saviz Shafaie
1950 - 2000

Saviz Shafaie, a long time member of NOMAS and a member of the National Council died from cancer on September 18, 2000. His life companion, Jim Ford, was with him at the time and notified NOMAS of Saviz's passing. A lifelong activist in support of gay rights for Iranians, Saviz's National Council entry read "Health food store manager and grassroots activist, Winter Park, FL." A wonderful tribute to Saviz by Jack Nichols of the Greenwich Village Gazette can be found at http://gaytoday.badpuppy.com/garchive/people/102300pe.htm.
Manhood and Violence: The Deadliest Equation
Michael Kimmel, PhD

In the days and months following the tragedy at Columbine, the nation stared at the pictures of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold trying to understand the unfathomable—how these two young boys could arm themselves to the teeth and open fire on their classmates and teachers. We continued to stare at the pictures as the explanations began to pour in from the experts and the pundits alike.

We heard from psychologists who drew elaborate profiles of misfits and loners, of adolescent depression and acting out. Cultural critics on the right threw some blame on Goth music, Marilyn Manson, violent video games, the Internet. More liberal critics told us it was guns. President Clinton chimed in about violence in the media. We even heard about fatherlessness and the disappearance of modesty. The Denver school board banned the wearing of black trench coats and some lawmakers called for the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools.

All the while we continued to miss the point—even though it was staring right back at us: the killers were middle class white boys who lived in gun states.

Skeptical? Try a little thought experiment: Imagine that the killers in Littleton—and in Pearl, Mississippi, Paducah, Kentucky, Springfield, Oregon and Jonesboro, Arkansas—were all black girls from poor families who lived in New Haven, Connecticut, Newark, New Jersey, or Providence, Rhode Island. I believe we would have had a national debate about inner-city poor black girls. The entire focus would not be just Riff and Bernardo, but all the toll would not be just Riff and Bernardo, but all the Sharks and all the Jets—and probably several dozen bystanders.

Yet gender is the single most obvious and intractable difference when it comes to violence in America. Men and boys are responsible for 95% of all violent crimes in this country. Every day twelve boys and young men commit suicide—seven times the number of girls. Every day eighteen boys and young men die from homicide—ten times the number of girls.

From an early age, boys learn that violence is not only an acceptable form of conflict resolution, but one that is admired. Four times more teenage boys than teenage girls think fighting is appropriate when someone cuts into the front of the line. Half of all teenage boys get into a physical fight each year.

The belief that violence is manly is not a trait carried on any chromosome. It is not soldered into the wiring of the right or left hemisphere. It is not juiced by testosterone (half of all boys don't fight, most don't carry weapons, and very few actually kill). It is, unfortunately, taught to our boys. It is taught by their fathers, nearly half of whom own a gun. It is taught by a media that glorifies it, by sports heroes who commit felonies and get big contracts, by a culture saturated in images of heroic and redemptive violence. It is taught and reinforced by their peers.

And this horrible education is made more lethal in states where gun control laws are most lax, where gun-lobbyists are most powerful because all available evidence suggests that all the increases in the deadliness of school violence is attributable to guns. Boys have resorted to violence for a long time, but sticks and fists and even the occasional switchblade do not create the bloodbaths of the past few years. Nearly 90% of all homicides among boys aged 15 to 19 are firearm related, and 80% of the victims are boys. If the rumble in West Side Story were to take place today, the death toll would not be just Riff and Bernardo, but all the Sharks and all the Jets—and probably several dozen bystanders.

Some will throw up their hands and sigh that "boys will be boys." In the face of these tragic killings, such resignation is unacceptable. And it doesn't answer the...
policy question; it begs the question: if boys have a natural propensity towards violence and aggression, do we organize society to maximize that tendency, or to minimize it?

Perhaps the most sensible reform that could come from these tragedies is stricter gun control laws, at least on assault weapons and handguns. Far more sweeping – and necessary – is a national meditation on how our ideals of manhood became so entwined with violence.

Make no mistake: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were real boys. In a sense, they weren’t deviants, but over-conformists to norms of masculinity that prescribe violence as a solution. Like real men, they didn’t just get mad, they got even. Until we transform that definition of manhood, this terrible equation of masculinity and violence will add up to an increasing death toll at our nation’s schools.

Columbine and Male Entitlement
Moshe Rozdzial, PhD

Much has been written over the last year and a half about the violence at Columbine. The issues of “not fitting in,” bullying, revenge, and the “jock” masculinity that seem to permeate many American schools have been discussed, examined and reexamined by sociologists, psychologists and the popular press. A common conclusion appears to be that America is a violent society and by common definition violence and manhood go hand-in-hand. What is also true, for me, is that the picture is not yet complete.

Male violence has been a part of the social fabric since the beginning of patriarchy, so why the extraordinary, and apparently escalating, violence from middle class white boys, now, at the beginning of the 21st century. A partial answer may be that we are at a cultural crossroads, a time when white male entitlement is finally colliding with a generation of women and minorities who have grown up in a time when racial and gender civil rights are the norm – by law, if not by societal desire. The generations of minorities enslaved to do the white man’s bidding are dying out and the new generation, that did not know this slavery (or at least its most vile aspects), is grown or growing up.

Nevertheless, the cultural messages to our young white males are still ambiguous and the ambiguity is probably more intense in the gun states than elsewhere in the US. While the media and society, schools and sports fans still glorify white male dominance, white males have increasingly come up against barriers to their entitlements in every aspect of their lives. Title 9 advances, civil rights protections, and the feminist and sexual revolutions have all taken their toll on traditional white male privilege.

The response has been the proverbial backlash as white men by the thousands have joined white supremacy groups and recidivist religious organizations, such as Promise Keepers, in order to regain a sense of the power they perceive they have lost to women and minorities. The reason that so many white boys, like Harris and Klebold, connect with Hitler and Nazism is that these represent archetypal powerful white men: outcasts who regained power through force and coercion and punished all whom they perceived as having stood in their way.

What I wonder is not so much the quantity of parenting these boys had, but whether they grew up in traditional, authoritarian, male dominated households. Were their fathers such examples to their sons that it had led them to expect a future of male power when their turn came? That expectation was ultimately thwarted when they finally arrived at manhood (high school) and discovered how powerless they were.

In high school the jocks maintain the patriarchal domination, set the standard for masculinity, get all the dates and live a privileged existence. But what about the outcasts? Read the words of Harris as reported in the press. In his diatribes of anger you read the struggle of a white male dealing with the loss of power and control. Unfortunately, the only recourse he and Dylan Klebold could find for asserting their will was the use of a gun. Fundamentalism, as practiced by these boys, may well have been a result of the incapacity to deal with the inconsistencies offered them by our ever-evolving pluralistic society. And, unfortunately, once again violence has been the recourse of the dominant group in response to losing power and control in society. Historical privilege continues to crash into historical reality of progressive social movements with violent outcomes.

Access Reality TV Series –Don’t Forget!!

Barry Shapiro hosts a series of shows on men and masculinity to bring attention to the ongoing contributions made by NOMAS in combating sexism, racism, and homophobia. Ideal for public access as well as classroom training material, programs include guests Terry Kupers, Paul Kivel, Victor Lewis, Hamish Sinclair and others.

Topics include: male/female relationships, the prevention of male violence, homophobia, fathering, men in prisons, straight white male supremacy, internalized oppression, the “–isms”

For more information visit www.nomas.org or email Barry at shapirobar@earthlink.net
Can Men do Feminist Theory?

There are perhaps as many definitions of feminism and feminist theory as there are people who declare that they are feminists. Ben Agger (1998) states that the major achievement of feminist theory is to make the politics of sex and gender central to understanding oppression. However, feminist theory is not only about understanding but also about action. A goal of the feminist project is to end the oppression of women and attain social equity for them.

The politics of patriarchy have suppressed women's voices and dominated social discourse and social action to the benefit of men and detriment of women. Thus it may be problematic for some readers that I, as a white male in this patriarchal society, am struggling to define the male role in feminism, which was born out of the women's movement and revisits the unanswered question, can men do feminist theory?

This question can only be answered in differing ways for the meanings of text and answers to social questions are contested symbolic mediations imbedded in social relations of power. Perhaps a more important question than whether or not men can "do" feminist theory is whether men can engage feminism and can they be feminists?

Can Men be Feminists?

It is crucial for men to be a part of feminist agency. If feminism is to attain its goal of liberating women, men must be a part of the struggle. Indeed, men probably bear more of the responsibility for ending oppression of women since patriarchal men have been the main perpetrators of that very oppression. But can men do this by becoming feminists?

Although I believe that men can be pro-feminist and anti-sexist, I do not believe we can be feminists in the strictest sense of the word in today's society. Men, in this patriarchal system, cannot remove themselves from their power and privilege in relation to women. To be a feminist one must be a member of the targeted group (i.e., a woman) not only as a matter of classification but as having one's directly-lived experience inform one's theory and praxis.

A clear analogy can be made between male pro-feminism and anti-racism. Men cannot really be feminists anymore than whites can be black nationalists. However, men can be pro-feminist and whites can be pro-black nationalists. At the same time it is not enough to simply be a member of the disenfranchised minority to be either a feminist or a black nationalist. Feminism, like black nationalism requires political consciousness and even activism.

Sexism restricts roles for men as well as women. But while sexism impacts women more negatively than men it also affects individual women to differing degrees. Some women internalize sexist beliefs and subservient behaviors to a greater extent than others and do not/cannot embrace feminism.

Sexism negatively impacts men by forcing them into a hyper-masculinity which engages high-risk behavior and limits their emotional expression as full human beings. However, regardless of these and other secondary effects of sexism, men still benefit from patriarchy (the social system of sexism) whether or not they choose to fight sexism in others or themselves. Women, and feminists in particular, face the damaging primary effects of sexism and the wrath of patriarchal society whenever they resist their subjugated social role and often even when they don't. So if men cannot be feminists how can we be a part of a feminist agency? Does feminism address only women or doesn't it also address men in some way?

What Should be the Role of Men in the Feminist Movement?

Feminist discourse might even have more pertinent impact on men than on women. Many women know they are oppressed by patriarchy. They have the life experiences of belonging to an oppressed group and have most likely shared personal stories that reveal their wounds from patriarchy. Men, on the other hand, are less likely to recognize their gender privilege and probably have not shared stories of wounding women through their own oppressive behaviors nor have they grieved with other men over the harm they have caused to women. Vulnerable, acquiescent behavior is not commonly accepted as manly in today's society. Nevertheless, I believe that real feminism is not just about hearing personal stories but also about changing the structure of gender relations and acting to eliminate all forms of patriarchy.

Unfortunately, some segments of the men's movement, such as men's rights groups and followers of Robert Bly's mythopoetic movement, seem less focused on dismantling patriarchy and more focused on, in bell Hooks's (1992) words, "the production of a kind of masculinity that can be safely expressed within patriarchal boundaries. She further explains that the most frightening aspect of the contemporary men's movement, particularly as it is expressed in popular culture, is the depoliticization of the struggle to end sexism and sexist oppression and the replacing of that struggle with a focus on personal self-actualization. She suggests that the men's movement should not be
separate from the women's movement but instead become a segment under the larger feminist movement. In this way men would not be taking center stage in yet another part of women's lives allowing a slightly more subtle form of domination to continue.

Paul Smith, who co-authored the book Men in Feminism suggested recently in Cultronix that men should not be in feminism but nearby. He challenges men to think of feminism working on them. But this cannot be done without changing, not only how men relate to other men, but how we relate to women as well. Perhaps men need to be "menists," supporting women in their feminist work while allowing feminism to work on them, challenging themselves and other men to end patriarchy. In this way feminist theory and practice could be a catalyst for liberating both men and women from their restrictive gender roles and the system of patriarchy.

**Can Men Do Feminist Theory?**

Any substantive theory for social change must provide something for most if not all members of society. Theories which use abstract and elitist language will not be accessible to the oppressed groups most in need of social justice. A good theory, then, will also have multiple layers of messages for different social groupings. While some radical feminists may take an essentialist position that feminist theory construction is only possible by women other feminists will insist that men can participate in feminist theory, under certain conditions. Alison Jaggar (1988) describes these conditions as follows: men will have to learn women's text, a process that will require at least as much humility and commitment as that needed by white/Anglo women to understand the experience of women of color.

**What Should be the Role of Men with Feminist Theory?**

As suggested by Alison Jaggar and others, men must first learn the text of feminist theory. This learning must not only involve the traditional reading of seminal works in feminist theory by feminist authors but must also involve a learning of social and political experience from a feminist perspective. Men should consult with feminist women when writing about feminist theory. Men should also support more authorship of feminist theory by women and challenge other men to see feminist theory as a legitimate and necessary practice that challenges men to end patriarchy. Above all, men need to engage with feminist theory and practice, letting it work on them, in order to liberate all genders and build a society constructed on justice and nourished by love.

**References**


Meninist Website: http://Feminist.com/men.htm


**M&M25**

The next two pages recap the wonderful event that was the Twenty-fifth Men & Masculinity Conference. Below is a list of NOMAS members who were recognized at the Silver Anniversary Conference for their contributions on behalf of gender equality and social justice. Other former leaders could not be reached. If you can help us find more possible honorees please let us know.

| Bill Aal          | Terry Kupers         | Perry Kaufman        | Michael Rudnick       |
| Franklin Abbott   | David Fanning*       | Michael Kimmel*      | Sam Sappington        |
| Alan Acacia       | Sam Femianno         | Charlie Kreiner      | Saviz Shafae          |
| Margo Adair       | Phyllis B. Frank*    | Terry Kupers         | Barry Shapiro*        |
| Peter Alsop*      | Ken Fremont-Smith    | Gary Lapeau          | Craig Sherfenberg     |
| Don Bell          | Rose Garrity*        | John Lapham          | Fred Small            |
| Lisa Berndt       | Doug Gertner*        | Victor Lewis*        | Ron Smith             |
| Sven Bonnichsen   | Glen Good            | David Lewis*         | River Smith*          |
| Stephen Botkin    | David Greene*        | David R. Matteson*   | John Speaks           |
| Bob Brannon*      | Alan E. Gross        | Vernon McClean       | John Stoltenberg      |
| Harry Brod        | Alan M. Gross        | Michael Messina-Yauchzy | Jack C. Straton      |
| Gary Brooks       | Mark Hamblett        | Geoff Morgan*        | Cooper Thompson       |
| Carole Campana    | Jim Harrison         | Wayne Morris         | Adam Thorburn         |
| Gordon Clay*      | Bill Holbrook        | Tom Mosmiller        | Charles Thornbury     |
| Jon Cohen         | Jim Kane             | Gordon Murray        | Timothy J. Wernette   |
| Kurt Colborn      | Michael Kaufman      | Craig & Vicki Norberg-Bohm* | Harvey Whitten    |
| Don Conway-Long   |                     |                      | Michael Whitty        |
| Allen Corben*     |                     |                      | Ben Zeman             |
| Jim Creane        |                     |                      |                     |

* Indicates attendees at the M&M25
Twenty-Five Years of Changing Men:  
History, Progress & Opportunities  
August 10 to 13, 2000  
Colorado College  
Colorado Springs, CO

Committee  
Moshe Rozdzial – Chair  
Donald Cavanaugh  
Margie Duncombe  
Doug Gertner  
Brian Klocke  
Kevin Maly  
Kirsten Peterson  
Christy Pitts

The M&M25 in Colorado Springs was a grand conference! Thanks to Moshe, who almost single-handedly created this conference from concept to reality, and to the local committee and everyone who participated and presented and supported in any of a thousand ways! Kudos to all!

David Greene's MSA meeting was a success and all the presenters felt that they came away with as much received as given. Keynotes Michael Kimmel, Edgar Rodriguez, and Nick Sarchet were all great. And Bob Brannon, as keynote at the Silver Anniversary Banquet, gave a compelling history of NOMAS and the M&Ms.

The keynotes were all wonderful and the theater programs were great. Chris Kilmartin's one-man show, Crimes Against Nature, was excellent and people who attended Hamish Sinclair's manalive and The Color of Fear with Victor Lewis pre-conference institutes all expressed great appreciation for the presentations and the presenters.

Dedicated to enhancing men's lives
The workshops were all well received and an incredible sense of community developed among the attendees over the three days due in no small part to the opening session where people were invited to get out of their comfort zones a bit and become part of the whole group.

Peter Alsop and Geof Morgan were wonderful and the talent show on Friday night produced some very interesting material including original musical compositions by Julia McKay and some unique poetry read by River Smith and Ron Ruhnke.

The Colorado College Campus is charming and very beautiful. The dorms are ... well ... dorms, but they were very adequate for sleeping and the food service at the dining hall was very impressive with a huge selection of a variety of things to meet everyone’s needs and tastes. The catered banquet was mostly vegan and extremely well prepared and presented to everyone’s delectation.
Re-Visioning

The NOMAS re-visioning of the pro-feminist men’s movement and NOMAS’s part in it was held on August 14, 2000 in an all-day, facilitated session at Colorado College. During the session, attendees brainstormed strengths and weaknesses of the organization as well as opportunities for renewal. The group determined that there are ten things that have to be done for NOMAS to succeed in the future. The first four are prioritized. The rest will be discussed at the mid-winter meeting:

1. Continue the M&M conferences and creating other programs and training/proselytizing opportunities
2. Recruit, retain and engage the membership
3. Create an infrastructure to support the work of NOMAS
4. Develop and implement a fund raising plan
   • Expand awareness through relationships with other groups, web, marketing, media
   • Create alliances and collaborations with other organizations
   • Advocate political action locally and nationally
   • Develop and support regional and local chapters
   • Develop a resource bank of activists, documents, cultural works, etc.
   • Develop training products and curricula based on the NOMAS mission

A more comprehensive report on the re-visioning will be provided in the Spring 2001 issue of BROTHER.

Anti-Oppression

Anti-Semitism and Heterosexism: Common Constructs of Oppression
Moshe Rozdzial, PhD

All oppressions have common roots. Born out of misinformation and directed toward the “other,” the goal of any oppression is the unjust, destructive, and unequal distribution of power to the advantage of one group over another. And although there is no specific hierarchy of oppressions, the context in which they manifest themselves – history, economics, or politics – makes some types of oppressions more closely related than others.

I propose that anti-Semitism and heterosexism (which manifests as homophobia) are directly analogous to one another. To disregard anti-Semitism while claiming to understand heterosexism is to overlook the most potent of historical lessons. I believe that these two oppressions share many elements that are deeply rooted in the psyche of our culture and, as anti-Semitism has gone underground and heterosexism has become institutionalized, the open hatred and scapegoating of Jews has almost effortlessly been transferred to homosexuals.

Homosexuals and Jews are feared and despised not because they can be identified as outwardly different but precisely because of the relative ease with which both can be disguised. Both groups share the capacity to “pass” as either straight or gentile respectively and therefore are viewed as objects of suspicion and sources of conspiracy. The unfounded belief that homosexuals are not only furtive perpetrators of pedophilia but proselytizers of a gay “agenda” directly echoes the blood libel and kidnapping charges of historical anti-Semitism when Jews were accused of ritual slaughter of Christian children and “international conspiracy” theories had Jewish bankers surreptitiously controlling the world.

Within the psychology of group hatred both Jews and homosexuals are viewed as having unique political and economic power. Under the scrutiny of the prejudiced eye both groups are charged with promoting “special rights” and are blamed for a variety of social ills and misfortunes. The same accusing voices that cry out to exclude these minority groups, who have no real power in the political arena, would never question the political voice of the societal majority. Institutionalized Christianity and heterosexuality wield power through legislation that defers to Christian religious sensibility and morality in a nominally secular state and to heterosexual privilege through the denial to homosexuals of marital, parental, estate and civil rights that have been normalized as majority rights.

Similarly, religious attacks on homosexuals, defended under biblical precedent, echo the vilest forms of anti-Semitism. The slander of “sodomites” has replaced “Christ-killers” in the vocabulary of hatred and heaven’s retribution against a minority community has once again, become the excuse to justify victimizing the victim. Even the promise of “salvation” through
The Developmental Experience of the Gay/Lesbian Youth
Don Johnson, PhD

I propose that everyone in our society is homophobic. In addition, it is my strong belief that gay and lesbian individuals, prior to coming out, are among the most homophobic people in our society. Most of us do not think of ourselves as homophobic, however, and many people will disagree with this concept of universal homophobia, especially as applied to them. My intent in opening this article with such a potentially inflammatory statement is to focus immediately on a central dimension of the struggle homosexual youth face: that of owning an identity they have been taught to hide and developing with that identity to a socially responsible adulthood.

Having spent over 20 years studying and teaching in the field of human sexuality, I believe that it is impossible to grow up in America and not absorb some level of homophobia. The question is not "am I or am I not homophobic?" The real question is "how homophobic am I?" Long before the label of "gay" or "lesbian" is attached to them, young homosexuals are acutely aware of how our culture (including their families in most cases) feels about homosexuality. And the messages are usually negative. So as the homosexual teenager develops an awareness of his or her same-sex sexual attraction and becomes conscious of the associated pejorative labels the societally engendered negative feelings toward homosexuality (homophobia) and toward self (internalized homophobia) are already in place.

Sex is one of the few, if not the only, physical experiences of our lives where we know how we feel about it (it is good, bad, right, wrong) before we experience it. Parents, family, society, school, church, media and others constantly barrage us with messages about cultural attitudes toward sex and gender. The overwhelmingly negative messages about homosexuality set the stage for a range of social dysfunction for the homosexual teenager including the higher than average rate of suicide among gay and lesbian teens. For those who survive, even more frustrations await.

As typical American teens enter their high school years they undertake a range of sexual and social changes and adjustments which are difficult at best. Teenagers must learn all of the survival rules around love and relationships: how to identify an appropriate potential partner; how to initiate and develop a loving and sexual relationship; how to appropriately turn down unwanted attention; how to deal with non-reciprocated attraction; how to heal from rejection; how to be interested in other people and attracted to them because of personality traits and not just because they are physically desirable; and more. While these are extraordinarily complex tasks filled with many pitfalls, failures and wounds, society offers a variety support systems for young heterosexuals during this period. Parents, family, church, popular culture and a variety of
other sources encourage struggling youths with the message that the process is survivable and a host of successful role models is available. Even so the route is painful and bumpy.

There are no such positive support systems for young homosexuals. Any cultural messages that are provided are usually negative. Our society associates the adolescent feelings experienced by teenage homosexuals with images of unhappy, lonely people, rejected by family and society, afflicted with disease and with death. There are generally no positive role models available and visible for gay and lesbian teens. Two classic patterns of dysfunctional behavior tend to arise for young homosexuals in response to this failure of society to provide a positive environment for their development. The first is attempting to become the model teenagers; internally they are torn with fear, self-doubt and self-hatred over their developing feelings and attractions. The second is one of withdrawal from society and peers. In this case homosexual youths often involve themselves with dropouts, drug-users and other social misfits. Both patterns reflect deep internal isolation and both result in the unhealthy denial of one’s identity.

Thus, while heterosexual youths are acquiring the teenage developmental skills of learning how to fall in and out of love, survive broken hearts, and fine-tune their social dating skills, gay and lesbian youth are investing their energy in denial and pretending to be something they are not. A major consequence of this is that gay and lesbian youth miss the acquisition of appropriate same-sex social/sexual/dating skills during their formative years. When gay and lesbian individuals finally do "come out," no matter what the age, they essentially have to go back to adolescence and experience the developmental social/sexual tasks that were denied them by society. They must learn how, as homosexuals, to fall in and out of love, to have their hearts broken and recover, etc. In sum, they must "go through" adolescence as a gay or lesbian person.

If this development process was difficult for heterosexual teenagers post-teen homosexuals have an even more difficult time. They have acquired the cognitive awareness and judgements of adulthood which they apply in self-evaluation to the adolescent skills acquisition tasks with which they are now involved. It is very difficult to be in one’s thirties or forties (or beyond) and act out a teenage developmental task. The behavior is adolescent; the judgements about the behavior are adult. It is painful and confusing to go through this process for both the individuals and those close to them. It is an unfortunate irony that the culture that makes it impossible for gay and lesbian individuals to integrate fully functioning relationship skills during the formative teen-age years is the very one that condemns them for not having done so. Gay men are portrayed as sexual libertines when essentially all they are doing is acting out an adolescent agenda with no parental/cultural supervision or support. Fortunately, for a majority of gays and lesbians once the delayed tasks of adolescence are accomplished they stabilize into committed meaningful relationships very much like their heterosexual peers.

In a healthy non-homophobic culture this natural evolution would have occurred for homosexuals at the same time their heterosexual counterparts were experiencing it. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals would have reached sexual-social maturity at the same time and both could have become productive, contributing members of society with stable relationships and positive social impact. Instead, a significant minority of the population reaches adulthood without having learned major relationship skills. Their productivity and ability to contribute to a stable social structure are compromised until they develop these skills and they are disadvantaged, both personally and socially, by having to experience this development as adults, all because everyone in our society, to some extent, is homophobic.

Response to the Christian Men’s Movement

The Promise Keepers
Allen Corben

Promise Keepers is the most popular regressive Christian movement since Prohibition. Founded by Bill McCartney in 1990 to deal with men’s failure to exercise their divinely appointed roles as heads of their households, Promise Keepers fights the ‘sissification of men’ through literature, rallies, and accountability groups. From under 100 men at the first gathering in Colorado in 1990 to nearly a million attendees (in more than a dozen stadium events) during 1996 Promise Keepers has grown to include more than 200 full time staff and an annual budget of over $100 million.

Rallies are held throughout the country in major sporting arenas and attract men from all over the target area.
These praiseworthy goals have, in fact, resulted in some challenge the patriarchal context of those relationships. Many conservative Christian organizations come to their century has not taken place. It is unfortunate that "vital relationships with other men," even as feminists conscious people recognize the value of men "pursuing churches, and to actively evangelize the world. Socially to provide financial and personal support for local promise to honor and commit to Jesus Christ, moral and ethical purity. Christians everywhere will applaud a promise to honor and commit to Jesus Christ, to provide financial and personal support for local and denominational barriers to achieve unity within the Body of Christ; and 7) to actively evangelize the world.

It is hard to find fault with men practicing sexual, moral and ethical purity. Christians everywhere will applaud a promise to honor and commit to Jesus Christ, to provide financial and personal support for local churches, and to actively evangelize the world. Socially conscious people recognize the value of men "pursuing vital relationships with other men," even as feminists challenge the patriarchal context of those relationships. These praiseworthy goals have, in fact, resulted in some positive (however flawed) consequences among Promise Keepers.

Nevertheless, not everyone is happy with the Promise Keepers. Greater involvement by men in their families is laudable if it means a focus on shared decision-making instead of "head of the household" dominance. The phrase "maintain a strong marriage" is sufficiently vague, however, to allow quite a range of behavior, some potentially unhealthy and even illegal. The seven promises do not include foreswearing violence against family members or others and "a man's home is his castle" is, potentially, an easy justification for violence. Promise Keepers' messages of male dominance, its anti-gay rhetoric, and its apparent, if unstated, condoning of emotional abuse are abhorrent to many progressive and feminist groups as well as individual members of society. Nevertheless, while many protest the Promise Keepers, the media generally paints a rosy, uncritical picture and the organization continues to have successful rallies though not with the same attendance as in its 1996 heyday.

It is not only progressive political and women's organizations that challenge Promise Keepers. Mainline Christian denominations which do not accept the "male-headship" interpretation of the Christian scriptures obviously critique Promise Keepers but even some denominations that support male headship fear that Promise Keepers can cause dissension within a congregation by having a key man create factionalism among church members. Non-white Christian men often feel excluded because Promise Keepers is still predominantly white. Low-income Christian men often feel excluded since Promise Keepers' advertising and cost of attendance fairly assure that attendees are predominantly middle-class. Single Christian men who might agree with the Promise Keepers' agenda in principle feel that Promise Keepers is only about and for married men. And gay/bi-/trans- men know they are not welcome, regardless of their theological orientation.

One of the most telling impacts of Promise Keepers is the greater involvement of men in their communities. Promise Keepers claims to be a-political, but it does encourage members to be more involved in the political process of their local and national communities. Given the conservative public stance of every national leader of Promise Keepers, the message to those attending the rallies is obvious: 'become involved, but as a force for regressive and conservative politics.' While not the "storm troopers of Christian
Survivor without a tattoo

I survived the camps at Buchenwald, at Bergen-Belsen and far worse
But no obscene numbers stain my aging arm
The stench of carnage still burns the nostrils of my mind.
Yet the mud blood earth clings to no shoes or clothes or part of me
I was not there
But I survived.

I am no Jew of “a certain age” born in a time when monsters stalked.
My young eyes looked, from the comfort of an untouched land,
For my parents faces—and my own—
In those firewood piles of corpses the newsreel cameras showed.
The distant cousins, great aunts and uncles, all up in smoke, my
bubbeh wept for bring my tears too.
“Survivor guilt,” my therapist said, as I cried and cried
I was not there
But I survived.

Endured the amputation of roots, wounding of my culture, death of my
shtetl.
You who were there your nightmares are not mine
I have nightmares of my own.
My horrors do not match your horrors
My memories do not run and hide from me like yours
I am a survivor without a tattoo;
Scared and scarred in other ways.

Martin A. David
December, 1997

Editor's note: The poem above is taken from Martin David’s first novel, Karpstein Was Hiding. The novel is a powerful and even frightening examination of how hate and hate crimes can overwhelm the minds of individual members of the hated group. Karpstein Was Hiding has been widely reviewed and reviews are available from a number of sources. The book is available directly from Martin via the Internet at http://www.compteam.com/Karpstein/autograph.htm or by writing him directly at the address indicated.
Social Activism

The following letter was sent to Jim Beam Brands to protest their current sexist advertising campaign. Not only are the ads misogynistic, the company has attempted to glorify antiquated patriarchal attitudes with an online voting/approval system at www.jimbeam.com/jb_web/ads/jim_beam_ads.asp. We invite you to join our organizational voice with a letter of your own.

Jim Beam Brands Co.
Clermont, KY 40110

November 30, 2000

Dear Jim Beam Brands Co.:

I am writing on behalf of the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) to express our concern over your recent advertising campaign (www.jimbeam.com/jb_web/ads/jim_beam_ads.asp) depicting “male bonding” in the context of female-bashing.

These ads are offensive, misogynistic and denigrating of women. They imply that anything feminine or relational in nature is not of value, especially to men. For example, the ad caption stating “you can count on them to never ask you to ‘get in touch with your feminine side’” feeds into the stereotypic patriarchal image of masculinity -- devoid of nurturing, emotion, connection, etc. Such a polarized image of male gender roles is harmful to both men and women. It perpetuates the stereotype of non-communication between the sexes, whose outcome in our society has too often been violence against women.

We are disappointed that you do not celebrate the potential of men and women having friendships and relationships based on equality and understanding. We hope you will withdraw this campaign as soon as possible and issue an apology to the millions of men and women who have worked so hard over the past 100 years to end sexism and the stereotypes you have chose to glorify.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Very truly yours,
Moshe Rozdzial, PhD
Co-Chair, NOMAS

Call for Submissions

"On the road to healing -- a booklet for men against sexism."

We recently received a call for submissions for a publication that supports the same ideals that we do. We thought it worthwhile to make you aware of the publication and to invite you to submit your own stories.

"On the road to healing -- a booklet for men against sexism" is a hard copy “zine” that features articles, stories, art, photography and other printable media directed at critical theory and personal reflections on male socialization, sexism and the concept of manhood. Submissions are welcome from people of all genders who want to describe the roles they were taught in relation to manhood and how this experience influences every and any aspect of their lives. The first issue was released in May 1999, and there are over 1500 copies in circulation. The projected date for the second issue is May 2001 with an anticipated circulation of 5000 or more copies. The current deadline for contributions is March 1st, 2001.

For more information, or to order a copy of the first issue at $2.00 each, please contact the editors as indicated below:

Basil Shadid
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The Promise Keepers (continued)

fascism" some have described them, Promise Keepers are still a potent political force of the far-right.

Costs of Promise Keepers

There are obvious benefits for men involved in an organization supporting male supremacy and anti-feminist backlash. The male-only approach in gatherings means that there is no way for attendees to hear or honor the voices of women who are among the intended recipients of their promises. In Promise Keepers, since the husband/father is supposed to lead based on what he believes, hearing a wife or child’s views could potentially confuse or compromise his insight and might be detrimental to male headship theory. Those few, carefully chosen women who are allowed to speak from the platform at Promise Keepers' rallies are complicit with the male-headship view.

For Promise Keepers, male headship is the notion that the husband is solely responsible before God for everything that happens in his family. As head, the husband/father must use whatever means necessary to enforce his decisions. Of course Promise Keepers encourages benevolent male headship, but there are no injunctions against coercion or abuse. The Promise Keepers emphasize that the husband/father is to make decisions that serve the best interests of his wife/children as he understands those interests, even if she/they disagree with him as to what is best. This externally imposed model of male headship can become a poison in a relationship. The overwhelming brunt of the oppression falls upon the wife and any children though the husband/father must also diminish his own humanity in the process.

In the worst case, a dangerous situation can arise when a husband/father understands interpersonal power as a limited quantity in a zero-sum situation. Given the sexist culture of patriarchy and male supremacy in which every American male is steeped, the command to "take back" the role of Godly head of the household could easily lead to "justifiable" battering. Men may feel that they must coerce (hit), emotionally or physically, in order to take back what has been taken from them. They batter so that they can re-establish themselves as the unchallenged heads of households, and anything which borders on negotiation and interdependence is perceived as a challenge to their leadership.

Ironies of Promise Keepers

It is ironic that in order to help men connect with a nurturing, feminine side, Promise Keepers assemble in sports arenas in male-only groups and offer highly masculine motivational speeches by males who are widely accepted as embodying "real masculinity."

It is a deeper irony that even as they seek to overcome the stereotype of harsh disciplinarians, they still use stereotypically masculine (bullying) methods to keep their followers in line. Calling men "sissies" for not keeping their promises is behavior one might expect from grade schoolers, not from mature adult leaders, not to mention the sexism and homophobia such behavior implies. Nevertheless, rally attendees respond by being shamed into behavior modification through such name-calling by a masculine "father figure."

It is ironic that Promise Keepers gather for Bible study in order to improve their relationships with wives and children; preferring the intellectual to the interpersonal. Instead of practicing a God-like love, however, Promise Keepers enforces an agenda of male headship with no negotiation.

It is ironic that despite a stated goal to increase ethnic and cultural diversity, Promise Keepers makes no allowance for a range of interpretations of masculinity. Male leadership apparently can only be expressed in one way. Any culture, ethos, or denomination that has a different view is criticized for having been 'swayed by the feminists.' Thus Promise Keepers seems to want diversity in skin color but no range of opinions on what it is to be a male. It is further ironic that these white, middle-class men reach out to "other" men, when the bargain appears to be that if men of color will join the white men on the sex issue, the white men will overlook the race issue.

Conclusion

The militaristic tone of much of Promise Keepers rhetoric is troubling. The hierarchical chain of command being the basis of all husband-wife (if not all male-female, relationships) is dehumanizing. The implicit, and perhaps intentional, sports aesthetic of the movement detracts from its purported spiritual objectives, revealing that Promise Keepers has drunk deeply at the well of corporate, consumer and competitive culture. Increased participation by men in their families, churches and communities can be positive. But the things left unsaid about violence, and about the means by which men will "take back the role they ceded to women" can and should be of concern to members of their families, as well as to the Christian communities to which they belong. The unspoken theocratic agenda should be unnerving to everyone who does not share Promise Keepers' interpretation of the Bible. Even in racial reconciliation, the fundamentally interpersonal nature of the Promise Keepers' approach leaves societal and systemic racism unchallenged.

Promise Keepers has one of three possible destinies: it will fizzle out completely; it will become increasingly marginalized; or it will succeed in regressing society. I believe the last is unlikely. The social justice gains of the past 100 years outweigh the recent losses,
and I think the current backlash is more of a death rattle than a revitalization of fundamentalism. Promise Keepers portrays itself as too centrist to become a fringe backlash organization. Most likely Promise Keepers will ultimately fizzle out, much as did the last Christian men's stadium movement "Men and Religion Forward" back in the 1920s.

Slavery was outlawed 160 years ago. The last of the de jure racial caste system ended in America about 40 years ago and while white supremacy, particularly as embodied in the Ku Klux Klan and other such organizations, is still an issue, our society is a long way from where we were in the 1860s. The second wave of American feminism is only about 40 years old. It is still early in its trajectory compared with progress on race relations. Promise Keepers may remain a fringe element expressing the more generally denied sexism and heterosexism of US patriarchy for some time. The last ditch efforts of patriarchy in the next 100 years will be painful, violent, and even fatal to some, primarily women. Still, in this age of rapid technological advance, perhaps it will take less than 100 more years for feminism to begin to accomplish its goals, and with them the withering of support for Promise Keepers.

Did You Know? …NOMAS Has 13 Issues-focused Task Groups

- Adult Supremacy
  Sven Bonnichsen

- Bisexuality
  Sven Bonnichsen

- Child Custody
  Jack Straton

- Eliminating Racism
  Bill Aal, Chair

- Ending Men’s Violence
  Jon Cohen

- Homophobia
  Allen Corben

- Men’s Culture
  Paul Landen

- Men’s Studies
  Michael Kimmel, Co-Chair
  David Greene, Co-Chair

- Men And Mental Health
  Terry Kupers

- Men & Spirituality
  Moshe Rozdzial

- Men And Prisons
  Terry Kupers

- Pornography & Prostitution
  Robert Brannon

- Sexual Harassment
  Barry Shapiro

If you would like to know more about any of these task groups or volunteer to join one or more of them, you can contact the individual chair/co-chair by e-mail to info@nomas.org. We will pass your inquiry along. If you would like to establish an additional task group focused on some social issue about which you feel particularly strongly, please submit your request to the National Council by e-mail to info@nomas.org.

Membership application form -- please complete and return with your check or money order to the address below.

The National Organization for Men Against Sexism

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Louisville, CO 80027-0455

Name_________________________________________
Org___________________________________________
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