

# Toronto Men's Clearinghouse Newsletter

March 1988—Issue 11

We hosted an Open House on January 24th to introduce the concept of men support groups. We received many phone calls and over 20 men showed up. Initially, men browsed through changing men magazines, ate cookies, and spoke guardedly. Members of different support groups shared the joy they received from being in a group: having a safe place to be listened to, to hear from other men in similar situations, to share their struggles with negative images of men, intimacy, and expressing of emotions. One man pointed out that one man who felt he didn't fit in with his group, is now happily in another. And they're not therapy groups. The participants broke into small support groups and shared the insights with the larger group. One observation was that in a support group, one doesn't have to prove oneself to be a man, one is accepted as being a man. Several men who live north-west of Metro-Toronto who attended the Open House are seeking others to form a group. Any man wishing to join that new group, or any other one, please give Peter a call at 532-9400.

## Upcoming Events \*\*\*\*\*

Saturday February 27 Hearing a Different Drummer

A workshop led by Warren Robinson in Brampton, \$75 456-1911

March 4, 5 Conscious Feminity: Mother, Virgin, Crone

A workshop for both men and women led by Marion Woodman, C.G. Jung Foundation 961-9767

March 5 International Women's Day "Women United to fight Racism, Sexism, and Economic Inequality" Men needed for childcare, Briam Emms 466-8602 or George West 537-3888.

Toronto Men's Forum 101 Summerhill Ave., 920-2396

potluck 6-7:30, discussion 7:30-10:00

March 13 "Family Violence" Georgè Westal

April 10 "Men's Oppression" Jim Caughran

May 8 "Fathers and Sons" Peter Garnsworthy

Annual weekend retreat - for details contact Alan Gordon 225-9486

Men's Group at The Gestalt Centre starts March 15, \$95 for 8 weeks, Peter Wordsworth 461-9535

Support Group for male survivors of sexual abuse

Michael Irving 469-4764

Nurturing: Giving and Getting, an ongoing group for men and women 10 sessions \$200 979-9666, or 922-9334

June 16-19 Grindstone Fifth Annual Men's Retreat "Scarred and scared: Pathways to Healing Our Wounds and Healing Our Worlds" 968-9187

Boys Will Be ...a play by men about wife battering, New Theatre Centre

## The Deep Masculine

Historically, the male has changed considerably in the past thirty years. Back then the '50s male was hard working, responsible, aggressive, and never cried. This image lacked feminine space, lacked compassion.

Then, during the '60s, the waste and anguish of the Vietnam War made men question what an adult male really is. And the women's movement encouraged men to actually look at women, forcing them to become conscious of certain things that the '50s male tended to avoid. Some men began to see their own feminine side and paid attention to it.

Now there's something wonderful about all this. The male has become more thoughtful, more gentle. He's a nice boy who now not only pleases his mother but also the young woman he is living with. But something's wrong. Many of these men are unhappy. There's not much energy in them. They are lifepreserving but not exactly lifegiving.

Recently I taught a conference for men only. Often the younger males would begin to talk and within five minutes they would be weeping. The amount of grief and anguish in the younger males was astounding! Part of the grief was a remoteness from their fathers. Part, too, was they had learned to be receptive, and it wasn't enough to carry their marriages. In every relationship, something fierce is needed once in a while; both the man and the woman need to have it. At the point when it was needed, often the young man didn't have it. He was nurturing, but something else was required - for the relationship, for his life.

In my "Fairy Tales for Men" collection is a story called "Iron John", first set down by the Grimm Brothers around 1820. The implication of the story is that when the male looks into his psyche he may see beyond his feminine side, to the bottom

where there is a large primitive man covered with hair down to his feet. Making contact with this wildman is the step the '70s male has not yet taken.

This figure is even more frightening than the interior female, who is scary enough. When the wildman is freed a little, when the young man feels a little more trust in his instinctive part after going through some discipline, then he can let the wildman out of the cage.

It's very hard for us to conceive the possibility that the deep nourishing and spiritually radiant energy in the male lies not in the feminine side, but in the deep masculine. Not the shallow masculine, the snowmobile masculine. It's forceful action undertaken, not without compassion, but with resolve.

The first thing that happened in the Industrial Revolution was that boys were pulled away from their fathers and other men and placed in schools.

If the son does not understand clearly, physically what his father is doing during the day, a hole will appear in the son's perception of his father. His mind fills with suspicion, doubt, and a nagging fear that his father is doing evil things.

It's true, the idea that male energy, when in authority, could be good has come to be considered impossible. Yet the Greeks understood and praised that energy. They called it Zeus energy which encompasses intelligence, robust health, compassionate authority - in sum, positive power accepted by the male in the service of the community.

Zeus energy has been disintegrating steadily in America. Popular culture has destroyed it mostly, beginning with the "Maggie and Jiggs" and "Dagwood" comics of the 1920s in which the male is always foolish. The young men in Hollywood writing TV situation comedies have a strong

and profound hatred for the Zeus image of male energy. What they are actually doing is taking revenge on their fathers.

I think the next step for us is learning to visualize the wildman. The man in touch with the wildman has true strength. He's able to shout and say what he wants in a way that the '60s-'70s male was not able to do.

However, the ability of a male to shout and to be fierce is not the same as treating people like objects, demanding land or empire, expressing aggression - the whole model of the '50s male.

Just as women in the '70s needed to develop the ability to really say what they want, to dance with skulls around their neck, to cut relationships when they need to - what males need now is an energy that can face this energy in women, and meet it. If they don't they won't survive.

- excerpt from "What Men Really Want" an interview with Robert Bly by Keith Thompson which was published in New Men: Changing Minds, Hearts and Lives.

"MEN TALK ... a source for emerging male expression" is an excellent publication of the Twin Cities Men's Centre in it's 11th year. The centre has weekly open support groups for divorce/uncoupling, gay issues, men and women, and playshops. They have a radio show and a library (book donations are tax-deductible). MEN TALK has a thorough resource section, articles from local men sharing their concerns, and letters from abroad. In a reader's survey last year, 80 men responded with their major interests being male sexuality, male identity and self acceptance, spiritual development, dealing with anger, and intimacy. Subs are \$14 (U.S.), sample \$2: Men Talk: TCMC News 3255 S. Hennepin Av, Suite 45, Minneapolis, MN 55408 U.S.A.

## The Pain of Male Oppression

Many people believe that males do not feel as much pain or feel hurt in the same way females do. This is not true. Our bodies react to injury the way a female's does. We have the same nerves that females do. However, we are told that we are weak if we admit to feeling pain. If we get hurt when we are working or are playing a game, we are supposed to shrug it off and continue as though nothing happened. The work or game is more important than our feelings.

Adults are embarrassed by males who show that they are hurting. Not being listened to can make us doubt whether our pain is real or whether anyone cares. Since the pain is not "real", it is shameful for us to seek attention.

Our identity as males is constantly in question, as something to prove again and again. It is not recognized as something inherent, but rather treated as dependent on our actions and attitudes. If we refuse to comply with the pressure to conform, we are accused of being gay, in other words, "not a man". The rejection and violence towards anyone labeled "not a man" enforces compliance with the rigid restrictions about how we should be as males.

Many of us have had fighting as a regular part of our daily existence, just to maintain a respected position among peers, to avoid being shunned as a sissy, or prevent being a target for bullying. Violence is one part of proving yourself to be male to other males.

Others have refused to fight and have been targets for others acting out how they were hurt. This carries a terrible toll of isolation from other men and often shame about not fighting back.

To be respected as "manly" requires sexual "conquests". Acceptance as a sexual mate by a

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female is evidence that at least a female thinks he is male, which is the other half of the battle to prove ourselves to other males.

Nearly all of us have been abused in some way sexually as well as loaded with guilt and shame about how we function sexually. Further we are told this is the only avenue for real closeness with another human. Most of us spend tremendous amounts of time preoccupied with sex and need to get our minds free of the tension.

In gross terms, we are treated as objects to be used. We are used as tools and machines to produce wealth. We are seen as important for what we can do, not who we are.

We are used as weapons in war. It is considered glorious, the highest form of being a man, when we sacrifice our lives for others. On the one hand we are seen as expendable. On the other it is assumed that it won't bother us too much to kill people or see our friends killed.

An ideal of a "real man" is held up as a good thing, but no one is really like the ideal. Rather than making us proud, it makes us see ourselves as failures.

Males are hurt from childhood through adulthood in ways that are largely unnoticed or dismissed. We have a difficult time still acknowledging the hurt and seeing that the difficulties we have are not the result of our nature as males but rather the result of a consistent pattern of mistreatment of males by our society.

There is an anti-male attitude in society that men are inherently oppressive. This is incorrect. The ways men act oppressively are an indication of how badly they have been hurt themselves. Anyone who has been hurt and has not healed is drawn to act out his/her experience of being hurt at someone else when the feelings resurface in the

present. In this reenacting of the hurtful experience, anyone takes the role of hurting the other person rather than being hurt, if possible.

As humans we have a natural healing process that allows us to recover from being hurt. People cry, shake, laugh, tremble, rage, and talk as they go through the healing process. Males are not supposed to need to use this process, because we are not supposed to get hurt. Getting hurt is a sign of weakness, that is of not "being a man". Any time we are showing that we got hurt, we are open to humiliation and rejection.

Most men choose to numb themselves to the pain rather than show it and get hurt even more. As a result, our ability to recover is not allowed to function and the effects of being hurt pile up on us. When we are scornful of other men for being unmanly, when we are ashamed of men for acting hurtfully towards others, when we hate ourselves for our mistakes or bad feelings, when we give up on reaching another man out of hopelessness, we are being hurt by internalized oppression. When we work ourselves to exhaustion, when we numb ourselves with alcohol and drugs rather than show pain, when we defer out of guilt, when we go off by ourselves in despair, we are in the grip of our internalized oppression.

We fear opening ourselves up, showing our fragile deepest feelings, and getting disgust or criticism in response. We are aware at a deep level of our mistakes and bad feelings and, having no explanation but the criticism we grew up with, hate ourselves for them.

We are separated from everyone by the denial of our pain and our true nature.

The truth about us: Every male is living as good and honourable a life as he can, working as hard as he can with the information and resources he has available. Every male is ridding himself of

his difficulties as fully as he can. Any male can be reached by anyone who can appreciate him in spite of his struggles and can communicate that clearly.

We want to love people. We want children to be cared for well. We want affection and touch. We want to move. We love things of beauty. We like a challenge.

Our smiles, tears, laughters, songs and dreams are our precious gifts to the world. Our presence itself matters to the world in ways we cannot fully appreciate. The lives we touch are enriched not merely by our deeds, but even more by our spirit. Each life is irreplaceable and a sacred thing not to be seen again. Each is something to cherish and honour.

We can create lives where we spend time with the people we love. We can set aside time for doing the things that remind us that it is great to be alive. We can be any kind of men we want to be.

We can recover completely from the hurts we have suffered as males and enjoy our full capacities to love and be loved. In doing this, we need to pursue each other and become true friends. This will mean acknowledging our own pain and true feelings, trusting each other to help us heal, inviting others into our lives and being thoughtful of them. We will need each others' help to recover from our oppression as males.

Our liberation as males will of necessity enhance and support the liberation of women and children. Men's liberation and women's liberation require each other. Men's issues are also women's issues and vice versa because of the pairing of men's roles with women's roles in the society. Men's oppression leads to men acting oppressively towards women. Women and children are not to blame in any way for our oppression and do not benefit at all from it.

Gay oppression is aimed at all

of us using gay people as examples. Sexuality is not the issue. Oppression of people not conforming to restrictions is. Eliminating gay oppression would give us all much greater freedom to get close to other people and to make our own choices about our lives as men.

The oppressive nature of society has been in place for thousands of years and no one in the present has chosen to play a role in it. Human beings never hurt each other by choice, only when lost unthinkingly and unawaresly reenacting an old hurt of their own.

-John Irwin 10-5-87 (edited down from 15 pages) who's involved with RC (Re-evaluation Counseling) To find out about their Toronto chapter contact:  
Mary Susan Yankovich 960-5402, or  
Gabriel Epstein 463-7786.

## Response to "The Angry Men's Movement"

It is with anger and frustration that I write this response to the interview with Ross Virgin which appeared in the last issue.

I am angry because the editors choose to devote three pages of their brief newsletter to the President of "In Search of Justice". I am frustrated because such exposure of this reactionary group impacts negatively on those men who are seeking to understand how they participate in the oppression of women and the denial of their own inner feelings and emotions and are struggling to change.

I need not recount the myriad of ways that women are oppressed, raped, beaten and defiled by capitalist-patriarchy through the men in their lives. Whether these men are invited in or force their way in is of little consequences.

Virgin says that the best way to "get them (men) to do something is to get them angry." I don't know which planet he lives

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on, but my experience both with myself and other men tells me that getting men angry is not a big problem. Controlling men's anger is a far greater undertaking. Mr Virgin's tactics are at cross purposes to any activity aimed at helping men to express their true feelings and emotions in a caring, loving and human way. The millions of wars fought and the uncounted numbers of people, men, women, and children, killed by men's anger would suggest that counselling men to get angry is not a pressing social need nor a step in the direction of social harmony. Virgin reveals his own racist, misogynous attitude when he refers to a Black man as a "Negro fellow" and a woman as "a bitch". His statistics, e.g. "not more than 2000 men in Canada assault their wives", fly in the face of not just those statistics recounted by women, but by those of law enforcement agencies, welfare agencies, family service agencies, etc. In fact Virgin's statistics are thrown in for effect rather reality or honesty.

Virgin says, "there are more men murdered in Canada than women." Yes, there are! Many more men kill men than women kill women. It should not surprise us to realize that often women kill men because they have no other escape. Even the male dominated courts have acknowledged this fact.

Maybe Virgin could tell us why the women he refers to as a "bitch" burned the accounts. Maybe she was tired of being a slave?

Finally, let me voice my anger at the Toronto Men's Clearinghouse for allowing this reactionary spokesman for this reactionary group to take up so much space in your newsletter. At the very least you could have put this interview in the context of a debate or invite some other man or men's group to reply in the same issue of the newsletter. Your actions would suggest that

you have more than a little soft spot for "In Search of Justice". You should be reminded that the "justice" that men like Ross Virgin seeks is the maintenance of male privilege which many women and fewer, but a growing number of men, are working to overcome.

-Errol Sharpe, Halifax, N.S.

Erik Malmsten responses: Thanks for your concern. The Clearinghouse doesn't have a policy of excluding some men's experiences, of being limited to pro-feminist men. It is important to know the details of this high profile group than simply labelling them "reactionary". I feel it would have been self-righteous to present countering logic. I don't take sides in domestic disputes, and don't think that ISOJ helps men to work through the pain of a divorce, nor in helping them build, new loving relationships. They have moved from the personal to the political, and the other men groups need to, too.

Interestingly, the NOCM in the U.S., a pro-feminist men's group, invited these "Men Right's" types to speak at their National Conference last June.

ISOF claim to support "mediation" and "joint custody". For a feminist analysis of these anti-woman strategies, info packets can be bought from: Collectif Masculin Contre le Sexisme, 913 de Bienville, Montreal, Que. H2J 1V2

I don't know if ISOJ is more racist than any other men's group, indeed, they may have more Black members. "Negro" isn't racist - it was used by Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X - just archaic. "Black" is more equal, proud, and inclusive. Still, some activist prefer "African" or African words.

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Having sex? Use condoms. And don't even brush your teeth before kissing! Keep informed AIDs hotline 926-1626

**Book Review: Men Freeing Men;**  
**Exploding the Myth of the**  
**Traditional Male, edited by**  
**Francis Baumli Ph. D., 1985**

The National Coalition of Free Men started as a group of divorced fathers wanting more access to their children, and extended to a general critique of the women's movement as being anti-male, plus a desire to take up an equal role with women in society. These men see men as just as oppressed as women, and want all the arguments in favour of women's rights to be extended to men, too.

This is not a book "exploding the myth of the traditional male" - it is a book for those who want to support and extend the myth of the traditional male in a much more conscious and self-aware way.

"Surely, it would be pointed out that men, too, were treated as objects, as death-risk objects, physical-strength objects, success objects... that society was always much more sympathetic and forgiving of women... that women contributed to the existence of sexism in the world as well as men." (pg 9)

There are two basic errors involved in this kind of argument.

The first error is to say that there is no distinction and no difference between the old sex war and the new feminist challenge. The old sex war was an evenly balanced game where for every accusation there was an equal and opposite accusation. It was a comfortable sort of game, where everyone knew that no one was ever going to win.

The feminist challenge, on the other hand, is about a radical change in society which would question the whole existence of the old sex war, together with all the other gender stereotypes which arise from a patriarchal structure.

The second error is to say that

society as at present constituted is basically equal. But it seems obvious to me that the struggle does not take place on flat ground - it takes place on a slope, such that men are playing downhill and finding it rather easy to win most of the time.

The typical traditional male does hate women, and this book underlines that by spelling out what an accurate account of self-justified women-hating looks like. All the relationships with women mentioned here are awful.

"It should be apparent now that a woman's motive as a female is to trade sex and companionship for men's property and status... their strategic, money-orientated sexual behaviour is what gives them ultimate control over male sexual behaviour" (David Morrow, former editor of MEN'S, pg 49)

"I see a power more one-sided than power in any other sector that I know, I see the female control of children so complete ... Any female who is biologically capable of reproducing is allowed to do so ... a man has to apply to a woman for access ... if she decides that she no longer wants you to be the father of her child, she can revoke your licence." (Fredric Hayward, founder of Men's Rights, Inc. in 1977, pg 173)

"Lesbians announced in New York ... that their objective is to destroy the traditional heterosexual orientation of our society by creating a situation of hate and distrust between men and women, so that ... more women will then become sexually available to them." (Ken Pangborn, President of MEN International, pg 214)

But it doesn't need militant lesbians to create hate and distrust between men and women - these men seem quite capable of doing it on their own.

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The unawareness of hatred which comes through in this book, and the way in which the hatred is projected on to women, suggests very powerfully to me that some of these men need therapy.

There are a few good things in this book, but it is not worth the horror of reading all this agonisingly dreadful material in order to get to them.

This book is a monument to the traditional male. It warns of what maleness is under patriarchy. It tells, by its very articulacy, what many men are really thinking underneath their impassive exterior. And it is frightening.

-John Rowan, therapist and author of "The Horned God".

A flyer for the book cites praise from such people as Karen DeCrow, three times President of the National Organization for Women:

"Every man should read this book - and so should every woman. [It] is brilliant, thorough, and will become, I predict, a classic in our understanding of human relations... This book can help create an armistice in the war between the pinks and the blues... Its message is that men do not want to be our gods; they simply want to join the human race."

## Men's Groups, Sexism, and Classism

The problem with "men's groups" is that they have a basically white, middle-class heterosexual bias that does not recognize differing male realities, and, by extension, does not serve the interests of all women.

Unless an analysis of masculinity deals specifically with male power and privilege as its basis and starting point, it is likely to be more or less subtly anti-feminist. It will ignore or implicitly deny that between women and men there is an imbalance that gives power to men and disempowers women.

Furthermore, an analysis of masculinity that does not deal with the contradictions or power imbalances that exist between men themselves will be limited and biased, and its limits and biases will be concealed under the blanket of shared male privilege.

Men's Liberation has no analysis of sexism as political. They ignore the fact that men's alienation from ourselves is in reality the price that we pay for male supremacy. Men's liberation seeks to find ways to keep the power and avoid paying the price. In other words, let's ignore the power differences and learn women's stuff, so as to get all the goodies, all the power.

The Men's Liberation "movement" is characterized by support groups for men, more or less suppressed sexuality with each other (indiscriminate mandatory hugging), and a liberal tolerance of gayness (disguised homophobia), all of which is protected by the massive fortifications of heterosexual privilege. Stated most simply, the men's liberation movement is a reactionary white middle-class heterosexual backlash to feminism. It is dangerous because it is dishonest. It provides a way of having their cake and eating it for men who are afraid that women are going to take their cake away altogether.

I believe that it is inappropriate (or maybe appropriating) for men to call ourselves feminists. Since sexism is the acting-out of male power, anti-sexism must begin with the recognition of that power, and an intention to counteract it in whatever concrete way is possible in our lives.

At first the intention wavers, with lots of resistance, a little movement, lots of resistance, a little movement - a pattern any feminist who has pushed a man on sexism knows only too well. But ideally the practice develops the analysis, and the analysis connects with the practice.



Where we have always expected and taken access to women's lives and bodies, we become less obtrusive, take up less space. Where we have been used to dominating, taking over, we listen. We can call ourselves anti-sexist men remembering that our conditioning and the construction of our society are such that there is no such thing as a non-sexist man.

Like men's liberation groups, anti-sexist groups are joined predominantly by white middle-class heterosexual men. There is an apparent contradiction in the notion of organizing to surrender power, since groups tend to be empowering. But the fundamental problem is the basic requirement - that they start from male privilege - is at the same time a basic limitation. Anti-sexist men's groups are organized around a contradiction in society - that of gender. The unity that the group members have as males will be undermined by unresolved differences of class, race or sexual orientation. Furthermore, the norms and assumptions, as well as the style and the issues of the group will be unexamined and will tend to be those of white, middle-class heterosexuals. This will limit who will join the groups. Underlying this is the assumption that sexism is the major contradiction, to which others are secondary.

Group splits caused by "personality differences" often turn out, when examined, to be based in unacknowledged power differences. If differences within are made less significant than the particular major dividing line that defines the group, the differences within will sooner or later split the group apart, but they will be concealed for a while by false unity which will be defined and perpetuated by those with privilege within the group, who do not have to notice. Since most anti-sexist men are liberals, prejudices are usually harder to detect and therefore more dangerous.

The anti-sexist men's group that I was most recently in collapsed when the middle-class men refused, with hostile defensiveness, to address the classism within the group.

The accountability to all women that, ideally, anti-sexist men must learn, has to work across other dividing lines as well, if it is truly to be to all women.

Oppressions can not be ranked, even by groups that are working on one particular front. Unless anti-sexist men move in these directions we will stay limited.

-Ned Lyttelton, Toronto, 1983

This is an abridged version.

Published in "Men and Women, Interdisciplinary Readings on Gender", 1987.

## Fighting Our Sexism

Most women I know are sexist. Most homosexuals I know are heterosexist. Most Jews I know are anti-Semitic. It is the rare soul who has deprogrammed herself or himself today.

When you meet a woman who rejects a preconceived role; who celebrates the gifts of her womanhood and who sees equal rights not merely as a justice issue but as an opportunity for society to become enriched. Consider what such a woman has overcome.

Can we men imagine growing up in a world in which every supreme authority is female? What would that do to our sense of importance? Our sense of pride? Our sense of equality?

What if men's penises were thought of as elephantiasis of the clitoris? What if male body hair was socially offensive and we were forced to daily shave our underarms, legs and chest? What if male puberty was considered a "curse", semen a frightening sight which should be disposed of with a sanitary napkin? What if our culture demanded that men insert devices into our penises to prevent pregnancies?

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What if we weren't allowed out at night unless a girl asked us out? What if women stood every time we went to the "powder room", opened every door, pulled back every chair and paid every check? Would we not feel weak and dependent as opposed to "special"?

What if we only had two sexual role models in life, the whore or the saint? What if a limited family income only allowed our sister to go to college? What if we finally did get a job in the women's world and discover that that on payday, women were paid nearly twice as much for the exact same job? What if a successful male was always described as being cute or handsome rather than sharp, intelligent, and industrious?

Would we not be angry? Would we not demand that language be changed to reflect the presence of men in the world, and history books be changed to reflect the self-sufficiency of men? Some of us would, but many of us would not.

Many of us men would be afraid to challenge thousands of years of culture. Many of us would fear that if we boldly proclaimed our disgust with the status quo, women might not date us, like us, or stay friends with us. Worst of all, many if not most men would have a hard time believing that we were equal to women. We would ask women to help us understand ourselves. We would be sexist because we would believe that if we had our druthers, we would really rather be women.

Heterosexism and sexism are prejudices based upon the assumption that one sexual orientation or one gender is more equal, more preferred, more "normal" than another.

As a man living in a male world, I acknowledge my sexism. I work hard at eliminating it, but it shows its ugly face more often than I would like to admit. My best bridge in spanning the emotional gap between myself and

women is my reflections on what it is like growing up homosexual in a heterosexual world.

What has helped me attack my own heterosexism is examining not only why my sexual orientation is "just as good" as that of heterosexuals but, more important, what makes me special. I am less likely to be heterosexist when I begin celebrating the unique beauty of my being gay and the unique contributions I am making to society and nature because of my homosexuality.

My sexism and that of my women friends is best attacked when I examine, with the tutoring of women, the unique beauty of the female, the unique glory of the female perspective, the unique contribution to society and nature of the female mystique.

Like most men today, I have been deprived of half of reality. Men have deprived me of my entire inheritance as a human being by burying half of life's treasure under mounds of ignorant, self-serving bias. I am less whole, less healthy, less liberated, less in tune with nature because of this deception.

I don't owe it to women to eliminate my sexism by discovering the unique perspectives and gifts of women; I owe it to myself.

- Brian McNaught, abridged version taken from "Gay Life: Leisure, Love, and Living for the Contemporary Gay Male".

The National Organization for Changing Men in the U.S. currently has 11 task groups, a newsletter, Brother, and two public action projects: Brother-Peace, a call for ending men's violence against women, children, and each other, and the Campaign to End Homophobia, a national conference. Membership is \$25/\$15 U.S. a year. Info: NOCM, 1402 GreenField Ave. # 1, Los Angeles, Ca 90025, U.S.A.

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## Toronto Men's Clearinghouse

is a volunteer group of men devoted to sharing and brotherhood. Items in this newsletter don't necessarily represent the views of these men. All men are welcomed to join.

### Co-ordinating Group

Benny Andersen, Greg Barsoski, Jim Caughran, Al Conery, Alan Gordon, Erik Malmsten, Warren Robinson, Michael Rubinoff, Peter Strathy

### Workers on this issue:

Erik Malmsten, Greg Barsoski, Benny Anderson, Peter Strathy, Stephen Boyd, and Bruce Cardoza. Over six men contributed magazine articles (edited down by Erik), not all of which were republished here. Thanks very much. We're looking forward to feedback on these articles, and hearing about your own personal experiences.

For more information on the Clearinghouse, and to join support groups, phone Peter at 532-9400.

Subscriptions of \$10 for 4 issues, literary contributions to:

## T.M.C. Newsletter

c/o Greg Barsoski  
104 Spencer Ave.,  
Toronto, Ont.  
M6K 2J6

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The third issue of Integral is in production and will be available at many bookstores. Bookstores with sections on men include The World's Biggest Bookstore, The Women's Bookstore, and Another Story (which still has copies of the New Internationalist issue on men). And books on fathering at Parent Books.

## A Touchy Issue

Touch is obviously an emotional issue for many of us, one that creates problems in connection with sex, romance and friendship. In a way, that's odd, because we're all born with a deep human need to touch and be touched. Babies that aren't held and cuddled often sicken and die.

As boys we've often given much less affection than the girls; it isn't considered manly. The result is that boys learn to touch mainly in two specific situations—they touch other males when playing contact sports; they touch females for sex.

This uneasiness many men feel about non-sexual touching makes us lose out - both as lovers and in general. It's not only women who need to be held, comforted and soothed sometimes; men do too. It's just hard for many of us to admit it.

First, if consciously or unconsciously you've thought of cuddling, caressing and such for its own sake as something more appropriate to women than to men, de-sexualize it. That is, don't think of the need to be held and snuggled as "feminine," something only women want. It's a human - not gender-related - characteristic.

Give yourself permission to enjoy non-sex touching - touching that doesn't lead to sex. To enjoy being touched is to take pleasure in your own body. Do you know your own body? It's studded with some five million nerve endings, or "touch receptors" - are you really in touch with them?

If you're puzzled about what a woman you're dating wants and doesn't want in the way of touch - ask her. Talk about it. Don't keep it one-sided, though; tell her what your feelings and needs are, too. There's risk involved, but if you don't talk about it you've bound to keep misunderstanding each other and deprive

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yourself of a lot of good  
feelings.

Physical affection displayed between male friends -straight males- is even more of an explosive issue. Here, fear is involved on two counts: One, that it they were to reach out affectionately they would see themselves as potentially gay; two, the men on the receiving end of the affection would see them as gay. The fear takes over because of being locked into a mind-set in which touch and sex are tightly connected. What we don't see is that touching need not be sexual, any more than feelings of love or closeness or caring need to be sexual.

I remember the first time, as an adult, I kissed a guy. He was getting married. At the reception afterwards he wanted to thank me for interrupting my trip

to come. I understood what he was feeling, how much our friendship meant to him, and impulsively I hugged and kissed him there in the midst of the happy crowd. He said, "You SOB, that's what I wanted to do!" We both laughed; we felt closer than ever to each other, a wonderful feeling.

I felt something else, as well - a sense of liberation, as if I'd crossed an important hurdle in my own growth. And that freed me in ways I couldn't have known about beforehand. In the intervening years I've not made hugging and kissing men a habit - nor have I shrunk back when I've been moved to express myself that way. Among its other rewards, reaching out and touching enhances our inner sense of freedom.

- Myron Brenton abridged article from MGF magazine

### T.M.C. Newsletter

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