

End Gender Violence

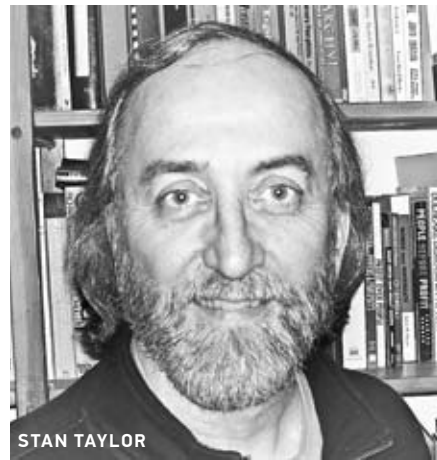
PEACE SYMPOSIUM APRIL 19
TARGETS RAPE, ABUSE

An epidemic of violence against women is happening globally and in the U.S. that rarely gets acknowledged because violence is embedded in our patriarchal concepts of masculinity. Globally one in three women will be raped or beaten in their lifetime, or over one billion. The U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey documents 207,754 victims (age 12 and older) of rape and sexual assault each year. Every two minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted. More than 90 percent of these assaults are perpetrated against women by men.

The statistics show that men are the primary perpetrators of physical violence in our society. This is true for violence against women, violence against children, violence against gays and the transgendered and violence against men by other men. Some 85 percent of the people who commit murder are men; 90 percent

of the people who commit violent physical assault are men; 95 percent of serious domestic violence is committed by men; 85 percent of child abuse is committed by men; 99 percent of the people convicted of rape are men. Yet, in our society we tend to blame the victim and place the burden on them to cope with the problem of male violence, rather than face the fact that our concepts of masculinity are at the root of the problem.

Almost everywhere we look in the dominant culture in the U.S., masculinity and violence are inseparable. The level of violence in the media perpetrated by men who are glamorized as tough and independent is staggering, while women are at the same time objectified. In politics, the "War on Women" by male politicians seeks to take away women's access to reproductive health services. In economics, classic male traits of competition and dominance are celebrated at the same time that poverty rises with a disproportionate impact on women and children. And in the military, soldiers are trained to use violence as a primary means to achieve their missions. Militarism and patriarchy reinforce each other, as is evidenced by the fact that the majority of casualties and refugees in contemporary warfare are women and children, and further evidenced by the pervasive level of sexual violence against women in the military often referred to as the "invisible war" [see the upcoming film showing of *The Invisible War* in Activist Alert].



STAN TAYLOR

The women's movement and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) social movements have been at the forefront of asserting equal rights and challenging the violence of patriarchy in society. They have embraced a feminist ethic of care and nurturing that is critical to changing not just individual behavior, but institutional structures that advocate and perpetuate violence. However, if we are going to address the problem of violence in society, men as the

primary perpetrators of violence must step forward and join these movements. Men must become feminists embracing the values of care embodied in the peace movement's values of nonviolence.

On April 19 the Lane Peace Center's annual Peace Symposium is titled "Rise to End Gender Violence!" Two powerful women keynotes will provide insights into feminist perspectives: Jean Kilbourne is the creator of the *Killing Us Softly* video series, which reveals the impact that advertising images of women as objects have on our society; Jensine Larsen is the founder of World Pulse, a worldwide media action network whose mission is to lift and unite women's voices worldwide. The event is free and open to all and you are invited to attend. Information is available at wkly.ws/1g6 ■

Stan Taylor is chair of the Lane Peace Center and teaches classes in peace and conflict, environmental politics and civil rights and liberties at Lane Community College.

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