

# Can Men Really Change?

BY ULYSSES TUDKER, JR.

Many men in the United States are starting to talk more about their feelings, how society has traditionally viewed the man's role, and how women blame them for most problems associated with relationships/marriages. To say the least, some men are angry, confused, guilty, unhappy, and lost emotionally.

Most feminists feel that men are violent, abusive, oppressive, and responsible for bad government, wars, and dysfunctional families. Men are also accused of hiding behind their egos and pride when it comes down to communicating openly with mates/wives, and their children. Do men deserve such a terrible rap sheet?

Let's explore some of the statistics compiled against men: 730,000 women are raped and report it each day. That averages about 2,000 rapes per day and for each one of these rapes reported, there are 10-15 more not reported. In a survey conducted by the Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center, 1700 6th to 9th grade students revealed some alarming and scary facts. A whopping 80 percent said that a man had the right to force women to have sex if they were married. Seventy percent said that a man did not need the consent of the woman to have sexual intercourse. Sixty-one percent of the students said that it was okay to force her if they had sex before. More than half believed that a man had a right to sex without her consent if (1) she led him on, (2) she got him sexually excited or (3) they'd been dating a long time.

About 30 percent of the students also said it was okay to force the woman if (1) she has had sex with other men, (2) he is so turned on he can't stop or, (3) she is drunk. Lastly, more than half the students thought that "if a woman dresses seductively and walks alone at night, she's asking to be raped..." Another twenty five percent believed that it was the child's fault if they were over 12, should they become a victim of incest. Are we looking at future victims, rapist, and child abusers of America? Remember, these youngsters are only in middle school or freshmen in high school.

Where are they developing such attitudes, unenlightened perspectives, values, and morals? Television? Their parents, peers, or society? Even more

sad, most of these students from these public and private schools surveyed believed that rapes/sexual assaults were committed by strangers. Statistics reveal that victims know their offenders 80 percent of the time. Enough talk of rape. There are other areas to be addressed and information about men to be shared.

According to a study conducted by Neil Bennett of Yale, women who live with a man before marrying him have an 80 percent greater chance of divorce than those who don't. Also, women who marry younger husbands have a greater chance of getting divorced than those who marry men their own age or older. Divorce rates are also higher in marriages in which the woman has a higher level of education than the man, and in marriages mixing different religions. Advice to women: Avoid living with a man until marriage and consider candidates with equal or more education.

For the record, there are some very successful relationships/marriages in the scenarios mentioned above, but statistically they do not succeed. Even in marriages that do survive, some women are psychologically/physically abused, isolated socially, and many stay in these dysfunctional situations because they are unemployed, have children, and fear life on their own. Staying in an abusive relationship as opposed to a shelter or on the streets is the general attitude. Lack of commitment is the number one reason for failed marriages (53 percent), far ahead of other reasons such as immaturity (32 percent), finances (17 percent), and adultery (11 percent). Men dodge a bullet in the commitment area, simply because Better Homes and Gardens did not specify gender. Who would you blame? Strangely, the presence of a son reduces the likelihood of a divorce by 9 percent over the presence of a daughter. Why? Overall, 50 percent of marriages end in divorce, according to some figures, and out of wedlock births continue to rise. Forty percent of all (US Census Bureau) births in the U.S.A. fall into this statistical area. As one story suggested recently in a national publication, "Men should have an expiration date on their head like a carton of milk, so that women can be aware of the date they go sour..." Is

the situation that bad? Should more stats be compiled to trash men?

This article is not meant to beat up men or to cast them into a negative light; the intent is to show that it's very easy to justify an opinion with statistics and research. The same argument could be compiled against women, who can be just as guilty in some cases. Still, the question remains -- can men change? Can they be more sensitive? Share their feelings? Share power and responsibility with women? Can they stop the sex crimes and assaults against women? Will the court system give sentences that send stronger messages to those committing sex crimes against women? Will we ever live in a society that pays women and other minorities equal to white males? Can men be sexually responsible? Yes, men are to blame for most evil, pain, discrimination and violence in our society.

When does the "Hagar The Viking Attitude" become a thing of the past? Men have been socialized or raised with the mindset of exercising power and control, but the world has out-grown those values.

It is now time for change and a new respect that does not abuse/hurt others. It is time for men to respect family, women, and grow in an upward manner spiritually and emotionally. It is time for men to allow his woman to stand by his side, not in the darkness for behind him.

The question now becomes will they change as oppose to can they change? Men can only search themselves for enlightenment, answers, and for the peace that ego and false pride suppressed or altered. Growth and change is painful and men need to know that women are on their side. Can they change? "Men have to change," said Mack Parks, resident psychologist/bartender at the Texas II in Northeast Portland. "I did. Men need to step up and account for their actions. It's the only way for him and society to grow or make progress. No longer can men blame women or make excuses for their shortcomings. Positive change can only help future generations to move forward. At some point, the cycle or fold attitudes needs to be eliminated. If not, kids will carry the values or attitudes that could be bad into adulthood. Men must do it."

## Ending Gang Violence

In August, Portland got a violent reminder of its gang problems with two deaths in one day: Fourteen-month-old Howard Hill shot in a house used by Crips gang members and John Edwards Frater, a 21-year-old Bloods member killed by a drive-by gang shooting. Fifteen people have been killed since 1989 in gang-related incidents, and last year 206 of the 2,500 gang calls police responded to involved shootings. What's being done to stop the violence? What should be done to get our kids out of gangs?

Other TV programs have looked at who joins gangs and why. Many articles have been written about the roots of gang violence and what it's doing to our communities. On this program TOWN HALL will concentrate on solutions. We'll spend an entire hour discussing ways to solve this complex and frightening problem. We hope to come up with some creative new approaches and help you discover how you can help--no matter where you live.

What programs exist to keep kids away from gangs? Are they working? What are the police doing to solve the problem? The schools? What should parents be doing? What do ex-gang members and gang experts think will be the key to solving the gang problem? What do YOU think? Join Jack Faust for this discussion on Sunday, September 15, 1991 from 6:00-7:00 p.m. For seat reservations, please call Frank Mungeam, Alison Highberger or Liza McQuade at 231-4620. Guest should plan to arrive at the

KATU studios (21st & N.E. Sandy Blvd.) between 5:00-5:15 p.m. The public is welcome, but reservations are required.

## Volunteer Clean-Up Day Planned

That's the message of sponsors of the first annual SPLASH DAY, Saturday, September 7th, a volunteer river shoreline clean-up day. Splash Day is planned for 9:00 to 1:00 p.m. For more information, call RIVERWATCH at (503) 295-049. Sponsors of our Splash Day event include Cellular One, Metropolitan Disposal Corporation, Multnomah County Parks.

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