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Men pay a steep price when it

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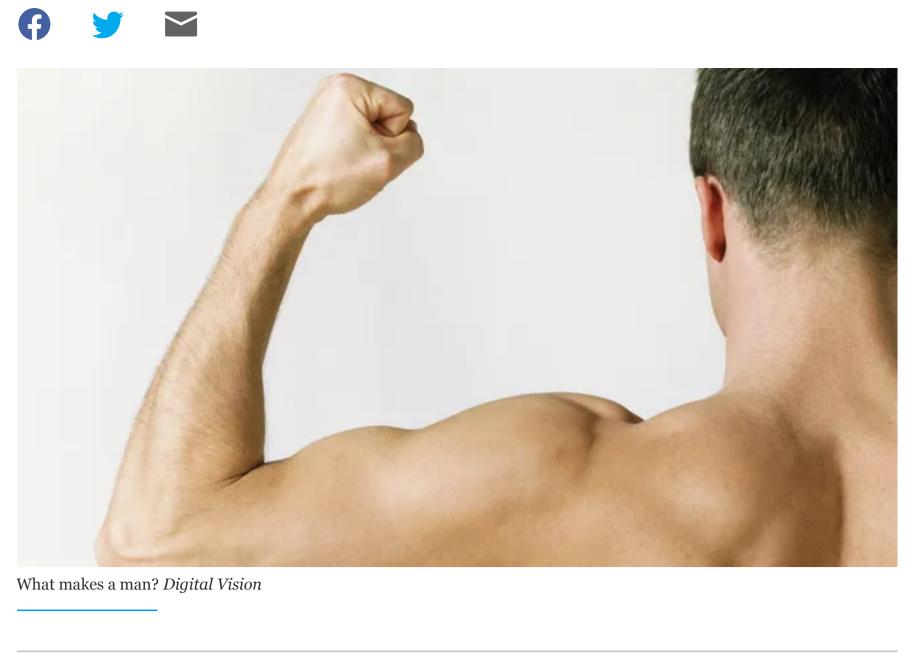
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Alia E. Dastagir USA TODAY Published 2:22 p.m. ET Mar. 31, 2017 | **Updated 2:05 p.m. ET Apr. 26, 2018**



Story Highlights

Corrections and Clarifications: A previous version of this story misstated Elliot Rodger's weapons. He used both a knife and a gun.

A <u>scandal</u> that began this month with Marines sharing sexually explicit photos of female colleagues on social media, and expanded to include photos of male service members on gay pornography sites, cannot be blamed on a sexist military subculture alone, but rather on the broader culture of American men.

Comments on the women's photos were said to be degrading and alluded to rape. At least some of the photos of the men in uniform — including ones where they're engaged in sex — were shared without their consent. It's a power play — an example of what many call "toxic masculinity." The stereotypical sense of masculinity is at war with everything we know about

what it means to be human. It's muted suffering, even when we know talking through trauma is important for healing. It's not expressing physical affection for other men, including male children, even though we know human touch is central disguised as bravado. It's being taught that power is dominating others, rather

to emotional well-being. It's filthy jokes, flaunting sexual conquests and insecurity than treating people as the full humans they are. For this, men pay a steep price. So do women. "We brutalize [males] and then tell them the tradeoff is you get to be in a more

powerful position," said CJ Pascoe, a professor at the University of Oregon and

Men not only are told this is how you behave if you want to be a man, but they're

author of *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School.*

also called upon to demonstrate — in the military, in fraternities, in politics, in relationships — just how masculine they are. Former Marine Erika Butner, one

of the women whose image was posted without consent on Facebook, spoke out this month: "Victim blaming and the excuse that some are giving that 'boys will be boys' needs to stop." This isn't what a boy is. It's what a boy is told he must be.

others feeling powerless and a lot of men angry.

out on the political stage and beyond.

rather than human?

these things."



in the Oval Office, other men joined the Women's March on Washington.

Attitudes about masculinity appear to be shifting, but there are paradoxes playing

• Even aside from the infamous tape in which he refers to grabbing women's

genitals without consent, President Trump often refers to himself as aggressive,

strong and competitive — stereotypical masculine traits. More than 60% of white

men helped to send Trump to the White House. But the day after he took his seat

scrutiny of sexual harassment accusations against him. • Trump's Cabinet is made up of largely white men, but the cultural backlash against them has been unforgiving. On Saturday Night Live, Melissa McCarthy's damning portrayal of White House press secretary Sean Spicer takes aim at what many view as the administration's fragile sense of masculinity.

• And while it may seem positive that a video of a man braiding his daughter's hair

goes viral, isn't there something amiss when we applaud men's caretaking as heroic

"The bar for men is so low," said Jane Ward, a professor of gender studies at the

University of California, Riverside, and author of Not Gay: Sex Between Straight

White Men. "This man brushing his daughter's hair — which is just like what any

human should do if they have kids because people have hair and hair needs to be

something like that to go viral, because it's perceived to be so remarkable that a

brushed — is applauded as almost an act of heroism, and it's so telling for

• On the same night that *Moonlight*, a film that re-envisions black manhood, took

home best picture at the Oscars, Casey Affleck won best actor with little public

man would gently brush his daughter's hair or braid her hair. People think it's news." Is masculinity who you are or what you do?

reports that sex is used to recruit athletes to the University of Colorado and other colleges. Susan Walsh, AP "Masculinity is a performance. It's an act," said ex-NFL quarterback and feminist

Don McPherson testified before the House subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection in 2004 regarding

activist Don McPherson. "We don't raise boys to be men. We raise boys to not be

women or gay men. We don't affirm what a loving man is. ... We're not supposed to

be effeminate or care or love or be sensitive, and it's all utter BS because we are all

While men, specifically white men, have historically dominated economic and

presidents, and have continued to wield extraordinary political power over

fulfilling friendships. They commit suicide more often. Studies show school

live as long. They have a harder time making and maintaining

political institutions — they make up 80% of Congress, an unbroken line of male

women — rigid adherence to masculine stereotypes is destroying them. Men don't

shootings are often linked to a masculinity crisis, real or perceived, on the part of

the shooter. Elliot Rodger, a 22-year-old college student who in 2014 killed six people near the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, wrote a manifesto in which he rationalized the crime: "For the last 8 years of my life, ever since I've hit puberty, I've been forced to endure an existence of loneliness, rejection, and unfulfilled desires. All because girls have never been attracted to me."

Christin Munsch, a sociology professor at the University of Connecticut, conducted

a 2012 study where male undergraduates were given a fake masculinity test. She

told half they fell on the masculine side of the spectrum, and the other half were

told they fell on the feminine side. Then subjects were given several scenarios,

including one where a woman is sexually assaulted. Men who were told they were more feminine, whose masculinity was threatened, blamed the victim. Those who were told they were more masculine, with less to prove, sympathized with her. The men's rights movement Many American men who feel their culture demonizing masculinity are flocking to the men's rights movement.

Warren Farrell, known as the intellectual father of the focus on "men's issues,"

wrote the book *The Myth of Male Power*, the bible of the men's rights movement.

Farrell had been active in the women's movement in the 1970s and served as the

National Organization for Women's New York City chapter, but slowly broke with

"Every society that survived, survived based on its ability to train its sons to be

disposable, "Farrell said. "Disposable in war, disposable in work — on railroads or

oil rigs — and therefore indirectly disposable as dads. And in order to get men to be

disposable — you couldn't get a man to be willing to sacrifice himself if he got in

Some grievances those in the men's movement air — family courts discriminating

against fathers in custody cases, high rates of violence and child abuse, deplorable

prison conditions — are supported by data. Other concerns, such as <u>false rape</u>

touch with his feelings — we had to disconnect men from their feelings and

therefore who they are."

feminism. His book argues, and those in the movement believe, that men are not oppressors, but victims of gender discrimination who are now suffering more than their female counterparts. Supporters call his ideas transformative. Feminists call them outrageous.

reporting, are not. Filmmaker Cassie Jaye called herself a feminist when she set out to make a documentary about the movement. When she completed it, she stopped referring to herself as one. While making the film, *The Red Pill*, Jaye said she learned the ways men are disadvantaged in society.

the advantages and disadvantages over what men face." But feminists argue they've always been fighting for men, too. Many of the issues at the fore of the movement are ones that benefit both sexes, like paid parental leave and anti-violence initiatives. It was feminists who pushed the FBI to change the definition of rape to include men. The problem for the men's movement going mainstream is not that some of its concerns aren't legitimate, but that it's infused with notoriously anti-women rhetoric. Activists in the men's rights movement undermine social justice concerns by using venomous tactics and lobbing vicious personal attacks against women. The Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors hate groups, says the "manosphere" of anti-feminist websites which are part of the movement "are almost all thick with misogynistic attacks that can be astounding for the guttural hatred they express."

Michael Kimmel, founder and director of the Center for the Study of Men and

Masculinity at the End of an Era, says men in the movement believe feminism has

given women more freedom than them. He writes: "They may not feel powerful,

but they do feel entitled to feel powerful. And it's this aggrieved entitlement that

Trump shows that traditional masculinity can still be rewarded. Where his critics

see bluster, his supporters see competence. Where some see a beneficiary of family

<u>Masculinities</u> at <u>Stony Brook University</u> and author of *Angry White Men*:

animates the men's rights movement."

Trump says accuser 'would not be my first choice'

accusers, saying she would not be his first choice.

Along comes Trump

"If I had the opportunity to be born a guy I wouldn't want to be," she said. "I prefer

Rally for Men & Boys in Crisis

Sept 28, 2013

wealth and privilege, others see a successful entrepreneur.

"Those men believed that they had been screwed by the system," Kimmel said. "And in a way they were right. They were screwed. But it wasn't feminist women who issued predatory loans and ... immigrants didn't outsource their jobs. They're not delivering their mail to the right address." While it may seem Trump would be the movement's anti-feminist hero, the men within it are split in their support. Paul Elam, founder of the men's rights website <u>A Voice for Men</u>, said in a <u>YouTube</u> video days after the election that "[Trump] beat the feminists like they were retarded stepchildren in the biggest upset in American political history." Farrell supported Clinton. "The biggest challenge with Trump as president is that many of his personality characteristics are such that they are not good models for what we want a boy to be," he said. "His narcissism, the self-centered-ness. He has a lot of attributes of toxic masculinity, and that's not a good role model for our sons." So what do we do?

Where should men look for answers? Sociologists and feminists say they could

regulate one another. A boy can be called the slur for demonstrating any behavior

seen as unmasculine, for "being stupid or incompetent, dancing, caring too much

about clothing, being too emotional, or expressing interest (sexual or platonic) in

"We are constantly gauging our peer group to find out what's acceptable, knowing

that if we come close to a line where we demonstrate a wholeness of ourselves the

start by looking at one another. Pascoe's research on high school students

for Dude, You're a Fag, revealed how the slur has become a way for boys to

Donald Trump, when addressing one of several accusations of inappropriate sexual behavior, criticized one his female

USA TODAY NETWORK

other guys," she writes. Men police other men when they try to break out of the masculinity box. It's how the system reinforces itself.

admonishment is quick and unforgiving," McPherson said.

policies include mothers and fathers.

society," Pascoe said.

relationships with other men, we trivialize it by calling it a bromance, defined as "a close but nonsexual relationship between men." Isn't that just a friendship? Elsewhere in the world, where masculinity is less rigid, experts say gender equality is better built into the structures of society. For example, Sweden's parental leave

"Individuals have to be held accountable, but we haven't changed the

The policing continues well into adulthood. When men try to forge healthy

McPherson, the youngest of five whose father was a police officer and whose mother was a nurse, says he learned early on the ways in which culture tried to define him. And he fought it. "I grew up at a time when being black — I knew I was a n---- to a lot of white folks, but I also knew that I got a pass with a lot more white folks because I could play

football," he said. "So the hypocrisy of our social hierarchy was always very evident

to me. ... It's really not about who I am. It's about who you want me to be." McPherson pointed to treatment of Colin Kaepernick as an example. Whether you agree with his views or not, Kaepernick's action was taking a knee, which he did based on his principles.

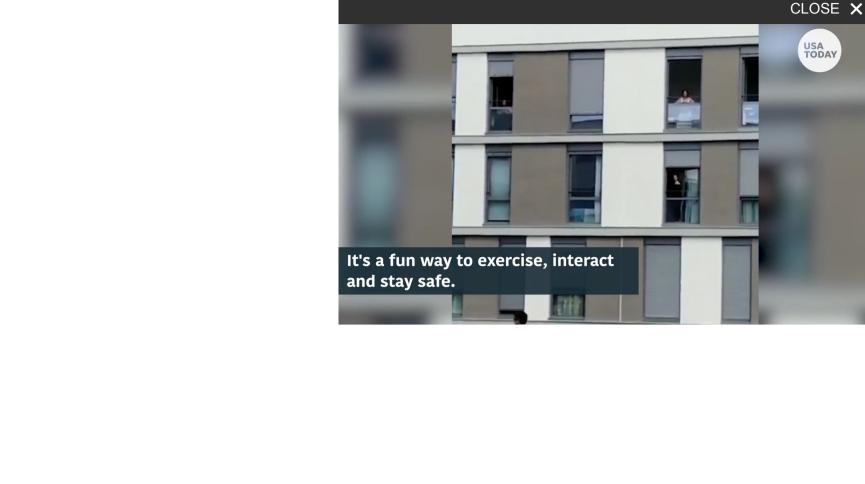
rapists and abusers and flat-out criminals, people who have been arrested and charged with horrific crimes against women or against others who are in the NFL," McPherson said.

"He's all but been ostracized as a distraction from the NFL. Meanwhile, you have

power to me," McPherson said. "That's a privilege that comes from oppression ... We value football but not teachers. We value sports but we don't value men who are loving or whole or who are caring ... What's the message about what kind of

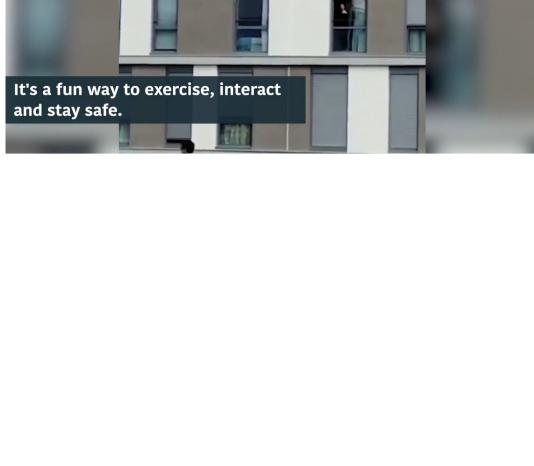
To fight sexual assault, Alexis Jones wants to rebrand manhood Do's and don'ts for men at work and in life Campus men's groups explore what it means to be a dude

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McPherson hopes more men will recognize the power many of them hold — the power many feel they've lost and are trying to reclaim — may not be power at all. "If my power as a man lies in my privilege over women, or my privilege to be identified as a hyper-masculine football player, I denounce that power. That's not masculinity we value?"

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