

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this note finds you well. I'm a postdoctoral research fellow at the UCSF Center for AIDS Prevention Studies, and am writing to let you know about an initiative that started in 2008 called the Men's Story Project (MSP) - it is a presentation & community dialogue project that brings critical exploration of masculinities into public forums, for the purpose of health and justice. The websites are www.mensstoryproject.org and www.youtube.com/user/mensstoryproject.

The Men's Story Project is intended for local replication & evaluation. It has been received with extremely positive audience response, recently received an award for its potential to improve student life at UC-Berkeley, and was featured on CNN's Comcast Newsmakers in August 2009. Jackson Katz, Michael Kimmel, Paul Kivel, Mary Koss and other leading researchers and activists are on the Advisory Council.

A DVD of our first live presentation is available for educational use (114 min, 16 presentations in stand-alone chapter selections). An MSP training guide, MSP license agreement, half-day training workshop, and consulting are also available for groups that would like to create their own campus-based initiatives. I would also be glad to come to universities and organizations in or near northern CA to speak about the project and links between masculinities and health.

Please find below descriptions of the project, film, training guide, and license agreement, and please contact me with any questions or to purchase materials.

With best wishes,
Josie Lehrer, Sc.D.

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The Men's Story Project (MSP) is a replicable community presentation and dialogue initiative in which local men critically - and publicly - explore social ideas about masculinity for the purpose of health and justice. The mission of the MSP is to strengthen social norms that support healthy masculinities and gender equality, and to help eliminate gender-based violence, homophobia and other oppressions that are often intertwined with masculinities, through ongoing events of men's public story-sharing and community dialogue. The project has a social constructionist view of gender (e.g. Courtenay's Theory of Gender & Health), and the pedagogy is informed in part by observational learning ideas within Social Cognitive Theory. It emphasizes links between the personal and political, the interpersonal and institutional/structural.

In each MSP presentation, approximately 15 local men share pieces they have created about their own lives, with the purpose of highlighting men's stories that are less often heard; breaking silences on issues including cultural norms around sexism, racism, heterosexism, and violence – and ways in which these interconnect with norms around masculinity; celebrating positive traditions regarding masculinities; and stimulating collective discussion on what contemporary masculinities can be all about. Presentations are multi-medium (e.g., slam poetry, monologues, music, dance) and are followed by facilitated audience-presenter discussion. Presenters are established artists and activists as well as men who have never been on a public stage.

It is increasingly recognized in the public health and social justice arenas that working to shift gender norms in support of healthy masculinities is a productive and needed approach to improving the health and well-being of people of all genders. In the U.S., critical discussion about masculinities and impacts of men's traditional social training has not often occurred in mainstream contexts. There currently exist few

ongoing, visible, public forums in the U.S. where traditional masculinity ideologies are critically and overtly examined and alternate, more health-supporting discourses emphasized. The MSP will help to fill this social gap; we hope the project will spread far and wide as a locally-created initiative with NGO's, on campuses, and in other contexts.

Some MSP work to date:

- Five live presentations since 8/08 – strong positive audience & media response (e.g., "groundbreaking," "inspiring," "transformative," "something that needs to keep happening"). On the basis of the first event in 8/08, the group was invited to present at UC-San Francisco in 10/08, sponsored by the UCSF Center for Gender Equity and 10 other campus groups. We presented at UC-Berkeley in 4/09; sponsors included UC-Berkeley Intellectual Community and Multicultural Funds and the campus group of the Vagina Monologues.
- Development of Advisory Council with leading researchers, educators and filmmakers in masculinity studies and prevention of gender-based violence and HIV/STI (including Mary Koss, Michael Kimmel, Shari Dworkin, Jackson Katz, Paul Kivel, Frederick Marx (Hoop Dreams))
- "Big Ideas @ Berkeley" Award at UC-Berkeley in category of Improving Student Life (4/09)
- San Francisco State University created their own initiative with MSP support
- Film of debut MSP production in San Francisco Independent Film Festival (2/09)
- Ongoing screening/dialogues of MSP film with local men's groups

Conference & University Presentations

- Presentation at Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality, Rio de Janeiro (3/09)
- Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health - Population and Family Health Departmental Seminar (10/09)
- San Jose State University – Family Violence course (10/09)
- Workshop at Roots of Change: Men, Sex and Justice - 34th National Conference on Men and Masculinity, 2nd Biennial Statewide Conference on Sexual Violence Prevention. Portland State University (10/09)
- Seminar at First National Conference for Campus-Based Men's Gender Equality and Anti- Violence Groups. St. John's College (11/09)

Media

- San Francisco Chronicle, SF Weekly, CNN Headline News - Comcast Newsmakers, On the Issues Magazine, VoiceMale magazine (forthcoming)

Current Initiatives

- Developing new MSP initiative in Chile - in collaboration with writer Pablo Benedetti, other well-known artists, Ministry of Health, VivoPositivo (a group for people living with HIV/AIDS) and other groups
- Conducting qualitative study of self-perceived impacts of the MSP for presenters and college student audience members, for academic journal publication
- Received UC-San Francisco funding to implement and evaluate an MSP initiative in Capetown, S. Africa in collaboration with the Sonke Gender Justice Network - which works with men and boys in prevention of HIV/STI and gender-based violence and promotion of gender equality.

The Men's Story Project: *Building Strength, Creating Peace*

FILM DESCRIPTION

“a film of cultural importance” – *San Francisco Chronicle*

“deeply funny” – *SF Weekly*

“The Men's Story Project film is a powerful and moving tool for sparking conversations about male socialization, the variety of masculinities men act out, and the roles that all men can play in building healthy and just communities.” –Paul Kivel, co-founder of Oakland Men's Project; author of *Men's Work* & other books

"It is still relatively rare -- and often startling -- to hear men talk openly and honestly about experiences in our families, struggles (and joys) in relationships, violent victimization or perpetration, or anything else that leaves us feeling vulnerable -- especially in front of other men. That is why the Men's Story Project film is such an important contribution to the expanding work of engaging men at all levels of gender justice work: it speaks to our hearts as well as our minds, and beautifully brings together the personal and political aspects of these critical issues." -*Jackson Katz, anti-sexist educator, filmmaker & author*

Filmed at La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley with a standing-room-only audience, this film shows the powerful debut presentation of the Men's Story Project - a new performance and dialogue project exploring social ideas about masculinity for the purpose of health and justice.

Described by audience members as “groundbreaking,” “transformative,” “a gift” and “something that needs to keep happening,” this bold performance highlights a diverse group of 16 Bay Area artists, activists, and first-time presenters, ages 22-60, sharing stories about their lives through slam poetry, monologues, music and dance.

The stories address expression of platonic love between men; impacts of homophobia on heterosexual men's relationships with each other; struggles with Islam, Christianity, homophobia and HIV/AIDS; coming out to one's parents; intersections of race, disability and sexuality; testicular cancer and personal wholeness; images of African American masculinity; a journey from perpetrating domestic violence to becoming an anti-violence activist; men's public restroom rituals; an Oakland activist's refusal to continue intergenerational patterns of violence; spirituality and transformation inside San Quentin prison; transgender identity and gender fluidity; challenging a father's racism; being raised without male role models; desire to be in a committed relationship; gratitude to lifelong mentors; the value of often-undervalued lives; and other subjects.

Presenters include Robert Haaland, the first transgender candidate elected to San Francisco public office; Juan Cuba (San Francisco Women Against Rape); Leroy Moore (Sins Invalid); Galen Peterson (Art in Action); Kenny Johnson (This Sacred Space); and members of the Berkeley and San Francisco slam poetry championship teams.

16 individual pieces (chapter selections) including 10-min director introduction. Pieces range from 4-11 min. Total run time: 114 min.

Individuals: \$20

Nonprofits: \$50-100

Colleges/universities: \$175-250

Checks can be sent to Josie Lehrer, 4601 25th St. #7, San Francisco, CA, 94114.

MSP TRAINING GUIDE

“The Men’s Story Project: Tips and Guidelines for Creating Local Presentations”

This training guide shares the Men’s Story Project mission, goals, theoretical framework, and pedagogy, describes what a Men’s Story Project piece “is” and “isn’t,” provides practical guidance in creating local presentation/dialogue events and follow-up activities for campuses and NGO’s, and outlines the licensing requirements for using the Men’s Story Project name and joining the online MSP Network.

Table of Contents:

A. Men’s Story Project Overview

Men’s Story Project (MSP) Mission Statement; Project Summary; Background/Context; MSP Presentation Model; Local Replication; Website & YouTube Channel; Excitement & Increasing Momentum; Supporting the MSP

B. Creating a Men’s Story Project Presentation

MSP Core Values; MSP Basic Premises; MSP Goals; Leadership Roles; Content of Presentation Pieces; Talking About Violence/Crime; Anonymity; Accept/ Reject/ Revise-Resubmit; Participant Recruitment; Release Form; Creation Process with Participants; Curating the MSP; “Moment of Truth” – Truth-telling vs. Performance; Performance Staging & Flow; Music; Performance Space; “Men’s Story Project” Title; Program; Publicity; Creating Safety; Presentation Introduction; Audience-Presenter Discussion; Filming & Audio Recording; Fundraising as part of the MSP; Email list, Feedback forms & Tabling; Tips for Creating Successful Campus-based Productions; Building MSP Community: Ownership & Participation; Connecting with MSP Central; The Bottom Line: Requirements for Calling it a “Men’s Story Project”

C. Appendices

Sample Call for Submissions; Sample Presentation Introduction; Flyers; Sample Press Release; Audience Feedback Form

Nonprofits: \$75-150 sliding scale

Colleges/universities: \$125-200

Checks can be sent to Josie Lehrer, 4601 25th St. #7, San Francisco, CA, 94114.

MEN’S STORY PROJECT LICENSE AGREEMENT

The MSP License Agreement is a legal document that allows groups to use the Men’s Story Project name and share their work on the MSP Network site (under construction) and MSP YouTube Channel. The license agreement includes guidelines on basic elements that must be part of a production in order to use the MSP name, and has an important Presenter Release form that groups can use with their presenters to minimize liability issues that can arise when men publicly share personal stories about violence, other crime, and other sensitive topics. Other topics including media release are also addressed.

The cost of licensing is \$90/year for all groups. You can request to see a copy of the agreement by emailing Josie at jlehrer1@gmail.com.

Josie Lehrer, Sc.D. founded the Men’s Story Project in March 2008. She is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at the UCSF Center for AIDS Prevention Studies. Her research and applied work in the U.S. and Latin America focuses on the prevention of HIV/STI and gender-based violence, and the promotion of healthy masculinities and gender equality. She currently also co-facilitates social support groups for young adults who are living with HIV/AIDS, and has worked as a community education consultant with San Francisco Women Against Rape. Dr. Lehrer completed doctoral studies at the Harvard School of Public Health in 2004, and her work has been highlighted through CNNWorld.com, CNN Headline News, AP, Reuters, Forbes.com, MSN, CBS, On the Issues magazine, and other outlets. Her family is from Chile.