

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this finds you well. I am writing to tell you about an initiative I started in 2008 called the Men's Story Project (MSP) -- it is an arts and community discussion project that brings men's critical, personal exploration of masculinities into public forums, for the purpose of expanding health and social justice.

The Men's Story Project model is based on public health research and theories of health/social behavior change, and is intended for local implementation and evaluation with nonprofits, campuses, and other groups. The project has had an overwhelmingly positive audience response in the US and Chile, received a 2009 Bears Breaking Boundaries Award at UC-Berkeley and the 2010 Chancellor's Award for Public Service at UC-San Francisco, and was featured on CNN Headline News. Jackson Katz, Michael Kimmel, Paul Kivel, Shari Dworkin and other leading researchers and advocates are on the Advisory Council.

A DVD of our first live production is available for educational use (114 min, 16 pieces in stand-alone chapters). An MSP Training Guide, MSP license agreement, training workshop, and consulting are available for groups interested in creating their own MSP initiatives.

I am also available to come to colleges/universities and NGOs to speak about the project and links between masculinities, health and justice.

Please find below descriptions of the MSP's background, activities and resources. The websites are [www.mensstoryproject.org](http://www.mensstoryproject.org) and [www.youtube.com/user/mensstoryproject](http://www.youtube.com/user/mensstoryproject).

Please contact me with any questions or to purchase materials.

With best wishes,  
Josie Lehrer, Sc.D.

Josie@mensstoryproject.org  
(415) 217-9875

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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 health and well-being for people of all genders, including the prevention of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. In the U.S. and many other countries, critical discussion about masculinities and impacts of men's traditional social training has not often occurred in mainstream contexts. There are currently few ongoing, visible, public forums where traditional masculinity ideologies are overtly examined and alternate, health-supporting discourses emphasized.

The Men's Story Project (MSP) was created in 2008 to help fill this gap. The MSP is a replicable community arts 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, and the pedagogy is informed by Social Cognitive Theory. It emphasizes links between the personal and political.

In each MSP production, approximately 14 local men share pieces they have created about their own lives, highlighting men's stories that are less often heard; breaking silences on issues including sexism, racism, homophobia, and violence – and their links with masculinity norms; celebrating men's beauty and strength; and stimulating collective discussion on what contemporary masculinities can be all about. Presentations are multi-medium (e.g., slam poetry, monologues, music, dance), followed by facilitated audience-presenter discussion. Presenters are established artists, activists, and men who have never been on a public stage. We hope the project will spread far and wide as a locally-created initiative with NGOs, on campuses, and in other contexts.

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### **Some MSP work to date:**

- Four live presentations at UC-Berkeley (2 nights), UC-San Francisco, and La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, CA. Strong positive audience & media response (e.g., "groundbreaking," "already historic," "inspiring," "transformative," "something that needs to keep happening"). UCSF sponsorship included the Center for Gender Equity and 10 other campus groups. UC-Berkeley sponsors included UC-Berkeley Intellectual Community and Multicultural Funds and the campus group of the Vagina Monologues.
- 2 live presentations and filming in Santiago, Chile. Project developed in collaboration with public health researchers, health educators and well-known artists. Sponsors include Amnesty International, VivoPositivo (national network in Chile of people living with HIV/AIDS), EME – Masculinities and Gender Equity, Popular Education in Health, Organization of Transsexuals for Dignity in Diversity, and Metropolitan University of Education Sciences. The production included Chile's most popular comic, other celebrities, and men who had never been on a public stage.
- Establishment of Advisory Council with leading researchers, advocates and filmmakers in masculinity studies and prevention of gender-based violence & HIV/STI (including Jackson Katz, Paul Kivel, Mary Koss, Michael Kimmel, Shari Dworkin, Aqeela Sherrills, Frederick Marx (Hoop Dreams))
- Development of 40-page MSP Training Guide, which is increasingly ordered by nonprofits and colleges/universities
- Debut MSP film selected for San Francisco Independent Film Festival (2/09)
- Ongoing sales of MSP film to nonprofits & colleges/universities, for classes & campus-wide events
- Ongoing screening/dialogues of MSP film with local men's groups
- San Francisco State University created their own initiative with MSP support, which was successfully implemented in 2009 and 2010.
- MSP inspired the creation of a student-led Men's Collective at UC-Berkeley, which meets weekly to discuss masculinities-related topics including patriarchy, privilege, health and justice.
- MSP inspired the creation of "Men for Change," a Politics & Economics discussion group on Gays.com.

### **Presentations**

- Presentation at Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality, Rio de Janeiro (3/09)
- UC–San Francisco Center for AIDS Prevention Studies – Fellows Seminar. San Francisco, CA (3/09)

- Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health - Population and Family Health Departmental Seminar. New York, NY (10/09)
- San Jose State University – Family Violence course. San Jose, CA (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. St. John, MN (11/09)
- Social Enterprise Pitch at Unite for Sight Global Health and Innovation Conference. Yale University. New Haven, CT (04/10)
- Invited workshop at Campus Training Institute held by California Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Office of Violence Against Women. Las Vegas, NV (6/10)
- Presentation at "Side by Side: A Conversation about Violence Against Women and Engaging Men to be Part of the Solution." Community forum at Berkeley Unitarian Universalist Church. Berkeley, CA (6/10)
- Workshop at 2010 National Sexual Assault Conference held by California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Los Angeles, CA (8/10)
- UC-Riverside Women's Resource Center: Men's Story Project film screening & discussion. (Upcoming - Oct. 12, 2010)
- Workshop, Paving a Rocky Road: Removing Barriers to Men's Engagement. Pacific Lutheran University. Tacoma, WA. (Upcoming - Oct. 14-16, 2010)

### **Awards**

- "Big Ideas @ Berkeley" Award at UC-Berkeley in category of Improving Student Life (4/09)
- UC-San Francisco Chancellor's Award for Public Service (4/10)

### **Media**

CNN Headline News - Comcast Newsmakers  
 San Francisco Chronicle  
 SF Weekly  
 KPFA  
 KPFK  
 Wanda's Picks  
 On the Issues Magazine  
 VoiceMale magazine (cover story, Winter 2010)

### **Funding**

UC-Berkeley Bears Breaking Boundaries Award – Category of Improving Student Life  
 UC-San Francisco Center for AIDS Prevention Studies – Innovative Grant Award  
 UC-Berkeley and UCSF campus groups  
 Give Something Back, Inc.  
 Vanguard Foundation  
 Private donors

## 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***

**"The Men's Story Project" gathers a wonderful array of men's voices and stories -- deeply moving, at times hilarious, and always thought-provoking. I can't wait to show this film to students in my college sex and gender courses; I'm sure these stories will provide inspiration for my students to think about male privilege and pain, as well as the commonalities and differences among men. And ultimately the film will provide plenty of grist for us to ask together, 'Just what is a man?'"**

**-*Michael Messner, Professor of Sociology & Gender Studies, U. of Southern California***

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); 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 sliding scale**

**Colleges/universities: \$175-250**

*Please add \$6 for shipping/handling.*

Checks can be sent to Josie Lehrer, 4601 25<sup>th</sup> 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; Supporting the MSP

#### **B. Creating a Men’s Story Project Presentation**

MSP Core Values; MSP Basic Premises; MSP Goals; MSP Pedagogy/Teaching Approaches; Leadership Roles; Participant Recruitment; Accept/ Reject/ Revise-Resubmit; Anonymity; General vs. Topic-Specific Productions; Curating the MSP; Content of Presentation Pieces; Further Ideas for Addressing Men’s Violence Against Women; Discussing Violence/Crime – Legal Aspects; “Moment of Truth” – Truth-telling vs. Performance; Creation Process with Participants; Release Form; Presentation Staging & Flow; Music; Presentation Space; Licensing & Participation in MSP Network; Program; Publicity; Creating Safety for the Audience; Event Introduction; Audience-Presenter Discussion; Filming & Audio Recording; Fundraising as Part of the MSP; Email list, Feedback Forms & Resource/Action Table; Building MSP Community: Ownership & Participation; Helping the MSP Succeed on College Campuses; Connecting with MSP Central; The Bottom Line: Requirements for Calling it a “Men’s Story Project”; References

#### **C. Appendices**

Sample Call for Submissions, Introduction and Press Release; Audience Feedback Form; Selected Resources

**Nonprofits:** \$75-150 sliding scale

**Colleges/universities:** \$125-200

*Please add \$6 for shipping/handling.*

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

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### **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 and MSP YouTube Channel. This license agreement includes guidelines on basic elements that must be part of a production so as to use the MSP name, and has a 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 issues including media permission are also addressed.

Licensing is \$90/year. To see a copy of the agreement, please contact [josie@mensstoryproject.org](mailto:josie@mensstoryproject.org)

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**Josie Lehrer, Sc.D.** is Founder/Director of the Men's Story Project. 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. Josie currently also facilitates social support groups for young adults who are living with HIV/AIDS, and has worked as a consultant with organizations including San Francisco Women Against Rape and World Vision International. Josie completed doctoral studies at the Harvard School of Public Health and a postdoctoral fellowship at the UCSF Center for AIDS Prevention Studies. Her work has been highlighted through CNN Headline News, Forbes.com, MSN.com and other outlets. Her family is from Chile.