

**Men's Manifesto 2012**  
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Reports of men's violence against women dominate our headlines. In homes across the United States and around the world, my gender is perpetrating violence against women in record numbers.

In 2001, eleven-year-old Nestor "Tito" Nieves was stabbed to death outside a Springfield, Massachusetts, movie theatre by another boy his age. Subsequent news reports indicated that Nieves was going to the movie with a girl that the other boy wanted to date. "That other boy was jealous and got mad," said Nestor's stepfather, Angel Herrera.

Another eleven-year-old boy from Springfield died in 2009. Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover endured daily anti-gay bullying. Since her son's suicide, Carl's mother, Sirdeaner Lynn Walker, has dedicated her life to stopping bullying.

Like Tito and Carl, I went to middle school in Springfield. I learned many things there and elsewhere about what it means to be a man. There were some good lessons: Be strong about your opinions, stand up against injustice, take initiative rather than standing back, and so forth. But there were some lessons I could have done without: Always have a girlfriend, always have the biggest car or make the most money, don't show vulnerable feelings. If a girl doesn't want to kiss you, kiss her really well and she'll "melt." If your girlfriend doesn't do what she "should," it's all right to bring her into line. And if she's going out with someone else, you have the right to a jealous, even homicidal rage against that other person—or against her.

All the popular guys in school seemed to embody these qualities. They were the guys I wanted to be like, and I tried my hardest to be like them. These same role models were on TV, in the movies, and in our popular culture. Any guy who deviated from this got labeled a sissy, gay, or (Heaven forbid) a girl.

The rigid enforcement of gender stereotypes has a body count. The victims are male and female. One in three women worldwide will be raped or abused by a man they know. In the United States, tens of thousands of women have been killed by men who promised to love them. And the very same gender stereotype that helps to create the problem keeps it going: If men speak out against male violence, we are often called misogynist and homophobic slurs.

I was sick of it in 2001 and I'm sick of it now. After Tito Nieves was murdered, I wrote a Men's Manifesto as a call to end male violence. Since then, much has changed but much remains the same. One of the reasons our sons are killing is because we have encouraged it. One of the reasons our brothers and fathers have abused their wives, girlfriends, and partners is because we haven't said, with a unified voice, that this is not a "manly" thing to do. We still need to do more work to change what it means to be a man, what it means to be one of the "cool" and popular guys. Toward this end, I again propose a Men's Manifesto 2012.

I'm proud to be a part of a growing movement—a multiracial, multicultural, global movement of men who are challenging male violence and outdated notions of masculinity. I have been inspired by, taught by, and befriended by men across the world who have dedicated their lives to reducing male violence. Men and boys around the world work for domestic violence programs and rape crisis centers. They donate and

raise money for women's groups. They organize and participate in community walks and wear White Ribbons. Men Can (and do) Stop Rape and Men (are) Stopping Violence.

There is a growing Call to Men to become part of the solution.

This movement, at its best, strives to be accountable to those who have taught us everything we know about these issues: women. We men have listened to and learned from women. We often forget to give women the credit they are due, and sometimes claim their ideas as our own. But the heart of this growing men's movement rests in the intelligence, kindness, confrontation, and love from the strong women in our lives.

I don't presume to speak for all men in this movement. These are simply things I strongly believe, things I have heard other men say. Things that I think would make the world a bit better.

We are men and boys who are proud to be working to stop male violence. We are proud to be men who welcome non-traditional expressions of what it means to be a man. We will be our own role models, applauding each non-traditional male role model who appears in film and television. As representations of manhood diversify, we will welcome the by-product of such diversity—acceptance and celebration of all varieties of manhood.

We are proud to be gay men and bisexual men. We are proud to be heterosexual men working to end homophobia.

We are proud to be transgender men. As transmen, we may choose to take on some aspects of so-called traditional masculinity while working to undo the very notion that there *is* such a thing as “male” and “female.” As men who were once labeled

“female,” we bring knowledge of sexism and male privilege to our work as male allies against sexism.

We are proud to be African-American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American men. We are proud to be white male allies against racism and sexism.

We are proud to have survived violence ourselves. We are rape and incest survivors, survivors of intimate partner violence at the hands of women and men.

We will work to end all violence against all people, even as we work to end the epidemic of male violence against girls and women.

We love other men. We will boldly express our love of other men with hugs, tears, high-fives, handshakes, holding hands, and kisses—sometimes with sex. We will sometimes choose a man as a beloved life partner.

We love women. Knowing that our gender perpetrates violence and sexism, we pledge to change ourselves and the world. Rather than riding in on a white horse, we will partner with women and support women’s leadership in stopping violence and sexism.

We love our families. Those of us who are fathers love our children. We reject the aloof father image. We realize that our children’s happiness depends on treating their mother with dignity, respect, and love.

When a boy scores a touchdown, we will continue to praise him with back-slapping celebration. But we won’t stop there.

When a boy dresses like a princess, we will embrace him as we embrace the boy who hits a home run. We will embrace boys wearing skirts, boys wearing makeup, boys wearing black and boys with piercings.

When a boy cries, we will comfort him. We will cry with him.

We will celebrate boys with long hair and short hair—running boys and boys in wheelchairs—ballet dancing boys and cheerleader boys. We will celebrate shy boys, singing boys, kind boys and poet boys.

We will stand up against injustice. We will speak out against it, and will listen without defensiveness when it is pointed out in us. Rather than hiding behind “I didn’t mean to,” we will listen to the effects of our actions, not just point out our intentions. Strength as men will be measured not just by how many weights we can lift, but by how well we can listen.

We claim the right to define what’s cool. We refused to be defined rigidly, and will protect anyone who is bullied because he doesn’t seem “cool” to the dominant culture. Coolness doesn’t have to be aloofness, toughness, unreasonable jealousy, and possessiveness. We declare that it’s cool to be tough sometimes, and vulnerable some others. We declare it cool to support the people we date in their independence: Love isn’t about control and sex isn’t about coercion.

We will not use homophobic, sexist, racist, or other oppressive slurs to gain the upper hand with someone else. And when we’re called sissy, gay, or girly, etc., we will take it as a compliment. Strength as men will not be measured in opposition to women and things female, but in unity with those things.

We will be men in this way with determination—sometimes quietly, sometimes proudly, and always unapologetically. We will write country western, hip-hop, and rock songs with these voices. We will raise our sons this way, and raise our daughters to be strong and articulate. We will refuse to accept it if others say this isn’t the way to be a man. This is our way to be men, and we will not be denied our self-defined manhood.

We realize that we've been raised in a sexist culture, and that we will continue to act in a sexist fashion despite our best intentions. When confronted on our own sexism or male privilege, we pledge to listen instead of being defensive. We realize that it's a gift for women to confront us on our sexism.

We realize that the continuum of men's violence against women goes from murder and physical violence all the way to sexist jokes and objectification. We admit that we have done things along that continuum, and we pledge to stop doing them.

We realize that in pledging to be part of the solution, we also must acknowledge that we have been (and still are) part of the problem.

We pledge to listen to women and learn from women.

We pledge to be accountable to women's leadership in stopping men's violence, and to be accountable to our own male privilege.

We are sick of violence from intimate partners. Gay men, bisexuals, heterosexuals, lesbians, and transgender folks all have the rights to joyful relationships free of violence and control. As the White Ribbon Campaign asks, we pledge to never commit, condone, or remain silent about men's violence against women. We choose to respect, seek equality with, and share power with the girls and women in our lives. We encourage, demand, and expect other men and boys to do the same.

Tito Nieves didn't have to die. He could be a college graduate by now. Carl Walker-Hoover didn't have to die. He could be a part of the growing anti-bullying movement in high schools across the nation. How many murdered wives and girlfriends were going to be the next Maya Angelous, the next Marie Curies? We must stand with

each other as we boldly define a new form of manhood, and work for a world free from violence.