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Domestic violence is a men's issue
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I'm sure that most people are aware that the nuclear, homemaker, breadwinner family often depicted as it was on the show "Leave it to Beaver," is few and far between in 2005.

Family life for many has veered far from the Beaver's. In fact, other than the military in times of war, the family is the most violent institution in the world.

The truth lies behind the closed doors of private life. Once this truth is revealed we can begin to understand why 4 million American women annually experience a serious assault by an intimate partner.

Of these, more than 300,000 are pregnant. More than three women are murdered every day.

Do you think this is a women's problem? If so, let me paint a different picture for you. Males are most often the victims and perpetrators of 90 percent of homicides and other physical assaults.

Although there are a great number of women victims, many men are prey to bullying, intimidation, and physical and sexual violence perpetrated by other men.

Overall, men perpetrate 95 percent of all serious domestic violence. However, although the numbers of violent crimes are perpetrated by 95 percent of men, it does not mean that 95 percent of men are abusive.

Clearly, the problem of domestic violence is a men's issue.

I am proud to say that I represent the majority of men, men who are not acting out in violence, men who believe that we can strive to live in a world of equality (some call this feminism). As a man, although I continually attempt and practice emotional, verbal, and physical forms of nonviolent communication, it is not always easy.

First and foremost, I am a white heterosexual male, which status offers many unseen privileges.

As a man, these privileges are instinctively utilized by myself as well as awarded to me through the conditioning our society has placed on the value of genders. This value is perpetuated through the media.

American media promotes and reflects the current cultural standards from body image to behavior.

Unfortunately, as entertaining as our media is, its portrayals of men and women are unrealistic. While women are often over-sexualized and objectified, men are often seen as lazy, unrestricted and violent.

Why is this a problem? The average child watches four hours and 40 minutes of TV a day, spends more time in front of the TV than in school over a year's period, and will witness over 200,000 violent acts by the age of 18.

While the influence of the media on violence and inequality continues, I request that *you* begin to ask questions. Pay attention to what you are being told and sold.

To do so will be your first step in escaping from the strict and confining box we males have been placed in. Next, get involved.

There are many organizations we can involve ourselves in, from national organizations such as "Men Against Violence" to the local Men's Project at Colorado State University, "Take Back the Night" and Crossroads.

When Audre Lorde said, "Your silence will not protect you," many in the antiviolence movement have attributed it to mean that women need to speak out and not be silenced in fear.

I believe the same is true for men. We must begin to speak out, and challenge ourselves and others.

Thanks for listening.

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