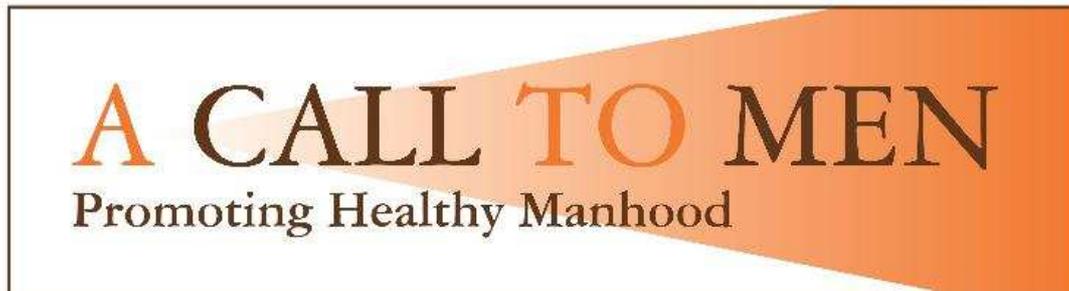


A CALL TO MEN e-NEWS



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Breaking the Silence

By Co-founders - A CALL TO MEN

"There's a code of silence that we don't dare speak; There's a wall between and the river's deep..." -- Bruce Springsteen "Code of Silence"

In the recent tragedy at Penn State it is reported that trusted Coach Jerry Sandusky was arrested on 40 counts related to allegations of sexual abuse of eight young boys over a 15-year period. This allegedly occurred while other coaches looked on and kept silent about what they saw, what they knew and perhaps even tried to cover up for their colleague and "the program."

As men we have a long history invested in collusion with other men and codes of silence. Also known as codes of honor, vows of silence, the blue curtain of silence with names like "the family" or "the brotherhood." Many of us, in our youth and adulthood, have participated in defining violators of the code of silence as haters, suckers, punks, rats, snitches, weasels, a snake and much worse.

This pervasive silence among men in our culture to protect the status quo, to win at any cost, and never tell on your brother is a glaring example of how destructive the current model and definition of manhood operates to demean, diminish and oppress anyone who is not considered a "real man" in our society. Our fear of being perceived as less than a man or weak, keeps us in line with these codes, regardless of right and wrong. This fear is running rampant and dominating our sense of righteousness. Dare we be a "whistleblower" when most of us as boys have been told "don't be a tattle tale."

This code protects men from confronting or challenging other men about their behavior, no matter how violent or inappropriate. This agreement has at its foundation the belief that men have more value and should receive entitlements and benefits, even if it compromises the rights and humanity of anyone else and therefore should be given priority, protection

and the benefit of the doubt in cases of any wrong doing. These social and cultural norms, that have been established by men for the benefit of men, are steeped in our history, laws and tradition and we continue to pass this belief system down to our sons and boys.

While all of the perpetrators of the Penn State incident need to be held accountable and dealt with swiftly by the law, it does not let the rest of us off the hook. What happened at Penn State is "a cough in the cold," a symptom of the illness. While clearly, there are specific individuals involved and responsible, we believe that this is not just an individual ill but a social ill requiring a social response.

As men, we must join the growing movement of men and women, willing to challenge these age old notions and norms defining manhood. We must be willing to escape the fear of being viewed as less than a man and branded an outcast or "traitor" of the unit, the organization, the team. We must be willing to step outside of what we at A CALL TO MEN call "The Man Box". We must be willing to break the code of silence which continues to restrict us and compromise our humanity...

"We keep pretending that there's nothing wrong; But there's a code of silence and it can't go on" -- Bruce Springsteen "Code of Silence"

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