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**OVERCOMING FLAWED MASCULINITY**  
**(BY USE OF CLINICAL RESEARCH TECHNIQUES)**

When you disturb nature,  
It works quickly to restore itself,  
Not exactly as it was before disturbance,  
But with disturbance experienced as part of its new nature  
-Richard Leakey

**PREAMBLE**

Concerned about the pandemic violence perpetrated by men against women, and propped up by the new global consensus that women are human, not men's property, I convened a march for men to cooperate with women in the fight for human equality. Many men came forward to welcome the women's claim that "women's rights are human rights" as something important and as a legitimate cause for social justice. The mobilization process assumed the acronym MEW (Men for the Equality of Men and Women). The mission of MEW was for changing men to become truly human by ceasing to be property in which men considered women to be of lesser value than men. MEW welcomed the struggle for gender equality being waged by women as the struggle of all to become human, sovereign and equal.

MEW's response did not confine itself to the local conceptualization of gender issues. MEW was impacted upon by the ongoing *gender revolution*, galvanized by the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which forbids discrimination on the basis of sex; the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979), The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for Advancement of Women (NFLS 1985), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA 1995) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 2000), under the rubric of human rights.

In 1999 some Kenyan men were inspired by this conventional wisdom to get engaged in the gender revolution. They organized a march from Kamukunji to Uhuru Park in Nairobi to own up to their violence and discrimination against women. The test of owning up needed a long process of studying and understanding both the conventional wisdom and the gender revolution more widely so that this owning up is from an informed and wise position. Most men feared that the women galvanizing the gender revolution were one-sided and lacking dialogue with men. As recently as 2006, many organizations attending the Nairobi+21 anniversary found it quite strange to see MEW represented as men's organizations talking about gender issues. It was as if men are not part of gender. Men missed a two-sided gender platform to make the gender revolution symmetrically and dialectically grounded. Lack of a common gender platform intimidates Kenyan men to fear BPFA's and NFLS's call for men to "include women in the promotion into positions of power at all levels (strata) within political and legislative bodies". While women may want to be promoted and included into the status quo "at all levels" of the hierarchy of masculinity, MEW is aware that 90% of men are equally excluded from the same hierarchy of masculinity. Ordinary, poor and malnourished patriarchs fear that if women become included in these high levels of property ownership, in which power is but a method of acquiring more property, such women will enslave them to perform traditional "feminine" roles without recourse to dialogue. But the ruling class, due to international pressure, agrees to absorb and co-opt women into its

*privilege, property* and *patriarchy* as long as this pacifies women voters and makes the few empowered and propertied a grateful third of the one-way siphoning systems that pump resources from the poor to the rich, bottom to the top and periphery to the center.

**MEW engages in research to develop materials for training, counseling, outreach and advocacy to enlighten men on gender issues and prevent boys from acquiring flawed masculine constructs, and to cure men of pseudo-masculinity.**

## **THE STRATEGY**

MEW's strategy was to unearth and study various Kenyan cultural fossils in order to trace the origins, nature and character of Kenyan masculinity. We wanted to know the composition of Kenya masculinity so as to discover how this determines men-women relationships. So far, we have not found any traces of masculinity that predate the establishment of male dominance: in other words, all common ideas of masculinity have male dominance embedded in them. In our preliminary research covering all Kenyan ethnic, class and racial diversity MEW has discovered that Kenyan masculinity contains the defects of male dominance, specifically the urge for males to eat and mate before, and more, than others. Masculinity has an interface in the ferocious ways human males and animals bull-fight to establish the hierarchy of their eating-mating order. While the purpose of the struggle for dominance is a biological necessity men go beyond the natural urge to eat and mate more and before others by converting their animal intra-masculine struggle for dominance into their human ultra-masculine struggle out of which originates patriarchy, feudalism and capitalism.

The fact that females are not involved in the bullfights does not exempt them from the consequences of victory and defeat. Women suffer double jeopardy because, to legitimize patriarchy, the victorious men pacify and help the poor and defeated men to recover their losses from women. Religion moralizes and enforces that women should pay for being victims of the collateral damage caused by the intra-masculine struggle for dominance and justifies this by ordaining men as breadwinners, protectors and property owners. The fact that the center of the male eating-mating order excludes all women and 90% of men who are losers, makes it dysfunctional, for inequality cannot be maintained in any other way but by the same violence that established it.

Conventional wisdom advocates for access, space, inclusion, cooption, integration, assimilation and mainstreaming of women into the center of this unjustly established eating-mating order. In Kenya, gender assimilation strategies aim to raise women's participation in government to 30%. That would mean 30% of the stakeholders, beneficiaries, space, jobs and seats that are monopolized by the ruling minority of just 10% of the population. This ruling minority siphons blood from the majority 90% of the population, placing them at the risk of imminent environmental disaster and life-threatening extinction. Conventional strategies of cooptation and assimilation are based on the logic of "If you cannot beat them, join them." If it helps women to become part of the 10% dominant clique that by means of elections, appointments or ethnic balance occupies the uppermost echelons of the eating and mating order, they will be abetting the structures of male dominance and aiding male acceleration toward self-extinction. Meantime, the backlash from the men displaced by women from the center of the eating and mating order will certainly create male lobby groups to parallel FIDA (the International Federation of Women Lawyers) or a Disenchantment-K party to fight for their return to the center. MEW may support conventional wisdom and its affirmative action if this were to go beyond a mere 30% tokenism and reaches 50% and above of the dominant

minority, and if by so doing it destroys the center-periphery dichotomy inherent in all the material forms of flawed masculinity such as patriarchy, feudalism and capitalism.

### **CLINICAL RESEARCH (excerpts):**

1. The Naivasha Maximum Prison's workshop (see MEW Manual Two) is a story about gender conflict and dysfunctional masculinity. Inmates confessed that they raped women because they felt threatened by educated, empowered and skilled women who seem to deliver better. It is a poignant testimony of a defective masculinity that served men well at earlier times, at the expense of women, but that now would rather blow up the future of humankind than compete with women.
2. In workshops covering about sixty-two Kenyan ethnic communities, including Southern Sudan and Northern Tanzania, Kenyan Asians, and Europeans, we found the relics of the mating and eating order that entitled men to eat more and before women in almost every ethnic community. The communities around Mount Elgon have kept until now a centralized and meticulously structured order where men are entitled to eat the "best" part of the chicken. A woman can be severely punished if found to have eaten the gizzard. Around Mount Kenya it is taboo not only for women to eat meat in public but to eat certain parts of the meat. The fact that when men stopped being hunters and gatherers it did not stop them from enforcing their priority to eat and mate before others shows that the entitlements had outlived their economic value but continued to hang only on gender criteria. This gender bias became the very validation of patriarchal society and feudalism, then capitalism and eventually imperialism. Kenya is a patriarchal society. When a baby girl cries due to hunger, the society demands that the mother should rock and soothe her into silence. The same society demands that when a baby boy cries due to hunger, even though he has not been hunting or gathering anything, just because he is male, society demands that the mother should jump and feed him immediately, or else....Entitlements (power, prerogative, privilege, right, and claim i.e. male dominance) are given to the boy-child at birth, not as biological necessities, but as gender constructs.
3. As a result of stagnation in masculinity, men forced women into slavery and themselves into atrophy in order to survive. In the Kiratina, Molo, Engineer, and Makueni communities about 80% of married women of over sixty years are widows (See MEW Manuals Two and Three). Biology has very little to do with this. Men die earlier than they should and before women because of their rigid gender constructs. From infancy till manhood boys are indoctrinated that their destiny is to become "future leaders", thus, bread-winners, protectors and owners of property. In order to accomplish this, urban mothers and sisters wait on boys while boys grow idle, drunk or violent. They cop out of their upbringing very early and ruin their lives with drugs and gangsterism. Rural boys fare no better. By passing them through the rites of passage, mainly the circumcision rituals, the boys' masculinity is fixed and rigid, so rigid that, in some ethnic communities, for a boy to prove his manhood, he has to go cattle-rustling to get goats, sheep, camels and donkeys for his father to pay dowry so that he can marry. One youth from East Pokot told us that he walked for hundreds of kilometers to Karamoja in Uganda to raid cattle as part of his rite of passage. Just as the Industrial Revolution did not cure European masculinity of its predatory character but turned it into imperialism, education has not cured African masculinity of its cattle-rustling character but turns it into high level of property accumulation, namely corruption, looting of public funds and political thuggery: rape. Half of all the 450 men convicted of rape at Naivasha government prisons are boys and men below 24 years of age. If the men of high level politics and property do not conspire with high level women to make male dominance the basis of gender equality, it will be easier to deconstruct flawed masculinity and in its place build a healthy masculinity, MEW's way.

Instead of men feeling flattered by the call by the conventional wisdom to “include women in the promotion into positions of power at all levels within political and legislative bodies” men should first consider dismantling most of these levels (strata).

In her article, “Living in fear of confronting biases on patriarchal society<sup>1</sup>” Kaari B. Murungi argues that,

Domination, and discrimination including sexual slavery, exists in all strata of society and is enforced and consolidated by an entrenched system of patriarchy, bolstered by religion, culture and law. Our struggle must be to dismantle a system that so despises and denigrates women. It is a political and ethical struggle that must join all Kenyan women and men who care about social justice for all.

For men to join women in dismantling patriarchy, it means joining forces to dismantle a property hierarchy in which men relate with each other as property and with women as cheaper property. Men and women must be made to understand that patriarchy is a common enemy, for it enslaves people at all the “levels” in its hierarchy of property, the very “levels” in which it entices women to fight for inclusion, access, space, mainstreaming and integration. All “levels” of Patriarchy are strapped with explosive masculinity to blow men up and kill everything around and under them at the earliest threat to their flawed masculinity. Patriarchy is wired with perceived rights to eat and mate more and before others. Under patriarchy, women are sexual slaves supposed to be happily married under guns, gangs, land grabbers, thieves, financial scammers, mercenaries and conmen in the guise of bread winners. Patriarchs, just as women and children, are victims of their own patriarchy when it comes to intra-masculine conflicts. Men maimed by and dying of failed masculinity hate but at the same time defend patriarchy on ethnic and religious bases. They do not know how else to be men without being patriarchs. Patriarchy is like the mafia: once you enter it you don’t leave it “until death do us part.” So, Murungi’s call for “Kenyan women and men...to dismantle...the system of patriarchy” is not only salvation for women, but for men as well. Murungi’s call is more comprehensive than the conventional wisdom which Kenyan men fear as calls to swap roles with women so that women can become providers, protectors of men and owners of the family property and so that men can change diapers, prepare food for the family and make beds.

Murungi’s call makes sense to 90% of the poor and oppressed patriarchs who are denied the opportunity, space, access, representation and participation in the “levels” or the eating and mating order by 10% of patriarchs. Women are not the only enemies of patriarchy. Patriarchy is a suicide bomb strapped to kill itself because, by its very eating habits:

- It cannot absorb all the boys that it trains to be patriarchs in addition to the 30% of women that it promises to make matriarchs
- It denies millions of prospective sons-in-law the means to pay dowry to the prospective fathers-in-law, which is self-destructive
- It renders youth jobless leading to gangsterism, alcoholism, drug abuse and sexual violence
- It renders men redundant, indolent and sexually bored leading to atrophy and early deaths

All these are symptoms of defects in flawed masculine constructs and their outward hierarchies of property accumulation. This concept needs contempt, not pity. MEW looks for a common struggle for men and women to transform their:

- **lives from being property into being human**

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<sup>1</sup> DAILY NATION, Tuesday March 6, 2007.

- **countries from being markets into nations,**
- **intellect from ambition and self-interest into vision for service to all, and**
- **Means of existence (livelihood) from the global market into the global family where all get respect for their dignity and rights to reasonable means of livelihood.**

MEW's call for men to collaborate with women is cognizant of the need for all the men alienated from the high "levels" of property concentration to cooperate with women, as Murungi says, to rid them of masculinity on the basis of which those levels are built. **In real economic terms, patriarchy is a pile of unequal men replicating their inequality through women.** In Kenya, patriarchy (in politics known as Jogoo or Simba) is a time bomb because 10% of the population (including just a few women) owns and consumes 90% of the national resources.

The majority of men have therefore no reasons for clinging, inflexibly, to the myth of being the sole breadwinners/providers, protectors and owners of material belongings, because they are already living below the poverty line of one Dollar a day. Moreover there are many successful women in the informal market who are beating them at their own game of being providers and protectors.

**Even if all women liberation movements were to close shop, men should persist with dismantling patriarchy and deconstructing masculinity in order to save themselves, humanity and the environment.**