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Against Women Requires a Bigger Role From

weeks ago, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krusinski, the head of the Air Force's sexual assault prevention a woman in a Virginia parking lot. Just days later the Army's coordinator for sexual assault [sexual contact.](#) And, as if it couldn't get any worse, last week, a sergeant at West Point secretly videotaping female cadets in the shower. Though the vast majority of our men and y, events like these are far too common. A [survey](#) from the Pentagon's Sexual Assault of sexual assault in the military are on the rise with 26,000 servicemen and servicewomen n 19,000 the previous year). Only 10 percent of these cases have been prosecuted.

and are providing much needed leadership, [pushing to reform](#) the military's sexual assault ble. Stricter enforcement and tougher legal penalties are necessary, but we must also in the military and our society that permit a culture of sexual inequity. The victims of sexual n men and women, but national and military surveys illuminate that proportionately most perpetrators are male.

the military are not a result of more mentally unstable and hardened criminals in our armed om across America, and their choices and behaviors are shaped by our society. We can't ur society as whole. Their high rates of sexual assault are a reflection of our society's failure s culture of impunity and emphasis on stereotypical attitudes of manhood exacerbate these

e military, the last year was rife with violence towards women. Women in New Delhi, India, orrific and highly publicized rapes, while debates on college campuses escalated to shed regarding attitudes towards sexual violence. When classmates at Dartmouth College otests highlighting issues of sexual assault, racism, and homophobia, students [issued rape](#) classmates. Sadly, these incidents represent only a small sampling of sexually motivated

s associated sexist attitudes is not limited to any one nation or institution, and it cannot be ng or tougher laws alone. To counter sexist attitudes, we must move away from advocacy ally female cause. We must foster male attitudes that recognize and reject violence towards need to create more opportunities for boys and men to exchange views and learn from and sue -- a space where male leadership can form organically. In order to be successful, we

just need to encourage more of them to speak up. Over the past six months working at a [Half the Sky Movement](#), I've met male athletic coaches, professors, students and former en to champion this issue in their communities. Male-led efforts have created effective

Initiatives like Men Can Stop Rape, which began with the tagline "my strength is not for hurting" or the [White Ribbon Alliance](#), which encourages men to speak out in solidarity against violence towards women. Sir Patrick Stewart of *Star Trek* has used his celebrity to call violence against women the "the single greatest human rights violation of our generation," and called on one million men to join him in helping to end this violence.

It's encouraging that there are men who want to take an active role in preventing violence against women. History illustrates the important role men can play in advancing the status of women. During the suffrage movement in the early twentieth century, for example, millions of men supported suffrage with some even forming Men's Leagues for Woman Suffrage. Their support helped to achieve the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right vote. Though the goal may not seem as clear-cut, we need a similar level of male participation to address present-day violence against women.

We are seeing more initiatives focused on facilitating conversation between men and boys on the topic of sexual violence and attitudes -- a subject on which men have not been effectively engaged in the past. Jackson Katz, who co-founded [Mentors in](#)

[Violence Prevention](#) at Northeastern University, promotes a grassroots approach to ending gender violence that encourages male leadership and ownership. Organizations like [A Call to Men](#), led by Ted Bunch and his team, work with young men to challenge common notions of 'manhood.' A similar initiative from Futures Without Violence, [Coaching Boys into Men](#), trains adult mentors to teach boys respectful attitudes towards girls in youth athletics. Similar opportunities should be expanded at schools, places of worship, and on athletic teams to sensitize boys and young men to gender issues with opportunities for discussion.

The Half the Sky Movement's [educational videos](#) make the positive impact of these male-to-male exchanges clear. One video from Sierra Leone captures a local men's group discussing domestic abuse and sexual violence. One man argues that it is acceptable to abuse a defiant or insubordinate wife. Others disagree, and a conversation ensues challenging each man's judgments in a productive way.

It is high time that more boys and men step up as leaders to make improvement in their ranks. We are taking strides in the right direction to make that a reality, but until we engage men on a large scale on this issue, efforts to end violence against women will be elusive.

**The views expressed in this articles are those of the author and do not necessarily represent Half the Sky Movement.*

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