

dispelled through dialogue and conversation. But conversations about "race relations" will hardly dismantle a prison industrial complex that thrives on and nourishes the racism hidden within the deep structures of our society.

The emergence of a U.S. prison industrial complex within a context of cascading conservatism marks a new historical moment, whose dangers are unprecedented. But so are its opportunities. Considering the impressive number of grassroots projects that continue to resist the expansion of the punishment industry, it ought to be possible

to bring these efforts together to create radical, nationally visible movements that can legitimize anti-capitalist critiques of the prison industrial complex. It ought to be possible to build movements that persuasively argue that what we need is not more prisons, but new health care, housing, education, drug programs, jobs, and education. To safeguard a democratic future, it is possible and necessary to weave together the many and increasing strands of resistance to the prison industrial complex into a powerful movement for social transformation.

32. • Jackson Katz

GUILTY PLEASURES: PORNOGRAPHY, PROSTITUTION, AND STRIPPING (2006)

Jackson Katz is an antiviolenace activist whose work focuses around the social construction of American masculinity. He is an award-winning filmmaker well known for his films *Tough Guise* and *Tough Guise 2*, which examine what he sees as a crisis in masculinity. He argues that cultural norms encourage a style of manhood steeped in misogyny, homophobia, and violence. Katz works with boys and men in schools, sports organizations, and the military to change the definition of manhood as a way to address the social problems of bullying, sexual assault, and domestic violence. In "Guilty Pleasures: Pornography, Prostitution, and Stripping," Katz analyzes the effect of the sex industry on heterosexual men and how it shapes their view of girls and women.

[. . .]

It has long been understood that what people do for entertainment—and sexual pleasure—can be shockingly revealing. But until recently, most discussions about pornography, prostitution, and stripping have

focused on the women and girls in those industries—who they are, how they got into that life, and what happens to them once they do. These are important areas of discussion, and over the past couple of decades activists and researchers have learned a great deal about the reality of women's and girls' lives in

the commercial "sex industry"—largely as a result of the courageous testimonies of women who have survived it. But if we hope to *prevent* sexual violence and other forms of sexual exploitation, we must begin to ask another set of questions: How does heterosexual men's use of pornography as a masturbatory aid help to shape not only their view of women and girls, but their own manhood and sexuality? What is the influence on boys' sexuality of early and repeated exposure to the pornography industry's particular representation of "normal" sex? Is it possible to discuss sexual violence in our society and not talk about the influence in male culture of the \$10 billion pornography industry? What is the relationship between the sexual abuse of children and the proliferation of media products that deliberately sexualize young girls—and in some cases boys? How do men treat prostitutes, and what impact does this have on the way they treat their wives, girlfriends, female coworkers, and fellow students? As strip culture seeps ever more visibly into the mainstream, what effect does this have on men's and boys' attitudes toward women? What can be done about what seems to be a steady movement away from the idea of sex as mutually respectful? Short of creating our own version of a Taliban-like theocracy, is it possible to reverse the seemingly inexorable societal trend toward the pornographic fantasy of men using women like blow-up dolls?

These are uncomfortable questions, and what makes them even more difficult is that not everyone wants to know the answers. Men have an obvious incentive to change the subject. But it is also true that many women are not eager to find out about what goes on in certain parts of male culture that historically have been off-limits to them, especially when it gets personal and involves men close to them. And who can blame them? The "truth" about some men's callousness, cruelty, and need for sexual dominance that is revealed in pornography, prostitution, and strip culture is a lot to stomach. Some women carry the added burden of having done things sexually with men to accommodate a man's pornographic fantasy, which in another context they might feel compromised their integrity. It also must be painful

for women to admit to themselves that their fathers, brothers, sons, and lovers are often the very same men who rent videos with titles like *A Cum-Guzzling Slut Named Kimberley*, pay twenty-year-old strippers for lap dances at "gentlemen's clubs" on the way home from work, get blow jobs from prostitutes at friends' bachelor parties, and in some cases travel abroad to have cheap sex with twelve-year-old girls.

REVOLUTIONARY HONESTY

The writer John Stoltenberg once said that pornography tells lies about women, but it tells the truth about men. I think Stoltenberg is only partially right. Unless it can be proven that male infants are born hard-wired for sexism, the only truth about men that pornography reveals is that they are products of their environment. Thus if we want to reduce the level of sexual violence perpetrated by boys and men, we need to critically examine the environment in which we socialize boys and establish norms in male culture. This will not be easy, especially since so many men have conscious or unconscious feelings of guilt about how they have objectified women, or perpetuated their oppression through their treatment of them as purchasable commodities. But in order for men to transform their feelings of guilt into something more constructive, they need to do something about the underlying problem. They need to move beyond defensiveness and ask themselves how they can help to change the sexual rituals and norms in male culture that are harmful to women and children. A good place to start this process would be to commit—in private and public—what Stoltenberg calls acts of "revolutionary honesty" about their lives, loves, and guilty pleasures.

In this spirit of revolutionary honesty, I want to come clean about some of my own guilty pleasures. At the very least, I want to make sure that I am not self-righteous or moralizing in this discussion. I do not characterize myself as a "good guy" while other guys who use porn or pay prostitutes are "bad guys," or irredeemably sexist. I have never had non-consensual sex or sex with a prostitute, but I am

far from prudish. In my teens and twenties, before I was politically conscious about the sexist exploitation at the heart of the "sex industry," I went to strip clubs and used pornography. But I never saw myself as oppressing women. I denied any connection between my private pleasure and the perpetuation of rape culture. At first I did not know, and then I did not want to know, how badly some men (and women) treat the women and girls in those industries. It was only as I came to hear and read about their life experiences—and reflect on the feminist idea that the high incidence of rape and sexual harassment in the U.S. is linked to the pervasive sexual objectification of women in our society—that I consciously refused to support or condone the commercial sex industry. Still, the effects of my earlier conditioning have stayed with me to this day. For example, I am sometimes aroused by images that I know are sexist and degrading to women. I appreciate the complexity of the human erotic imagination, but I wonder how much my fantasy life—and the fantasy life of tens of millions of my fellow men—has been shaped by the increasingly angry and misogynistic porn that has flooded the culture and our psyches in recent decades. I would never hold other men to a standard which I do not hold for myself. Any man who wants to fight gender violence—and all forms of sexism—needs to be careful not to condemn in others what he refuses to acknowledge about himself. The solution I have found is simply to be honest about my own self-doubts and contradictions. In my work with men, I have found that most of them respect and appreciate this, even if they do not agree with all of my interpretations or conclusions.

ANTI-SEXIST MEN AND THE PORN WARS

Pornography is usually thought of as a women's issue. But as the sociologist Gail Dines bluntly states, "Men make, distribute, and get rich on porn. They jerk off to it. Tell me why it's a women's issue."¹ Although men are overwhelmingly the producers

and consumers of porn, they are nonetheless dramatically underrepresented among the people who take the time to reflect on and discuss its societal function. In fact, millions of men use pornography, but I suspect very few have ever had a serious conversation about it. (Pornography marketed to gay men is a huge industry itself, and many feminist critics—gay and straight—have called attention to the ways in which much of gay porn eroticizes power and control and sexual violence. For the purpose of this discussion, I am focusing on by far the largest segment of the pornography market: heterosexual men and boys.) I know that countless men with whom I have worked over the past twenty years report they had never even heard—much less discussed—thoughtful critiques of the role of porn in men's lives, and the possible negative affect it has had on their sexuality and ability to connect with real women. Some men avoid this sort of introspection because it is still awkward to talk honestly about sex in this culture, and they are embarrassed. Other men like to shift the conversation about pornography into political arguments about free speech and censorship and away from questions about how boys and men use it, what types of porn they find pleasurable and why, and what effect heavy porn use might have on their feelings about women's bodies and sexuality. I am certain that part of their motivation for these evasions is personal: if they engaged in serious discussions about pornography, men might have to ask themselves troubling questions about what effect pornography has on how they view *themselves*, their bodies, and their desires for intimate connections with women.

The debate in this country about hot-button issues like pornography and the sexualization of children in advertising has become so polarized that to the casual observer, there are only two positions: either you are for porn or against it, with no thought given to the complexity of the subject. In real life, people tend to have much more nuanced views of these matters. People in the movements to end sexual and domestic violence are often falsely accused of prudery by the self-described

"sex positive" advocates and of being "in bed with the Christian right" if they dare to critique the behavior of "consenting adults." In fact, over the past couple of decades, pornography has even been a divisive issue among people who call themselves feminists. There are two major camps. Anti-porn feminists take the position that pornography sexualizes women's subordination, and is a critical factor in maintaining gender inequality. It might not directly cause men's violence against women, but it portrays men's domination and control of women as sexy. In practice, the porn industry is also a heartless corporate enterprise which can be quite brutal and exploitative of the largely working-class women (and men)—many of them in their late teens and early twenties—whose bodies provide the main attraction, but whose careers in the unforgiving adult film business—Jenna Jameson notwithstanding—are nasty, brutish, and short.

Pro-porn feminists, by contrast, argue that unbridled sexual expression—even if much of it is sexist and produced by and for men—is in women's self-interest because one of the cornerstones of women's oppression is the suppression of their sexuality. True emancipation requires the celebration of women's right to do whatever they want with their bodies—which includes their right to appear in pornography, strip, and sell sex.

Notably, these arguments about pornography have largely taken place between women.

Until recently, men who have a public voice about pornography tended to fall into one of two categories: conservative Christians or pro-porn enthusiasts.² In the former category are men like the Reverend Jerry Falwell and Dr. James Dobson, who publicly chastise the purveyors of "obscenity" and "filth," and who also oppose women's reproductive freedom, readily available contraception for young people, and school-based sex education. In the latter category are libertarians like Howard Stern who talk endlessly about how much they love porn, along with men in the porn industry itself who write and speak about its positive effects and savagely attack its right-wing and feminist critics.

But as a growing number of men enter the sexual violence prevention field, a new men's conversation about pornography is beginning to take shape.³ These men frequently bring an "insider" perspective on the role of pornography in the lives of boys and men. They do not have to debate in the abstract about whether they think the pornography industry is harmful to women. For many of them, the answer flows out of their lived experience and observations of the men around them. There are no formal studies on this topic, but my sense is that a sizable majority of men who have worked in college and community-based anti-rape organizations over the past fifteen or twenty years share the anti-porn feminist view that pornography contributes to the problem of sexual violence, and at the very least desensitizes men to women's sexual subordination. There is by no means unanimity of opinion among these men about what can be done to counteract the popularity and influence of the porn industry in boys' and men's lives. And there are ongoing debates on college campuses and email Listservs about whether all pornography is objectification, and hence bad, or whether the real problem is the misogynistic vision of women's sexuality and men's power that the multi-billion dollar porn industry has sold to the public as normal and even liberating. (Note: There are competing definitions of pornography. But to simplify matters, consider the definition Gail Dines uses in her work. Pornography, she says, consists of those materials that are produced by the multi-billion dollar pornography industry. "The industry knows exactly what it is producing," she says.)

It is also important to note that the vast majority of men in the rape prevention world who are critical of the pornography industry do not object because they think public displays of sex are obscene, but because of the harm inflicted on women and children by sexist displays of women's and men's sexuality. In fact, I would bet that most of these men would celebrate uninhibited expressions of women's sexuality. Their opposition to pornography stems from their belief that most of the magazines and videos produced by the pornography industry

actually *limit* women's sexual freedom, while setting women up to be sexually victimized by men. The problem is not only that a high percentage of women in porn are sexual abuse survivors, some of whom were coerced into the business when they were troubled or naïve teenagers by predatory pimps and other abusive older men. It is not only the reduction of women to what University of Texas journalism professor Robert Jensen, writing in the *Sexual-Assault Report*, painfully describes as "three holes and two hands."⁴ It is the way the pornography industry helps to define heterosexual *men's* sexuality. Every time a video portrays a scene where a woman asks to be penetrated by a succession of men who ejaculate all over her face as they contemptuously call her a "cum-guzzling whore," it also portrays men getting pleasure from the sight of that "cum-guzzling whore" getting what she wants, and deserves. It normalizes the men's pleasure-taking as it sexualizes the woman's degradation. The idea that consumers of porn can masturbate and have orgasms to that kind of treatment of women and not have it affect their attitudes toward the women and girls in their lives is more a fantasy than anything the most creative porn writers can conjure up.

Mainstream pornography has changed a lot in the past couple of decades. People of a certain age who still associate heterosexual porn with "girlie magazines" and air-brushed photos of big-breasted women shot in soft light on luxurious beds with big pillows would be shocked by the brutality, outright contempt for women, and racism that is common in today's product. One need not search out the extremist fringe of porn culture to find this. A simple Google search will suffice to see some of the "adult" titles readily available: *A Cum-Sucking Whore Named Francesca*, *Rectal Reamers*, *Brianna Banks aka Filthy Whore #1*, *Love Hurts*, and *Ride 'em and Wreck 'em*. There are thousands of porn videos that sexualize some of the most racist caricatures of women and men of color, with titles like *Big Black Beast*, *Slaves on Loan*, *Asian Fuck Sluts*,

and *Three Black Dicks and a Spanish Chick*. The Web is full of porn sites that advertise not just "sex," but the sexual degradation of women. One such site is called *Violated Teens: Cum in and use them*, which boasts of "Teens forced to fuck, exploited for hard cash; we do what we want to them and they have to love it." Consider one of the most popular porn sites on the Internet, called BangBus. Since its debut in 2001, this site has pioneered what has been called "reality porn," a new genre of "humilitainment" that features what Shauna Swartz in *Bitch* magazine calls "some of the most violent and degrading porno scenes to hit the mainstream." BangBus consists of a couple of average guys who drive around southern Florida in a van, "in search of every girl's inner slut." What they are looking for—the viewer is led to believe—are young women who will agree to go for a ride with them on the promise that they will be paid a few hundred dollars to do something sexual on camera. The videotape documents the initial pick-up on the side of the road, followed by a brief conversation inside the moving van, where the men convince the seemingly naïve woman to take off her clothes. As the handheld camera rolls, the woman has vaginal or anal sex with one of the guys, or she performs oral sex on him. He then withdraws and ejaculates on her face, as the narrator with the camera shrieks in delight. Then after the sex act, the men figure out some way to get the woman out of the van, in one instance to let her pee, in another so she can wash off in a lake. Once she is outside, they hit the gas and race away without paying her. The men laugh and congratulate each other on another successful "drop off," as the young woman's face registers disbelief and then shame as she realizes she has been duped and literally kicked to the curb. The success of this site—which in recent years has drawn huge crowds at the porn industry's major convention in Las Vegas—has predictably spawned a series of imitators, including a site called Trunked, which boasts, "It's simple. Throw the bitch in the trunk. If she doesn't like it, she can get out. Oh yeah. We're goin' 55 mph."

The word "pornography" translates from Greek to mean "writing about prostitutes," and there is no doubt that just as women's bodies are the center of attention in heterosexual pornography, most of the people who have written about pornography as a cultural phenomenon have written about how it affects women's lives. This is understandable and appropriate, because it is primarily the bodies of women and girls that pornography producers use and abuse for profit. But if our goal is to dramatically reduce the incidence of sexual violence, we must turn our attention to the demand side of the pornography question and begin to look critically at the role of pornography in the lives of boys and men.

. . . [T]he concept of rape culture . . . starts with the premise that sexual violence is common in our society not because there are so many sick men, but because we socialize *normal* boys to be sexually dominant and *normal* girls to be sexually subordinate. The pornography industry is clearly a key area in the culture where "normal" boys learn to objectify and dehumanize girls and women. For example, Diane Rosenfeld, who teaches gender violence at Harvard Law School, says that her students worry about whether the male judge who watched a porn movie last night is taking her seriously at all.

But sexual objectification notwithstanding, Robert Jensen has written that people are mistaken in assuming that pornography is such a difficult and divisive issue because it is about sex. On the contrary, Jensen maintains that our culture struggles unsuccessfully with pornography because it is really about men's cruelty to women, and the pleasure men sometimes take in that cruelty. Like many women in the anti-rape movement who have studied pornography, Jensen has spent thousands of hours coding and analyzing the content of mainstream porn videos and magazines. His research focuses on men's use of pornography, and how that might shape their attitudes toward women or their own sexuality. In his prolific popular writings on the subject, he cites numerous examples as evidence, realizing that people who are not familiar with contemporary heterosexual porn—especially women—can

be skeptical about feminist claims that porn is less about naked bodies and "sex," and more about the eroticization of men's dominance and control of women. The following extended quotation is from an article by Jensen that was published in 2004 in the *Sexual-Assault Report*.

One of the ten scenes in the film *Gag Factor #10*, a 2002 release from J. M. Productions, begins with a woman and man having a picnic in a park. He jokes about wanting to use the romantic moment to make love to her mouth, and then stands and thrusts into her mouth while she sits on the blanket. Two other men who walk by join in. Saying things such as "Pump that face, pump that fucking face," "All the way down, choke, choke," and "That's real face fucking," they hold her head and push harder. One man grabs her hair and pulls her head into his penis in what his friend calls "the jackhammer." At this point she is grimacing and seems in pain. She then lies on the ground, and the men approach her from behind. "Eat that whole fucking dick. . . . You little whore, you like getting hurt," one says, as her face is covered with saliva. "Do you like getting your face fucked?" one asks. She can't answer. "Open your mouth if you like it," he says, and she opens her mouth. After they all ejaculate into her mouth, the semen flows out onto her body. After the final ejaculation, she reaches quickly for the wine glass, takes a large drink, and looks up at her boyfriend and says, "God, I love you baby." Her smile fades to a pained look of shame and despair.

Jensen recounts several similar scenes from a variety of bestselling porn videos, and then concludes that because the vast majority of people who rent or buy these sorts of videos are men, "we have to ask why some men find the infliction of pain on women during sexual activity either (1) Not an obstacle to their ability to achieve sexual pleasure, or (2) A factor that can enhance their sexual pleasure." The optimistic way to read the contemporary market demand for cruelty in pornography is that men and boys have been so desensitized to women's suffering that they are not bothered by the cruelty. This is a frightening development by itself, with serious

implications for the present and future of relations between the sexes. If present trends continue, heterosexual sex—at least that which is represented as such in the commercial sex industry—would seem to be growing increasingly impersonal, and men's pleasure increasingly linked to displays of masculine power and dominance. In other words, transforming the rape culture could become even more of a difficult challenge than it is at present.

The more pessimistic assessment is that some men's sexual pleasure is actually enhanced by the mistreatment and degradation of women. Sadly, there is a wealth of documentary evidence which suggests that the producers of porn are quite conscious in their attempt to provide men with an outlet for their anger and feelings of sexual aggression. Consider the words of Max Hardcore, a popular porn director and actor whose name calls up over one million hits on Google. In an interview with *Hustler* magazine that is recounted by Robert Jensen and Gail Dines in their book *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*, Hardcore said, "There's nothing I love more than when a girl insists to me that she won't take a cock in her ass, because—oh yes she will!"⁵ He described his trademark as being able to "stretch a girl's asshole apart wide enough to stick a flashlight in it," and went on to say that he doesn't hate all women, just "stuck-up bitches." The porn performer Amanda McGuire told this story about him in *Icon* magazine: "He has made girls cry and lots of girls puke—that's not unusual. I was there once when he throat-fucked a girl so hard she puked and started bawling." Hardcore, whose work has been referred to by porn reviewers as "pseudo-pedophilia" because of how he dresses up his "actresses" to look like young girls, explained the challenges he faces making his films. "It's pretty easy to get a slut to spread solo for the camera," he said. "And quite a different matter to get her to take it up the ass and puke up piss."

In spite of these sorts of statements by men in the industry, its defenders—including women such as the "thinking man's porn star" Nina Hartley—downplay or even deny that porn culture is saturated

with misogyny and sexism.⁶ They point to the small percentage of porn written and produced by women, or they emphasize the growing popularity of "couples porn," which is typically less misogynistic and abusive than the majority of products that are aimed at the predominantly male market. However, veteran porn director and actor Bill Margold comes right out and admits what he and so many other pornographers are trying to do:

I'd like to really show what I believe the men want to see: violence against women. I firmly believe that we serve a purpose by showing that. The most violent we can get is the cum shot in the face. Men get off behind that, because they can get even with the women they can't have. We try to inundate the world with orgasms in the face.

Examples like this of the sort of open misogyny and woman-hatred that comes out of the mainstream pornography industry still have the potential to shock young women, because due to the segmentation of the porn market, many of them have never been exposed to it. Dines says that her women students who think they know what's out there in porn are often devastated to learn what their boyfriends consider "normal." This is because the guys are more likely to use the "gonzo" porn referenced above to masturbate by themselves—with effects on their sexuality that we have not yet even begun to understand.

[. . .]

Girls and women suffer the most harm from a culture awash in misogynist pornography, but boys and men are hurt, too. It is important to discuss this hurt both for pragmatic reasons, and out of genuine concern for these boys and men. In order to stem the tide of cruelty, callousness, and brutality toward girls and women that is now mainstream fare from the porn industry, men and boys in sufficient numbers will need to make the decision to stop paying for porn magazines, videos, and Internet porn sites. Some men will be motivated to give up their porn

habits as they develop a greater sensitivity to the damage that eroticized cruelty does to girls and women—inside and outside the porn industry. But altruistic concern for harm done to women cannot motivate anywhere near as many men and boys as enlightened self-interest. In other words, if they can be shown that porn hinders rather than facilitates a healthy sex life for *men*, there is at least a chance that enough men will reject it to truly make a difference. But unless heterosexual men perceive that

they have a personal stake in a sexual culture that is not dominated by the cartoonish version of sexual fulfillment created by middle-aged businessmen in windowless studios in the San Fernando Valley outside Los Angeles, it is hard to see how the current trend toward greater acceptance of sexualized brutality will be reversed in coming generations.

[. . .]

NOTES

1. "Men make, distribute, and get rich on porn." From personal conversation with Gail Dines.
2. *Until recently, men who have a public voice about pornography*: One notable and powerful exception to this is John Stoltenberg's 1989 collection of essays *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice*. Another thoughtful contribution to men's writing about pornography—pro and con—is Michal Kimmel's 1990 book *Men Confront Pornography*, a groundbreaking and highly readable collection of essays from men about various ways that pornography functions in men's lives.
3. *A new men's conversation about pornography is beginning to take shape*: Feminists who criticize the pornography industry are often characterized by "pro-porn feminists" as "pruders" and "Victorian moralists" who do not like the sexual or erotic choices some women make and hence seek to couch their discomfort in language about women's exploitation. Anti-porn feminists are also often accused of being anti-male, or of caricaturing heterosexual men's sexuality. As a heterosexual man who takes—in this book and elsewhere—a strong stance against the pornography industry for its misogyny and contribution to rape culture, I want to make it clear that I preemptively reject any attempt to characterize me as prudish or moralizing. Since my years in college when I led student opposition to the New Right and groups

- such as the Moral Majority, organized banned book displays, distributed contraceptive information to women and men, and participated in a pioneering peer sexuality education program at the University of Massachusetts, I have fought for women's sexual and reproductive freedom and will continue to do so for the rest of my life. Criticism of the pornography industry is NOT criticism of women's fundamental right to sexual expression, nor is it inherently anti-male. In fact, as I have argued in this book, in spite of some people's efforts to produce "nonviolent, non-exploitative, non-sexist" erotic porn, I believe the pornography industry as a whole over the past generation has done incalculable damage to both women's and men's sexuality.
4. *Robert Jensen . . . painfully describes as "three holes and two hands"*: See Jensen, 2004.
 5. "There's nothing I love more than when a girl insists to me": From Dines, Jensen, and Russo, p. 81.
 6. *Its defenders—including women such as the "thinking man's porn star" Nina Hartley*: For a fascinating left/feminist response to Nina Hartley's defense of pornography that links opposition to the porn industry's exploitation of women (and men) to other forms of class exploitation, see Stan Goff's piece, entitled "The Porn Debate: Wrapping Profit in the Flag," available at: www.notforsalebook.org/Articles/Goff_Hartley.html