



**THE CULTURE
CHANGE STARTER
PACK**

**FOR FEMALE
SAFETY AND
EQUITY**

Created by

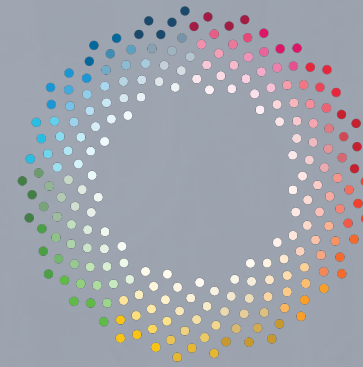
THE
Social
good
CLUB

The Social Good Club is a community of Creators working directly with Experts in equity, sustainability, and mental health to create content and campaigns that inspire audiences into action.

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Spotlight
Initiative

*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*

and

The Spotlight Initiative is a global partnership between the European Union and United Nations, focused on ending violence against women and girls.

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TL;DR

The stories we watch and consume shape our beliefs and worldview.

The beliefs we hold and share shape our culture and the way we show up in society. Stories are created by humans.

And those humans are where we begin to shape change.

So, we're asking anyone who shapes culture (content creators, influencers, artists, and more) to join us in this ongoing mission to create a culture where women and girls are safe and can thrive. We created a guide to get us started.

What we have laid out here is the **groundwork** for a journey of **cultural change**, starting with **personal transformation**. We are starting a movement from the **inside, out**.

So, are you with us?

THE ROADMAP

TRANSFORM YOURSELF TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

- This guide will introduce you to a practice of **ongoing self-learning, reflection and personal change in action.**
- You will explore in this starter pack what we call **CYCLES OF TRANSFORMATION**, guidance through internal changes that will naturally shift how you **view and show** up in the world around you.
- Consider this exercise of personal inquiry a **first** step in deep, impactful action. You may not see the clear results of this shift in front of you, but as a cultural figure, you set the standard for everyone who interacts with your content.
- **Even this first step can lead to change.**

SEE IT

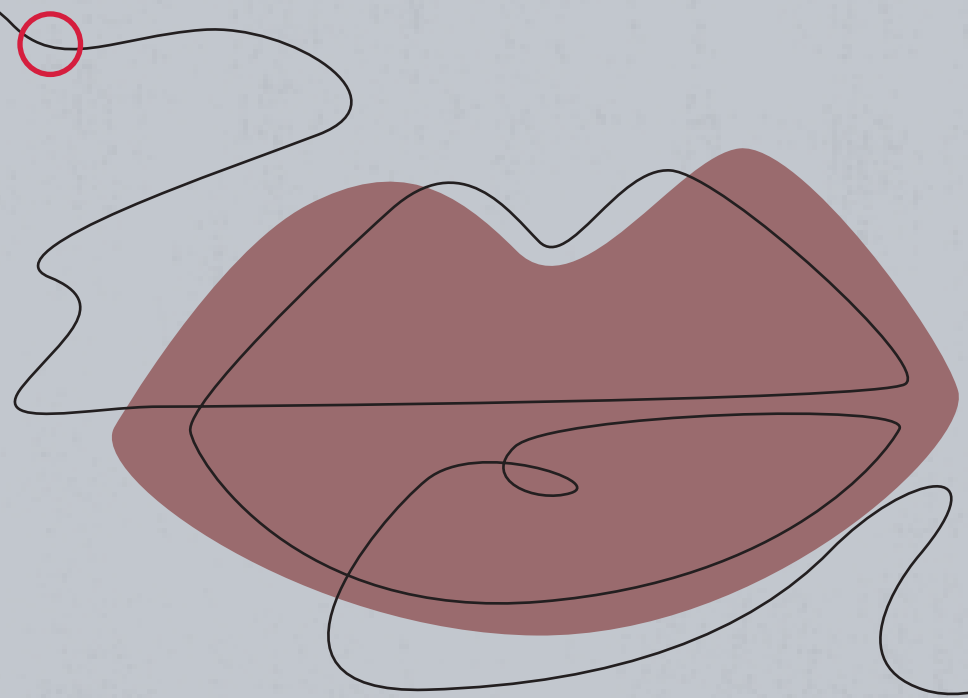
Awaken to a new level of awareness around these issues, and particularly, the “invisible” fabric of oppression that disguises itself in our language, storytelling, culture, and so much more.

OWN IT

Reflect and understand how you (yes, you!) fit into this fabric, and what your role is in changing it.

ACT ON IT

Learn how to put this new awareness into action to shape a culture of belonging, safety and liberation.



This guide will explore these cycles in the areas of...

Language

Storytelling

Culture

This cycle can be utilized for any element of culture we are hoping to shape for the better.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

- This guide is a **start**, and is **inherently incomplete**. This process is ever-evolving for both the readers and writers.
- This process can get heavy and can feel exhausting at times. As you move through this, make some room for self care, lightness, joy, whatever makes this sustainable for you.
- Always remember: The feelings of heaviness that may emerge pale in comparison to the gratification that comes with shaping our world for the better. With every step you make here, **you can alter the course of someone else's life**.
- Pay special attention to the areas you don't connect to, and the places where you feel like "I already know this." **This is a practice of reconnecting to our humanity**.

TRIGGER WARNING

This guide contains references to violence against women and girls. If you have experienced violence of some kind in the past, some of this information might be triggering. At the end of this guide, there are some resources to use if you need support.



WE EXIST IN A GLOBAL ECOSYSTEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

AT LEAST 1 IN 3 WOMEN WORLDWIDE HAVE EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE. And that number could be much higher.

An adolescent girl dies as a result of violence every 10 minutes - roughly the time it will take you to read this guide.

Violence against all female-identifying people is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in our world. And this violence affects marginalized women of all kinds in disproportionate ways. But, too often, we silently accept that this problem has always and will always persist.

“But my community is a safe space for women. I have lots of empowered women in my life. I have never inflicted or experienced this sort of violence...”

If any of these thoughts just popped into your head, this guide is for you.

The truth is, we exist in an entire *ecosystem* of oppression and subversion of women. (If you're a cisgender man, just ask any woman in your life.) Everything from extreme violence against women to the everyday sexism that we may not even notice, is tied to the same root cause: **gender inequality, and oppression of all female-identifying people.**

This ecosystem works as a whole (in plain sight and in many disguises) to normalize and justify all forms of violence.

Whether or not you see it, you're a part of it. This system thrives on **dehumanizing all of us**, by keeping us at a “healthy distance” from the issues. That shows up in the biases that we've inherited, and the norms that we don't even realize oppress women. Those same biases especially impact upon women of color, indigenous women, and those living in poverty.

And you're not just reading this as an individual. You are speaking to and representing a massive group of people who are attached to what you do, say, and create online.

“Well, that's overwhelming!” It really is, but we can do something about it. Stay with us...

Culture is one of the key pieces in reinforcing and perpetuating violence against all female-identifying people. The whole spectrum, from subliminal messaging to overt misogyny, leads to real harm. This may feel too big to conquer, but it also means there is an **opportunity to intervene** at any place on that spectrum.

Storytelling and content shapes culture, full stop. So, as content creators, we are actually shapers of culture.

This guide is for creators of all kinds to **step into true influence** and start learning **how to shape a culture where female-identifying and non-binary people aren't harmed, and can really flourish.**

A NOTE ON WHO WE DEFINE AS “WOMEN AND GIRLS”

- **Female-identifying** = Anyone who identifies as female, regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth. That includes women who are cisgender (someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth) and transgender (someone whose gender differs from the sex they were assigned at birth).
- **Queer femme** = Queer people who present femininely, although they may not identify as women.
- **Why is this important to clarify?** **Anyone** who presents female or feminine is subject to disproportionate oppression, dehumanization, and violence based on their gender identity.

Let's start with the basics. What is this ecosystem of violence? What are we working to change?

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, 101

CONSIDER UNDERSTANDING THIS AS STEP ZERO. THESE CONCEPTS ARE NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN SHAPE CHANGE. TAKE A DEEP BREATH, READ PRESENTLY and PATIENTLY. YOU MAY OR MAY NOT IDENTIFY WITH THESE TERMS, BUT YOU DO PLAY A ROLE IN THEM.

THE DEFINITIONS OF VAWG

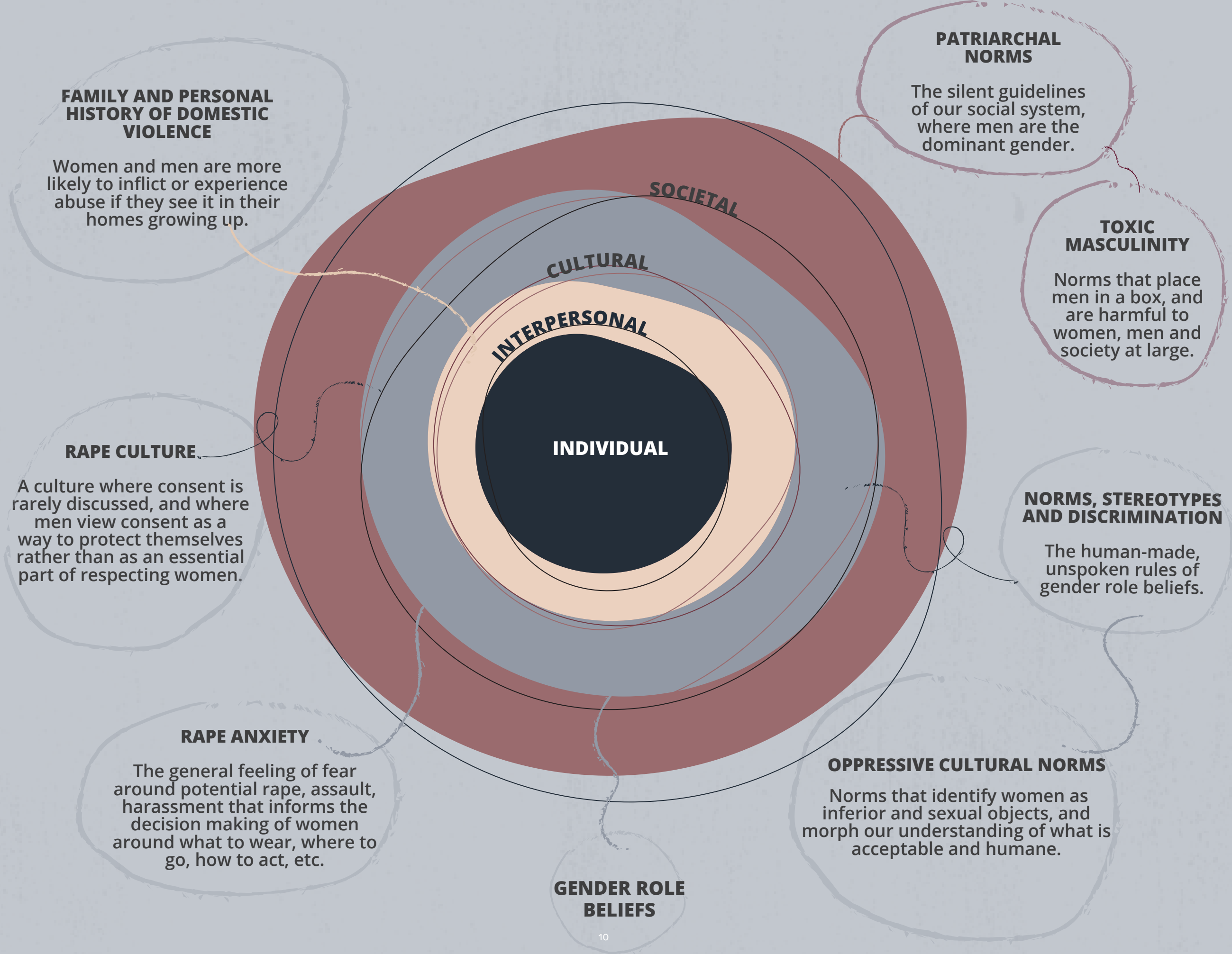
THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEFINES

violence against women and girls (VAWG) as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” This includes, amongst other forms of violence...

- INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
- SEXUAL VIOLENCE
- HUMAN TRAFFICKING
- FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
- CHILD MARRIAGE

**For further explanation, please refer to our glossary of terms*

BUT VIOLENCE ISN'T JUST PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL. IT'S REALLY ABOUT CONTROL AND DOMINANCE. This wide spectrum of violence includes intimidation; coercion; verbal, psychological and emotional abuse; manipulation; financial abuse; workplace harassment; bullying and even male privilege. At the root of this whole ecosystem is the same thing: the dehumanization of women.



INDIVIDUAL

INTERPERSONAL

CULTURAL

SOCIETAL

INTERSECTIONALITY

Gender inequality doesn't affect all women equally.

- It's crucial to consider **where gender intersects with other inequalities and oppressions** due to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, indigenous identity, immigration status and disabilities. Some women **face far greater inequalities** than others.
- For example, the movement to challenge sexism was largely created around white women, and the movement to challenge racism was largely created around black men, so **black women in particular are excluded at this key intersection.**
- **It's crucial for us to incorporate all of these layers into how we address this issue for women of different backgrounds and life circumstances.**

COVID-19 SHADOW PANDEMIC

COVID-19 doesn't affect all genders equally.

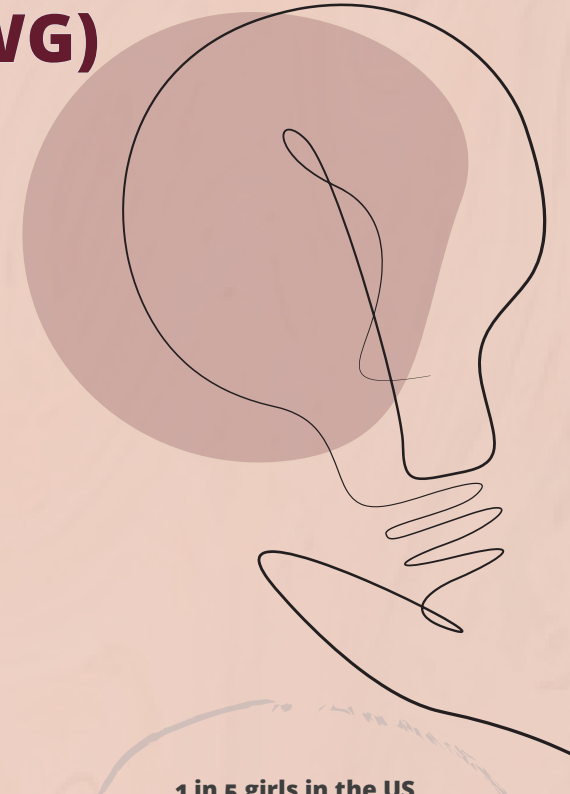
- Over half of the world has been in lockdown or quarantine in 2020, and the **rate of domestic abuse is skyrocketing.** In some countries, reported cases have doubled. And that's not the whole picture. **COVID-19 is also making pre-existing inequalities worse:**
- **Heightened pressure** around finances, health and security amongst both men and women, leads women to be **more vulnerable to instability and violence** at home (not to mention in lockdown).
- **Women make up 70% of the global healthcare workforce** - this includes frontline workers such as nurses, midwives and community health workers. They also make up the majority of service facility staff such as cleaners, laundry workers and caterers. And most recently affected: teachers.
- Beyond parenting, it is estimated that over **740 million women globally work in the 'informal economy'** (jobs that are not regulated or protected by the state, even though they often pay various fees, taxes and are usually part of global chains of production and distribution). Jobs include self-employed enterprises, nannies, housekeepers, manicurists, etc. This figure is rising and is seen predominantly within poorer communities.

(forced lockdown + pre-existing abuse + shutdown of usual support services = the perfect storm)



NOW BACK TO THAT MISLEADING 1 IN 3 NUMBER. WE KNOW THAT'S JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG, SO HERE IS A BIGGER PICTURE.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)



IS SEVERELY UNDERREPORTED. So, we really don't know how many women experience violence. Right now, the best number we have is **1 in 3**, but even the World Health Organization who reported the statistic warns that **the true number could be far higher.** The fact is, this is a global average that can't account for entire countries and cultures, where reporting violence is highly **stigmatized**, or where violence is even considered a **rite of passage.**

IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. Every human being has the right to life, liberty and security (in the least). Not only does violence threaten the livelihood and liberty of millions of women and girls worldwide, the threat of violence keeps them from being able to live their lives to the fullest on a daily basis.

IS A MEN'S ISSUE, TOO. The majority of violence against women is committed by men. The majority of violence against men is also committed by men. There's a trend here. And when it comes to the more subtle elements of culture that support this trend, men are needed as allies in the work of dismantling rape culture, toxic masculinity and patriarchal norms that oppress women.

Every 10 minutes, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence, usually at the hands of people closest to her: caregivers, intimate partners and peers.

1 in 5 girls in the US report that by the age of 17, they have been victims of a sexual assault or abuse at the hands of another adolescent.

Women usually know their rapists. In the US, 8 in 10 women are attacked by someone they know.

1 in 2 women killed worldwide in 2017 was killed by her partner or a family member.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

1 in 5 female undergraduate university students reported having experienced sexual assault or sexual misconduct in the context of an educational institution in a survey across 27 universities in the United States in 2015.

IS A SCHOOL PROBLEM. Sexual assault and misconduct is a massive and massively underreported issue on college campuses in the United States. Cases are likely underreported due to the prevalence of rape culture on campus, which trivializes and normalizes assault. There have been several cases where universities were shown to have prevented legal action and reporting around assault.

Rates of reporting to campus officials, law enforcement or others ranged from 5% to 28%, depending on the specific type of behavior.

HAS LONG-LASTING IMPACTS. Women who've experienced physical or sexual violence report higher rates of immediate to long-term mental and physical health issues compared to women who haven't. And the effects of violence go beyond the victims or survivors, impacting their families, communities, and countries at large.

Intimate partner violence costs the US more than \$5 billion every year. This total could increase the Environmental Protection Agency budget by nearly 60%, or nearly double the 2020 budget of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The COST of violence: In the US it is estimated that intimate partner violence costs \$14.4 million per day, impacting public budgets and local/national services, which disproportionately affects those who need these services most.

IS CONNECTED TO SO MANY OTHER ISSUES. Violence against women is linked to poverty and hunger, health issues, educational barriers and financial instability. On a collective level, it affects climate change, financial mobility for all people, the safety of public spaces, and oppressive consumeristic trends.

AFFECTS WOMEN IN PUBLIC ROLES, OFFICE, OR ELECTIONS. Here is a direct example of how culture, society and policy connect. Not only do women face a barrage of online abuse when campaigning for public office, they're more likely to be subjected to psychological violence of some form while holding office. Both of these barriers limit women and their political power, which also limits the possibility of policies that genuinely support all types of female-identifying people.

A study conducted by the Inter-parliamentary Union in 39 countries found that 82% of women parliamentarians reported having experienced psychological violence in some form (remarks, gestures, threats, character assassination, denial of salary). 65% had been subjected to sexist remarks, primarily by male colleagues in parliament and from opposing parties as well as their own. Research carried out by The International Women's Media Foundation and Troll Busters found that in 2018, nearly 2 in every 3 female journalists surveyed said they have experienced online harassment.

THE CYCLES OF TRANSFORMATION

CULTURE

STORYTELLING

LANGUAGE

*Transform yourself to
change culture!*



1. LANGUAGE

(verbal and non-verbal) Language is so essential. It is the building blocks of our biases, social norms, and silent acceptance of violence against women, femme people and girls. ***These thousands of tiny soundbites have the power to create - and destroy - assumptions.***

How can we change how we see and use language?

STEP #1

SEE IT

Consider how language impacts stereotypes, discrimination, attitudes, and actions.

STEREOTYPES ARE EVERYWHERE:

Stereotypes of women add layers of baggage and assumptions to their identity, which can contribute to harassment and violence.

Stereotypes establish women as inferior in subtle, nearly invisible ways. A UK study highlighted that 4 in 5 experts cited in online news are male. This collective choice to cite mostly male expertise reveals a stereotype that female expertise is less trustworthy.

Stereotypes strip away people's complex individualism, and pin the negative impacts of patriarchal norms on women themselves, as opposed to the system as a whole.

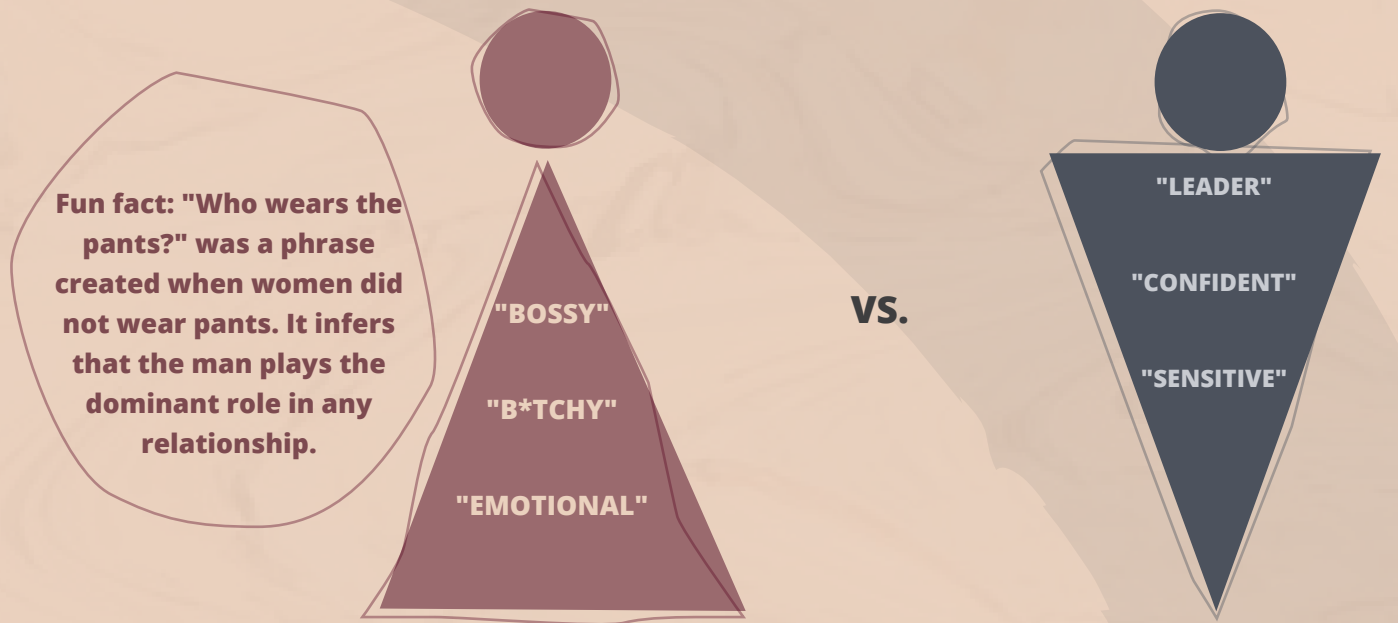
Just because a stereotype is positive, doesn't mean it's not a stereotype! See the above note on stripping away people's individuality.

Stereotypes are particularly dehumanizing for Black women, women of color, and queer women. This is a poignant example of intersectional oppressions.

MALE-DOMINANT LANGUAGE IS EVERYWHERE

How do you usually address a group of people? "Hey ___?" "Guys" is the **go-to** term, regardless of gender. **We often** refer to the human species as "mankind" and put the word "female" in front of many professions. Think about the commonly used phrases "grow a pair" and "stop being such a pussy" side by side. The juxtaposition speaks for itself.

- Male dominance defines the world we live in where men are silently and subtly considered the dominant gender.
- Male dominance manifests in so many areas of language, including the automatic use of "**men and women**" as opposed to "**women and men**," and reinforces traditional roles i.e. "**man and WIFE**," "**man of the house**" and "**wearing the pants**" in the relationship.
- Male dominance is what justifies the more extreme manifestations of dominance over women, including physical and sexual violence. And it starts with our words.



MICROAGGRESSIONS, THEY ADD UP! Seemingly tiny remarks and assumptions can act as indirect or unintentional discriminations that accumulate to make women feel invisible or inferior in some way. Microaggressions can manifest in so many ways: seemingly "**harmless**" jokes and remarks, telling women to "**stop being so sensitive**," asking women if they're **on their period**, asking women to prove their qualifications way more than men.

VIOLENT LANGUAGE GOES BEYOND WORDS:

Dominance can come through in many forms of communication, including body language, choice of imagery, even silence.

- Researchers at Wesleyan University found that on average, across 58 different magazines, 51.8% of advertisements that featured women portrayed them as sex objects. When women appeared in advertisements in men's magazines, they were objectified 76% of the time.
- This subliminal messaging can take root when we're not noticing, and inform our belief systems as much as verbal cues.
- **A note on body image (which deserves its own playbook):** Advertisements are just a tiny microcosm of how the media reinforces our perception of female bodies. This unrealistic and oversexualized "norm" fuels dehumanization and lowers the self esteem of women, impacting their ability to be present and thrive.
 - * The 2016 Dove Global Beauty and Confidence Report found that 7 in 10 women and 6 in 10 girls believe the media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty that most women can't achieve.
 - * Research found that looking at magazines for just 60 minutes lowers self-esteem in over 80% of girls.

Simple questions to spot language that reinforces biases and oppressive norms:

- *Do the words you're using feel awkward when you use them to describe a man? (Hint: You would never say "career man.") If they do, the statement is likely generalizing or dominance-reinforcing.*
- *Does the language you're using degrade or commodify women and girls? (i.e. A man placing unsolicited judgments on a woman's social media post implies that she is on the platform for his pleasure).*
- *Does the language you're using involve an assumption about a person based on their gender, race, ethnicity or another part of their identity?*
- *TIP: If you're unsure, google the term to understand where it came from!*

EXAMPLE: The term "simp" has become a popular way to describe young men being emotionally connected to and kind towards a young woman. But, it's meant to be a knock on men. Being sweet to a person you hold affection for should be a virtue, no matter your gender.

COMMIT to seeing the assumptions and baggage of the language you use, and how it affects women, femme and gender non-conforming people.

OWN IT

STEP #2

Explore how your (yes, your!) language translates into a global issue, and can translate into global change.

Explore these questions...

"BOYS WILL BE BOYS" directly reinforces rape culture in that it lets men off the hook for inappropriate or violent behavior.

"Am I using the word GIRL when I should be using WOMAN?" Girls are children, and calling a woman "girl" subtly speaks down to her.

AM I GENERALIZING WHEN I SHOULD BE INDIVIDUALIZING? Ditch the idea that all women should be like 'x,' watching 'x' type of programs, working in 'x' type of industries.

WHAT'S MY LANGUAGE LIKE? Consider using gender-neutral words such as **'humanity'** instead of **'mankind'**. Consider the use of pronouns to alter gender-bias; for example, 'a director in Detroit earns less than **they** would in LA' instead of 'a director in Detroit earns less than **he** would in LA'. Be conscious of the subtle nature of language that narrowly defines manhood in terms of violence, sex, status and dominance towards women. **There is no such excuse as 'boys will be boys'.**

WHAT WAYS CAN MY BODY LANGUAGE CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS? Am I aware of how I'm sharing physical space with someone female-identifying, how I acknowledge their appearance, and the subtle ways I may be inciting fear or defensiveness? (**Normalize asking permission!**)

HOW CAN I CONTINUE EXPANDING MY AWARENESS? Hint: Seek out insights from people who may be affected by the limitations imposed by language! Consciously listen to their experiences, ask honest questions, and invite people to challenge your viewpoints with curiosity and willingness to engage.

Some sample questions for women or people who may be on the receiving end of varying oppression

- Are there ways society has made you feel less valued than a man?
- Are there ways you see this in your life that I may not be seeing?
- How does it make you feel when _____ ?

COMMIT to exploring how you reinforce oppressive language in your daily life by asking yourself these questions, and consciously "unlearning" day by day.

A NOTE ON ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE SURVIVED ABUSE:

A crucial layer to this process is engaging meaningfully with people who have experienced abuse of all forms, to **humanize this issue**. Here are some helpful ways to approach:

- **"Would you feel comfortable sharing about your experience? I totally understand if not!"** Always. Ask. permission! Many of the women in our lives have experienced some form of violence, whether more extreme or more subtle. These are intimate and sometimes traumatic experiences. It's important to approach these conversations with deep care and understanding for your fellow human's bandwidth.
- **Listen deeply.** This type of space holding can be rare even today, as **rape culture** also stigmatizes talking about assault and abuse. If someone is willing to share, be willing to just be with them and listen. **If you don't know how to respond, straight up ask!**
- **What is the appropriate terminology for women affected by violence?** Some people identify as a victim, while others prefer the term survivor. The best way to be respectful is to ask for their preference.

STOP: BEFORE YOU PROCEED, READ BACK THROUGH THIS SECTION. NOTICE WHICH POINTS OR EXAMPLES STUCK WITH YOU, IF YOU SAW YOURSELF IN ANY OF THE STATISTICS, OR IF YOU DID NOT HAVE A CONNECTION TO ANY OF IT. RECONNECT TO YOURSELF AND YOUR HUMANITY.

ACT ON IT

Actively effect change and become part of the solution through your language and behavior.

STEP #3

CONTINUOUSLY REFLECT ON YOUR TERMINOLOGY and HABITS. When creating content, ask yourself "Does this language/behavior contribute to biases and norms that reinforce violence against women and girls?" **Shape positive change by using your platform to normalize language that doesn't reinforce male dominance over women.**

- "New normal" language and stories that actively break norms and stereotypes can build solidarity and progress. It doesn't take long, and can have implications way beyond content.

INVITE IN CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE FROM YOUR COMMUNITY. Practice active and compassionate listening to female-identifying people. Ask how your language makes them feel, if they have any criticism or feedback, and be willing to embrace their response!

PRACTICE EMBRACING YOUR OWN CONTRADICTIONS. No one is perfect, and a culture of perfection can also encourage silence and dishonesty. Owning mistakes and daring to be vulnerable with any learning opportunities sets a new standard on how we talk about this issue, and opens up possibilities for the people around us.

NOTICE and EMBRACE THE PROGRESS and SOLUTIONS YOU SEE IN YOURSELF and OTHERS. Identifying positive behaviors and solutions fosters solidarity. A community that supports one another for personal and global change is also a community that embodies honest conversation. Language is a form of modeling and leadership.

COMMIT to a constant practice of intentional language, by unlearning limiting/oppressive language and learning expansive, liberating language for women and girls.

Once you know better, do better!

Tell your friends, family, colleagues: "I'm trying to work on being a better ally with women. Can you let me know if and when any of my language feels problematic?"



2. STORYTELLING

(communication) Stories use language to shape worldviews and social norms. They are the way humans relate to one another. They are the most **powerful reflection of culture**, and have the **power to change the reality of culture**.

How does storytelling inform our culture, and how can we harness the power of storytelling for progress?



STEP #1

SEE IT

Consider the realities you are creating through the stories you hear and tell.

THERE IS A CONTINUAL STORY BEING TOLD INSIDE ALL OF OUR HEADS: Humans translate everything through storytelling, with roles, plot twists, lead characters, and extras. And these stories in our head are the lenses through which we view the world around us.

- Even harmless questions like “what do you do for a living?” or “where do you live?” are full of assumptions - we’ve already created half a story in our heads before asking.
- These stories also create *blindspots*. Things we subconsciously ignore in the world around us.

THE STORIES INSIDE US DISTORT WHAT WE SEE AROUND US, AND VICE VERSA: The stories we choose to focus on or ignore are based on these inner monologues. And online, the stories we choose to see, share or silence, are what feed back to our inner stories.

- For example, if we only perceive men as powerful thought leaders, and women as beautiful bodies, our instagram feeds will appear that way, based on preference. And those feeds will constantly confirm that belief system.

STORIES NORMALIZE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN and GIRLS: This inner-outer feedback applies to how we see women. How women are presented in stories affects our beliefs about them in our heads, and vice versa.

- If someone with very **limited** views on women creates a story with female characters, those characters will likely be more generalized, within the box of their experiences and views.
- The more we take in characters who are generalized, with limited dimensions, devoid of true complex individuality, the more we reinforce limiting norms of women and girls.
- Regardless of whether these portrayals are positive or negative, if they put most or all women in a box, they are holding us back from seeing each **woman, man, and genderqueer** person as the *individual* they are.

STORIES CAN NORMALIZE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: Storytelling (particularly in content or online) around violence against women and girls tends to desensitize us to the global issue.

- We all know the classic story: Boy chases girl, girl plays hard to get, boy persists, girl gets worn down, boy wins girl. While this story seems harmless, it subtly reinforces the norm that relationships start by men deciding they want a particular woman, and persistently “courting” her until she gives in. **Through these stories, men are not taught about the appeal of mutual consent, they’re taught to never give up.**
- Assault storylines are often one-dimensional, and can show the survivor as brave, strong, a hero. While these seem healthy, they reinforce the idea that these events are out of the ordinary, when the truth is that they happen every day.
- Violence against women and girls is often generalized in storytelling. But stories are expanding to incorporate more nuance and subtleties. We are including a watch list at the bottom of this document!

STORIES CAN SHAPE CULTURE (FOR BETTER OR WORSE): Storytelling sets examples for how we behave in real life, either by reinforcing traditional norms, or **modeling something new.**

- For example, romantic comedies are being re-imagined to give female roles more agency, and re-imagine how **romantic relationships can start with mutual consent.**

COMMIT to seeing how storytelling affects your perspective on violence against women and girls, and how storytelling can shape the culture.



STEP #2

OWN IT

Explore how you can address your inner story: your blindspots and personal biases.

Reflect on these questions...

- **WHEN I SEE A STORY THAT CENTERS A WOMAN OR FEMME PERSON, WHAT AM I ASSUMING ABOUT HER?** Even if we're not conscious of it, we can make a handful of assumptions about a person or situation within a matter of seconds (for example - there's a reason why women are often not believed when sharing their experience of harassment, assault, or abuse). If you can notice the baggage you bring, you can get closer to seeing a story, a situation, an individual, for what it truly is.
- **ARE THERE STORIES I'M NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO?** This is an important question in efforts to break our own inner echo chambers. Our attention is like a spotlight, and whatever we direct that spotlight on grows inside our minds. Reflect on how you can expand your spotlight (in your life and online) to a wider variety of female-identifying people.
- **HOW TO EXPAND YOUR SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIALS:** Depending on your interests on social media, actively reach out of your current network to find more women and specifically women of color to follow. Ask women and WoC whose taste you like if they have accounts they recommend! **Your algorithm will follow your lead :)**
- **AM I MAKING EFFORTS TO EXPAND BEYOND MY MIND'S LIMITATIONS?** Are there people who can add to my point of view with a different perspective? Can I make some regular efforts to engage in conversations with people who can help expand my perspective on the issue?
- **When you engage with people around these issues, check in with what resonates with you, and how it is that you relate to those stories.**

Expanding your mind with what you watch and consume is a continual process! Alison Bechdel created a simple test to gauge female representation and gender equality in film.

The rules are:

- Does the film/tv show have at least two female characters?
- Do they talk to each other?
- Do they talk about anything other than men?

But we can go further.

- How many women are in the cast, and how much of the dialogue do they speak?
- Do the female characters have free choice and power to make decisions for themselves?
- Do their stories enable them to thrive or are they there to be put down?
- Does the story invite the audience to imagine a thriving culture for women and girls?
- If the women characters experience abuse, does it shed light on the nuance and trauma beyond the one or two abuse storylines we usually see? And what is the point of that plot line? Is there redemption, learning, deeper understanding on the other side?

Black women, women of color and queer women MUST be included as we expand our spotlights. We must expand our attention on and knowledge of their experiences and perspectives, in order to create change that supports ALL types of women.

COMMIT to exploring how storytelling limits your worldview, and how it can expand your worldview, especially when it comes to biases and norms around women and girls.

ACT ON IT

Practice how your storytelling (to yourself and others) can reframe a world where women, girls, and femme people can flourish as human beings.

STEP #3

Storytelling should be creating a culture of **BELONGING**, not just inclusion. How can my platform be a space that everyone, **INCLUDING** women and girls of all backgrounds, can not just feel included, but **BELONG**?

REPRESENT A DIVERSE ARRAY OF FEMALE-IDENTIFYING, FEMME PEOPLE AND GIRLS. If your content involves other people, ensure you are showcasing a comparable proportion of women to men, and women and girls of **all types**. This can have a profound impact on expanding your audience's feed and worldviews.

- Representing Black women, women of color and queer women is a priority in showcasing women in general.
- Representation applies behind the screen as well. Ensure you have equitable female perspectives in development, production, edit, etc.

USE YOUR PLATFORM TO DEMONSTRATE HEALTHY DYNAMICS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN. Violence is rooted in control and misuse of power. Demonstrating how to use individual power (female and male) in a healthy way formulates new models and positive social norms.

YOUR CONTENT REPRESENTS THE FUTURE YOU WANT TO SEE IRL. What do you want the world to look like, when it comes to dynamics between women and men, safety and equity for women and girls? Imagine it (or ask women to imagine it with you), and model it.

BONUS POINTS: SHARE YOUR OWN TRANSFORMATION: Everyone is starting from a different point on this journey. If you're able to share publicly where you started and the progress you've made, you can inspire and harness much wider engagement, showing real possibilities for change that people don't usually see.

Violence comes in so many forms, most of which we don't see on screen. If you or someone you're featuring has experience in these more subtle or nuanced forms of violence, sharing is a powerful way to expand people's mindsets around what qualifies as violence.

COMMIT to practicing storytelling for progress, in whatever form fits your style, brand, personality.



3. CULTURE

(the bigger environment of people and community) Language and storytelling build and reinforce our culture. **As storytellers, we have the opportunity to shape culture** with our stories and with our way of being, which can truly change the world.

How can we shape a culture where all women can flourish?



STEP #1

SEE IT

Consider how the fabric of our culture currently perpetuates harm against women and girls, and how it's possible to change that fabric.

CULTURAL HARM AGAINST WOMEN IS EVERYWHERE: From music that promotes forcing women into physical or sexual acts, to the general acceptance of “victim blaming” when it comes to harassment, assault, or abuse, to even the most subtle of marketing towards women as “housewives.” These are all cultural norms that reinforce an acceptance of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

THE SUBTLE and OVERT ELEMENTS OF CULTURE ARE ALL CONNECTED: The whole spectrum of oppressive culture, from subliminal messaging to overt misogyny, builds the current culture which perpetuates harm. This may seem overwhelming, but it also means there is an opportunity to intervene at any place on that spectrum.

POP CULTURE IS SHAPED BY INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE: The #MeToo movement not only called out many industry leaders who perpetrated violence, but also created a big shift in representation and storytelling of women. And this all started with influential women coming forward with their experiences of assault, and people listening to them.

- People like those of you reading this guide are the people who define the values of current and future cultures.
- Artists like Lizzo have had a profound effect on body image, inspiring women of all shapes and sizes to love their bodies.

COMMIT to seeing how the culture of violence connects directly to harm against women and girls, and how we can harness that connection for positive change.

OWN IT

Explore how you can contribute to changing culture, and growing a safe and balanced world with women and girls.

STEP #2

Reflect on the following...

WHAT EXAMPLES IN MY OWN LIFE AND ELSEWHERE (POP CULTURE, ROLE MODELS, FEMALE-IDENTIFYING FRIENDS) DEMONSTRATE A *BALANCED WORLD* FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS?

- Think of any examples and write a list! If you can't think of any, ask your friends, your audience, anyone in your community who might have insights.

WHAT VALUES AND NEW NORMALS ARE PRESENT IN THESE EXAMPLES AND IDEAS?

- Look at the ideas, examples, and thoughts that came up in answering the above. What values are generally present? Whether it's deep listening, equal opportunities or freedom of choice, distill these into a list.

HOW CAN I INTEGRATE THOSE VALUES INTO MY UNIQUE VOICE AND PLATFORM?

- Taking the above list of values, think about your brand, platform, creativity, and get more specific about how these values can be practically reflected in the formats, production, music, casting, and processes in between.

HOW CAN I EMBODY THOSE VALUES IN MY OWN LIFE?

- If you keep yourself honest, listening and learning around these issues, the changes to your storytelling, platform and brand will be more natural, sustainable, even seamless.

COMMIT to asking yourself these questions consistently to constantly grow into someone who amplifies and shapes positive values and norms and to build a safe culture for women and girls.

If you're a woman or femme person, ask yourself, what does the world look like if you feel completely safe and liberated? How are you able to go about your day? What do you have in that future that you may not have now?

If you're a man, ask the women in your life the questions on the opposite side of this page. What could the future look like if these barriers no longer existed for them? How does that make you feel?

SIDE NOTE:

Have you considered that this thoughtful shift in your storytelling and the culture you're creating could make your content and ideas more creative?

ACT ON IT

Practice being an arbiter of cultural change, as a storyteller, business owner or social leader.

STEP #3

DEFINING THE CULTURE WE WANT TO CREATE

Informed by this guide, and by your own research (whether it's using our references to explore further, having meaningful conversations with female-identifying friends, etc), determine the ways you want to model safety and equity with women.

Recognize that this change not only applies to what you create, but what you consume, and who you collaborate with. Bring these shifts outside of yourself to make waves in the culture around us.

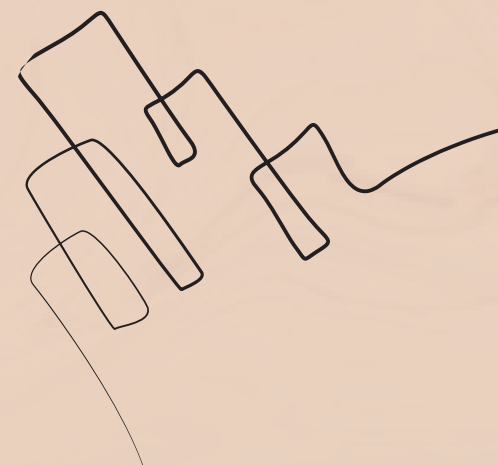
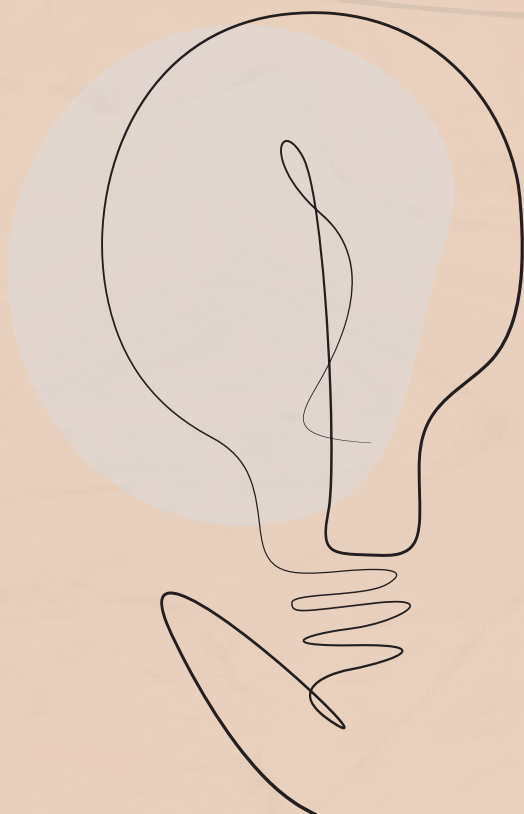
EMBRACING THE EVER-LEARNING PROCESS: Open yourself to listening to the experiences of women and emptying your biases and assumptions. Embrace imperfection and allow yourself to "stand corrected" as you continue to learn and make progress.

"I'm on board, but the people around me might not be 'there yet.' How can I ensure this transformation ripples out?"

REDEFINING THE CULTURE OF PROGRESS ONLINE

- **MEANINGFUL COLLABORATION:** If you have shifted your content to be conscious of doing no harm against women, that extends to who you collaborate with. If you're partnering with another creator, assess their brand. Are they perpetuating harm against women? Is it possible to facilitate a learning experience by collaborating with them?
- **SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING:** If you see other content creators or audience members in your comments perpetuating harm, engage with them directly about it!
- **CALLING OUT VS. CALLING IN:** We are currently in the throes of a "call out" or a "cancel culture" and this behavior can cloud intentions and hinder progress. As opposed us to calling people out publicly, consider calling in, approaching someone privately to discuss the issue and help facilitate their learning. Hey, pass along this guide while you're at it!
- **CELEBRATE PROGRESS:** As you begin noticing the changes happening around you, it's important to notice, recognize and celebrate positive shifts. Many of us currently understand impact, activism and change as a "slog," but if we can create a culture of celebrating progress, we can build more excitement and joy around shaping a better world.

COMMIT to honoring yourself and your community of influential people as beacons for positive cultural change, and acting in a way that reflects the importance of that role.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This guide is the **beginning** of a commitment to learn, grow, and be there **for** women - the ones you know and the ones you don't.

The commitments you take here are **commitments to humbly evolve**. This is not an overnight change, but with every step in this direction, you will become **more conscious of these issues**, and how they connect to **all of the humanitarian issues we face today**.

With every step, you are becoming a beacon of positive change, and a key player of a transformative movement for our culture.

COMMIT to:

- **Seeing** the assumptions and baggage of LANGUAGE, **exploring** how you reinforce oppressive language in your daily life, and **practicing** intentional language, by unlearning limiting language and learning expansive language for female-identifying people
- **Seeing** how STORYTELLING affects your perspective on VAWG, **exploring** how storytelling can either limit or expand your understanding of biases and norms, and **practicing** storytelling for progress, in whatever form fits your style, brand, personality.
- **Seeing** how the CULTURE of violence online connects directly to harm against women and girls, **exploring** how you can authentically grow into someone who actively builds cultural safety and equity for women and girls, and building cultures of progress amongst your community, on and offline.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL:

- **We recommend reading through this document once, without interacting, and a second time, answering the questions provided.**
- **Integrate the immediate action items with your personal life and brand.**
 - These action items are purposely broad. In our ideal world, they can be applied to a wide spectrum of activations, knowing that you are the expert on how to connect with your audience.
- **Champion the expansion of this work by *calling others into it*. That can mean...**
 - Choosing 5+ relevant people in your community to share this with, and making yourself available to engage with them as they process.
 - Amplifying this campaign by using the social assets we've created, or using them as inspiration to create your own content!
- **Joining our community of shapers to be available for ongoing, action-oriented resources and events, as we refine this mission and dive deeper into specific sectors of arts and culture. You'll automatically join the community as you provided your contact info to download this guide!**

GLOSSARY

- **Child marriage:** Child marriage usually means an end to a girl's education and her right to make life choices. Research confirms that girls who marry in childhood are at greater risk for intimate partner violence than girls of the same age who marry later.
- **Female genital mutilation:** FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Beyond extreme physical and psychological pain, the practice carries many health risks, including death.
- **Family and personal history of domestic violence:** Belief systems are passed down through families and communities. In the most direct form, men who witness or experience some form of violence at home are significantly more likely to inflict violence in their adult relationships. Similarly, women who witness or experience some form of violence are significantly more likely to assume that it is okay or an acceptable part of relationships.
- **Gender role beliefs:** The construct of societal roles that are generally categorized with a person's gender identity (i.e. women are meant to be mothers and homemakers, men are the breadwinners). While of course there are growing exceptions and variations, these roles are centered on the concept of "masculine" and "feminine." These beliefs are held by individuals, communities, and perpetuated by cultural and state institutions.
- **Human trafficking:** The acquisition and exploitation of people, through means, such as force, fraud, coercion, or deception. This heinous crime ensnares millions of women and girls worldwide, many of whom are sexually exploited.
- **Intimate partner violence:** Any behaviour by a current or former partner or spouse that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. This is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally.
- **Oppressive cultural norms:** Behaviors that are commonly accepted, including sexually degrading language, harassment, misconduct, and oppressive content. These are often normalized as a part of our culture and their connection to sexual violence is not widely recognized nor judged as harmful. The behaviors contribute to a culture of violence that supports and tolerates the more severe forms of violence against women.
- **Patriarchy:** A socially-constructed system where the male gender holds primary power. It affects all aspects of our lives, starting from the family home where men are considered to be "head of the household," all the way up through business management, religious institutions, economic systems, and political leadership. ***This does not mean that all individual men hold dominance over women, but it does mean that this power structure dictates the overarching system we exist in.***
- **Rape anxiety:** One of the many indirect effects of rape culture on women, and the general feeling of fear around potential rape, assault, harassment that informs the decision making of women around what to wear, where to go, how to act, etc.
- **Rape culture:** A culture where sexual assault and abuse is considered the norm, or enabled. A culture where men are taught that consent is a means of protecting themselves, rather than an essential part of respecting women. A culture where women are taught how to protect themselves from men, and also blamed for "failing" to protect themselves from sexual violence.
- **Social norm:** The informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies.
- **Sexual violence:** Any sexual act committed against the will of another person, either when this person does not give consent or when consent cannot be given.
- **Toxic masculinity:** Cultural gender norms that are harmful to women, men and society. When traditional gender roles teach boys that toughness is a virtue and emotions are a weakness, they can evolve into repressed men whose form of emotional expression is aggression.

ANCILLARY RESOURCES

TO WATCH:

- Kimberle Crenshaw's Ted Talk: THE URGENCY OF INTERSECTIONALITY
- Tony Porter's Ted Talk: A CALL TO MEN
- Jackson Katz's Ted Talk: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, IT'S A MEN'S ISSUE
- Khalida Brohi's Ted Talk: REDEFINING HONOR TO FIGHT HONOR KILLINGS
- KIOO India's Children's Photography For Gender Equity Project
- BIG LITTLE LIES (HBO, Created by David E. Kelley)
- I MAY DESTROY YOU (HBO, Created by Michaela Coel)
- **The Representation Project's Films:**
 - MISS REPRESENTATION (Netflix, Directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom)
 - THE MASK YOU LIVE IN (Prime Video, Directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom)
 - THE GREAT AMERICAN LIE (Prime Video, Directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom)

TO READ:

- INVISIBLE WOMEN, by Caroline Criado Perez
- THE BODY IS NOT AN APOLOGY, by Sonya Renee Taylor
- NOT THAT BAD: DISPATCHES FROM RAPE CULTURE, by Roxane Gay
- HUNGER: A MEMOIR OF (MY) BODY, by Roxane Gay
- MEDIOCRE: THE DANGEROUS LEGACY OF WHILE MALE AMERICA, by Ijeoma Oluo
- WOMEN, RACE and CLASS, by Angela Y. Davis
- RAPE CULTURE IS REAL (Time Magazine article, by Zerlina Maxwell)

ORGANIZATIONS TO FOLLOW AND GET INVOLVED WITH!

- The Spotlight Initiative: An EU-UN global partnership to end violence against women and girls by 2030.
- The Representation Project: An organization that uses documentaries and education to shift culture.
 - Their advertising campaign #NOTBUYINGIT
- Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
- A Call to Men: Trainings and resources to promote healthy, respectful manhood.
- Storyline Partners: For storytelling support from a network of community-based organizations, and culture change experts!
- Time's Up: For support around workplace safety and equity for women
- Keeping it 100 Solutions: Support for women, by women

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM ACTIVISTS WE SUPPORT!

- Safe Hands for Girls (Jaha Dukureh)
- Sughar Foundation (Khalida Brohi)

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS and SURVIVORS:

- RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) SUPPORT CENTER
- Alliance For Safety and Justice Trauma Recovery Center for Crime Survivors
- Hot Peach Pages (International List of Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies) <http://www.hotpeachpages.net>
- EU Helpline Directory <https://ec.europa.eu/justice/saynost-opvaw/helpline.html>

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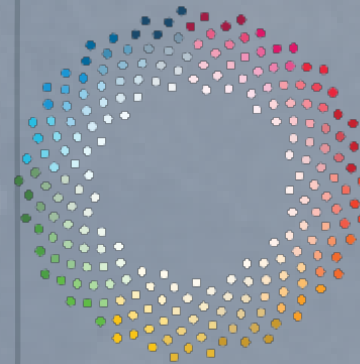
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*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*