

# MaleCall

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Men's Network  
UUMeN, 5307 NW 118th Ave., Coral Springs, FL 33076  
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Fall 2006



## A Woman Looks at Being Male

By Jan Christian

Winner of the 2006  
UUMeN Sermon Contest!

A week and a half ago, I heard a radio program in

which a man named Azim Khamisa spoke of the murder of his 20 year old son, Taliq, who was shot and killed by a 14 year old gang member, named Tony Hicks. Taliq was delivering pizzas at the time. One of Mr. Khamisa's friends immediately gave voice to a desire for revenge, but Mr. Khamisa told him, "There were victims on both sides of the gun." And indeed, the more he found out about the 14 year old, Tony Hicks, the more he believed that to be true.

Tony Hicks was following the orders of an older gang member. He was the first juvenile in the state of California to be tried as an adult. The new law went into effect just three weeks before his crime. He pled guilty to first-degree murder and on April 11, 1996 he accepted a 25-years-to-life sentence in an adult prison. In an emotional and remorseful speech, he accepted responsibility and prayed for forgiveness. Tony Hicks was sentenced on April 11th. That day stands out for me because it was on April 11th in 1969, that my brother was killed in Vietnam.

Many of you know that, in the last seven months, I have been in touch with many men who served with my brother. I have spoken to over a dozen men and have met face to face with some of them. I have been shocked by how much that one day stands out in the minds of so many men. Of course it stands out for 2nd Lt. Tom O. He was another platoon leader and he was sent in that day when my brother's platoon was ambushed and lost radio contact. He doesn't remember

arriving in that area or leaving it. He took a bullet that entered just under his right eye and came out just below his left ear. It shattered his jaw in the process and severed nerves which left him with a Bell's Palsy sort of effect. His left eye droops and tears. He had surgery on it just this year. The VA just recently acknowledged that his ongoing dental problems are related to the injury.

I meet him at the Boston Common Frog Pond. He hands me a Filene's bag with a box of Godiva truffles inside. This simple gesture almost moves me to tears. We have only walked a short distance when he tells me he is part of "The Living Dead Society." He sees himself as a failure. He didn't make the grade somehow. He had envisioned a "successful tour" in Vietnam and, in his fondest dreams, a return to perhaps teach at Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia. He speaks of the successes of others and it is clear that he is contrasting those with his own failures. He is kind and gentle.

There was another Tom there on April 11, 1969. He was 1st Lt. Tom H., the Company Commander. He sent my brother's platoon out and then Tom's platoon and then he took the rest of the company in. Of all the guys, he is the only young man there who went on to make a career out of the Marines. He is a recruiter for a military prep school in Texas. It turns out that he and his wife will be in near here in the near future and we arrange a meeting.

We sit down in the restaurant at the Marriott. I ask his wife how and when they met. She was a flight atten-

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## About UUMeN

The Unitarian Universalist Men's Network is a continental membership organization for UU men (which also welcomes other gender allies). Our purpose is to build and sustain a mature, liberal religious masculinity. Our primary objectives are to: develop a continental resource network; support the personal and spiritual growth of men at the local, district and continental levels; and collaborate with other UU groups who share our interests and commitments. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, may vote at our Annual Meeting held in June at General Assembly, and are eligible for discounts on materials.

### 2005-2006 Steering Council

Dave Woods (IL), president, 2007  
Rev. Todd Strickland (CO), VP, 2007  
Roy Schwartz (FL), treasurer, 2008  
Bob Hospadaruk (MI), 2007  
Rich Wilson (WI), 2006  
Jack Ripple (AZ) 2008  
Rev. Chester McCall III (PA), 2009  
Frank Mundo (ME), 2009  
Rev. James 'Chip' Roush (MI), 2009  
Rev. Tom Owen-Towle, President Emeritus

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## MaleCall

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*. It is printed in the United States of America. Submissions for publication are welcome, but are subject to editing for length and clarity. The views expressed in MaleCall are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of UUMeN.*

*Please send all submissions and concerns via e-mail (info@uumen.org) to:*

**Editor:** Chip Roush

**Layout:** Bob Hospadaruk

**Address Changes:** Frank Mundo

**WWW.UUMEN.ORG**

## From the President...

Hello MaleCall recipients:

I begin by saying that we've had a banner year ending with GA2006 in St. Louis last June. Our two workshops "Voice Male" (How Men Do Marriage) by Neil Chethik, and "Feeding the Souls of Men" by Revs Tom Owen Towle & Jaco ten Hove were both well received there. The UUMeN Exhibit Booth was supreme and great numbers of convention people stopped by to join our ranks in record numbers (over 50 new memberships). Convention people purchased lots of Neil's & Rev Tom's books. UUMeN is on a roll and we all need everyone's help to keep it going. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, or wish to join us as new members, please do so now by going to our website [www.UUMeN.org](http://www.UUMeN.org). You can make this \$25 tax free yearly donation with credit card at that time. Better yet, why not do a life membership for \$300 and you'll never have to make a yearly donation again. I've done this and so have Rev Dan O'Connell, Rev Tom Owen-Towle, Rev Ken Beldon, Neil Chethik and Gregg Grisa.

Prior to GA, I attended the UU Meadville-Lombard Seminary Minister's Graduation Ceremonies on June 4th in Chicago. A special Honorary Doctor of Divinity Award was presented to former UUMeN Steering Council member Rev Frank Robertson. It was noted that he was one of the first of our UU clergy to come out as an openly gay man back in the early 1970's. His success as an MRE is renown throughout the UU world. Congrats Frank, and I was proud to be there with you, your partner Rick and many other important people in your life.

It was a pleasure meeting & awarding a \$500 check to Rev Jan Christian, UUMeN Sermon Contest 2006 Winner from California. There were many other good submission received. Some will be placed in future MaleCalls.

We welcome four new members to our UUMeN Steering Council. They are: Rev. James "Chip" Roush - Traverse City, MI, Rev. Wm Chester McCall, III - Philadelphia, PA, Frank Mundo - Rockport, Maine, and Rich Wilson - Racine WI. I also want to thank those members who completed their terms including, Dick Whitaker, Rev. Drew Johnston, and Jim Jaeger. A special thanks to Rev Ken Beldon for his years editing MaleCall (this issue being his last). It is so nice to have ex Steering Council members, like Ken continuing to pitch in to help UUMeN.

Keep up the good work and remember, your honored handshake to the UUMeN commitment is appreciated. We want to continue contributing good things for all men and women at our UU congregations.

My Best in the Brotherhood,



President, UUMeN, [dnwoods@ameritech.net](mailto:dnwoods@ameritech.net)



*Dave Woods*

# Towards Mature Masculinity

By Forrest Gilmore

*“Hope lies in the longing we have to be adults.”  
- Robert Bly, *The Sibling Society**

I believe, as Robert Bly suggests in his book *The Sibling Society*, that our country suffers from a crisis of maturity. We live primarily in a society of adolescents. Adulthood has come to be viewed not as the life-giving source of our culture but as boring, out-of-touch and oppressive (perhaps not without good reason). Without the inspiration of meaningful adults, our children choose to remain children, afraid to take on the mantle of maturity. And yet for those children ready and desirous for more, we have no entry points, no paths and processes that test and affirm their readiness for those next, expanding steps in life.

Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, in their book *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, describe Western society not as a patriarchy but as a “puerarchy (i.e., the rule of boys).” To quote them, “Patriarchy is set up and run not for men as a gender or for masculinity in its fullness or in its mature expressions but rather by men who are fundamentally immature. It is really the rule of boys, often cruel and abusive boys.”

It is my belief that the lack of mature adults in our society, particularly men, lies at the heart of our society’s ills. We need a re-ascendance of the mature masculine to find our way back and push our way forward to a society of beauty, equality and soul.

We woke up that first morning to the sound of a banjo playing. Our guide plucked away at the strings. The sun had yet to rise but we could catch a faint glimmer of light on the eastern horizon. There was a bit of tension among us, myself included, because we knew this was our day. I decided to make light of my own uneasiness and dance a little step of

my own invention to the guide’s music, dancing away to some twangy jig at 5 o’clock in the morning, on the edge of Death Valley. Some people laughed and began to dance with me. Some wondered out loud at how I could actually be feeling any joy at the moment.

The sun did eventually show itself. I snapped a photo capturing the light as it pierced the sky and climbed above the mountaintops. It got warm fast, even though we were at 7,000 feet in late September. The group of us packed up our gear in a hurry, knowing we would be leaving soon and, that on this day, breakfast would not be coming. No food for four days seemed like a long time.

After packing up my bag and throwing it over my shoulder, I walked over to our guide, the banjo man.

As I stepped into a circle of stones, he prayed that my journey would go well. He told me, “Pay attention. It will be over before you know it.” I didn’t believe him. He spread the smoke of some mountain sage about, hugged me, and that was it. I exited the circle and walked off into the desert. I walked off to four days without food, without shelter, without people. I

walked off to mark my entry into ministry and the giving of my life as a gift. I walked off to mark a transition that I felt primed to make and for which I had prepared for at least the last ten years. I walked off to take part in what is commonly known as a vision quest, an ancient rite of passage used throughout the world to help people make and mark their transition into adulthood.

There are times in our lives when we feel the deep inner pull of our psyches, calling us to explore the depths of our identity. These are the moments when we are called to let go of who we’ve been in order to more fully become who we are. These are the mo-

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*(A Woman Looks at... Continued from page 1)*

dant based in San Francisco. She met him in 1969 right after he returned. Her next words chill me, "And today will be the first time I have ever heard Tom talk about Vietnam." It is then that I fully understand what I have done. About my call, he says, "I knew my past would catch up with me sooner or later." I am that past. Tom was in charge that day, but he was not really in control... and it still haunts him. He draws a primitive map and looks at it as though he is seeing that day. He taps on it several times before he can say, "They said, 'Let's send a company in there and see if it can survive.'" His wife looks at him and then at me with tears in her eyes. She believes that many of the problems they have had with one of their sons comes from how Vietnam changed Tom. He does not disagree.

I meet with Sgt. Jim in the lobby of a hotel in Marietta, Georgia. He was in Korea and Vietnam. I know that he spoke of my brother at a previous Kilo Company reunion memorial service and that is why I have sought him out. "I never met a finer young man," he tells me. Being in control of his emotions is important to him. He tells me of the death of his wife in a hotel elevator at a Marine reunion. Sometimes to maintain control of his feelings, he goes on tangents away from what is really on his mind. I walk him to his car and we hug and then he says in a Georgia drawl, "You go on now. I don't want you to see me cry."

This summer, I get a call from another man. He is riddled with cancer that is service-connected. He begins sobbing and I can barely make out his words. I finally understand he is saying that he will call me back. A few minutes later the phone rings. More sobbing and the words, "When will we ever learn?"

Years working in the so-called justice system have given me a sense of what gangs do to young men and to the community. My own experience has given me a sense of what war does to young men and to communities. But the truth is that war and gangs do something for young men as well.

I have a sense of that from the men from Kilo Company who are seeking one another and finding one another after all these years. There were bonds forged in that time that none will ever forget and that many will

never again approximate. Only one has mentioned some greater possible good that might someday come from the involvement of the U.S. in that war. For the most part, it was about one another. It was about staying alive and keeping each other alive. I know that is what motivated my brother that day. It was the intimacy of a shared struggle, of a common language and purpose. It was an attachment to a greater good...not based on foreign policy, noble or misguided, but in losing oneself in the common struggle. There were other motivations at work for sure including the chance to see what one was made of and to prove it to other men. And perhaps the biggest pay-off was membership in the tribe.

In an article entitled *Initiation and the Male Spiritual Quest*, Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette write, "All human beings need to be initiated into the wise and life-enhancing uses of human psychological resources." They see the initiation process essentially as one that "removes our ego from the center of the universe." They believe, as I

do, that our loss of an initiation process for men has serious consequences.

For the most part, the secular experiences being substituted on a large scale for male initiation rituals in our culture center around prison, the military, gang life, and to some extent, team sports. There was a time when fraternities might have belonged on the list. I don't think it is a coincidence that gang membership and incarceration rates began their steady rise in this country with the end of the war in Vietnam. In the last decade, young men have begun to disappear from our institutions of higher learning. On any given day, we have more young men of color under the jurisdiction of the justice system than in our colleges and universities. I used to say that if this was true for our young white men we would be marching in the streets, but I no longer say that because it seems that all of our young men have become expendable somehow. Many women are choosing to have and to raise children without the father present. Some are even choosing to conceive without the father present. The unemployment rate of young men between the ages of 20 and 24 is twice the national average. Almost every time I gather with a group of parents with young adult

"Men will always be uniquely responsible for modeling for boys what it means to be a man. Men are the only ones who can model what a mature man looks like. I can't think of a more important job in our society today."

children, the conversation turns to a lost son, a good and decent young man who is struggling mightily to find his way. Each Sunday, we speak of our joys and sorrows. Even in the last few months, news of the suicide of a young man has been spoken several times into the silence.

It seems to me that parents face a real conundrum. Every fiber of our being longs to keep our children from hurt and from harm and yet we want them to be able to live in the real world. Our son wants a doll. We don't want him subjected to the cruelty that will come his way if he has one. But if we are raising our children to go along with the way things are, how will we ever build a better world? In our society, our boys are all behind the gun and they can either stay behind it or get in front of it or hold it to their own heads.

That choice is not good enough.

What is the gun? Allan Johnson would say that the gun is the system we live in that both victimizes and privileges men. It is this system that provides a very limited gender-based view of what is acceptable behavior for women and what constitutes "a real man."

The gun seems aimed at women and much has been written about women as victims of patriarchy, but Johnson understands there are victims on both sides of the gun. That men are victims, too, does not mean that patriarchy doesn't exist. It only underscores how damaging and complex it is.

In his book *The Gender Knot: Unraveling our Patriarchal Legacy*, Johnson writes, "Men's frequent complaints about their lives often reflect the patriarchal paradox that organizing yourself around control, power, and privilege often makes you feel worse about your life rather than better." He writes, "The more that men organize their lives around control, the more they disconnect from everyone, including themselves. They become trapped in avoidance of attachment, denial of need, and an endless quest to substitute abstract 'meaning' for what Joseph Campbell called 'the authentic feeling of being alive.'"

Before we create meaningful initiation rituals, we

must understand what we are initiating men into and whether or not we really want to initiate men into it. Moore and Douglas write, "By far the most serious consequence of ceasing initiatory practices is the loss of a periodic social forum for considering the nature of maturity. A society has to know what maturity is before it can pass the knowledge on."

"A society has to know what maturity is before it can pass the knowledge on." Men often talk about experiences that "made a man" out of them. But what kind of man did it make out of them? What does it mean to become a man? What constitutes male maturity? Is it different than what constitutes human maturity?

I think these are fundamental questions that our faith movement needs to grapple with. In Judaism there is a Bar Mizvah. Mormons send their young men on missions. And although I am very suspicious of the missionary impulse, they generally come back in one piece, with new self-discipline, often appreciating deeply another culture and what they left behind. What would our version be?

When it comes to maturity, I don't think that losing

innocence is the same as gaining maturity. I believe that maturity is more than learning what we can survive. It is knowing what makes a life worth living. Maturity does not come from learning blind obedience but from understanding self-discipline. Maturity does come from removing our ego from the center of the universe, but not by replacing it with someone else's. Maturity comes not from letting ourselves be swept into group think and gang mentality but in learning when the good of the community requires our sacrifice and our dedication and our willingness to put aside our personal preferences and when

it requires that we stand in resistance no matter the cost. Maturity comes, not when we are protected from the real world, but when we are equipped for it, even if it means we are equipped to resist that which is unhealthy in it. Moore and Douglas write, "An initiated man will not be easy prey for the simplistic,

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*(Towards Mature Masculinity Continued from page 3)*

ments of passage.

There is a basic truth that every spiritual traveler knows – death happens more than once in our lives. Those small “d” deaths can be extraordinarily challenging, yet profoundly meaningful... for with each death, rebirth always follows. We may not always recognize these death-rebirth passages as such and our culture seems to blatantly ignore them. But they are there.

This recurring journey of transformation has a name: positive disintegration. Positive disintegration basically means that every form of life must at some point shed its current form in order to evolve into a new and hopefully more adaptable form. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette described this transition when they wrote, “[L]ife’s perhaps most fundamental dynamic is the attempt to move from a lower form of experience and consciousness to a higher (or deeper) level of consciousness, from a diffuse identity to a more consolidated and structured identity.” Our physical death is the most classic example, the letting go of our bodies so that other bodies more adaptable to our world can come to be. But there are many other “positive disintegrations” that occur throughout our lives – puberty, leaving the family home, the entry into vocation, marriage, parenthood, the death of one’s parents, retirement, and on and on.

*This excerpt from an essay by the Rev. I. Forrest Gilmore is taken from a forthcoming book on the experiences of UU young adult men to be published by Skinner House.*



*(A Woman Looks at... Continued from page 5)*

totalistic, and tribal visions offered by the spiritual, political, or ideological charlatans of his day.” Oh, dear ones, the world needs more initiated men.

Margaret Mead noted in her travels that it wasn’t so much what men did in various cultures she visited as who did it. Some things, it didn’t really matter what, were only done by men. It might be the sewing, it might be the hunting. The important thing was that only men did it. Now, we might wish it was otherwise and we might work and plan for it to be otherwise, but consider this. For women, it is built in...literally. We have a clear marker for “becoming a woman” and there is one thing in our society that only women can do. Perhaps someday it will not matter. But in our dominant culture today, we lack clear, intentional and life-affirming markers for manhood and many of the things long reserved only for men are no longer reserved for men. But here is something that has always belonged to men and always will. Men will always be uniquely responsible for modeling for boys what it means to be a man. Men are the only ones who can model what a mature man looks like. I can’t think of a more important job in our society today.

Blessing on all men here today because I know you are struggling to do just that. I am not suggesting male guilt over patriarchy. We all inherited this. I am suggesting fear. I am suggesting that our fear rise up in us as if the gun was in our hands pointed at those we love the most...because it is. There are victims on both sides of the gun. But, as our hymn tells us, “Wait and see, wait and see what a world there can be.”

*This sermon is dedicated to David Frank who bought this theme at our church auction and who works in so many ways to help us put the gun down. The Rev. Jan Christian reserves all rights to this sermon.*

***This sermon by the Rev. Jan Christian is the winner of the 2006 UUMeN Sermon Contest.***

## **Open Call for MaleCall**

This newsletter is accepting articles, reviews, and original poems relating to mens' experiences for our upcoming quarterly edition. If you have something to share with your fellow readers, please submit your writing to our editor at:

**jchpr@yahoo.com**

***Thank you!***





## Editor's Note

I wanted to offer a note of gratitude, as this issue is my final one as Editor of MaleCall. First, my thanks go out to Bob Hospadaruk, who lays out each of our newsletters with excellence and a sense of fun.

Second, my thanks go out to the many fine writers who have submitted their work to be published in the pages of MaleCall. They have consistently filled these pages with insightful, moving, and provocative ideas, proving that the state of dialogue between and about men within our movement is strong and meaningful.

And, finally, my thanks go out to you, the readers of MaleCall, for your encouragement and feedback and for the time you have spent with this bulletin.

I hope it has enriched you. It certainly has added to my self-understanding as a man, and my appreciation for liberal religion.

One of my next projects is similar to this one—I am Contributor to, and Editor of, a book that will be published by Skinner House about the life experiences of UU young adult men.

I am handing over the editorial duties to the capable hands of the Rev James “Chip” Roush. He will be happy to receive your correspondence, feedback and article submissions. (jchipr@yahoo.com)

Good luck, Chip! And thanks for taking the reins.

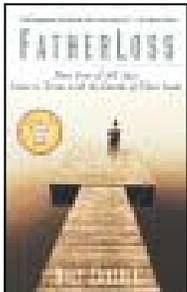
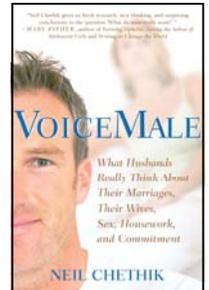
Blessings, *Ken Beldon*

### GREAT BOOKS FROM UUMEN



**A Community of Men: A Guide to Men's Programming in UU Congregations** is available free to new members (See membership form on back cover) or \$5.00

**VoiceMale: What Husbands Really Think of Their Wives, Their Marriages, Sex, Housework and Commitment** (Simon & Schuster). Written by former UUMeN president Neil Chethik, based on his original research of 350 American husbands, this book challenges many of the most-commonly held beliefs about men and marriage. It also offers men advice based on the wisdom of the husbands themselves. \$23.95



**FatherLoss: How sons of all ages come to terms with the deaths of their dads**, by Neil Chethik, focuses on the father-son relationship. It comes with a study guide for men's groups. \$14

To order any of the above books, make your check out to Neil Chethik, and then send to UUMeN/Books, PO Box 8071, Lexington, Ky. 40533. Proceeds from sales will be donated to UUMeN. There is no shipping or handling charge

**SAVE THE MALES: Changing Men Changing the World**, also by Tom Owen-Towle, boldly engages with stimulating topics such as men choosing to be brothers...men as religious beings...joining ethics and power...saying “yes” to aggression and “no” to violence; graying gracefully as elders. \$14.95 plus \$2.00 (shipping/handling)—order directly from Tom Owen-Towle, 3303 Second Ave., San Diego, CA 92103 (uutom@cox.net).



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