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I feel like men have a responsibility to deconstruct the patriarchal systems of societies that predominantly suppress women of color but all women in general. We must dismantle the institutions of oppression so that all people regardless of their gender identity or lack thereof are treated equally. Whether we as men realize it or not, we benefit from the society we live in with its various levels of misogyny but I think we also must understand that some men benefit from these systems more than others.

When we see our friends, family or simply people around us make sexist comments, we should call that individual out and explain why those sorts of actions uphold the patriarchal society we live in because even if they are just joking around, it still feeds into their mindset of how “men are supposed to be superior to women.” Implicitly and explicitly that is what those sorts of statements are implying when in reality men and women should be treated equally.

Unfortunately, toxic masculinity affects both men and women negatively. Although it affects women disproportionately more than men, it is often overlooked how gender stereotypes affect all people. Men are placed in this box with certain expectations on how they should act and be. One of these stereotypes is that men should suppress their emotions, especially feelings of sadness, insecurity or depression. Essentially these stereotypes stipulate that men can’t talk about mental health and how it affects them. It is not acceptable for them to cry and show their true emotions. For me, the first time I recall experiencing toxic masculinity in the form of suppression of emotions was when I was younger, around 5 years old, my grandpa would tell my cousins and me to not be chickens and that you must be strong and not cry. I recall this because I was crying at the time due to the pain I felt. I told him that I was different that I was not a chicken for crying.

I think men could produce healthy manhood by being open to talking about what they are experiencing, understanding the privilege we have as males and finding active and inclusive ways to dismantle the patriarchal society we live in. We have to expel our usage of sexist comments, beliefs, etc. We have to teach our boys to respect women and not get sucked into “locker room talk.” That they must respect and support other men and their form of open emotional expression, as they should not bully or degrade them for feeling a certain way.”