



Ambar Mishra

What is the definition of a real man? I believe that a real man displays their emotions openly. There. I said it. But how many people would respond to this if I said it aloud to a group of high schoolers? I would hear laughter and the word “weak” as response. However, if I said “real women show emotions”, I would observe heads nodding in agreement. Why is that? It’s a question I ask myself. After all these societal boundaries our communities have overcome, for example sexual orientation and racial discrimination, why can’t society accept that a man can and should express his emotions? Why do I have to hide myself when I cry even though I live in one of the most “open minded” places in the country? These are questions I ask not only to you, but also to the world. This isn’t only limited to emotions, but body shaming and gender expectations as well. There are many aspects of this toxic masculinity that have affected my personality.

Throughout my high school experience, body shaming was a common form of pleasure for boys who wanted to look superior to others. I have been a victim of body shaming, where I was taunted for a bulging belly or chubby chest. I felt afraid of wearing my favorite shirt or taking my shirt off at the beach because I was labeled as “fat” by others. **This is where I learned that labels, no matter if they’re positive or negative, can deeply affect one’s emotional state.**

It took me two years to gain confidence to wear a tight shirt and be confident with my body. I was encouraged by my friends to face my fears and I did. I became motivated to be proud of who I am as a man. However, it wasn’t always easy. With no clear social manual on how young men should confront their bodies, I wrote down on a piece of paper, the reasons why I should be comfortable with my body.

As I was writing, I realized how all of my qualities went against the “bro code”. I wasn’t aggressive or brash enough to make sexually suggestive jokes towards women. However, many of my male classmates had these

qualities and were able to “fit in” their social groups. Instagram and Snapchat clearly showed examples of how men openly abuse women. As I searched through these social media pages, I saw many men following and liking posts with sexist comments. They replied back with references to the “bro code”. Then I thought to myself, is this how men are motivated to abuse women? Do men commit domestic violence or perpetuate violence against women because of the pressure of the bro code?

When I see news of violence against women that is taking place in different forms in different places I feel frustrated. I wonder what is stopping all men to stand up against violence against women or sexual harassment. Why do many men avoid the topic? I know many men support many domestic violence organizations, but do they stand up and protest whenever their peers, friends and family make a sexist comment? All of these thoughts were in my head and I felt an urge to take action. I concluded how social media plays a significant role in our attitude towards women. I disagreed with how movies, media and TV shows depict ideal gender roles and portrays women as mere object.

However we cannot underestimate the positive side of using social media. Social media can be a positive tool to utilize for voicing out our opinions against sexual abuse and other forms of abuse and violence towards women. Men and women have the potential to make the #METOO movement stronger with more projects being launched in our community. Since I have a voice, why not use it to the maximum potential? I’m not ashamed to protest violence against women and girls on a social platform. I’m glad that I was given a chance to express my thoughts on this topic and I hope my write up will motivate many men and boys to do the same. Unless we talk about it, we won’t be able to solve the problem.

--Ambar Mishra serves as co vice chair for the Fighting Discrimination Committee at Agents of Change. He is an advocate for equality and hopes to spark new projects to raise awareness towards domestic violence and toxic masculinity. Currently, he is a senior at American High School where he serves as senior class senator.