



## Hope, Sexual Violence Prevention, and Reaching the Hearts and Minds of Boys

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I've been asked to talk about sexual violence prevention today. And, in an attempt to keep things simple, I want to discuss three basic questions: (1) What is it? (2) What works? And (3) Why should we care?

I'm going to start with the last question first actually: why should we care about sexual violence prevention? Why is an understanding and appreciation for sexual violence prevention important? What I have in mind as an answer to this question has to do with hope. Maybe it goes without saying that hope is something all of us need in our work - especially work against violence and abuse, work that can be so emotionally and spiritually taxing, which can be so discouraging.

To begin this discussion about hope, I want to share a quote with you, one that has both haunted and inspired me. This is a passage written by Andrea Benton Rushing, taken from an account of her process of healing and recovery after a man raped her while she was living in Georgia. She writes:

In movie and television versions of rape, the problems are that people think you seduced the man, the police are sexistly hostile, hospital staff are icily callous, but my ordeal wasn't going that way at all. In my apartment, the Georgia police officers who look and sound like rednecks treat me with a courtesy nothing in my childhood summers in segregated ... Florida, or ... Alabama, prepared me for. I'm questioned gently. Did I recognize the rapist? A boyfriend? Someone who'd stalked me? Was he a college student my daughter and her friend knew? Did we have oral sex? Anal sex? Did he bite me? They accept my word that I've never seen the man before and don't even ask if I tried to fight him off. At the hospital, the in-take clerk, crisis counselor, lab technician, nurse, doctor, billing clerk are all considerably consoling. At the time I don't notice, but a week later their behavior upsets me. There is, I tell sympathizers, no plan to end rape. People are just refining their treatment of the inevitable.

I think this is a very challenging and important passage. It offers a perspective I have not often heard but that I suspect is more commonly experienced than it is spoken.

Andrea Benton Rushing describes her experience with people like many of us in this room today - police officers, nurses, hospital staff, crisis counselors. Something about this experience is upsetting to her. I don't think the story here is the failure or futility of those who try to help her, or survivors of rape in general. I think the compassion and care she describes are lifted up. Too often, we know that the experience of survivors is to be disbelieved, bullied, and harassed in ways that serve as a kind of re-victimization. It has great meaning when we go about our work and our lives in ways that communicate dignity and respect for survivors of sexual violence. It matters.

And maybe the author's mention of race caught your attention? I wondered about leaving it out, or using another passage. I worried about that actually. But, no, here is a woman, a black woman, living in Georgia, who is appreciative (if, yes, surprised) that white police officers could treat her with such courtesy, of a kind she did not experience as a child living in segregation. I thought about finding another passage. Yet, while it is generally uncomfortable to do so, I believe that we need to realize that race and

racism shape how people respond to the issue of sexual violence - usually for the worse. This is a time where racism does not stand in the way of compassion and care for someone who needs it.

Yet, despite all that goes well in her account, Andrea Benton Rushing seems to be saying: it is not enough. As a survivor, she wants to know there is "a plan to end rape." Why? What does she mean?

When I first read this passage I had just begun to work at a rape crisis center. I had just been through a training to prepare volunteers to do the work the author describes. Going into the training, I knew that working with survivors on the crisis line or at the hospital was not the work I was going to be doing. I would be, and still do, work with men and boys, in prevention and intervention. Yet I understood that attempting to grasp the reality that rape survivors experience, both through their assaults and their processes of healing and recovery, would be very important grounding for the work I do. Reading this passage, I wondered whether I "got it." How did the passage fit with what I was learning? How would it impact what I understood and felt about the work my co-workers were doing, as crisis counselors, therapists, and advocates?

I was, and am, the only man on staff at the center, the first man ever on staff there, hired to involve men and boys in prevention. I'd been charged with doing something new, something innovative. Maybe the passage caught my attention because I thought this was the something missing from Andrea Benton Rushing's experience? And, probably with a certain amount of arrogance, I was inclined to place what I was doing in something big and bold like a "plan to end rape."

But, well, I asked around and I looked around for a good bit and it turned out ... we didn't have a "plan to end rape" - not on file anyway. We had no document, no blueprint. Even if we had, there were only a handful of us - surely we would not be able to carry out such a plan by ourselves. Anyway, if we didn't have one, what did that mean?

At the rape crisis center - at rape crisis centers all over the state and the country - survivors continued to call looking for help and support - in the same numbers, distressingly high numbers. Volunteer crisis counselors continued to make regular trips to the hospital. We continued to hear that the police could be sexist and hostile. We continued to hear that hospital staff could be icy and callous. From that perspective, this whole "plan to end rape" thing just seems pretty pie in the sky.

But, without it, Andrea Benton Rushing is saying that we aren't doing enough?! And maybe other survivors are feeling the same way?!

In the face of such questions and realizations, I think it is easy to get tired or to get discouraged. In our attempts to address violence against women and children, I assume that most of us already work without the resources and support that we need. I assume that it feels like such an enormous task to do what we already do. Until just last month our rape crisis center in DeKalb County was living in a basement office leased for free, yes, but shared with rats. It flooded when it rained more than just a little bit. And on and on. Maybe this sounds familiar? Maybe you, too, share an office with rats or work in an office that floods?

I suppose, for me, the question became and remains: in these circumstances, how can I find a way to live with and act on what Andrea Benton Rushing was saying? Without becoming exhausted, discouraged, or bitter? And without being arrogant about how special or different what I'm doing is, about how I "get it" and others don't.

Well, I realize that the challenge is not to work more. It is not my place to ask the people in this room to do that. And, anyway, in the long-term, implementing a plan to end rape means, of course, that many of us will be working a whole lot less.

Maybe the question posed by Andrea Benton Rushing can be approached a little differently. I want to suggest that the question, for me, and maybe for you, is: Are we here today talking about the inevitable? Are we "refining our treatment of the inevitable," as she describes?

Pay attention to how you feel when I say this: rape is inevitable.

This is what Andrea Benton Rushing heard and felt, even as people helped and cared for her. This is what is upsetting. I think it's similar to what we hear when someone tells a joke about rape. I think it's similar to what we hear when people say that rape is human nature, that it's "natural": you know, it's awful but it simply can't be helped. I think it's similar to what we hear when people tell stories about rape that are full of pity: how sad, but what can be done?

What we hear, generally speaking, is that rape is inevitable. And this is oppressive. It is depressing. Even so, many police officers, hospital staff, and crisis counselors, many people nevertheless try to do things to lessen the impact, to minimize the damage. We try to do the right thing, and we do. But maybe something is missing? Something so important?

I said that you should care about sexual violence prevention because it has something to do with hope. This hope is the hope that rape is not inevitable. Ever. Anywhere.

Now, to me, hope and optimism are not the same. I have hope that we will see a world free of rape. I am not optimistic that this will be soon. There is a lot of sexual violence in this society and few resources devoted to ending it. Yet, to me, there is substantial ground for hope. There have been societies in the past that have been free of rape. There can be again. That we are here today together is another basis for hope.

In my heart I believe that a world free of rape is possible. I have that hope. I believe that human beings are better than that. I believe that we can travel up river, so to speak, to the sources of this trouble and deal with it. And I think that's why I work in prevention. Rape is not inevitable. I absolutely believe this. And I try to put that faith into action. When you get right down to it, that's what "prevention" means to me.

If you work in prevention, maybe it's because you carry a similar hope? If understanding and believing in prevention helps you to carry such hope into the work you do, perhaps transforming that work, I suggest this is one reason why we should care about it and work to understand it. And I think this is what Andrea Benton Rushing and other survivors may be asking for - in addition to our courtesy and compassion.

I said I would talk with you about three questions. As a reminder, the two left are: (1) What is sexual violence prevention? And (2) What works?

Before getting into these questions, I want to explain what I mean by 'sexual violence'. By the term 'sexual violence' I primarily mean rape and sexual assault, but also sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, and molestation. Further, as I understand it, most of the time those who commit sexual violence are male. In at least a majority of cases, the targets of this violence are female. When males are the targets, this is most often as a child or youth - and, most often, the person who commits this violence is a man. In other words, as I understand it, the problem of sexual violence is primarily a problem of violence committed by men against women and children. For this reason, and because it is the work I do, when I talk about sexual violence prevention and about what works in sexual violence prevention, my focus is men's and young men's violence against women and children (especially girls). The reality is more complicated than this. Both perpetrators and victims of sexual violence can be of any gender. Because I don't intend to dismiss or discount that reality in any way, I wanted to make sure you understood what my focus will be and why.

Question one, then: What is sexual violence prevention?

When the topic sexual violence prevention is mentioned, any number of things may come to mind. Maybe you think of self-defense classes and safety tips. Maybe you think of the work I mostly do, in a classroom with young people, talking about respect and healthy relationships. Maybe you think of our criminal justice system, of laws and consequences. Maybe you think of addressing the influence of the media, of movies, TV, or video games. At many rape crisis centers, or centers that address violence against women and

children, it is now common to have staff whose primary focus is prevention. In my experience, that prevention work may focus on any of these things that I just mentioned.

It is also common that prevention staff are the last to have been hired and, in times of budget crisis, the first to be let go - as has recently been the case around the state. Sexual violence prevention in general, and especially the kind of prevention I want to discuss, is a new and still poorly supported idea.

Part of the story here is that to the extent that rape is a matter of public concern today at all, this is a result of the violence against women movement. And how old is this movement? Tracing origins is tricky. But the first rape crisis center was established in this state in 1974, less than 30 years ago. In DeKalb County, our center is less than 15 years old. The rape crisis center here in Valdosta is about 6 years old. In other parts of the state, for all practical purposes, this movement has not existed.

So, the kind of sexual violence prevention that I want to discuss is new. It is premised on an idea that has been promoted by the violence against women movement and is also new: that rape is not acceptable under ANY circumstances - whether between strangers, acquaintances, on a date, within a marriage, within a family, etc.

Of course, I say that's a new idea, but victims and survivors have always felt this way, that rape is not acceptable - even if their communities and families would not support them, even if people refused to call what was done to them "rape." Even if they themselves didn't have the word. Even if they had been the wife or daughter of the man who raped them. Even if they had been slaves. Even if the man who raped them was a member of the clergy. No matter the circumstances of the victim, the feelings have been no less real and the impact no less damaging. It was real. It was rape. And, to a survivor, it is unacceptable - whether the rapist was a stranger, an acquaintance, a date, a spouse, a member of the family, and so on.

But now, what happens when the idea that rape is unacceptable under ANY circumstances becomes a matter of public concern, of social policy, for all of us? Especially in light of the fact that between 65% and 85% of sexual assaults occur not between strangers but in situations where the perpetrator and victim know one another, this can be a very challenging thing to get people to accept. But this is what activists who helped to found rape crisis centers, raise awareness, and the rest of it have wanted to find out - whether it was possible for a society to say, as a collective, rape is not acceptable under ANY circumstances.

And the idea of prevention has been born. For, if rape is not acceptable, if we are serious about that, then it is to be challenged and eventually stopped. Or, put another way, and even better, it is to be stopped before it starts.

The promotion of this idea has not necessarily worked smoothly. There have been and are significant differences of opinion about what "prevention" means. For example, in 1973 - just a year before that first rape crisis center was established at Grady Memorial Hospital, the Governor of Georgia ran a Crime Prevention Month campaign. In that campaign was featured a poster that read, "If you get raped, it might be your fault." This particular campaign, apparently targeted mainly to women, didn't last long, given protests from the Governor's own Commission on the Status of Women and others. In fact, the debate the campaign generated gave momentum to folks working to address rape in a different way. But this message is probably pretty familiar to most of us, even if we didn't catch it back in 1973. We still hear it today. The way of thinking behind that 1973 campaign is still pervasive.

If you get raped, it might be your fault ... because you wore that dress ... because you "led him on" ... because you went out alone with him ... because you had that drink ... because you didn't say "no" loudly enough or often enough. The prevention message is, prevention in this case means: don't wear that dress, don't "lead him on," don't go out alone at night, don't drink, say "no" more loudly and more often ... know your enemy and learn to protect yourself.

I assume that the Governor's office went about this campaign with good intentions - just as I assume that people who promote similar messages today have good intentions. The intention of the message is to protect potential victims, to keep people safe. Yet I think folks protested the Governor's campaign because it stated rather bluntly that at least in a significant number of cases rape is the victim's fault. The message intends to protect potential victims, but in fact mainly what it does is blame them. The person it actually protects is the person who commits a sexual assault, by excusing his sexually aggressive choices.

This is not the prevention message I came to sell you on today. The kind of prevention that I want to talk about is sometimes called "primary prevention." It is not the only kind of prevention.

There is "secondary prevention," which might be helping women or others to identify potential assailants and dangerous situations, thereby reducing the risk of assault. And there is "tertiary prevention," which might be something like self-defense, something that can thwart an attack once it's begun. These forms of prevention are really, really important.

Especially for women and children, rape and attempted rape are realities. They are real dangers. I'm not here to judge what women and children, or men for that matter, do to protect themselves from being assaulted. I believe that there are advice, skills, and a sense of empowerment that benefit women and children. I believe there are things that women and children need to know, before and after an assault, about protecting and taking care of themselves. I believe those things are really, really important.

But I am asking, to the extent that we suggest that potential victims - primarily women and children - are the first line of prevention ... to the extent that we suggest that raising their awareness and encouraging their behavior change is the first line of prevention: What's the message in that for men? What are men's roles and responsibilities - as potential perpetrators, or as the fathers, uncles, brothers, coaches, teachers, and peers of potential perpetrators? What are we as a people doing to prevent sexual aggression in men? What are we as men doing to confront it in ourselves and in other men?

In light of these questions, I want to share a story with you that helps to illustrate what a different kind of prevention message might be.

Not long ago, I did some work with young men at a youth detention center. While young men in this setting are often unfairly stigmatized as delinquents and criminals and other things, the young men I worked with in that detention center were not so different from any of the other young men I work with in schools or after-school programs or churches. I think that's important to remember.

In any case, at one point, one of the young men in the group named Robert told a story. I say "young men" though Robert is only 13. He didn't call it this, but the story was in my opinion about a gang rape. According to Robert, who was 11 at the time, a twelve-year-old girl "led" a group of boys and young men into the basement of his home. In this group were 4 or 5 others, including Robert's older cousin and an older brother - the oldest in the group was 16 or 17, Robert said. He said that in the basement this girl began to take off her clothes, and the rest of the group took this as a sign that she wanted to have sex with them. Apparently, all of them did, except Robert.

Robert said that when the girl began to take her clothes off, he left. I asked him why - especially since older boys, including an older brother and cousin that he was likely to look up to, participated. He said he left because his gut told him it was wrong, because he had a sick feeling about it. Robert didn't call this a rape, but I believe that it was. Not just because she was 12, I don't believe that this girl could have meaningfully consented to what was happening - not in the basement with 4 or 5 older, bigger, stronger boys, not in the presence of other circumstances of force and coercion that Robert either failed to mention or didn't know about. Robert described a gang rape and how he refused to participate in it.

There is more to the story. Robert said something else. He said that if the girl had been 16, he would have stayed and participated in the rape.

Assuming he is telling the truth both about why he left and the conditions under which he would have participated in the assault - but, actually, even if he's not - I think there are at least two very important lessons for us contained in Robert's story.

One is that if rape is to be stopped or prevented, that primarily depends on the choices that men and boys like Robert make. Robert told me that he refused to participate in a gang rape even though in his characterization the girl led the boys into the basement and began to take her own clothes off. He could have attempted, though it would have been wrong, to blame her and hold her responsible for the choices he or other boys were making. He could have said, "If she got raped, it was her fault." But he didn't. The choices those boys made determined whether or not a sexual assault would occur in that basement. Robert proved that by leaving. The other boys proved that by committing the assault. This is the first lesson of Robert's story.

The second lesson of the story is that this rape happened, that rape generally happens, primarily because boys and men learn to turn off or disregard this gut feeling, that sick feeling that led Robert out of that basement.

What is this feeling? It may be a sense of right and wrong. I want to think that at a deeper level, it is empathy. It is the ability to see your own humanity in another person's, to try to put yourself in their shoes, to imagine and let yourself feel what they may be feeling or are about to feel. That gut feeling is the biological reminder to treat others with respect, to treat others as you would be treated - and of the principle that human beings are connected, that what we do affects others.

Many people learn to turn off feelings of empathy, or at least disregard them. How? Why? I think there's an important clue in Robert's comment - that if this girl had been 16, he would have stayed. If she had been 16, it would have been ok.

I'm not saying it doesn't matter. When it comes to whether or not a person consents to sexual activity, age generally makes a big difference. But, in this case, how much of a difference? How much of a difference does it make, when it is still in the basement, when there is still a group of boys bigger and stronger, when at least some of those boys would have gone ahead had she been 12? Because she is 16, does this mean those boys suddenly become concerned with her consent? Does this mean they become concerned with how they may be exploiting her vulnerability, her lack of safety? Can the same basic attitudes and behaviors that made them gang rapists of a 12-year-old make them consensual partners of a 16-year-old? I don't see how this is possible.

Yet for Robert, something changes if she is 16. He learned to draw the line there. For Robert, there is a line where what would otherwise be rape, or at least unacceptable, becomes ok - and vice versa.

On the one hand, of course there should be such a line. On one side of this line there is consensual sexual activity, healthy sexual activity. Toward that line, sexual activity may become unhealthy and then - crossing the line - it becomes assault. The question is not whether or not there should be a line but what Robert uses in drawing it.

I believe Robert's statement reflects the fact that when he draws the line, he is not ultimately using his gut feeling - his empathy, his natural inclination to treat others with dignity and respect. Where he draws the line, in this case, is actually where he turns this feeling off. When Robert draws the line between acceptable sexual behavior and rape, he's not making a distinction between aggressive and consensual sexual behavior. When he draws the line, he is making a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate targets for aggressive sexual behavior - with either denial or lack of concern about the harms that will result. A 12-year-old is not a legitimate target. A 16-year-old is. For this 12-year-old girl, in this case, that distinction means a lot. For a 16-year-old in her place, it means Robert would probably choose to rape her.

And there's a bigger picture here. More or less, Robert said: whether or not what I'm about to do is OK is not about me - it's about her. We should be familiar with other versions of the "it's not about me, it's about her" way of thinking. Surrounding an allegation of rape, how often do the questions focus on the way a female victim dresses, the places she went, the people she was with, and on and on and on? When I tell the story Robert told me, how many people will spend most of their time wondering why this girl was in the basement and what she did to "let this happen"? The message is, whatever happened there, it wasn't about him or them. It was about her.

Maybe, in the use of this story, I'm making this sound too complicated? It's not complicated.

There are studies that have shown that the way a rape victim is dressed, the way they act, the places they choose to be or not to be, their age - that all of these things have little or nothing to do with whether or not they were raped, that there is not a significant correlation between these things. I understand why people have done these studies. Sometimes we insist on a study, we insist that it be "proven" to us what we should already know. Sometimes powerful people insist that we prove to them what we already know in order for us to be able to continue to do our work.

But in this case, what we should already know is that a person cannot rape themselves. Nor, by definition, can a person choose or ask to be raped. A person cannot, by their behavior or their beliefs, be the cause of their own rape. They cannot be. If another person, independent of them, apart from them, does not commit the act of rape against them, there is no rape.

Back to Robert's story, then.

At the risk of over-simplifying a complicated problem, Robert's attitude reflects that there is so much rape because we teach boys that it is basically OK to rape, to be sexually aggressive, especially when this behavior is directed at the so-called "right target." Then, enough of these boys, usually after they've grown into men, find the freedom to act on this belief, at the rate of 100,000s of assaults every year in this country.

Who is the "right target"? In figuring it out, a boy can listen to his gut, which is likely to tell him there is no "right target" - that what he intends to do to another person is the problem and is unacceptable under ANY circumstances. If he learns to listen to his gut, that biological reminder to treat others with dignity and respect, he will not be sexually violent. But he may rape if what his gut tells him is overridden by what he learns from the aggressive mentality and behavior of other men around him. Or if what his gut tells him is overridden because the larger culture and society teaches him that to be a man is to be someone who doesn't take "no" for an answer - a man who takes what he wants, a man who's in charge at all costs, a man who is entitled to sex when and where he wants it. If that is what he learns, then there's a high likelihood that he'll be sexually violent. If he learns that women and girls are sex objects and not partners, there's little chance that empathy will kick in to stop him.

Many boys come to basically accept a sexually aggressive mentality. And they learn how to justify aggressive behavior, like Robert does, as the larger culture does, by blaming the victim - to sort women and girls into "good girls" and "bad girls." For example, a 12-year-old remains innocent, a "good girl." Then, when she's 16 ... or 19 ... or 21 ... then, well, "she ought to know better" than to be in that basement with those boys or out on that street by herself late at night. She was a "bad girl," so what did she expect? What did we expect?

Yet someone who meets all the criteria of a "good girl" - as difficult as this may be, as much effort as this may require - can still be raped. The existence of categories of "good girls" and "bad girls" isn't a truth about women or girls, and certainly not about who is raped. It is evidence of the excuses our culture makes for the persistence of rape.

Without a rapist, there is no rape. So, why would we say: "If you get raped, it might be your fault?" How could this ever be true? It can never be true. We may have the best of intentions, but one of the functions

of this statement is always to protect the rapist, to make excuses for him - or, if that is hard to see or accept, the function to protect ourselves from dealing with him, from directly confronting his sexual aggression and sexual aggression generally.

To be effective, sexual violence prevention needs to directly confront sexual aggression. Sexual aggression is the problem. Sexual aggression is what puts people in danger - not the way a potential victim acts or dresses. This is why "If you get raped, it might be your fault" is not only untrue. It is a really, really bad prevention message.

What is primary sexual violence prevention? It is working - through education and other means - to affect the choices of those who commit sexual violence or are likely to do so, bringing about attitude and behavior change that will reduce and eventually end the incidence of rape. This is why it is so important to work with men and boys. Sexual violence prevention is providing boys like Robert with the awareness, guidance and accountability they need to treat all people with dignity and respect - to learn to always listen to that gut feeling rooted in empathy and compassion.

In discussing prevention as I have, I'm suggesting that men's roles and responsibilities are clear and compelling. They are clear and compelling as long as we keep the truth about sexual violence, and our hope that it can end, right here in front of us. Because part of this truth is that men are in the best position to end rape.

HOW exactly does this happen? How does it work? How do we know if we've got it right? People disagree about what is effective, about what it really takes. What works?

When I think of this question, I flash back to a conversation I've often had with friends and others when I first mentioned my work to them.

They ask, "So what do you do? Andy, what are you up to?"

I say, "I work with young men and boys in violence prevention."

"Hmm...wow," they say. (So far, so good, right?)

But then they ask, "How do you do that? I mean, how do you know it works?"

And I say, "Well, that's a very interesting and important question ... I'm so glad you asked it ..."

What works? Why do I find that question intimidating? Why would I rather avoid it? After all, it's a reasonable question. It is a key question.

When most people ask me this question, I assume they are being very practical, very literal. I assume they are asking: "how do you know that the young men or boys that you work with will not go on to be sexually violent?" That is, how can I know that the programs I do change the attitudes and behaviors of the individual young men and boys that are in the programs?

This is a challenging question for a number of reasons. Among them is that, taking this question at face value, my answer is: "I don't know." Not really. Yet, at least for today, I have discovered that my real answer to the question is that, basically, it is the wrong question.

To explain what I mean, I want to return to Robert. At age 13, his age now, what will prevent him from being sexually violent, given what he's told me?

My co-worker and I were at the detention center for four weeks, four sessions, confronting particular beliefs and behaviors, working toward attitude and behavior change. As a member of the group, we were



able to engage Robert pretty directly, face-to-face about beliefs and attitudes that have a high likelihood of leading him to be sexually violent. I think we provided him with the right message and clearly presented the issue of male responsibility.

We were there as older men that he might identify as role models -- older men who were telling and showing him something very different from what he saw in that basement. I distinctly remember telling him to pay close attention to that feeling in his gut that led him out of the basement, lifting up his decision and encouraging him to carry it through in all of his relationships and in every situation. He seemed engaged and moved by what we had to say and by the process. He seemed to hear it and take it in.

All of this sounds promising. To give us more confidence, we could also administer some pre- and post-tests to gauge participants' attitudes and beliefs, before and after the four sessions. A reliable test may not be easy to find. But, assuming we can create one and assuming the participants answer honestly, these tests can give us some idea of participants' beliefs which in turn can be reasonable predictors of their future behavior.

For the sake of argument, let's assume that a post-test confirms that Robert's beliefs and attitudes shift in the four days - four hours, actually - he spent with us. They shift in the right direction - that is, this shift confirms that he has greater awareness of the issue and acceptance of his roles and responsibilities. We could call our program a success, right? Indeed, from this perspective, it is. So, is this what works?

Well, what makes us think that Robert's beliefs won't shift again in the opposite direction in four hours or four days or four years after the program?

Conditions at the detention center may or may not contribute to such a shift. If his experience there is about more disrespect, abuse, and violence or even if it's only about "doing time," he may dismiss our program as a generally hypocritical or irrelevant part of his experience there.

Soon enough, Robert will leave the detention center, and return home - rejoining the neighborhoods and schools where most boys and young men live most of the time. He will still be 13, still learning what it means to be a man. Remember that two of the young men in that basement were Robert's older brother and cousin. He may wish for others, we might wish he had others, but they will continue to be potential role-models for him. What will Robert learn from them, or others - again, not in a few hours, but months and years? What will he learn from seeing violence and disrespect toward women - at home or in the neighborhood or on TV? What will he learn from pornography, a \$10 billion/year industry that most boys will experience?

We can't be sure what Robert will take as an individual from these kinds of experiences. He always has choices. To some extent, it will always be up to him. But we need to take an honest look at the world most boys are living in. It may require real effort and real courage to look this honestly. We may resist doing it. But we need to do it. What we find, I think, is that by-and-large boys don't find a lot of reinforcement for what prevention programs might teach about personal responsibility and nonviolence. In fact, they often find the opposite. Sexual aggression in men is regularly condoned and celebrated. Sexual aggression is rooted in traditional norms of masculinity that value dominance and control over others. Sexual aggression is reinforced by pervasive violence and abuse of power of all kinds in this society - in business, in government, in the military. Sexual aggression is itself profitable - through pornography and other industries of exploitation.

So, before and after our educational programs, we could administer pre- and post-tests. Then what happens? In four months or four years? Do we administer more tests, four months and four years down the road? Do we create some kind of long-term surveillance for large numbers of young men and boys, whether inside or outside of detention centers? How many prevention professionals will we need to recruit to watch over and follow around these boys and young men to make sure they act upon the prevention message?

If this so-called "prevention program that works" is beginning to look like a huge, unwieldy under-taking, this is because preventing rape IS a huge under-taking - so huge that it cannot be left to us as professionals to accomplish it, so huge that it cannot be captured by models and measures of individual change. If this under-taking is left only to prevention professionals, the few that we are and are likely to be, if it is understood in terms of measures of individual change like pre- and post-tests, it will indeed be unwieldy. And it won't work.

What works? Well, to create education and intervention programs whose goal is behavior and attitude change among boys and young men is the right focus. This is the right thing to do. But, to ask whether these programs alone successfully create attitude and behavior change among their individual participants is the wrong question. It is the wrong question because, in evaluating and understanding the role and effectiveness of these programs, it is important to understand that while they can contribute to the change process for participants they are not solely - or even primarily - responsible for it.

We need to make reinforcement of the prevention message at the heart of these programs part of other institutions that will be in Robert's life. The prevention programs I do with young men and boys seek to engage them in a process of change and growth. For this process to be sustained, these young men and boys and the programs themselves need to be brought into more fundamental social change involving schools, families, neighborhoods, religious institutions, and much more. Until the social and cultural life organized by each of these institutions consistently supports principles of personal responsibility, community, and nonviolence, we have little hope of ending rape.

Rape is not inevitable. Rape is not acceptable under ANY circumstances. Rape is a choice. And as we examine the sources that inform this choice, we see that rape is learned behavior and it can be unlearned. Just as our culture and society puts the thought of rape into the heads of boys and men, changes in the culture and society can make rape unthinkable. We need to have that hope.

Developing a plan to end rape and putting it into practice is daunting. I have tried to convince you that while, as a prevention professional, I can craft messages and educational tools, long-term reinforcement is more important. In this, in the long run, I believe there is only a small role for professional training or incarceration or surveillance.

The incidence of sexual violence in our society will be reduced, sexual violence will be prevented, to the extent that boys grow to respect women and the qualities of empathy, personal responsibility, and nonviolence. All of us have a responsibility to live our adult lives in ways that respect those qualities. I suggest this may require some pretty fundamental changes to our way of life in this country. But these changes are worth the effort.

In the process of making those fundamental changes that can prevent sexual violence, the roles and responsibilities of men, in particular, are clear and compelling. Among other things, if we as men first do the work on ourselves and with other men that is required, then fathers, coaches, older brothers, uncles, and other men - and not some unwieldy corps of professionals - will be the role models and mentors that boys need in supporting safety and justice for women, children, and themselves.

Thank you.