

# **ENGAGING YOUNG MEN AS ALLIES**

A Summary Report of Survey Research Conducted  
By the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team

**June 2007**

[www.youngwomensactionteam.org](http://www.youngwomensactionteam.org)

Since June 2006, the Young Women's Action Team (YWAT) has been immersed in a multi-part project called "*Engaging Young Men as Allies to End Violence against Women and Girls.*" One of the most important aspects of our project is the research that we have undertaken to better understand how young men perceive issues of violence against women and girls.

The first part of our research involved producing a documentary. For this, we wanted to primarily get the perspectives of the young men in our community. We relied on friends and acquaintances. We also interviewed some local experts – adult men who we admire. We spent several days crafting our interview questions. We felt good about the final product but knew that it was still limited in its scope. Because we mainly reached out to people from our community and social circles, the interviewees were primarily African American and White. We did not hear the voices of Latino and Asian young men in the film.

It was important to us that our documentary included the voices of young women who have been personally impacted by male violence. As such, the male voices in the film shared the screen with those of young women. We were the ones narrating the story in the documentary. It provided a window through which we were introduced to what some men thought and how they felt about violence against women and girls.

We consider the documentary as the first phase of our research. In phase two, we decided that we wanted to let young men speak for themselves. A small group of us developed a survey that we decided to administer to young men ages 12-24. The survey covered some questions that we didn't ask in the film and others that could help us plan ahead for the next phases of our project. A primary reason for developing the survey was to capture the voices of Latino and Asian young men along with those of African Americans and Whites.

The following is a summary of our key findings from the survey. We were helped by our male ally, Brandon Carter, who collected over 45 surveys from young men. In addition, Nick Gainer from Between Friends who is also an ally collected over 120 surveys for us. We thank them for their help and consistent support. Our adult ally, Mariame Kaba, was invaluable in this process. She helped us to develop the survey, she imputed all of the data over the course of two long days, and finally she helped us to analyze the results that you will read in the coming pages. We thank her for everything that she does to support us and our work.

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*The Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team*  
June 2007

## Demographic Information

In March and April 2007, the Young Women's Action Team (YWAT) collected 226 surveys from young men ages 11 to 22. The following table outlines the age breakdown of our respondents.

N=226

11 to 13 years old (n = 14)	6.2%
14 to 15 years old (n = 85)	37.6%
<b>16 to 18 years old (n = 116)</b>	<b>51.3%</b>
19 to 22 years old (n = 11)	4.9%

The next table outlines the racial composition of our survey sample. We were unsuccessful at collecting many surveys from Asian-American young men. We hope that others who have connections to that community will conduct their own research in the future.

N=225 (1 person did not answer this question)

Asian (n =7)	3.1%
Latino (n =55)	24.4%
<b>Black (n =98)</b>	<b>43.6%</b>
White (n =52)	23.1%
Mixed (n =10)	4.4%
Other (n =3)	1.3%

The young men who were surveyed live in communities across Chicago. Listed are just a few of the zip codes.

60608 (13)	5.7%
60609 (21)	9.3%
60617 (11)	4.9%
60618 (10)	4.4%
<b>60623 (23)</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
60624 (11)	4.9%
60626 (19)	8.4%
60629 (10)	4.4%
60638 (20)	8.8%
60644 (8)	3.5%

## **The Good News**

Of the 224 young men who responded to the question: **Are issues of violence against women and girls important to you?** 58% responded that these issues were *very important* to them and 38.4% said that the issues were *moderately important* to them. Only 3.6% of young men said that issues of violence against women and girls were *not important* to them. As we look to engage more young men as allies to end violence, we begin from a position of strength with a potential base of supporters who care about the same issues that we do.

An overwhelming percentage (98.7%) of our survey respondents identified rape as an example of violence against women and girls. This finding points to the great success of the anti-rape movement in clearly communicating the fact that rape is violence. This message has obviously been internalized by young men in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Below is a table highlighting the responses provided by the young men who were asked the following question: **In your opinion, which of the following is an example of violence against women and girls (check all that apply)?**

N =226

Rape	98.7%
Slapping	93.4%
Sexism	73%
Constantly criticism a woman/girl	69%
Telling a woman/girl what she can do	66.8%
Yelling at a woman/girl	63.3%
Racism	46.5%
Homophobia	14.2%
Poverty	12.8%

In response to the question: **How many of your male friends or family members do you think would be interested in getting involved in taking action on issues of violence against women and girls?** Only 20.4% of our respondents said that they knew *no one* who would be interested in this. *50.9% knew between 1 and 5 people and 13.7% knew more than 10 other men who would be interested in getting involved in taking action on issues of violence against women and girls!* This is very heartening.

In response to the question: **Have you ever asked someone to stop using derogatory or negative terms of refer to girls and women (i.e. slut, ho, bitch)?** 64.2% of young men who completed our survey answered that they had.

Over half of our respondents (52.7%) said that they had intervened during a physical confrontation between a boy and girl. Both of these findings are very encouraging because they suggest young men's willingness to step outside the role of silent bystander and instead to actively interrupt interpersonal violence.

## **Opportunities for Education and Engagement**

We asked survey respondents: **“In your opinion, what percentage of women is physically assaulted by a male partner each year?”** The majority of respondents (38.1%) said that 40% of women are physically assaulted by a male partner each year. According to most official statistics, the number is actually closer to 25%. In this case, the young men who were surveyed overestimated (based on official statistics) the percentage of women that is physically assaulted each year. However, upon further reflection, perhaps their estimate is closer to the true extent of violence that many women experience at the hands of men on a daily basis. Many experts believe that official statistics dramatically undercount the actual number of victims of violence. Are the young men who we surveyed witnessing a significant amount of male violence in their day to day lives and therefore assume that more women are being victimized? This was an interesting finding for us -- one that we plan to probe in order to better understand its significance.

15%	7.5
25%	29.6
<b>40%</b>	<b>38.1</b>
60%	24.8

In response to the question: **How many of your male friends or family members do you think would say that women who are physically abused by men usually provoke the violence?** *Only 24.3% of young men responded that they had no male friends or family members who would say that women who are physically abused by men usually provoke the violence.* Almost the same percentage (23.4%) has at least 5 male friends and family who would say that women who are physically abused by men usually provoke the violence. The majority of respondents (52.2%) said that 1 to 5 male friends or family members would suggest that women provoke the violence that they experience at the hands of men. This finding suggests that anti-violence against women and girls’ organizations must do more to educate men about the fact that perpetrators of violence must be accountable for their actions rather than blaming the victims.

Most of the young men (56.6%) who were surveyed **personally** knew between 1 to 5 girls and women who have experienced male violence. This is not surprising given the epidemic of violence against women and girls in our communities. 16.4% of respondents said that they knew between 5 and 10 female victims of male violence. Only 24.3% said that they did not personally know any girls and women who have experienced violence from men. This finding provides communities and organizations with an opportunity to personalize our appeals for support to help end violence against women and girls. The overwhelming percentage (75.7%) of young men has a personal stake in the safety of women and girls based on knowing female victims of violence.

We asked the young men surveyed why they thought that more men are not involved in working to end violence against women and girls. Their answers listed below were very encouraging and provide an entry point for recruiting more men to the movement to end male violence against women.

Not important/not our issue	28.9%
Not enough time	7.6%
Never asked to be involved	23.1%
<b>Don't know enough about the issues</b>	<b>40.4%</b>

### **Cause for Concern?**

One of the main goals of our “*Engaging Young Men as Allies*” project has been to encourage young men to take on more public roles in the anti-violence against women and girls movement. We asked a series of questions aimed at learning whether young men would potentially be interested in taking on such roles within the movement.

In response to the question: **Have you considered participating in a public march, rally, or demonstration organized to protest violence against women and girls?** Only 23.9% of our respondents said that they had considered participating in a public march, rally, or demonstration.

Even less of our respondents (18.1%) had considered *joining or working with organizations that actively confront sexism* and take steps to prevent violence against women and girls. Finally a still smaller percentage (16.9%) has considered *speaking out publicly about violence against women and girls*.

These findings could be interpreted as discouraging. The following quote though underscores another way of looking at our survey results:

*“A commitment to violence prevention includes a variety of ongoing tasks and actions at both the public and private levels. Some actions that are public may seem indicative of a highly committed stance (e.g., attending a rally or march), yet it is the innocuous, personal daily challenges that are more difficult for most men to undertake (e.g., confronting a sexist coworker by the water cooler). Going to a rally may simply require the public role of sitting on a blanket surrounded by supportive, like-minded individuals (Crooks et al., 2007).”*

This quote illustrates that sometimes public actions can actually be easier to do and less meaningful than private, personal ones. Our survey results indicate that a few young men have in fact considered taking on public roles within the movement. Our challenge going forward will be to identify these men and to enlist them as allies and supporters while continuing to encourage more private and personal acts of interrupting violence. We still believe that there is need for more men to be “seen” taking action in order to influence a larger number of them to join the movement in private as well as public ways.

## Interesting Racial Differences

1. *Are issues of violence against women and girls important to you?*

	<b>White (n= 52)</b>	<b>Black (n= 98)</b>	<b>Latino (n= 55)</b>
<b>Not important</b>	2%	3.1%	7.3%
<b>Moderately important</b>	40%	36.7%	40%
<b>Very important</b>	58%	60.2%	52.7%

2. *How many girls and women do you personally know who have experienced male violence against them?*

	<b>White (n= 52)</b>	<b>Black (n= 98)</b>	<b>Latino (n= 55)</b>
<b>None</b>	34.6%	22.4%	20%
<b>1-5</b>	53.8%	46.9%	70.9%
<b>5-10</b>	11.5%	25.5%	7.3%
<b>More than 10</b>	0%	5.1%	1.8%

Young white men (34.6%) were more likely to respond that they did not personally know any young women who have experienced male violence than did their Black and Latino counterparts. Young black men (25.5%) were much more likely to personally know at least 5 or more girls and women who have experienced male violence than were their Latino and white counterparts.

3. *Have you ever asked someone to stop using derogatory or negative terms to refer to girls and women (i.e. slut, ho, bitch).*

	<b>White (n= 52)</b>	<b>Black (n= 98)</b>	<b>Latino (n= 55)</b>
<b>YES</b>	51.9%	75.5%	49.1%
<b>NO</b>	48.1%	24.5%	50.9%

Young Black men (75.5%) were much more likely to ask someone to stop using negative terms to refer to girls and women than were their white and Latino counterparts.

4. *Have you ever intervened during a physical confrontation between a boy and girl?*

	<b>White (n= 52)</b>	<b>Black (n= 98)</b>	<b>Latino (n= 55)</b>
<b>YES</b>	53.8%	57.1%	43.6%
<b>NO</b>	46.2%	42.9%	56.4%

5. *How many of your male friends and family members do you think would be interested in getting involved in taking action on issues of violence against women and girls?*

	<b>White (n= 52)</b>	<b>Black (n= 98)</b>	<b>Latino (n= 55)</b>
<b>None</b>	30.8%	13.3%	23.6%
<b>1-5</b>	50%	44.9%	60%
<b>5-10</b>	13.5%	20.4%	9.1%
<b>More than 10</b>	5.8%	21.4%	7.3%

## **Practical Applications**

As we move ahead to develop a train the trainer session for male allies in the coming months, we plan to use some of what we learned in our survey research to inform our work.

### *1. Accentuate the positives – Build from Strength.*

- a. Violence against Women and Girls **IS** a Men’s Issue -- We plan to highlight the fact that the overwhelming majority of young men say that issues of violence against women and girls are important to them. We will lead with this in order to establish a foundation from which to build together.
- b. Many young men say that they have acted in some way to interrupt interpersonal violence. We need to lift up these stories and invite workshop participants to share their own stories of resisting the role of silent bystander.

### *2. Provide concrete examples preferably through visual or auditory resources of men who publicly denounce violence against women and girls and other forms of violence.*

- a. Our findings suggest that young men are not quite ready to step into public roles in the anti-violence against women and girls movement. This raises at least three questions for us at this time.
  - What other roles should we be asking them to play in the movement?
  - Is it enough if young men remain at the level of taking individual responsibility for interrupting interpersonal violence?
  - What are the specific, culturally-relevant resources that exist or can be created to provide examples of the public role that other men have taken in the anti-violence movement (in general)? These could be used and perhaps adapted for our work.

### *3. Personalize stories of violence against women and girls.*

- a. Our findings confirm that most young men personally know at least one woman or girl who has been victimized by male violence.
- b. We will appeal to this reality and ask them to share a personal story about a girl or woman who they know has been a victim of violence.
- c. We will use this as an entry point before discussing the broader framework of oppression.

To view a full summary of the survey results, visit  
[www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=373216085847](http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=373216085847)