

## Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity

### “We're not boys anymore, we need to be courageous”: Towards an understanding of what it means to be a man in Lavender Hill

Marianne Brittijn

Published online: 10 Jun 2013.

**To cite this article:** Marianne Brittijn (2013): “We're not boys anymore, we need to be courageous”: Towards an understanding of what it means to be a man in Lavender Hill, Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity, DOI:10.1080/10130950.2013.804744

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2013.804744>

#### abstract

In Lavender Hill, a socio-economically disadvantaged and predominantly ‘coloured’<sup>1</sup> Cape Flats community, drug abuse, domestic violence and gangsterism are part of daily life.<sup>2</sup> The men from this community are often perceived as either violent gangsters, or neglectful and emotionally ‘absent’ – as fathers, husbands and/or positive role models. In order to deepen its understanding and to inform its practice, the New World Foundation, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that operates in Lavender Hill, carried out a pilot research project in the second half of 2012. This Focus is based on the preliminary findings of this research and focuses on the meanings men from Lavender Hill attribute to masculinity and ‘being a man’. It draws on the responses from 10 life history interviews, where the respondents speak about the respondents’ past and present relationships to the social problems of gangsterism, substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment and the cycle of men disappearing from their families and communities. The respondents’ life experiences and particular context inform their desire to embody other ways of being men. The intention is to contribute to the debate around perceptions of masculinity in a marginalised, ‘coloured’ community, by presenting voices from ‘the ground’.

Some tentative conclusions are drawn from the research, however because of the small number of respondents these are not generalisable.

#### keywords

Socio-cultural construction of manhood, crisis of masculinity, absent male role models, life histories, Cape Flats



UCT KNOWLEDGE CO-OP

The UCT Knowledge Co-op facilitated this collaborative project. Dr Adelene Afrika from the Department of Gender Studies at UCT advised the author.