



# Guidelines for Challenging Sexism and Male Supremacy

by Paul Kivel

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**IT IS POLITICAL THAT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN** are not widely acknowledged and talked about. It is political that when issues of sexism and male supremacy are raised they are usually denied or minimized. It is political that women are commonly thought to have achieved great success in our society and many people think that we have eliminated most barriers to gender equity. And it is political that we (particularly men) don't use a gender lens all day, everyday, to see and understand the world.

I want to offer some simple suggestions for putting these issues on a social justice agenda.

**Use a gender lens**—as well as economic, racial and other lens—all of the time. Constantly ask yourself, “What is the difference that gender makes in this situation?”

Always ask, “**Where are the women**—why aren't they in leadership?” “**Where are the other women**—which groups of women are not at the table?”

**Women constitute over half the population.** Notice and respond when they do not have representation, leadership, and power.

**Interpersonal violence is a social justice issue.** Unless each of us and our communities address and heal from the interpersonal violence that tears our lives apart, we will not be able to work together and foster the full, creative participation of vast numbers of people, nor will we be able to meet women's needs for safety, healing, community and justice.

**Make sure that women's contributions are recognized and honored.** Notice and draw attention to the unpaid and unrecognized work that women do to support our daily lives, to sustain those in need, and to make things happen.

**Interrupt male cultures of power** that operate to exclude, marginalize, or disempower women. Notice how men resist



accepting responsibility for male privilege and male supremacy and speak out.

**Become more knowledgeable** about women's cultures, women histories, women's contributions, and women's lives.

**Look to progressive women and women's organizations for leadership.**

**Strategize** about who you can organize with to address issues of sexism and male supremacy.

Identify where you have work to do to **build and sustain intimate, family, and community relationships built on complete respect, consent, and mutuality.**

**Identify your next steps in challenging sexism and male supremacy.**

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to [paul@paulkivel.com](mailto:paul@paulkivel.com). Further resources are available at [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).