

## One million men. One million promises.

### The solution to violence against women?

#### ***Include men.***

#### **The basics.**

Now is the time to end violence against women. On March 8, with launch events worldwide, [Breakthrough](#) will take its award-winning [Bell Bajao](#) (“Ring the Bell”) campaign global. **One million men. One million promises** calls on men worldwide to promise to take concrete action to end violence against women.

Men and women together have responded with outrage to recent dramatic acts of violence from Delhi to Cairo to Steubenville and beyond. Effective laws, courts, and cops are essential -- but they are not enough. We need individual and community action to challenge the habits and norms that perpetuate violence. **Men, their allies, and their actions, can create that global tipping point, today.** Together with our partners in South Africa, Brazil, Malaysia, and more, we will secure one million promises in one year, starting March 8, 2013 (International Women’s Day).

**With men as leaders and partners, we can build a world in which women are safe — and in which all of us live freely, fully, and without fear.**

Together we can build a safer world.

Make your promise today: [www.breakthrough.tv/ringthebell/](http://www.breakthrough.tv/ringthebell/)

#### **Background.**

Decades of activism have resulted in significant change: laws and policies addressing violence and discrimination everywhere from courts to classrooms to homes and boardrooms. But most of these are designed to respond after the fact. What will help reduce or prevent violence before it happens?

- **We need culture change.** Effective laws, courts, and cops are essential, but they are not enough. Prevention requires deep and lasting *culture change*. Culture change requires us all — including men. It starts with individuals changing their attitudes and actions. And when those efforts reach critical mass, violence against women — once considered a “private” matter — becomes a public responsibility. Violence against women, once considered acceptable, becomes unacceptable.
- **Men are part of the solution.** Breakthrough’s award-winning Bell Bajao ([bellbajao.org](http://bellbajao.org)) campaign, launched in India in 2008, helped do just that: it measurably changed the way millions of men and women throughout India think about and respond to domestic violence — and it positioned men as leaders and partners in stopping violence

against women. Now is the time to take that campaign global and address violence against women in all its forms.

### **Why now?**

Today, we stand at a global tipping point. Awareness and momentum, among both civil society and government leaders, have never been stronger. We believe we can end this global pandemic in our lifetimes.

- **Exceptional global attention and outrage.** A series of increasingly shocking — and increasingly visible — acts of violence from Delhi to Cairo to Bredasdorp, South Africa to Steubenville, OH have drawn unprecedented attention and outrage worldwide. Journalists, activists, and other influencers have made clear that all such incidents are expressions of one shared global problem.
- **Commitment by leaders.** In 1985, women had to fight for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt its first-ever resolution using the term “domestic violence.” In March 2013, the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will address violence against women as its central theme.

### **Why violence against women?**

Violence against women is the issue of our time. 1 in 3 women worldwide faces violence. Its scale is immense. It crosses all borders of country, culture, and class. It fuels and is fueled by virtually all other societal ills and inequalities. That said, we of course must address violence in all its forms, including violence against men, in order to move toward our shared vision of a peaceful world for all.

- **Violence is everywhere.** Violence is one expression of women’s unequal status, which varies in form and degree across cultures and countries, but which persists worldwide: from job discrimination to street and workplace harassment to domestic violence, rape and sexual assault and the institutions and cultures that excuse or ignore it, forced or early marriage, sex and labor trafficking, female genital mutilation, sex-selective elimination, and more.
- **The cycle continues.** Witnessing parental domestic violence is the strongest predictor of violence in one’s adult and intimate relationships.
- **Violence hurts *all* of us.** When women are unequal and unsafe, they cannot fully participate in society. Only when women *are* safe in public and private, can men, children, families, homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, communities, institutions, economies, ecosystems, and nations truly thrive.

*“Because it is — some — men who commit violence against women, it must be men who change. By this we mean not only those men who use violence in their relationships. We also mean the majority of us who have remained silent. Men dominate parliaments, pulpits and police forces. When we are silent, we allow violence to continue. Men today support equality not only because we know it is fair and right, but because it will enable the women in our lives to be safer and to exercise their power — and because it will inspire us to be better fathers, friends, and partners. Which means: we will all have better lives.” — Dr. Michael Kimmel, distinguished sociologist and expert on male violence*

## Why men?

When it comes to violence against women, an immense cultural shift has begun: men have started to think of themselves as part of the solution — and a crucial part, at that.

- **Men are protesting.** Men stood side by side with women protesting rape — and inadequate and inappropriate responses to it — in Delhi and Steubenville, and sexual harassment in Cairo.
- **Men are taking the lead.** Dallas, TX mayor Mike Rawlings, joined by members of the Dallas Cowboys, recently [called on men to stop domestic violence](#).
- **Men understand that discrimination and violence against women hurts them, too.** Men have started to see violence against women as not “just” a “women’s” issue but as an expression of inequality that limits them, too.
- **Men have power among peers and over institutions.** Men know that their actions add up and have impact. Men know their power to influence other men.
- **Most men are *not* violent.** But many, even the most well-meaning, do remain silent, especially in the face of powerful norms and pressures. Breakthrough aims to change that: to create such a groundswell of men speaking out and taking action that to do so is no longer a challenge.
- **Men want to know what they can actually *do*.** Breakthrough has convened meetings with young and/or influential men to discuss the Bell Bajao campaign and to think about the role men and boys can play in interrupting violence against women. We have been deeply struck by those who said, “Nobody’s ever asked us this before. Nobody has never come to us and asked, ‘What can *you* do to stop violence against women?’” When people are invited to be part of a solution, part of something bigger, and given something they can actually *do*, they step up.

*“It’s our fault. It’s not the women’s fault. We want to make it known that any violent act toward a woman will not be tolerated by the men in the city...We will reinforce that hitting women is not acceptable, and we will learn how to intervene when we see it taking place. I want fathers to bring their sons, because this is undoubtedly a learned behavior and we have an intergenerational reaching moment here. We have a unique opportunity to change the mindset of the next generation in Dallas. We’re making this a grass roots movement. And we’ll take it back to the community. In the past this has been viewed as a women’s issue, but it ain’t. It’s our problem.”* — Mayor Mike Rawlings, Dallas, TX

## What are we asking men to *do*? What can *one* person do?

Breakthrough is asking people to stand up and stand together to stop violence against women and build a safer world for us all.

- **Make change at home, with your own tools, in your own worlds.** We believe that human rights and social change start in our own individual hearts, actions, and worlds. While it is important to understand violence against women as a global issue, we are asking people to *not* think of violence against women as something that happens “over there,” to or because of “other people.” We are asking them to understand that violence, everywhere, is an expression of unequal status and treatment of women. We

are asking people — especially men — to start by looking at themselves: at their own attitudes, homes, schools, workplaces, and spheres.

- **Start by asking questions.**
  - Am I doing all I can to challenge inequality in my family, classroom, office, military unit, sports team or program, group of friends?
  - Can I start sharing chores and responsibilities with my sisters?
  - Will I call out friends (or online commenters) who disrespect women?
  - Does my company need anti-sexual harassment/discrimination training?
  - How can I safely interrupt the violent argument I overhear in my building or witness on the subway?
  - How can I be a role model for younger boys? What funds, expertise, or assets can I donate to the cause?
  - What action can I take, just in the world I inhabit and influence?
  - How can I be accountable?
- **Stand with women in solidarity.** Women do not need men to “protect” or “rescue” them from bad guys. Women need men to stand with them and act on our shared commitment to a safe and thriving world.
- **Think of women as mothers, sisters, daughters, girlfriends, wives — and humans.** Understandably, men often connect to this issue through actual or imagined personal experience. But we are not asking men to help stop violence against women *only* because women are their sisters, daughters, partners, and mothers. We are asking men to help stop violence against women because women are humans with the right to safety and because we share a commitment to a safe and thriving world.

*“Look around you. Look into your families and do what you can there. Look into your neighborhoods, and do what you can there. And forgive me if this sounds preachy, but I am talking from experience. It took me time to learn to iron my own clothes, wash my own dishes, and to cook for my family. It takes effort even today. I was not born with such habits. But I make an effort because I know that it is an example I can hand on to my son and, indirectly, my daughters. Rape is the monstrous face of ordinary domestic injustices. Do not fall into the easy trap of blaming politicians for a flaw that exists in almost every home.”* — Indian author and father Tabish Khair, [writing](#) in The Hindu

### **Branding and style notes.**

- **Ring the Bell** is the global expansion of Breakthrough’s award-winning Bell Bajao (“Ring the Bell” in Hindi) campaign, launched in India in 2008.
- **One million men. One million promises** is the current initiative of that global campaign, running for one year starting March 8, 2013.
- **One million men. One million promises** is written in sentence case and in bold and/or italics depending on typeface context.
- **Ring the Bell** is written in title case, both in reference to the campaign and in reference to actions people may take. (“I will Ring the Bell by promising to...”).

**About Breakthrough.**

Breakthrough is a unique global human rights organization that creates cutting-edge pop culture and innovative education to inspire new generations of leaders to act for change. We work out of centers in India and the U.S. — the world's largest democracies — to end violence against women and promote human rights.