

Rev. Dr. Kate Braestrup
MEN
Minns Lecture
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Good evening everybody. Thank you so much for coming, and my thanks also to the Minns Lectureship Committee for inviting me to give the Minns Lectures this year. I'm very honored.

In these three lectures, I plan to talk about three dangerous subjects:
Men...women...and children.

I didn't realize that these are dangerous, but when my friend Susan found out what my titles were, she called me up to inquire as to whether I'd lost my mind? Susan is also a minister, Unitarian Universalist, a nice, Birkenstock-and-socks liberal like me. And she's a woman, married to a man, with children. "All three subjects are dangerous," she said. "Basically, Kate, you've agreed to bring three giant hornets nests down to Boston, and now you're going to have to stand up and kick them."

Wow.

Luckily, I'm starting with the easiest subject. Men.

It is so easy and quite socially acceptable—to disguise a nice, self-indulgent sneer as a reasonable discourse. If, for example, I were to quote scientific evidence to the effect that language development occurs earlier in girls than in boys, I and all the women in the room could smile that gentle, superior smile: Oh yes. Girls really are... well, let's face it. Better.

It is true, by the way. I mean, there is evidence that girls seem to acquire language earlier than boys do, and my own experience bears this out: My three daughters did indeed learn to talk earlier than their brothers.

On the other hand, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and Barack Obama were all once little boys and doubtless were slower at acquiring language skills than their sisters, but the thing is, ladies

The boys catch up.

So for many reasons, self-preservation not least among them, I'm going to try to avoid cheap shots.

Though I am a minister, and we are in a church, this is not a church service and I am not going to preach a sermon. I'm just going to give a talk, and if a few hornets get kicked loose, well, we're all smart, liberal, tolerant people. We can handle it.

I am a Unitarian-Universalist, spiritual heir to two heretical Christian traditions. A quick re-cap: Unitarians were -the anti-trinitarians, worshippers of a uni-God who thought that conceiving of a God in the three persons (father son and holy spirit) was polytheistic and illogical. Unitarianism tended to demote Jesus, which pissed off other Christians, so Unitarians occasionally got burned at the stake.

Then there were the Universalists, the no-hell -soft-pews Christians who believed in a God too omnipotent, omniscient and plain loving to preside over an eternal torture chamber. The doctrine of hell was likewise considered illogical, but it was also (and remains) just plain mean.

Eventually, around the time of my birth, the two traditions recognized their parallel trajectories, and merged.

Under UU-ism as it is today, I could be so many things... but I've concluded that I really am a Unitarian-Universalist. Not just a post-Christian religious liberal, but a seeker who swings between the poles these two U's represent. There's the theoretical, head-y, egg-head side... Hey! Let's have a

six hour debate on the finer points of Docetism! And there is the side that seeks a God worth worshipping.

For those of you who don't know this, we U-Us nowadays pride ourselves on our acceptance of different ways of thinking and believing. You say you're a neo-Hindu who worships dozens of Gods, and believes in an afterlife that includes eternal torment? Welcome! (Just as long as you aren't, you know, a *Republican...*)

We're non-doctrinal, non-dogmatic, and willing and able to to think outside the box.

The phrase "thinking outside the box" gets thrown around so much because in general human beings really, really like our boxes. We like to build 'em and we like to climb inside and crawl around in 'em, admiring how nicely the walls line up, all the spiffy right-angles, and smooth joins. Inside the box, everything fits together, we have the right answers, so we know the right questions: This is both soothing to our fears and agreeable to our egos.

And boxes are not all bad. Being able to build a box—isolate a pattern, come up with a theory, propound a dogma, proclaim a truth we hold to be self-evident—is one of the most powerful of the human mind's capabilities.

My spiritual forebears, as I say, having had painful experience of what it was like to be forcibly squashed into someone else's box, decided that box-lessness is the way to go, and as a natural iconoclast and heretic, I tend to agree. Still, there are some disadvantages to box-free life and worship.

Say a Christian clergy colleague and I get together to drink coffee and purge a bit about our respective jobs. He might complain about the slackers and whiners he's got on his church council, or the leak in his church roof...or maybe one of the kids in his congregation is sick again, and it's feared her cancer has come back...

I might say something about the fatal snowmobile accident I'd attended. So far, so good. But if I mention that the victim's mother asked me why God allows such terrible things to happen...

PING! Just as if I'd pressed a button, the minister will get that look on his face, and he's in the box, the one labeled "THEODICY PROBLEM." Depending on my mood—which is to say, depending on how enthusiastic I feel about re-visiting that snowmobile accident—I might just get in there with him. It's nice and clean in there, with freewill theism, theological determinism, the way God self-limits in order to grant free moral agency to man... blah blah blah... look at all the spiffy right angles, the smooth joins. We're not out there, in the world, sitting beside the bed of the little girl with cancer, or standing in the bloody snow with the mother of a dead boy. We're in the box, and in the box everything makes sense.

It's not that the minister is incorrect. It's certainly not that he's a bad guy. He's just IN THE BOX.

And I have to say, because he's a Christian, most of his boxes are conveniently labeled with nice, large-font notices saying "DOGMA" or "CREDAL STATEMENT" so I know up front that we're stepping into a box.

While the calumny often directed at Unitarian Universalists is that "you people don't believe in anything," I am more inclined to fear that the temptations of the box are more difficult to avoid than we imagine.

As I said, this isn't a church service, so I haven't even softened you up with a few prayers, pried open your heart with hymns and choirs. I'm lecturing, so by definition I'm in my box. You're listening, and being very polite, and you're evaluating the box. All clear and above-board.

But if you and I were having a conversation—as opposed to me lecturing and you listening—how would you know when I’m climbing into a box, given that I’m a Unitarian Universalist religious liberal and thus feel no obligation to provide notice?

Sign number one—My gaze will become a little abstract, my focus will shift to that philosophical and theological plane that Martin Luther King called “mid-air.” My face will assume a certain expression, the “I know the answer to this one” expression that signals a kind of intellectual pleasure in the consideration, even when what is being considered is pain.

Sign number two: I’ll get confused, defensive or angry if you threaten to wreck my box. I like my box. Inside my box, I feel smart and righteous. Inside my box, I feel safe.

Feeling smart, righteous and safe is fine—indeed, probably necessary—when it comes to preaching a sermon or, for that matter, giving a lecture.

It’s not as useful for a chaplain.

A chaplain is a member of the clergy (or sometimes a recognized and accepted lay substitute) who is attached to a discrete, secular organization, such as a military unit, a hospital, a fire department or law enforcement agency. For the purposes of this talk, I’ll be using the term “chaplain” to refer to those who work with people in pain: A hospital chaplain, a prison chaplain, a fire or police chaplain.

The chaplain generally combines the roles of spiritual advisor and ad hoc pastoral counselor with perhaps some ceremonial functions thrown in: In addition to my pastoral duties for the Maine Warden Service, for example, I’ll conduct warden weddings and funerals, offer an invocation or benediction at an awards dinner...one of my lieutenants calls these the Hail Marys and High Ho Silvers... and I bless warden babies.

It's often been suggested to me that Unitarian Universalists must be natural chaplains since we begin from that tolerant, not-in-the-box place, and there might be some truth in this...

But not a lot. I have a colleague, a Unitarian Universalist minister, whose personal theological position does not permit him to pray. He tolerates the prayers of others, of course, but if he is asked to lead a prayer—for example, at a meeting of local clergy—he firmly declines. Nope, not even a moment of silence.

This is not a mere eccentricity. His is a thoroughly thought-out, principled position... He's a fine church minister for a UU church but he wouldn't fly as a chaplain. Meanwhile, one of my mentors, another law enforcement chaplain, has a day job as the pastor of an Assemblies of God church. (That's Sarah Palin's church. They speak in tongues there.) He's a wonderful chaplain.

So I suspect that it isn't the religion-of-origin that winkles a chaplain out of the box: It's something about chaplaincy itself.

I serve as chaplain to the Maine Warden Service, the law enforcement bureau of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

In Maine, game wardens are empowered just like State Troopers, with statewide jurisdiction. They can respond to any crime, any time, but their primary enforcement responsibility is enforcing fish and wildlife law. I don't have much to do with that part of their work, not because it isn't important, but because it doesn't involve trauma to human beings.

Game wardens also respond to a wide variety of wild-land calamities, including snowmobile accidents, all-terrain vehicle accidents, freshwater boating accidents: When someone drowns in one of our lakes or rivers, we have a dive team that retrieves the body. The warden service undertakes wilderness search and rescue or search and recovery operations, so when a hiker goes missing, or an Alzheimer's patient or a child wanders off into the woods the warden service searches for them.

Because Maine has a lot of woods, and our homicides and suicides often have a wild land dimension (the body is in the woods, or the evidence is in the woods) game wardens are often called upon to work with the state police on investigations. Since Maine is a large state and cops are thin on the ground, a game warden is often the closest available sworn unit when there's a domestic, a barricaded gunman, a mentally ill subject who's off his meds but has a weapon, or some other urgent situation.

When it seems probable that the victim of any given calamity is dead, the wardens call the chaplain.

The job of the Maine Warden Service chaplain is two-fold by design. My role on-scene at a search and recovery operation, for example, is to be with the family and friends while they wait for their loved one to be found. I provide practical assistance, information, and, when desired, assistance with working through the theological or spiritual questions that naturally arise. When desired, I offer prayers. Once a body has been recovered, I give the bad news and then offer consolation and support while family members marshal their own resources for the long, hard work of grief that lies ahead.

I also provide pastoral care and support to the wardens themselves, in the hope that this might mitigate the physical, psychological and spiritual effects that repeated exposure to vicarious traumatization and grief tend to have on human beings.

I know this doesn't sound like the best job in ministry, but being the chaplain to the Maine Warden Service really is the best job in ministry!

A church, temple, meeting-house or mosque-based ministry has advantages. By and large, the people one ministers to in church have all their clothes on, they smell good, and they aren't screaming. There is a rhythm to the

work, and at least some predictability. Sabbath to sabbath, meeting to meeting, bible study to bible study, high holy day to holiday.

Sit, stand, kneel, stand... The congregants' knees, hands and tongues know their parts. Familiar songs are sung, familiar prayers said in familiar ways, and the minister's sermon is preached in a spiritual language everyone present can be presumed to share. The context amplifies the message, the word is satisfactorily underscored by the body's belonging, and when the service is concluded, the pastor can—Tah Dah!—send forth the members of this beloved community refreshed and fortified in their shared faith.

Chaplaincy is unpredictable. The hospital chaplain can't know who is going to get sick with what illness, the fire chaplain can't predict fires, and the law enforcement chaplain can't even begin to imagine the terrible and foolish things one human being might do to another. Whether in a hospital emergency room, in a Red Cross shelter, by the shore of a lake in which a child has drowned, the chaplain meets a patient, victim or survivor who has been suddenly and forcibly stripped of the markers of her identity and power. She is out of her element, she is in pain and naked, she is afraid. Suffering is the only thing a chaplain can count on finding, but because ours is a pluralistic society, American sufferers are scooped more or less at random from a bewildering variety of cultures and creeds.

Whatever religious tradition and belief system the chaplain herself adheres to, she won't be able to presume a shared spiritual language with this suffering person. Whatever the chaplain's own tradition says about proselytizing, prayer, salvation or the lack thereof, there isn't time to force the sufferer to climb into the chaplain's box, even if it really is a better box.

Thus, the chaplain—no matter who she is—is going to have to climb out of the box and into a reality in which there is no language but the most basic, human spiritual esperanto, a language of stripped-down, present-tense word and present flesh: *Show up, shut up and be.*

As I say, this is not for everyone. But the law enforcement chaplains I work with in Maine—and we're talking Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Assemblies of God—all share this basic understanding. Chaplaincy is a ministry of presence. Show up, shut up and be.

The basic qualifications for being the Maine Warden Service chaplain are these: You need to be reasonably physically fit. You have to like being outdoors. You have to be mostly okay with hunting and fishing. And you really have to love men.

It's not enough to be a general lover of humanity, of which men are (sigh) a part... and it's definitely not enough to roll your eyes and tolerate the boys and their toys while you seek, covertly, to fix them.

When I was young—maybe 12 or 13—I read Robin Morgan's seminal (ovulatory?) primer on radical feminism, and I instantly became a radical feminist. My father was the closest available representative of the oppressive patriarchy, so he was the first (though alas not the last) of my male loved ones to really get it in the neck. I remember asking Dad, scornfully and rhetorically:

“What good are men, anyway?”

“Men are here to protect women,” Dad said virtuously, and I retorted well, but what are you protecting us from? Other men! If there were no men, there would be no problem!

I was wrong. I don't mean that I was morally wrong—I might have hurt my father's feelings, except that he always got a real kick out of his children's rhetorical flourishes. I mean that I was factually incorrect.

If there were no men—if there were only women—then contrary to any number of Goddess-conjuring new-age fantasies, certain essential challenges to us as individuals, and as communities would remain.

If you live in a technically advanced society, and thus haven't personally encountered one of these essential challenges recently, it is easy to forget that they exist. If you buy your meat in a plastic package at the supermarket, it is easy to forget that something suffered and died for your short ribs.

This week mid-coast Maine was hit with an early, wet snowstorm that knocked out the power. Without power, there's no light, no e-mail and no water because the pumps are electric... things get pretty Darwinian pretty fast.

As it happens, my husband was in Philadelphia this week, so I had to carry wood, shovel snow, haul water and generally do all the things he would otherwise, uncomplainingly, do for me. (Oh, and I had to cook, which he also, uncomplainingly, does for me.)

It's been a long week... but it was a really, really long week for the repair crews. They came from all over the Northeast and were out there around the clock, despite the snow and high winds. When I went out in the car to purchase drinking water, charge my cell phone and do laundry at a friend's house, I'd pass them on the road, a bunch of guys wearing thick padded snowsuits to protect them from the cold, helmets to protect them from falling trees, and reflective vests to protect them from being hit by passing cars. Whenever it seemed reasonable to do so, I'd stop to thank them.

They were all men.

I love men.

Most Maine game wardens, like most law enforcement officers, are male. As law enforcement officers, they are engaged in what is a traditionally—not inevitably, but traditionally—masculine activity. Law enforcement is paramilitary and hierarchical—people wear uniforms and obey orders given by sergeants, captains, colonels—and law enforcement officers use traditionally male tools (loud voices, big muscles, weapons) to enact a traditionally male form of love and nurture, that is, to *protect and serve*.

Not everyone is comfortable in a mostly-male, traditionally masculine environment. Not all MEN are comfortable there. My present husband who taught school for seventeen years, was comfortable in that predominantly feminine environment, for example, and to tell you the truth, I think my first, late husband Drew, who was a State Trooper and a macho guy, would have been just as happy in an all-female environment too. He liked women, he liked collaborative decision-making, he liked tea.

I like coffee and a chain of command. And I love men. Bearded,
breastless, betesticled...I am an androphile,

I'm not talking about *eros*, this isn't about sexual love.

Though...Maine's game wardens are remarkably handsome.

My job—the best job in ministry— does come with some serious eye candy.

But really, I'm speaking of the love that, in Greek, is known as *agape*. *Agape*, that generous, other-directed, not-about-me love that earnestly desires the achievement of wholeness by the beloved. This is the love that emerges from, emulates and yearns to participate in the love that is God's love and is God. To be an effective law enforcement chaplain, you have to have that kind of love—*agape*—for men.

As a religious fanatic...that is, as a religious professional....let me now confess the substance of my faith: *O Theos einai agapi*. Three words in English—God is love.

Love is my doctrine. The quest for truth is my sacrament and service is my law.

God is love, and love calls us to love, as well as we can, as often as we can, for as many people as we can, as much and long as life and luck allows, amen. It is simple... but it's not easy.

Human beings are called to love. Men are human beings. Therefore, men love.

Not just modern Western-culture type men, not just Democrats, not just you guys, not just my husband, sons, male friends and relations, not even just Maine's game wardens. Throughout time, across space: Men have been called to love, and men have loved, love now, and will love, on into the human future, however long that turns out to be.

To the extent that men are different from women, they are not different in this: Men love as deeply and as effectively as women.

Men refuse to love or fail to love no more often than women.

I'd better repeat that, in case you didn't hear me right: Men love as much and as well as women. Men fail to love or refuse to love no more often than do women.

I'll have more to say about women tomorrow morning: For now let me simply remind you that both men and women are products of an evolution that pre-supposes the existence of the other.

To the extent—whatever the extent is—that a woman is different from a man, it is because she was designed by and for an environment that was certain to have men in it. The reverse is also true: To the extent that men are different

from women, it is because their bodies and brains are created by and for an environment that includes the female.

Incidentally, children—of whom I shall be speaking tomorrow afternoon—are designed by and for an environment that presupposes the presence of parents. Take Jesus, for example. Even if his conception was as unusual as scripture claims, baby Jesus was born soggy, bald and bawling, too weak to even turn himself over let alone get up and run. In order to survive, Jesus had to have someone available to him as soon as he exited the womb, someone who would pick him up in her arms, offer him a breast with milk in it, someone had to keep him warm, dry, fed and protected for oh, the next eighteen years... Jesus, in other words, was designed by and for an environment that presupposed Mary, at a minimum, Mary and Joseph for preference.

Whatever we may believe or doubt about the birth narrative of Jesus, we need not doubt this: Jesus received the essential survival package in the form of his mother and step-father. How do we know this? Because he survived, long enough to become a man and die in one of the ways people—but especially men—die.

That is, by violence.

Mothers and babies. Men and violence...

My friend Susan, as I say, is a nice, middle-aged, Birkenstock-and-socks liberal and, like me, she's a minister with a husband and some mostly grown children. Because it was October when she and I talked, after we had discussed my hornets nests and Minns Susan told me she was preparing to give her annual sermon in recognition of Domestic Violence Month.

The title of her sermon was "One in Four," because, as she told me. "One in four women will be beaten by her husband or boyfriend."

“Where did you get that?” I said.

“Get what?”

“That statistic?”

“Oh, come on. You of all people...Everybody knows this, Kate. There’s research. There’s data. From the FBI.”

“Have you looked it up?”

“No, I haven’t looked it up!”

“How do you know it’s true?”

“It’s common knowledge!” Susan was getting mad. “Are you really about to tell me that domestic violence is not a serious and urgent issue?”

As it happened, not so long before, I’d been called, as a chaplain, to a domestic violence murder in which a man had killed his ex-wife and two kids before turning the shotgun on himself. I’d laid my hands on the body bags: So no. I wasn’t going to argue that domestic violence is not a serious and urgent issue.

And Susan was right about one thing: The one-in-four statistic is common knowledge, so common that a recent issue of the newsmagazine, *The Week* [Oct. 14, 2014] cited it without apparently feeling the need for supporting evidence or attribution.

At the beginning of a blurb about an upcoming television show, there it was: “One out of four women eventually suffers severe domestic violence,” set down in print with the kind of confidence reserved for scientifically established facts like “cigarette smoking causes cancer.”

I’ll bet you that everyone in this room believes that statement. Or knows full well that he had better say he believes it.

“One out of four women eventually suffers severe domestic violence.”

Perhaps you're thinking that I am kicking the wrong hornets' nest tonight: Isn't domestic violence a women's issue?

Not in my world: The last three conferences on domestic violence I've been to were organized, supported and attended almost entirely by men. Domestic violence is definitely high on the list of priorities for law enforcement officers in the state of Maine and—again—most cops are men.

More to the point, the fact that a person has been the victim of a crime tells you absolutely nothing about that person other than that he or she was, for whatever reason, vulnerable to victimization. While you and I might want to take steps to reduce the likelihood that we will, ourselves, be victims—drinking alcohol, for example, increases your chances of being the victim of any crime by at least 30 percent—the moral responsibility for a crime doesn't belong to the victim even if she's hammered. It belongs to the perpetrator. It is the criminal, not the victim, who reveals his nature by his crime.

So if it is true that one out of four women will be badly beaten by her husband or boyfriend (how else are we to interpret the phrase “suffers severe domestic violence?”) that adds up to a lot of male perpetration, even if we make statistical allowances for repeat offenders, serial wife-beaters and the odd lesbian batterer.

Fortunately for wives who might otherwise waste time and energy fearing an inoffensive mate, parents who might otherwise be tempted to confine heterosexual daughters to a nunnery for safety's sake, or police officers, for whom this particular crime is plenty common, complicated and depressing enough; fortunately for all of us that “one in four” statistic is not true.

Believers in the Nicene Creed have got Sam Harris and Bill Mahr breathing down their necks, but who wants to be a domestic violence heretic?

Not me. But at least I'm female—how much harder would it be for a man to say it?

The Week's assertion that one in four women will experience severe domestic violence is probably taken from a website belonging to an advocacy group such as the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Their website, at least, does offer a footnote citing data gathered in a survey conducted by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

(<http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245>) Impressive.

If you read the Bureau's report, you'll find it is prefaced with a whole lot of caveats about the methodological problems involved in studying this subject, the problems of definition, of context, of subjective versus objective measures of harm, and of interpretation.

This is why the statistics tend to vary: Depending on how you ask the question and how you rate the answers, one in three women have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner, but so have one in four men. One in five women say they've experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner... but so do one in seven men, and at least one study suggests women and men are equally likely to hit each other, though men are far less likely to report it.

The point is that both the Coalition and the Department of Justice define domestic violence not as "some form of physical violence," but as "a pattern of abusive behavior, including sexual, financial and emotional abuse as well as

physical violence, used by one partner to gain or maintain power or control over another intimate partner.”

If you are a feminist, you would add that this pattern of abusive behavior is grounded in, and supported by, a patriarchal society which has as its goal the maintenance of power and control over women.

This may come as a surprise, but over the past three decades—the duration, as it happens, of my life as a heterosexual married woman—the incidence of domestic violence victimization in the United States has dropped by more than half. According to the Department of Justice, fewer people are being victimized by domestic violence, and when they are, they feel safer reporting the abuse to the police,—there have been “significant improvements in the criminal and civil justice systems.”

Domestic violence continues to be a horrible and too often lethal problem—as I say, I have seen the body bags—but the behavior most of us think of when we hear the words “domestic violence” is not nearly as common as we are so confidently informed that it is. In the Bureau of Justice Statistics study, one in four women—actually around 22 percent of women surveyed—reported not that they were subjected to “a pattern of abusive behavior,” but rather that they have, at some point in their lives, been assaulted, sexually assaulted or beaten by a spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, ex-partner or date.

Most of these are, or are perceived to be, relatively minor assaults. Indeed when asked why they did not report a sexual assault, more than half of college-aged women said that they did not think the incident was serious enough to report. More than 35 percent said they were unclear as to whether a crime was committed or that harm was intended.

Even if we decide to ignore a victim’s own assessment and take these events more seriously than she does, the vast majority of assaults revealed by the survey do not meet the Department of Justice’s definition of domestic

violence as “as a *pattern* of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.” Most of these events would definitely not merit the adjective “severe.”

Good news!

Most men do not assault, sexually assault or beat their intimate partners, most men do not employ a pattern of abusive behaviors to gain power and control over their loved ones, and whatever Patriarchy wants them to do, most men do not condone violence against women. One in four women *will not* experience severe domestic violence during her lifetime, especially if she happens to be coming of age today, with most of her “lifetime” as a woman still before her. Those of us with heterosexual daughters can weep with joy, not terror at their weddings, those of us with sons can have reasonable confidence that our boys are not going to grow up to be monsters.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not arguing that living with a woman is just as dangerous as living with a man.

Still, I would like to point out is that living AS a man really is dangerous.

Men are far more likely to die prematurely from all causes than are women: They are four times more likely to be murdered, twice as likely to be assaulted or robbed with violence.

“If there were no men, there’d be no problem,” I told my father, and yes, the men are by and large being assaulted and robbed by other men, not by women...but of the fifteen most dangerous jobs in America—timber harvesting, farming, mining, long-distance trucking, construction, firefighting and so on—all fifteen are almost exclusively performed by men.

In 1996 my first husband Drew was one of 143 American police officers who were killed in the line of duty. All but seven were men. Ninety-four police officers have died thus far in 2014, ninety were men.

Incidentally, with the exception of airline pilots, most of the mostly male, most hazardous jobs in America aren't particularly well-paid or high in status. Women have not been excluded from mining, timber-harvesting, fire-fighting or policing because the Patriarchy wants to keep all the good gigs for the guys. From the evidence it would seem, in fact, that men do those jobs because men are disposable.

In 2nd Chronicles, we read that when the sons of Israel fled before Judah, "God gave them into their hand. Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain."

Over four hundred thousand chosen men of the United States were killed in the Second World War—four hundred American women died in that war, too. Of the 4,500 troops who have died thus far in our most recent wars, 97.5 percent were male. [<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22452.pdf>] A similarly large percentage of the 32,000 service members who suffered wounds, limb amputations, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries and PTSD were likewise men.

While we're on the subject of injury, civilian men are also much more likely than women to get hurt or maimed at work. Meanwhile, the exposure of men to risk by definition exposes them to traumatic stress. Stress has been strongly correlated with the most common causes of premature death—heart disease and stroke—as well as with alcoholism, clinical depression and suicide.

It could be that one of the reasons women live an average of five years longer than men is that, however difficult our jobs might be, by and large we don't have to worry about going to work and getting dragged overboard into the deep sea, having trees fall on our heads, being crushed by a tractor or asphyxiated in a mine, and if there's a big fire, or a mad gunman headed in our direction, we're allowed to run away.

Take the dangers a Maine game warden is exposed to: He could crash in a car, a truck, a snowmobile, an all-terrain vehicle or an airplane. He can fall out of a canoe, an airboat or a dive boat, get accidentally shot by a hunter or deliberately shot by a member of an anti-government militia. He could slip a disk pulling a corpse out of a river, step in a poacher's leg-hold bear trap, have a heart attack climbing a mountain to rescue survivors of a plane crash, or break a leg falling off a cliff while attempting to rescue a stranded hiker. He could get stomped by a moose or bitten by a rabid fox. At least in Maine we don't have poisonous snakes, although when some demented exotic animal collector decided his pet Gabon Viper would be happier free, guess who got to go and look for it?

Since most game wardens in Maine are men, the game warden who has to cut the decomposing body of a hanging suicide down from a tree will probably be male, as will the warden who spends forty-five minutes giving CPR to a teenage girl who tried to overdose on pills. The warden service diver who swims beneath the hard surface of a frozen lake, who gropes through the thick, dark water for the body of a drowned child will almost certainly be male: He will bring the body to the surface, he will gaze down at the child's face, he will tell the child's mother that her little girl is dead, and he will catch and hold that mother in his arms. The child's face, and the mother's wails will remain seared into his soul for the rest of his life.

Last but definitely not least, as a law enforcement officer, a game warden carries a gun and the authority to use it on behalf of the State of Maine to defend himself and others. This is not a thrill. It is a moral and spiritual burden, and it is heavy.

My first husband, Drew, was, as I mentioned, a State Trooper. My second husband, Simon, is an artist, a dad, a teacher, a good cook, and a gentle person.

Early in our courtship, it happened that we were walking together along a street in the city of Portland. An extremely angry man appeared, storming towards us, flailing his arms, smacking signposts, kicking garbage cans and snarling obscenities. To our relief it appeared that he wasn't actually pissed off at us: We gave him room to pass and he went by, still snarling and cursing, turned the corner and we never saw him again. The whole thing lasted perhaps five seconds.

Well, it happens, right? Not a big deal, even in Maine...What made that particular incident memorable for me was that Simon, my new boyfriend, saw the guy... and immediately stepped out in front of me.... that is, he reacted to the threat of violence by instinctively and swiftly placing his body between my body and that man.

It occurred to me that though police officers (whether male or female) make a whole career of responding to violence and managing violence, they merely specialize in what is the general and indeed, *defining* responsibility of a man. Not his exclusive responsibility—a woman can be violent, and if Simon had had to fight that guy, I would definitely have had his back—but nonetheless primarily his. Even a man who does not work in those jobs—law enforcement and the military—which are explicitly concerned with the management of violence will nonetheless feel the weight of his responsibility every time his wife hears a strange noise in the downstairs hall and asks him to go down and investigate.

This isn't about men being macho: The women in a man's life will expect him to deal with bears, corpses and Gabon Vipers should any happen along, and even here in Boston, my guess is that it is a man's job to check out the strange noise downstairs. Whether he likes it or not, or is good at it or not, whether or not he is afraid, it's his job.

If, instead of putting his body between me and danger, my new boyfriend had used my body to shield himself...our relationship would not have lasted long.

The training Maine game wardens, as law enforcement officers, receive builds upon a substrate formed by an ancient environment that presupposed the existence of violence, and presupposed the existence of persons who must be protected from violence.

If we accuse men, as we do, of being wholly responsible for the unjust, illegitimate and oppressive violence in the world, we might at least recognize and honor the mostly-masculine instinct to serve and protect. It is the product of an evolution that presupposes both angry men and angry tigers, and for that matter presupposes blizzards and other natural hazards that might leave a middle-aged woman like me stranded without power.

The feminist Robin Morgan once wrote that “For centuries, women have had responsibility without power while men have had power without responsibility.”

I'd love to see Ms. Morgan try to say that line out loud while standing in the middle of Arlington Cemetery. Or beside the law enforcement memorial in Washington's Judiciary Square. Or in the woods with my beloved wardens...Or even while walking down the street with either of my beloved husbands—the macho cop or the gentle artist, both of whom, when tested, showed willingness to assume the physical, moral and spiritual burden of violence, and risk their precious selves in my defense.

My Dad would have approved. I approve, too.