

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ix
Preface: Is This Book for You?	xi
Introduction	xiii
What Is the Blue Sky Rebellion?	1
A Tale of One Island: How the Blue Sky Rebellion Began.....	2
Principles of the Blue Sky Rebellion.....	4
You Deserve Better.....	5
The Mission	19
Self-defense	22
Diplomatic Briefing	36
Making Allies	39
Let the Rebellion Begin.....	59
Conclusion	65
Endnotes.....	76
Bibliography.....	96
About the Author.....	98

Introduction

On March 11, 2009, President Obama signed an Executive Order creating the White House Council on Women and Girls. “The purpose of this Council,” he said, “is to ensure that American women and girls are treated fairly in all matters of public policy.”

President Obama took no such action for you.¹



On April 16, 2009, the *New York Times* told of a sociologist who had extensively interviewed middle school boys in 2003 and 2004. “Boys were showing each other they were tough,” the researcher commented. “They were afraid to do anything that might be called girlie. It was just like what I would have found if I had done this research 50 years ago. They were frozen in time.”²

Girls have been anything but frozen over the past half-century and they are thriving in many new and positive ways. It’s as if the last forty-five years have been one long, enthusiastic pep rally for girls, telling them they can be and do anything they want, while boys have been pretty much ignored—or even cheered against.

What Is the Blue Sky Rebellion?

The Blue Sky Rebellion right now is what the modern Women's Movement was in 1840.

The Blue Sky Rebellion right now is what the Civil Rights Movement was in 1947.

The Blue Sky Rebellion right now is what the Gay Liberation Movement was in 1968.

The Blue Sky Rebellion right now is not much. It is only an idea.

What the Blue Sky Rebellion becomes depends on what you and your young male friends make of it.

This is the idea:

You and other young men are in some ways severely restricted in who and how you can be. Those restrictions are based on old and unnecessary stereotypes very much like the ones that operated against the freedom and happiness of women, African-Americans and gays. (Have you ever wanted or needed to say or do something, but you couldn't because it would have been considered "weak" or "punk"?)

You and your male peers are often victims of discrimination motivated and rationalized by biases and bigotry, much like the bigoted, selfish ideas that allowed women, African-Americans and gays to be mistreated. (Have you ever seen a boy and a girl do something "bad" together, while it is the boy who is more severely blamed and punished?)

Adult men, for reasons we will talk about later, have been unable to launch and sustain a meaningful movement to help you. So it is up to you and your friends to talk candidly about the problems in your life that require change. It is up to you to make sure those changes happen.

The Blue Sky Rebellion is only an idea. But it might also be one of the most powerful forces on earth—an idea whose time has come: a social movement of boys and young men to identify and address the ways sexism operates against you.

The name of the Blue Sky Rebellion comes from the following fable.

Principles of The Blue Sky Rebellion

1. The Blue Sky Rebellion will make the world better for everyone.
2. One of the best ways to make the world better for everyone is to make sure that you and your young male friends feel happy, healthy, fairly treated and appreciated.
3. While traditional sex roles and gender expectations impose disadvantages on girls and young women, they also provide advantages.
4. While traditional sex roles and gender expectations provide advantages to you and your young male friends, they also impose disadvantages.
5. There are many negative stereotypes and biases about girls and young women. Girls and young women have benefited greatly from overcoming those ideas and the policies they generated.
6. There are many negative stereotypes and biases about you and your young male friends. You will benefit greatly from overcoming those ideas and the policies they generate.
7. You and your young male friends deserve the right to choose how you want to live your lives, with as many options for fulfillment and happiness as girls and young women enjoy.
8. You and your young male friends deserve as much love, affection, compassion and respect as girls and young women receive.
9. Change is difficult—especially for people who feel powerful with the world as it is—and nobody gives up power willingly...unless they get something better in return. It is therefore up to us to demonstrate the truth of Principle Number One.

You Deserve Better

“Well, for one thing, the culture we have does not make people feel good about themselves. We’re teaching the wrong things. And you have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn’t work, don’t buy it. Create your own. Most people can’t do it.”

Morrie Schwartz⁴

Most young men between 13 and 23 are doing okay. But things could be better. Much better. Some young men, as you probably know, are not feeling so good. Some are angry, some are depressed, some are cynical. Even the young men who are doing “okay” could use some changes. They have to use precious time and energy to overcome and deal with problems that result only from old-fashioned and pointless ideas about how boys and young men “should” be.

We’re going to look closely at those problems. Our purpose isn’t to get negative, cynical and depressed, but rather to get excited, energetic and determined about moving the problems out of the way so you can be happier and healthier now and for the rest of your life.

Some people think that you need to change, that boys are too, well, male. These people don’t like the way boys are; they want boys to be more like girls.

You young men and boys don’t need to change; we adults need to put a stop to all the things that try to change you in the first place, all the forces that try to keep you from being all the great and wonderful things you and other young men naturally are.⁵

Sexism? Against Boys?

In kindergarten, Jessica likes to play with the toy saw and hammer and that’s just fine. Jason likes to play with the miniature kitchen appliances but the adults in his life let him know he really shouldn’t.

In elementary school, Jessica wears a T-shirt saying “Girls rule. Boys drool,” and that’s considered empowerment. Jason is overheard saying

The Mission



Our Mission is to gain for boys and young men as much access to traditionally female territory as girls and young women have gained in traditionally male territory. That territory isn't physical. It's not about land and acres. It's emotional, psychological, social, legal and cultural territory.

The Mission is to observe, identify, confront, and disable—nicely, if possible, but firmly as required—sexism, bias and discrimination against boys and young men wherever they occur.

It isn't about turning the clock backward to the old days. It isn't a “backlash” against the gains of women and girls. It's a “frontlash.” It's about pushing forward to a world in which “equality” is truly equal. It's about balance, respect, fairness, freedom and full opportunity for everyone.

The Blue Sky Rebellion will:

- expand the concept of “manliness” so you can more comfortably and confidently find your place within it
- gain for you the same life options that girls and women have
- bring you the services and programs you need to succeed in school and other fields of endeavor
- provide balance to public understanding of how power is shared and used between the sexes
- reduce or eliminate the gender discrimination that often causes you to be judged and treated worse than girls and more harshly than you deserve.

Self-defense

“First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, then you win.”

—*Mahatma Gandhi*

From the Fictional Island to Your Real World

The end of “A Tale of One Island” at the beginning of this book was not really the end. It was only the beginning. It’s not likely that all the people who gathered around the Rebels at the bottom of the mountain path simply said, “Oh. Okay.” There was still a lot of work to do, a lot of resistance to overcome. And so it is in your real life. We will face lots of opponents. And they will attack.

Identifying the Opposition

Lots of people—male and female—will want the Blue Sky Rebellion to go away. They either won’t care about or will actively oppose your effort to secure more emotional, psychological, social, legal and cultural territory in which you can live your life fully and happily.

Here are the types of people you can expect will give you a hard time.

1. *People who generally just don’t like change.*
2. *People—primarily other young men—whose main concern is trying to “fit in.”*
3. *Boys and men who have found some measure of success in traditional male territory and who are uncertain of being able to maintain their current status if the game changes.*
4. *Grown men who don’t want to admit that they’ve been duped or mistreated in their lives.*
5. *People who think girls and women are naturally superior to boys and men.*
6. *Girls and women who know they enjoy significant advantages as a result of sexism against boys and men and don’t want to lose those advantages (or even share them).*

But here is the opponent who will fight hardest against the Blue Sky Rebellion:

7. *Advertisers who want to sell you stuff.*

Making Allies

This is the very most important part of the Blue Sky Rebellion. The world is a big place and we will need all the help we can get.

Here are a few general principles for being diplomatic and winning friends.

1. Remember: we are the Good Guys. If we can win our Rebellion, everyone will benefit. We have lots of love to go around. We're here to present solutions and work hard to make things better, not just complain about problems and throw a tantrum. *This is not the Department of Ain't It Awful.*

2. Often, the way you say something is at least as important as what you say. Female activists used to assert "For a girl to be seen as half as smart, she has to be two times smarter." And so it is for us: "For a boy to be seen as half as loving or gentle or patient or caring or reasonable, he has to be two times more of all those things." That's not fair, but that's the way it is—at least until the Rebellion succeeds.¹⁰¹

Don't Shortchange Yourself

Imagine being shortchanged in a store. You know you should have gotten \$15 change, but you only got \$5. If you immediately become hostile and assume that the shopkeeper intentionally cheated you and accuse him loudly of bad behavior you're likely to meet with embarrassment, resistance, hostility and denial. You've become a problem and the shopkeeper will want to get rid of you as soon as possible. He might even call the police since he can expect them to take his side automatically.

But if you count your change and calmly say to the shopkeeper, "I'm sorry. I think you owe me another ten," and show him the hand into which he put your change, you're more likely to get a sincere apology and the money you are owed.

Now, certainly there are dishonest and selfish people in the world, and we will surely run into many of them during the Blue Sky Rebellion, but we're smart to assume first that people are honest and interested in being fair and to treat them otherwise only after they demonstrate that's what we have to do.

Let the Rebellion Begin

The Blue Sky Rebellion will not take place in this book. It will happen in the things you say and do in your life. It will occur in the success you and other rebels have in supporting each other and in your efforts to win allies.

This book has given some suggestions for what you can do and how you can do it. A few additional ideas follow. Ultimately, though, you will be much more important to the Blue Sky Rebellion than this book and its suggestions are. You and other young readers are the ones who encounter the real-life situations that need to be addressed. It will be exciting to see what you do and how you do it.

As mentioned earlier, the Forum at blueskyrebellion.com might be a good resource for you and other Blue Sky Rebels to talk and read about what is working best to advance the Rebellion. The discussion will probably start very slowly, so don't be afraid to be one of the early leaders to get things going. If, after you've participated in the forum for a while, you would like to be one of the moderators to help keep the discussion constructive and healthy, and to help keep our opposition from diverting, distracting or undermining it, please drop me a line at jk@blueskyrebellion.com. We will keep the Forum a "safe space" for you to say what you want among people who will be respectful, supportive and cooperative. (Other internet pages and groups will be more open to whatever comes their way, good and bad, constructive or not.)

Who knows what the future will bring? Let's keep tabs on how we can creatively use new Internet services to help you coordinate with other rebels and win new allies.

Additional Ideas to Get You Started on the Blue Sky Rebellion

- Organize your Rebel friends to gather signatures and send a petition to President Obama asking him to create a high-level White House Council on Boys and Men, like the Cabinet-level council he established for women and girls in March 2009. His address is:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

(Old-fashioned paper petitions are often more credible and impressive than online electronic petitions, but you might prefer one of the