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## **Leadership 101b By Mark Gorman**

A few years ago a young, teenaged male, with several others his age, killed nearly a hundred victims. A few years before, the young killers had witnessed the massacre of their families. Afterwards, although still very young, they were relocated to another community with few adults to raise them; importantly, it was absent of older, mentoring males.

These teenagers are young male African elephants. At a South African park, in the 1990's, three young males attacked and killed 58 white and five black rhinoceroses; at a second park, young male elephants killed 40 white rhinoceroses.

The problem began to come to light as scientists, sociologists and zoologists tried desperately to determine the cause of this unprecedented behavior in the young bull elephants.

Why would they do it? Well, like juvenile delinquent humans, they had grown up without role models.

The problem stemmed back 20 years to South Africa's largest conservation area, Kruger National Park. Kruger had too many elephants. In those days there was no way to relocate these large adults. So researchers decided to kill the adults and save the children, who were more easily transported to other parks.

The intentions may have been good but the program created a whole generation of traumatized orphans thrown together without any adults to teach them how to behave.

Years later those lonely orphans developed into troubled teen-agers. That's when the killings and destruction began.

The solution, they determined was to attempt to bring role models back into the lives of the young bulls.

They shipped much older bull elephants back into the herds. The older males immediately established a hierarchy with the herd, settling the young bulls and modeling strong elephant ethics. The result? Not one rhino death or outbreak of violence since the introduction of the older males. Young men need fathers, even in the animal kingdom.

This story illustrates both the need for leaders, and the tragic outcome when leadership is absent. True, this story was about elephants, not humans. But can any of us deny the similarity between this situation and our own society?

Specifically, we should take note of the impact created by the absence of adult male role models – mentors, in this “society”.

We live in a world today, particularly in America, in which fathers are often absent from the family. Not only is this true in the case of divorce or death, but more and more, our society validates the concept of a “family unit” without a man present – without even acknowledging the need for a man in the “mix”.

Admittedly, this is NOT an attack on any wife or mother whose husband has left, or whose husband was taken by an unexpected “early death”.

But let’s take a moment to look at some of the statistics:

In America:

- 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes (U.S.D.H.H.S. Bureau of the Census)
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes (Center for Disease Control)
- 80% of rapists motivated with displaced anger come from fatherless homes. (Criminal Justice and Behavior, Vol.14 p. 403-26)
- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes. (National Principals Association Report on the state of High Schools)
- 70% of juveniles in state operated institutions come from fatherless homes (U.S. Dept of Justice, Special Report)
- 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes. (Fulton County Georgia Jail Populations and Texas Dept. of Corrections.)
- Nearly 2 of every 5 children in America do not live with their fathers. (U.S. News and World Report)

There are:

- 11,268,000 total custodial mothers
- 2,907,000 total custodial fathers  
(Current Populations Reports, US Bureau of the Census, Series P-20, No. 458)

What does this mean? Children from fatherless homes are:

- 4.6 times more likely to commit suicide
- 6.6 times more likely to become teenaged mothers (girls)

- 24.3 times more likely to run away
- 15.3 times more likely to have behavioral disorders
- 6.3 times more likely to be in a state-operated institution
- 10.8 times more likely to commit rape
- 6.6 times more likely to drop out of school
- 15.3 times more likely to end up in prison while a teenager

In my opinion, one of the greatest examples of the long-term effects of the “fatherless family unit” is the prevalence of gangs in the United States.

Think about it: in nearly every case, young men who find their identity in gangs, grew up in a single-parent home, without a father, or they had a poor, inadequate relationship with their dad. In either case, these young men found their “male identity” in the “gang culture”.

You and I can view ourselves as those in need of leadership, or we can rise to the challenge, to become the leaders for those in need of direction.

Basically, we can be part of the problem, or part of the solution. And, as always, there is the third group – those spectators who refuse to become involved, but rather, they choose to watch from a distance, assuming that they are NOT part of the problem, not realizing that their apathy and lethargy create the atmosphere which fosters such runaway “out of control” mob mentality. Basically, with the law of entropy in place, if we aren’t part of the solution, it is very likely that through our own apathy, we are part of the problem.

But now, a word of encouragement and applause for the men who are rising to the challenge – mentors – fathers.

God bless the men whose lives serve as an example – a challenge to others, inspiring them to become the men and women who God destined them to be.

Next week, we will continue this teaching. It will be entitled, “I Ain’t Your Momma – Who’s Your Daddy?”

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