

For Immediate Release

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RAISING CAIN LOOKS AT THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BOYS
PREMIERES ON PBS JANUARY 12, 2006 AT 9PM

“Our schools have to make the distinction between actual violence, which must be discouraged, and fantasy violence, which should be accommodated. Otherwise, we risk giving boys one more reason to believe that school is not a place for them.” – Host Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

October 20, 2005 – America’s boys are in trouble. Boys are doing worse in the classroom than 10 years ago. Many are unable to express their emotions. They are the most violent in the industrialized world. What is responsible for this behavior? From the public school system to the absence of strong male role models, boys face a number of obstacles. But what can we do to keep them from growing into men who are stoic, silent and explosive – more prone to anger than to empathy? **RAISING CAIN**, hosted by child psychologist Michael Thompson, Ph.D. and co-author of the best-selling book “Raising Cain”, explores the emotional development of boys in America today. Thompson consults with some of America’s most respected psychologists, social activists, researchers and educators to probe the issues facing boys today. Produced by Powderhouse™ in association with Oregon Public Broadcasting, this two-hour documentary provides surprising new research about boys’ inner workings, dispelling a number of commonly held misconceptions and highlights innovative programs that are bringing out the best in boys. **RAISING CAIN** premieres on PBS January 12, 2006 at 9pm (check local listings).

We hold many misconceptions about the differences between boys and girls. In actuality, research confirms that genetically baby boys and girls have far more similarities than differences. In fact, contrary to common stereotypes, experiments show that baby boys are more emotionally vulnerable than girls. At Harvard University Medical School, Thompson follows an experiment that shows how infant boys and girls deal with the absence of their mother’s attention. While the girls remain calm and find other distractions to occupy them, the boys actually become quite upset. But from a very young age, boys are directed to deny their feelings and emotional responses. They are encouraged to exhibit anger and toughness as signs of manliness, but feelings of vulnerability and fear are discouraged. As a result, authority figures react simply to the physical and aggressive behavior they see rather than how these boys are truly feeling. This problem intensifies as boys enter the public school system.

In American culture, it is typical for teachers to want to protect children by intervening in conflicts and aggressive behavior. As a result, boys have difficulty learning to take responsibility for their actions. In addition, boys are much more physically active and less emotionally mature. As school requires sitting, listening and being quiet, teachers are unable to figure out ways to address this behavior. Boys increasingly find school to be a major challenge because the inactivity is counter to who they are biologically. Thirty years ago, recess was offered twice a day. But, today, schools are cutting back recess time or eliminating it altogether, which leaves boys with few ways to work off their energy. This can lead parents to turn to medication to treat their boys. In fact, almost 85% of the world's stimulant medication is prescribed to American boys.

As boys enter high school, these can be the toughest and most dangerous years of their lives. This is especially true for boys without a father or strong male role model. Without this presence, boys are forced to seek an alternative among their peers – and this can lead to involvement with gangs. Boys engage in deep relationships, just as girls do, but they still need guidance from parents who engage in real conversations and provide open expressions of affection.

Boys face a number of challenges today. From lack of role models to confusion among adults about how to handle boys, the obstacles can seem daunting. For some boys, life is much more precarious – drugs, gangs and poverty are just some of the everyday realities they face. As author Geoffrey Canada states, “I think it’s critical that boys see men doing the kinds of things we want those boys to do for their own children – wiping their noses, holding their hands, taking them across the street, helping them with their homework. All of that stuff that is against sort of the modern mythology of maleness.” **RAISING CAIN** is an illuminating look at a problem that affects everyone and offers concrete ways that we can work to improve the way we raise our boys.

About Michael Thompson, Ph.D., Host

Michael G. Thompson, Ph.D. is a consultant, author and psychologist specializing in children and families. His areas of expertise include eating disorders, depression, teenage suicide and social development. As a clinical consultant, Thompson has worked with more than two hundred independent schools across the U.S. and in other countries. He and co-author Dan Kindlon wrote *The New York Times* bestseller, “Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys” (Ballantine Books, 1999). He is the author of “Speaking of Boys: Answers to the Most-Asked Questions About Raising Sons” (Ballantine, 2000), and co-author of “Best Friends/Worst Enemies: Understanding the Social Lives of Children.” A much sought-after speaker, Thompson has appeared on *Oprah*, *20/20*, *The Today Show*, *The Early Show* and *Good Morning America*. Dr. Thompson received his B.A. from Harvard College. He later earned his Masters in Education from Harvard Graduate School of Education and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He received his clinical training at the Psychiatric and Psychosomatic Institute of Michael Reese Hospital, where he was a fellow in the Laboratory for Clinical Research and Training in Adolescence. While in Chicago he taught at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, co-led the anorexia nervosa research lab at Michael Reese

Hospital and served as a consultant to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. After moving to Boston, he was for many years a clinical instructor in Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School and a member of the Psychology staff at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center.

Photos for **RAISING CAIN** are available online at pressroom.pbs.org and www.promotion.opb.org.

Home Video and Companion Book for **RAISING CAIN** are available through PBS at 1-800-PLAY PBS.

For additional information about **RAISING CAIN**, visit the program Web site at www.pbs.org/raisingcain.

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Credits:

Hosted by: Michael Thompson

Produced and Directed by: Paul Stern

Co-Produced by: Craig Ginsberg

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Executive in Charge of Production: Jack Galmiche

About Powderhouse™

Powderhouse™ is an award-winning broadcast and cable production company based outside Boston, MA. For nearly a decade, Powderhouse has been producing some of the most highly rated and critically acclaimed programs that have been seen in over 200 countries.

Powderhouse™'s work has been recognized with The Beijing International Science Film Festival Silver Medal, The Houston World Fest Gold Special Jury Award, The CINDY Award, The Telly Award, The National Educational Media Network's Bronze Apple Award, The Communications Award – Crystal Award of Excellence, The Cine Gold Eagle and a national prime-time Emmy nomination. The Powderhouse web site is www.Powderhouse.net

About Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB)

OPB is a major provider of programs for the PBS national primetime schedule and American Public Television (APT), producing a variety of freestanding documentary specials and series.

OPB has produced major Web sites for PBS.org as well as enhanced TV prototypes,

books, companion radio documentaries and extensive promotion and outreach campaigns for PBS primetime programs. OPB has also licensed its programs in 29 countries throughout the world.

Oregon Public Broadcasting is also a statewide network of community-supported learning resources, including OPB Television, an affiliate of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and OPB Radio, presenting local news coverage and the programs of National Public Radio (NPR), American Public Media (APM) and Public Radio International (PRI). The OPB Web site is opb.org.