“Such a sissy.”

“Weak. Stop crying.”

“Suck it up.”

We have all heard or even said these phrases, most of the time directed toward young boys and men. Raised with this kind of language, pressured to be more independent, and to fight physically rather than negotiate, men and boys, the film shows, inevitably bottle up emotions. The results are these: they are more likely than girls and women to commit suicide, to be diagnosed with a behavioral disorder, or to drop out or be expelled from school. Most mass-shooters are male.

As part of the Men2Men Conference, cosponsored by the Men of the Historical Tanner Chapel AME Church and ASU Project Humanities, The Mask You Live In event proved an integral part of the social movement to make the voices of men heard. In less “toxic” ways. Facilitated by Foundation Professor of English and Founding Director of ASU Project Humanities, the event started with a screening of the film, which highlights gender stereotypes that arouse many issues in the lives of young boys and men. Just the words we use to talk to boys is astounding and the statistical data about the differences in suicides, self-harm and violence to others made for engaging audience discussion.

Somewhat naively, I expected to see only men and boys at this event, those shadowed by society’s expectations.

I was wrong.

Fathers. Mothers. Couples. Children. High school students. People of all different backgrounds, gender orientations, ages, ethnicities, and nationalities completed the audience of about 70. All gathered to converse about men’s issue; a perfect hotbed for talking, listening, and connecting.

Bobbie Washington Lewis, an attendee, is a single mother who was accompanied by her son. He, like most other men, is affected by issues that stem from the façade of performing masculinity.

“[Men are] committing suicide just because somebody is picking on them,” Lewis explained. “They’re being bullied … abused … sexually harassed—just as much as women.”