



The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege

Herb Goldberg

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Before John Gray and Robert Bly; before Warren Farrell, Robert Glover and Leonard Sax, there was Herb Goldberg whose classic work, "The Hazards of Being Male" was originally written as the male response to feminism's claim that oppression was for women-only.

In fact, this book by Herb Goldberg first became popular among female readers, who would often give the book to their male partners. Betty Friedan, the 'Mother of feminism,' who shared the stage with Dr. Goldberg in a 1979 program entitled "Men and Women; The Stresses of Transition," stated, "Every word Herb Goldberg says about the man-woman thing has been so on target that we have not had to waste any time on silly arguments."

According to Dr. Goldberg, "The women's liberation movement did not effect its astounding impact via self-hate, guilt or the desire to placate the male. Instead it has been energized by anger and outrage. Neither will the male change in any meaningful way until he experiences his underlying rage toward the endless, impossible binds under which he lives, the rigid definition of his role, the endless pressure to be all things to all people, and the guilt-oriented, self-denying way he has traditionally related to women, to his feelings, and to his needs."

Dr. Goldberg argued that men were in harness, conditioned by parents and society and often encouraged by women into such conflicting roles as aggressive businessman + compassionate husband; stressed-out breadwinner + attentive father; brave protector of family and country + sensitive male with a capacity for intimacy. Such impossible binds often crippled him both emotionally and physically and shortened his lifespan.

Introducing themes that have since become commonplace in discussions of masculinity, Dr. Herb Goldberg was the first to explain that...

Men use women as sex objects, but women use men as success objects;

Impotence is more likely an indicator of a man's emotional duress, rather than a physical malfunction;

Monogamy and marriage place unnatural binds upon the male which tend to keep him in a perpetually guilty state;

Women actually possess far greater flexibility than men in assertiveness, sexuality, clothing styles, career and family choices;

Playing the role of 'nice guy' leads to frustration and dehumanization;

Violence against men is far more prevalent than against women;

The more he works to support his family, the more a man tends to become alienated from them;

Because he traditionally assumed the active role, the man could be blamed as the heavy, the victimizer, and the destroyer;

The restrictive conditioning of young boys leads to the suppression of their emotions;

Divorce brings out a man's dependency and can be ruinous to his life.

Even after thirty years as an international best-seller, the brilliance of Dr. Goldberg's work remains undimmed. His insights are still relevant to men navigating the rocky road of relationships, marriage, and divorce and who are still struggling to define manhood in the post-feminist age.

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