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# Q&A: Prof. David Benatar

## WAKE UP! Men suffer from discrimination too.

Peter Lloyd

26 April 2012

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Earlier this week, a damning report by Stonewall revealed that UK healthcare is failing men – especially gay men. But what's new? From divorce, circumcision and paternal rights to domestic violence and a failing education system, boys and men are also victims of sexual discrimination.

Now, finally, a men's movement is gathering pace. Here, in a bid to silence the bigots who dismiss misandry, we spoke to Professor David Benatar about his vital new book *The Second Sexism*, which is out next month.

### PP.com: Why did you write *The Second Sexism*?

Discrimination against men and boys – what I call the second sexism – is insufficiently acknowledged. In fact, there's a widespread misconception that males suffer no sex discrimination at all! This needs correcting. Although others have pointed to this problem, I wanted to write an academic-but-accessible book about the issue.

### - Is there such a thing as a men's movement? And is it growing?

The answer to the first question will depend in part on what one means by a "men's movement". I know that sounds very much like a philosopher's answer, but I think it's the right one for the following reason. Because there obviously is a men's movement in some sense, the question ceases to be rhetorical only if there's some reasonable sense of "men's movement" according to which the answer to the question isn't obvious. Only once we know what we mean by a "men's movement" can we determine whether it exists and, if it does, whether it is growing.

### - What has the response to your book been so far?

It's only just been published in the UK and will imminently be published in other parts of the world, and thus there has been almost no opportunity for people to respond yet. I did write an academic article on the topic some years ago and that led a number of responses. I've also written some opinion pieces on this subject more recently. These elicited outrage from ideologues of various kinds, but also support from people who saw the reasonableness of the position I defend.

### - Men face sexual discrimination just like women - but the world largely ignores it. Will this ever change?

I can't say. I can only hope that people will come to recognise that this discrimination exists.

### - Your new book follows a recent Stonewall study which indicates that men are neglected by UK healthcare. Why aren't organisations like the NHS taken to task for such discrimination?

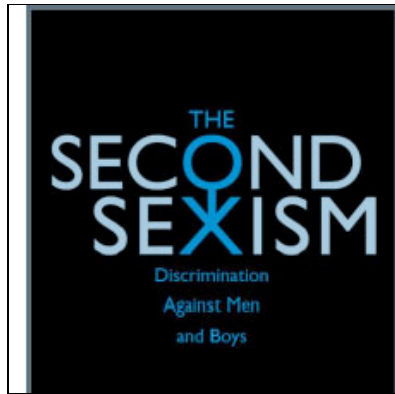
It's part of the malaise. First, insofar as people accept the orthodoxy that everything works to the advantage of males they'll ignore evidence to the contrary. Second, part of the discrimination that males face is that society (at least in the developed world) is less concerned about the well-being of males. Thus evidence of discrimination against males is either not noticed or not a subject of concern.

### - Sharon Osbourne recently said on live TV that the case of a woman who cut off her husband's penis was "fabulous". She STILL hasn't lost her job, but a man joking about female genital mutilation would've been dismissed on the spot. What would you say to the television execs who hire her - and the viewers who laughed along with her?

There is a definite double standard and it's deplorable. I don't think that people should necessarily be fired for stupid or even wicked comments, but it is clearly wrong to be outraged about flippant comments about violence against women while one turns a blind eye to comparable comments about violence against men.

### - Are women exempt from being sexist simply because they're female?

No! Women can be as sexist as men can be. One way that some people try to deny that there is a second sexism is by defining sexism in a way that precludes the possibility of males' being victims of it. I discuss this strategy in the book and show why it fails.



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**- What's your take on feminism?**

That's another topic that I discuss in some detail in the book. I don't think that there is just one feminism. One form of feminism – what I call “egalitarian feminism” – is interested in equality of the sexes, and its adherents will oppose sex discrimination irrespective of whether the victims are male or female. This stands in contrast to another form of feminism – what I call “partisan feminism” – which is interested only in advancing the position of women and girls irrespective of whether they are better or worse off than males in a particular way. I endorse the first kind of feminism but not the second. Sometimes people profess egalitarian feminism when they are in fact partisan feminists. How particular feminists respond to evidence of the second sexism will provide an insight into whether they really are egalitarian feminists.

**- Here in London, a man recently sued the London School of Economics for its anti-male Gender Studies course. In addition to this, schools in general are failing boys left, right and centre. How can school curriculums serve boys better?**

School and university curricula should aim at imparting knowledge and fostering understanding. One-sided, ideological curricula are no way to attain these ends. Intellectual openness is the way to serve both boys and girls.

[Buy The Second Sexism here](#)



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