

# MANIFESTO

*"Save The Males!"*

**OUR PHILOSOPHY:** No individual is completely free. Both legally and socially, society imposes a multitude of restrictive "shoulds" on its individual members. The "shoulds", developed over a long period of time, serve as a major vehicle for maintaining order. While they evolve and change, and sometimes allow for limited individual variation, they represent a powerful and ever-present influence on behavior.

One of the ways in which the "shoulds" function is by defining social roles — the what and the how of everyday but important behaviors, like being a spouse, parent, child, employee or neighbor. It has also been society's practice, however, to further many roles by gender — a spouse is either a husband or wife; a parent, either a father or a mother; a child, either a son or a daughter — and to require particular and different kinds of behaviors, thoughts and feelings from the males and females occupying these roles.

We have heard in some detail from the women's movement how such sex-stereotyping has limited the potential of women. More recently, men have become increasingly aware that they too are assigned limiting roles which they are expected to fulfill regardless of their individual abilities, interests, physical/emotional constitutions or needs. Men have few or no effective choices in many critical areas of life. They face injustices under the law. And typically they have been handicapped by socially defined "shoulds" in expressing themselves in other than stereotypical ways.

Society has taught us that a "real" man is strong... courageous... knowledgeable... disciplined... level headed... competitive... successful... in control ...un-emotional... heterosexual... sexually aggressive... sexually competent... and silent-suffering. A man is also dependent on women for satisfying relationships, for child rearing and for routine home and health maintenance like housekeeping and cooking. All of this and more, society has taught us, constitutes a man's role privilege or burden as the case may be.

Many men, however, are no longer comfortable with the traditional male role. Emotionally adrift, they are searching for a new identity; yet they find few viable alternatives to traditional masculine behavior (and even these few are narrow and limiting).

A view accepted in part by some of both sexes is that men's stereotypical behavior has resulted in the oppression of women, and that it therefore must change. While this view may contain some elements of truth and may, in fact, have political validity for women, it is nonetheless an oversimplification which does hopelessly little to help men understand their own discontent, or encourage them to seek out meaningful alternatives to the negative identity of the oppressor.

The change and flux of these times seem to provide an excellent opportunity to redefine options for men in ways which will allow them to develop according to their needs, desires and potentials. It also seems appropriate for men both to be active and to take initiative in this process,

rather than be reactors to a movement which does not focus on their needs and offers only a vague promise that the new world will be a better place for everyone.

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**FREE MEN SYMBOL** – The darkened area of the NCFM logo consists of the biological sign for masculinity. The lighter arrows pointing in different directions represent Options or choices. **FREE MEN** is an organization which seeks to help men take a self motivated step toward independence.

**WE KNOW**, for instance, how men struggle in relative isolation with concerns about career, and how they are frequently locked into a pattern of increasing salary-, pressure-, and time-demand, with decreasing satisfaction and opportunity for change. Free Men would like to help men explore, develop and choose career and career-coping options.

**WE KNOW**, that many men are unable – or unwilling – to communicate with others except on safe subjects and in well defined ways, and are therefore deprived of the benefits of close personal relationships with both men and women. We'd like to help men develop and sharpen their interpersonal relating skills.

**WE KNOW**, that many men in the throes of separation or divorce are in pain, miss their children, worry about

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money, feel alone, and in addition have to contend with laws and customs which view them primarily as providers rather than as people. We'd like to help alleviate the suffering of these men and help change the laws and customs which discriminate against them.

**WE KNOW**, men have learned to cope with feelings, such as anger only in stereotyped "male" ways – ways which can be harmful to them and others. Free Men would like to help increase men's options for dealing with anger and other emotions.

**WE KNOW**, We know that many men perform the parent role in only a perfunctory manner, depriving them and their children of the essence of this experience. We'd like to help men become more complete parents.

We think men should have a chance to work on such issues with all the information, support, understanding and brotherhood they can give to each other.

## **Main objectives of Free Men:**

*Promote awareness of how gender based expectations limit men legally, socially and psychologically.*

## **Free Men attempts to accomplish its objectives by:**

- Promoting discussion and study of relevant issues
- Disseminating information
- Facilitating the development of new resources

The Free Men agenda includes support and/or sponsorship of meetings, workshops, lectures, and other information disseminating vehicles, and groups whose aims are consistent with the organization's objectives.



## **FREE MEN:**

- From the notion which a) ignores the rigid definition of their roles and b) insists they are culturally favored.
- From the tendency to evaluate themselves and each other by the degree to which they meet an impossible ideal.
- From conditioned competitiveness and the fear of sharing failures, anxieties and disappointments with one another.
- From a mistrust of their feelings and instincts and an over reliance on logical thought processes.
- From the notion that violent action confirms and enhances their manliness.
- From a relative ignorance of their bodily functions and disdain for their body's warning signals.
- From their conditioning to pacify and protect women, thereby inhibiting them from expressing their true feelings.
- From the pressure to be what they are not in preparation for their success role.
- From an over reliance on their jobs for a sense of identity.
- From conflict between their polygamous sexual conditioning as youths, and

society's expectation that they will overcome that conditioning after marriage.

- From preoccupation with sexual technique and from imperatives to concentrate on satisfying their partners sexually, seemingly at the expense of their own sexual pleasure.
- From the social barriers and pressures which stand in the way of their establishing close emotional friendships with other men.
- From the inclination to turn their wives into permission giving mother figures.
- From the need to prove their worthiness as protectors and providers.
- From feelings of inadequacy in matters of child care and child rearing.
- From feelings which inhibit them from developing a closer more emotional relationship with their children.
- From divorce laws which presume the naturally superior capabilities of women to care for children and which stereotype men as wallets.
- From national conscription practices which play on their traditional role as protector of the family and society.
- From harsher treatment under law for criminal violations than the treatment accorded to women in matters of arrest, conviction and sentencing.
- From the notion that as a class they oppress women any more than women as a class oppress them, or than society in general oppresses both sexes through stereotyping.

*The National Coalition For Men is the oldest Men's Rights organization in the world. Our members are men and women from all walks of life. Donations of time or money help make the world a better place for all of us.*