If you were to simply search the word “feminism” online, you would mind a seemingly infinite number of pages and articles preaching about the difficulties of women in modern America. The list of women’s organizations and help groups goes on for miles. There would be numerous mentions of the wage gap, rape culture, career inequalities, and stereotypes. This is good, as anytime an issue of equality is brought up, it should be conversed about, at the very least. What you wouldn’t find much of, however, is everything that the average American man has to go through. Men have it just as bad as women, if not worse. The issues are simply different and less spoken of. As an American woman, I feel it’s my responsibility to shine a bit of light onto the difficulties of the rougher gender.

For a man, emotional vulnerability can be a tricky business. There exists the stereotype that men act emotionlessly, never crying or showing fear. It’s expected that they have a calloused heart to go along with calloused hands that bring home the bacon for the family. This cliché has created a double-edged sword for any male with more emotional capabilities than an android. If a man isn’t particularly expressive, he is accused of pertaining to the “gender norms” and excluding “toxic masculinity”. Yet if he were to show his emotions comfortably in public, he’s often called over-emotional or accused of having a lack of self-control. There is rarely a sweet spot allowed between these two extremes.

A more legal issue for American men is divorce. Far too often, men get the short end of the stick in divorce settlements. Most people know of the custody inequality; according to the US Census Bureau, a mere 17.5% of fathers win custody battles. If neither parent has roaring issues (eg. Poor mental health, criminal background), the mother is almost guaranteed to win. Add to this that of those 17.5%, only 28.8% receive child support from the mother, and the fact that the custodial parent (normally the mother) is almost always awarded the shared home, and something becomes blaringly clear. Men are extremely discriminated against in divorce settlement, but it is so much more apparent when custody is involved.

Suicide is widely considered one of the largest tragedies raking across the United States, being the second-leading cause of death for anyone under 35. What are almost never considered are the statistics of Americas suicide. Men kill themselves 3.5 times as much as women. According to the American Foundation for Suicide prevention, an average of 7/10 suicides are of white males. Modern men are often dehumanized by most human rights organizations; they are called misogynistic and feminism-deniers if they bring up any problems they face in life, while those that never voice their problems are seen as cold and privileged. There are also very few organizations that assist men in times of need, such as instances of depression, domestic abuse, or even rape. This drives many men to end their lives early.

Out on the streets, rape rates are horrendous (as any rate over 0% is), showing that roughly 80-90% of rape or sexual assault victims are women. This is a common talking point among feminists, saying that it shows a rape culture in the United States. What they never speak about, however, is what happens not on the streets, but behind bars. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, about 210,000 inmates report being sexually assaulted by either another inmate or a staff member each year. Compare that to the average of 90,500 cases outside of prison, and the reality of mainstream rape statistics becomes startlingly clear. Another thing to note is that among female inmate victims, roughly 40% of complaints resulted in convictions. Among men, that falls to 9%.

My final point to make may come across as a bit weak at first, but I promise it is the most serious of those I’ve listed. The biggest threat to modern American men is stereotyping. This may seem ludicrous, but the stereotypes and misconceptions tacked onto men simply for their gender can be extremely dangerous. Let’s start with the most common cliché – “men think with their dick”. Though this common phrase can seem funny or playful, it has many harmful implications. This thought drives communities to believe men are predisposed to do nothing but seek sex. What would a creature that lives for nothing but sex do? It would pressure partners, assault them, and even rape. Many men are seen first as predators until they prove that they aren’t. And think for one moment on what happens if a man is accused of rape or sexual assault. Whether or not he is convinced or even proven innocent, his life is ruined. The first thing that will pop up in a name search is a rape allegation. For women, however? If a woman is accused of raping a man, the man is often ridiculed, to begin with. If she is proven innocent, her life remains unchanged, but even if she is convicted, many in the public will doubt the validity of the conviction. Let’s try another – “If a man doesn’t make a lot of money, look elsewhere.” Many consider a male partner worth a shot only if he makes enough money to pay the bills, buy the groceries, and cover dinner. This is a direct cause of the assumption that a man is the bread-winner of the family. If a man over the age of 25 doesn’t have a good stash, he’s unlikely to have much luck in the dating pool. A final point – “men have it easier than women.” Did you know that if you take into account career choices, raise requests, and children, the “wage gap” falls to 1-2%? Now you do. If a man and a woman with the same qualifications apply for the same job, the woman is often favored to fill diversity quotas. There are countless scholarships and help organizations for women in need, but the number for men is minuscule. The expectation for the male physique is tall and muscular. Men are expected to be successful, but successful men are demeaned. Still think men have it better?

I have no intention of underappreciating women’s issues – I am one, after all! My issue stands with the under-reported difficulties that men face. A man in modern America has it just as difficult as a woman. It’s my belief that we, as citizens, should address the hardships everyone faces and work to make the country more equal for both sides. There is an epidemic of male suicides, and many of the factors I mentioned above have contributed to it. As much as women have it rough, so do men.

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