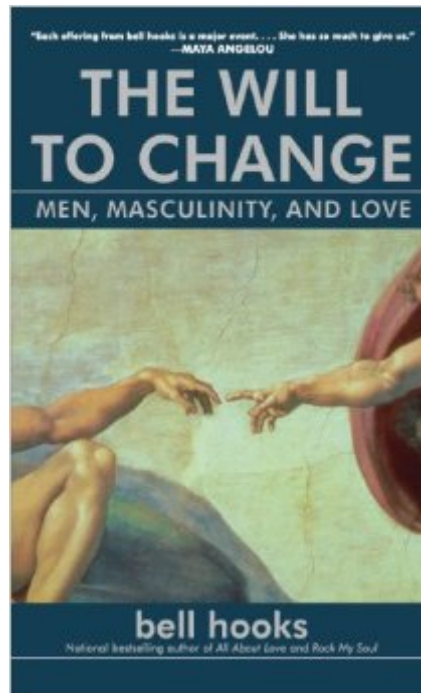


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# The Will To Change: Men, Masculinity, And Love



## Synopsis

Everyone needs to love and be loved -- even men. But to know love, men must be able to look at the ways that patriarchal culture keeps them from knowing themselves, from being in touch with their feelings, from loving. In *The Will to Change*, bell hooks gets to the heart of the matter and shows men how to express the emotions that are a fundamental part of who they are -- whatever their age, marital status, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. With trademark candor and fierce intelligence, hooks addresses the most common concerns of men, such as fear of intimacy and loss of their patriarchal place in society, in new and challenging ways. She believes men can find the way to spiritual unity by getting back in touch with the emotionally open part of themselves -- and lay claim to the rich and rewarding inner lives that have historically been the exclusive province of women. A brave and astonishing work, *The Will to Change* is designed to help men reclaim the best part of themselves.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"*The Will to Change*" by bell hooks is one of the best books I have ever read. bell hooks gets to the heart of the ways in which most of us (men and women, people of all classes and races) are harmed by patriarchy, as well as exposing the ways in which we unconsciously replicate it in our personal lives. Her ideas are big enough to include all people who are struggling with division, oppression, and/or general un-wholeness and unhappiness, not just women. She suggests that the way to freedom is for us to love each other and support each other on our journeys to wholeness.

She clearly and consistently frames the struggle as one of hurting people yearning to be whole and free. This is a theory that is accessible to everyone - anyone who searches their heart, or just observes the society around them, can see that what she says is true. As a feminist who is married and loves men, I found her advice to be full of wisdom, with a refreshing lack of intellectual elitism. After reading this wonderful work, I am more convinced than ever that heart and soul are the primary components of our future evolutionary path. Hats off to you, ms. hooks!

The book started with clear examples of what ms. hooks would like to see change, but about 2/3 of the way through shifted into arguing her case for what kind of change should happen and became very fuzzy. She has a theory, but I found myself wondering what she based her theory and what the change would look like, on. It got to be that she was just piling on to convince the reader that the form of her ideas was good and should be implemented, but never articulated how she arrived at her ideas, or what supported the formation of those ideas. Disappointing read.

Great book. This needs to be recommended reading for all men. I'll probably give my son this when he's a teenager.

A few things stand out about this book. First, it is refreshingly willing to call the feminist movement out on its s\*\*\*. I state this first because men who are less likely to read this book because of frustration with feminism need to hear this. As well, it's deeply honest, and not at all compromising in its radicalness to achieve the balance it has. Lastly, and most importantly, it's just deeply relevant. It matches so much of my experience, and has helped me see what I need to work on to improve my life. I recommend it to men to help see how they can live more fully and have better relationships (with men and women), and to women to see how to help support men in making these changes, as well as to understand our struggles.

bell hooks states that feminists have not discussed how to improve the lives of men and this is her attempt. In 11 chapters, she details her ideas that men must be open to feminism and feminists must be open to men, that patriarchal masculinity is the problem, not males, and that much harm comes to the life of boys. Professional critics have called this book that non-race-based equivalent to "We Real Cool." However, I'd say it's the male counterpart to hooks' "Communion." This book is an ideal tool for feminist women raising sons. It also may be a good introduction to feminism for progressive men or men who want to be progressive. hooks cites many canonical men's studies

texts and progressive books on boys and men that many readers will find useful. (Again, it's a shame that this book lacks a bibliography, just like most of her most recent works.) While this book discusses romantic love, that type of relationship is not the main issue here. Readers that have already heard enough about hooks' views on love from her autobiographies and recent works will find this refreshing. Many loving dynamics are detailed here. Most importantly, hooks discusses the troubles faced by little boys. I'm impressed that a childless writer is so devoted to children. This almost reminded me of Rosie O'Donnell's autobiography the way a grown woman is so concerned about minors. I would say that I have three major complaints/critiques of her book. First, as much as she constantly assesses and promotes feminism, what comes through is that anti-oppression books can help men. Her gender analysis just happens to be her angle. A civil rights activist could have said that organizing could help men or a Communist discussing anti-classism could make the same argument that hooks makes here. Thinking about justice, breaking out of boundaries, and imagining utopias has never been the work of just feminists. Second, hooks critiques feminist self-help books for not discussing politics and the larger superstructure. However, the majority of self-help books, even ones that she cites, are apolitical. She needs to critique the whole genre if she is going to find so many individual examples unsatisfying. People who feel that hooks was too hard on Naomi Wolf will be equally surprised at how she goes after Susan Faludi here. Third, recently, everytime bell hooks mentions sexual orientation issues, she starts off with "Lesbians and gay men can be as conservative as anyone else, but here's one bit of info that I find useful from their activism....." If a white person started every comment on race with "People of color can be just as conservative as anyone else, but...." or a class-privileged person said, "Some poor people deserve the barrel they are in, but here's what I find useful on class-based activism....", etc., hooks would be livid, yet she does it with gays. I understand hooks' point that gays are just people just like straights. However, her statements are somewhat course and insensitive. I think this flaw still highlights how bell hooks has continually marginalized issues of sexual orientation while she champions issues of race, class, and gender. Her recent ability to add imperialism to the mix shows she can build on her theorizing, so her stance on gay rights is incredibly problematic. There's a great chapter in Carbrado's "Black Men on Race, Gender, and Sexuality" that discusses hooks' shortcoming. At the end of almost every chapter, hooks presents cultural criticism. Her subjects are broad including the Harry Potter series, the film "Life as a House," and other popular works. I am curious as to whether she is trying to satisfy her fans that are most familiar with her cultural studies work. I wonder if she is trying to prove that her new march toward self-help writing is not meant to show she has lost her cult crit skills. Coming from an African-American woman who almost always discusses black issues, this book was

pretty light on race matters. African-American readers, like myself, looking for that topic will find that the only chapter that is the exception is "Popular Culture: Media Masculinity." I applaud hooks for pointing out and proving that black authors have an array of writing interests. Like always, this book is annoyingly repetitive. hooks comes close to admitting this in her introduction. If I remember correctly, she seemed reluctant to discuss domestic violence and war in her classic text "Talking Back." Now, she has taken those problems as a centerpiece of her work. The cover of this book shows that Renaissance painting where God's finger points down toward Man's (this was the basis for the cover to "E.T.," btw). The cover has a pretty shade of blue. I think readers will find the cover quite inviting.

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