



Decent Shame: Facing the Assaults on Our Husbands

John Hurst

CreateSpace

Unknown (pp)

978-1-4536-8269-2

Domestic violence, a deadly-serious problem worldwide, leaves physical and emotional scars on families for generations. Assaults, mostly men abusing women, were once considered a private family matter, and many concerned family and friends were encouraged to look the other way. Only when Erin Pizzey, a British family-care activist credited with opening the first battered-women's shelters in the early 1970's, stated that most domestic violence is reciprocal and that women are just as capable of violence as men, did perceptions begin to change.

In Decent Shame, the often overlooked topic of female-on-male violence is studied in detail. Of special note, "Wedding Dance" (chapter one) discusses the beginning of troubled relationships; "Scoping the Problem" (chapter two) offers an in-depth analysis of the relationship; "A Brief History of Shaming" (chapter three) details how men feel about being abused; The Role of the Police (chapter four) explains how police have improved their responses to domestic violence interactions and Some Recommendations (chapter five) provides tactics victims can use to protect themselves and their children.

John Hurst, a veteran journalist and corporate communications strategist for companies in the United States and Canada, draws on his early experience as a court reporter, and also as a victim of domestic violence. In addition to statistics, research data, and interviews with male abuse victims, the book investigates the possible causes of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) including a discussion of alcohol and substance abuse, both of which affect men and women in nearly equal measures.

The interviews Hurst conducts with abused men provide heartrending reading, and will serve to raise the reader's awareness. Unfortunately, parts of the book are difficult to follow due to organizational problems.

Few books have been written about violence perpetrated by women against men. Furthermore, there are few emergency resources—published or otherwise—available for male abuse victims and their children, unlike the plethora of resources for women. Hurst indicates that the abuse-against-men topic is often viewed as an attempt to divert attention from the larger problem of violence against women by men, but the author states his case without undue controversy. Additionally, *Decent Shame* provides more than twenty pages of resources for abused men in the US and Canada. Readers will be able to glean something of value from these lists alone.

Hurst handles a sensitive subject with care and respect. Though it's unfortunate that his vital message is troubled by poor structure and development, and lacks a bibliography, he brings to the forefront an under-discussed problem in the United States.

ANGELA BLACK (November 1, 2010)

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