



I AM A MAN: A Memoir

Carlos Gantchoff

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Write it. Write it.

So I did.

I could never figure out what was consuming me. Without knowing, what my wife told me to do when I was so angry or sad--write it, write it--ended up changing my life. What I thought was going to be a journal-like writing exercise ended up being the length of a book. I could not stop writing. All of the pent up emotions just came out. At first it was all anger, then sadness, and ultimately, hope. Hope is what I lacked for many years.

I am a 6'7" Mexican man, though defining Hispanic manhood is largely the quest of this book. I was assaulted by my uncle when I was 7 and that event set off a domino effect in my life, an effort to recapture my masculinity and my sanity. I grew up in Arizona and fulfilled virtually every expectation of my family and community, as a womanizer, a cheater, an addict. I also defied expectations, graduating college at 40 summa cum laude, getting full custody of my children, becoming a single dad. This book confronts Latin masculinity and how I defined it and defied it.

I AM A MAN is the story of what my uncle took from me, the horrifying quake of that monstrous act and all the dreadful aftershocks that later shook my life. It's a story of truth confronting mythology, of helplessness devolving into rage, and, perhaps most improbably of all, of the building of a life despite experiences that would, and do, undermine most foundations.

Most of my life I have wanted to help people. I believe it is because I wanted someone to help me. Help the child in me. I want my writing to help people who are like me. I believe it will. I felt alone all of my life and my writing helped me understand why. I want people to know they are not alone and even a 6'7 Mexican man can be abused. And I continued the abuse, in different forms. I feel obligated to write about what happened with a brutal clarity, a startling tone. This book is me. Everything in it is me.

Although this book is about being a survivor, it has also been said it is about being an addict, being a parent, being a man. It is a book about understanding a survivor when they are impossible to understand. It is a book about understanding yourself. The events in this book are more prevalent in society that anyone wants to admit. I want to bring the issue of survival to light in a visceral way. My life has not been apples and butterflies.

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