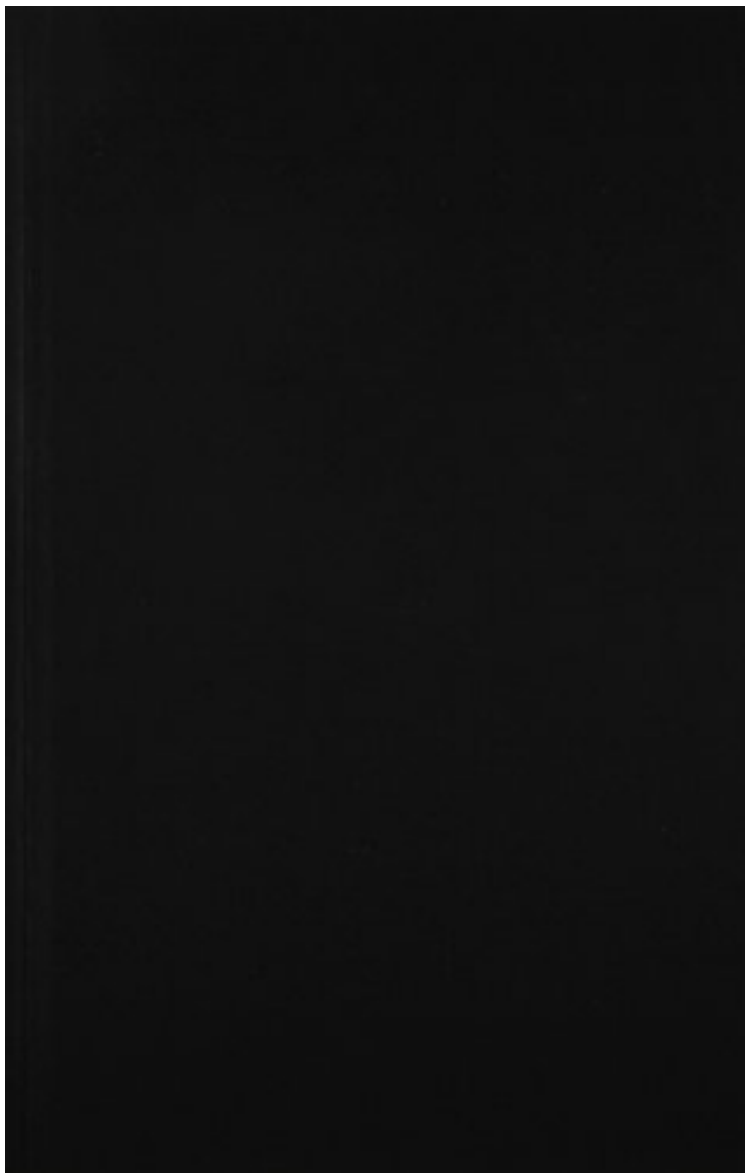


(Online library) Equality with a Vengeance: Men's Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash (Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law)


Equality with a Vengeance: Men's Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash (Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law)

Molly Dragiewicz

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Molly Dragiewicz : Equality with a Vengeance: Men's Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash (Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it

would be worth my time, and all praised *Equality with a Vengeance: Men's Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash* (Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law):

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Carefully researched, nuanced analysis
By Sherry Hamby, Author of *Battered Women's Protective Strategies: Stronger Than You Know*
Dr. Dragiewicz has written a very carefully researched account of the recent history of the politics of domestic violence. As noted in some of the other reviews, everything she says is thoroughly documented. I was interested to see a book address recent history. I am a fan of putting the social movement against violence in its historical context. This is an under-utilized approach to understanding domestic violence and so Dr. Dragiewicz's book makes a real contribution in that regard. I especially appreciated her nuanced discussion of terminology.

5 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Nails It
By Jay Young
In the past couple of years, my interest in the topics of sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence has grown. The uptick in interest has been due to personal factors and random events, but one thing that has become unavoidable as I delved deeper into these topics online is the presence of what has come to be known as "Men's Rights Activists" (MRAs), a loosely-affiliated crowd that is largely online. I read the Southern Poverty Law Center's report on some organizations that identify with the MRA label, which the SPLC classified as hate groups. In said report, this book was mentioned, so I decided to check it out. I find it highly informative, and it helped me to put all of the MRA claims and activity that I had come across into perspective, although the author does not specifically address the various websites in the "manosphere."

The focus of Dragiewicz's book is on a little-known court case from Minnesota, *Booth v. Hvass*. In this particular case, a men's rights group in Minneapolis sued to stop city funding to the battered women's shelter; allegedly because they distributed literature that was sexist against men, and that the very existence of a battered women's shelter violated the Equal Protection Clause. Dragiewicz explains, "The plaintiffs argued that the state discriminated against men when service providers acknowledged that sex and gender differences were involved in woman battering and other forms of domestic abuse. *Booth v. Hvass* joined other antifeminist efforts to reclaim patriarchal authority and the rhetorical space won by women over the past fifty years by enforcing a gender-blind understanding of a highly gendered social problem." The judge rejected the plaintiffs' arguments, finding that, first of all, the plaintiffs had not demonstrated any personal harm. Indeed, they admitted that they had never been denied shelter, or that they had even sought it. Further, having services that primarily cater to one gender was not a violation of the Equal Protection Clause, since evidence showed that the genders were not equally situated in regard to domestic violence. The plaintiffs appealed all the way up to the Supreme Court, but were rejected. Nonetheless, the case has ongoing relevance since "the claims presented in the complaint are not unique but instead are borrowed from antifeminist discourses circulating in other contexts." And it is the same kind of anti-feminist discourse that the author elaborates on this particular case that one sees everywhere in the "manosphere."

What I found illuminating in *Equality with a Vengeance* is the way the author deconstructs claims that appear to be about equality, and shows them to really be about reinforcing privilege. For example, lots of MRA discussions on domestic violence boil down to two claims: Domestic violence happens to men as often as to women, and seeing it as an issue in which women are primarily the victims is evidence of sexism against men, or "misandry." One meme I saw going around on Facebook that illustrated this was a picture of a sign that read "End Violence Against Women," but with "women" scratched out so that the sign read "End Violence Against Everyone." In fact, as Dragiewicz aptly puts it, gender equality arguments are generally couched as arguments that men and women should be equally treated according to standards developed from the life experiences of men, when in fact they are differently situated. I would be remiss if I did not quote another section: "The implication of insisting that domestic violence is a human rather than a gender issue is that paying attention to gender means paying attention to women. In the context of patriarchal hegemony, focusing attention on women's particular experiences and needs is unwarranted, abnormal, and intolerable. Objections to the recognition of gender as a factor in social life are also objections to the recognition of women and their experiences. Accordingly, contemporary efforts to enforce gender-blindness in areas where gender is pertinent essentially function as objections to the prioritization of women's experiences." In sum, I highly recommend this book to anyone who has seen the MRAs in the headlines and is eager for a critical analysis of what drives them. I frankly also would recommend it to anyone who considers themselves sympathetic to MRA ideas- it will challenge your thinking.

1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. New
By Cristina Fabr
You can not notice the difference between a new book and this one. No marks, ... absolutely new and clean

This book investigates efforts by fathers' rights groups to undermine battered women's shelters and services, in the context of the backlash against feminism. Dragiewicz examines the lawsuit *Booth v. Hvass*, in which fathers' rights groups attempted to use an Equal Protection claim to argue that funding emergency services that target battered women is discriminatory against men. As Dragiewicz shows, this case (which was eventually dismissed) is relevant to widespread efforts to promote a degendered understanding of violence against women in order to eradicate policies and programs that were designed to ameliorate harm to battered women.

Equality with a Vengeance, by Molly Dragiewicz, will be most interesting to domestic violence prevention professionals and others looking for a cogent analysis of the attacks on anti-violence legislation by so-called men's rights groups. [Dragiewicz argues that] considering gender in any analysis of violence is not radical but essential, and that refusing to do so is politically motivated. Womens of BooksDragiewicz has provided us with a treasure in its analysis of the motivations of mens and fathers rights (FR) programs, as well as their claims and how to refute many of their arguments. She writes both as a scholar and as an advocate of anti-violence, and has probably set herself up to be an expert witness in future lawsuits brought by FR groups. But even if she does not testify, her book will surely be used to counter their suits. Her book, Equality With a Vengeance: Mens Rights Groups, Battered Women, and a Feminist Backlash, is one that no state coalition library should be without. Ideally, every DV program should have a copy in the event it is sued by MR or FR groups.Domestic Violence ReportThe book has great value as a case study of antifeminist backlash. When Dragiewicz argues that what might seem at first glance to be isolated backlash from small fringe groups actually reflects larger anti-feminist discourses that are alive and well today, we are reminded of the importance and value of doing such close-up case studies. . . . Clearly, the discursive political battle that Dragiewicz describes continues, and this book is a welcome contribution to clear thinking on the issue.Contemporary Sociology

Equality with a Vengeance is a clear and convincing, finely contextualized account of violence against women and the multifaceted sources that help to understand its origin, pervasiveness and persistence. Dragewicz's work stands to combat the resurgence of myths about interpersonal violence promulgated by anti-feminist fathers rights groups. (Susan Caringella, Professor, Department of Sociology, Criminal Justice Program, Western Michigan University)|This book is a major contribution to the field of domestic violence, as no one else is writing about the lawsuits being filed by men's rights groups around the U.S. whose purpose is to defund shelters for battered women. Dragiewicz analyzes the first of these suits in depth, explaining why the arguments made by the plaintiffs are wrong legally, and demonstrating the ways that these arguments mirror typical statements by batterers. (Nancy K. D. Lemon, Lecturer, Berkeley School of Law, UC Berkeley)About the AuthorMOLLY DRAGIEWICZ is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Criminology, Justice and Policy Studies at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.