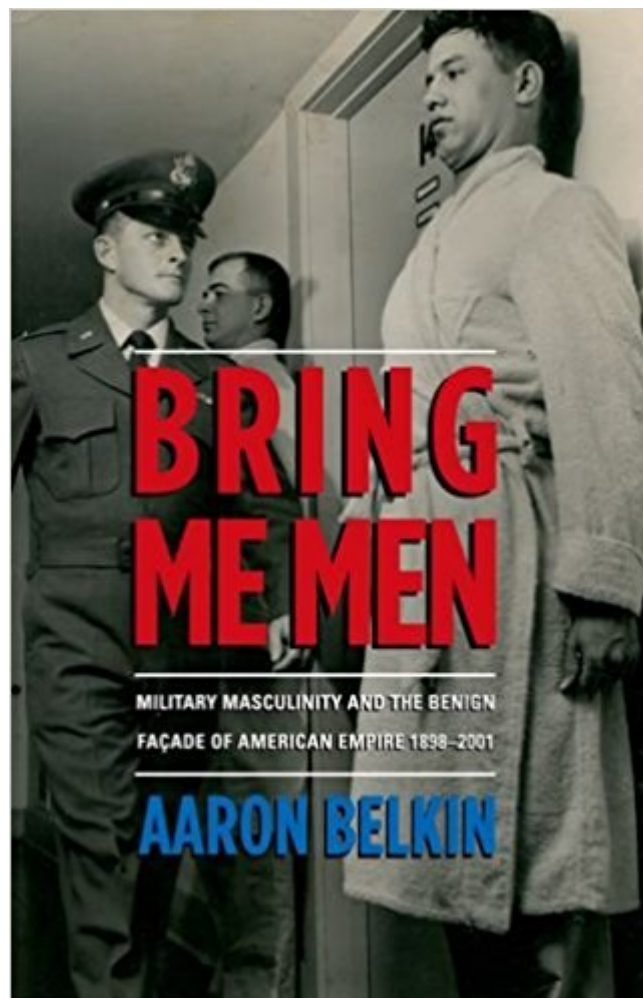


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Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity And The Benign Facade Of American Empire, 1898-2001



Synopsis

The masculinity of those who serve in the American military would seem to be indisputable, yet it is full of contradictions. To become a warrior, one must renounce those things in life that are perceived to be unmasculine. Yet at the same time, the military has encouraged and even mandated warriors to do exactly the opposite. *Bring Me Men* explores these contradictions in great detail and shows that their invisibility has been central to the process of concealing the darkest secrets of American empire. By examining case studies that expose these contradictions--the phenomenon of male-on-male rape at the US Naval Academy, for example, as well as historical and contemporary attitudes toward cleanliness and filth--Belkin utterly upends our understanding of the relationship between warrior masculinity and American empire and the fragile processes sustaining it.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (March 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199327602

ISBN-13: 978-0199327607

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.7 x 5.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #825,517 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Literature & Fiction > Literary Criticism](#) #444 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > History](#) #2257 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Military](#)

Customer Reviews

"Probably no single person deserves more credit for the repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell' than the author of this book. As Director of the Palm Center, Aaron Belkin effectively parried homophobic justifications for excluding gay men and lesbians from the US military, all the while learning unforgettable lessons about the complex culture of military masculinity. This book converts that wisdom into deep scholarship about, and a moral indictment of, the sexual culture at the basis of American military might. This gripping account of the strength and weakness, sadism and masochism, masculinity and femininity, boundedness and porosity, cleanliness and filth that together make up military masculinity--both at the most intimate level of a single troop's corporeality and the vastest expanse of American imperial power--will shock even those who knew all along that

inclusion in the US military would be an ambiguous triumph."--Janet Halley, Royall Professor of Law, Harvard Law School"Belkin's fascinating, original, and authoritative book overturns conventional wisdom about military masculinity and raises important and troubling questions about warrior identity. He shows that over the past century the US military has instilled not just hypermasculinity but also its opposites--intimacy, femininity, queerness, male rape--to create gender confusion in the ranks and then offer blind obedience to authority as the remedy. A must-read book for anyone interested in gender and war."--Joshua Goldstein, author of *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*"We tend to assume that military masculinity is made through an often brutal suppression of 'unmasculine' human qualities like empathy, nurturing, compassion. Aaron Belkin explodes that facile narrative, and reveals the contradictions at the core of the warrior's identity. The implications for our understanding of gender and American culture more broadly are profound."--Michael Kimmel, SUNY Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology"Just as the racial integration of the American military starting in the Korean War and the gender integration beginning with the current all-volunteer force reflected and helped shape American conceptions of race and gender, so does the recent lifting of the ban on gay men and lesbians serving openly mirror and shape our conceptions of sexuality, and particularly masculinity, in both the military and more broadly in society. Aaron Belkin has been the most prominent analyst of this latter process. This volume reframes our evolving understanding of sexuality and the falsity of the masculine/feminine dualism, and places this process in the context of historical, cultural, and political change in America."--David Segal, Director, Center for Research on Military Organization"A vigorous and fascinating account of military masculinity and its contradictions, its embodiment, and its links to empire. Sometimes funny and sometimes dismaying, Aaron Belkin's book conveys a strong sense of the emotional violence behind the public face of the armed forces."--Raewyn Connell, author of *Masculinities*"A tour de force. Belkin reveals the cultural and historical meanings of masculinity in the military of yesterday and tomorrow, including symbolic and psychological contradictions posed by the sex and gender binaries masculine/feminine, strong/weak, dominant/subordinate, victor/victim, civilized/barbaric, clean/dirty, and straight/queer. A great contribution to contemporary scholarship and policy."--Gilbert Herdt, author of *Moral Panics/Sex Panics: Fear and the Fight Over Sexual Rights*"In this well-researched, comprehensive manuscript Belkin demonstrates rather convincingly the many contradictions and dualities inherent throughout the US military's history when it comes to "turning men into boys" via military service. ...an important, timely contribution in the academic areas of masculinity, gender studies and political science." -- Choice: current reviews for academic libraries

Aaron Belkin is Associate Professor of Political Science at San Francisco State University and Director of the Palm Center, University of California. He was a MacArthur Foundation postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley and a pre-doctoral fellow at Stanford. He has published more than twenty-five books, chapters, and peer-reviewed journal articles, most recently *United We Stand? Divide and Conquer Politics and the Logic of International Hostility*.

I never bought into the belief that military service certifies one's competence, trustworthiness, and authenticity (nor those who serve on the police force, work for the government or the clergy). The author of this book states the military requires absolute obedience to orders and the abdication of conscience and reason which I agree and again would ascribe this to the police, government or clergy. The military's behavior internationally (assassinations, torture, financial support of dictators, killing of civilians) and their treatment of minorities, women and homosexuals leaves little to admire. Lots of surprising facts and information, this book really pulls the curtain back on military culture.

This book was both compelling and very disturbing. I work for a military organization; also a family member works at the Naval Academy. Several close friends are in the military or retired from the military. It makes me wonder what horrors they have suffered from the military culture. Yet do they accept that this is normal part of military life? The book is written by an academic and its style is very academic, so it can be hard to follow some times. And it is horrifying. But a good read!

This book is a practical view of real history with international comparisons. The obvious conclusion is that American military are myopic when compared to other military such as Israel. I read it with interest.

Bring Me Men is a compelling trip through American military culture over the last century. Author Aaron Belkin focuses on the odd concept of "military masculinity": odd because it's a form of masculinity that is not helpful to the military and, stranger still, not even consistently masculine. *Bring Me Men* is an exquisite cross between Andrew Bacevich's book *"The New American Militarism"* and William Ian Miller's *"The Anatomy of Disgust."* Belkin explains that the peculiarly American brand of military masculinity is steeped in parts of humanity that can disgust us (filth, sexuality, penetration, sadism, and weakness), and these bizarre conceptions of masculinity are in turn a microcosm of how the U.S. conducts foreign relations. Military masculinity is a fantasy-world depiction of

maleness and authority that is often at odds with our values, both civilian and military, and at odds with traditional masculinity itself. It's this contradiction that will fascinate readers. Belkin is a researcher and scholar who may have been the person most responsible for ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." He worked closely with the military to ensure its policies would be based on facts and experience, not fear and emotion. He succeeded, but gay service members were just another in a long line of scapegoats on which the military has projected the problems it most wanted to deny in itself. The stories are the most irresistible part of *Bring Me Men*. From tales of sanitation engineering during the Spanish-American War to recent efforts to bury reports of heterosexual male-on-male rape at military academies, Belkin bypasses the shiny patriotism of the 9/11 era and digs into the softer rot beneath. Finally, *Bring Me Men* dares to show how our uncritical adoration of those serving in uniform has led to a counterproductive and dangerous policy of American exceptionalism abroad. This book is a work of real courage. Read it and you'll never hear a call to use military force the same way again. A former Air Force officer, current law professor, and author of "A More Perfect Military: How the Constitution Can Make Our Military Stronger"

A simple, yet great, guide to the U.S. Armed Forces. Provides a look at all the major components and goes into great detail; an excellent companion.

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