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## THE GLASS FLOOR AND THE GLASS WALL

*Tim Goldich*



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### ABSTRACT

*Many believe men have power and women are victims. But when stigmatized prisoners, war-torn soldiers, and disabled laborers look up, the Glass Ceiling they experience is the Glass Floor women walk upon. For every one CEO there have been many POWs. The Glass Wall requires understanding that to avoid being shut out from the world of physical-and-emotional intimacy, men endure hardships and even risk death to gain entrance. A world in which the Glass Ceiling is eliminated while the Glass Floor and Wall continues is not a world of gender equality. Gylany—a world in which women are often more-than, but never less-than men—is the beginning of female supremacy and the end of equal partnership.*

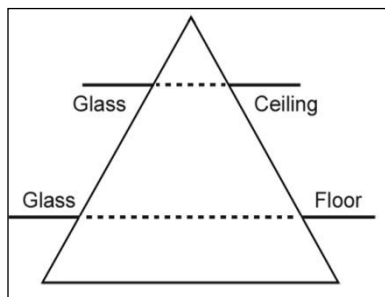
**Keywords:** equalism, gender politics, glass floor, glass wall, gylany

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## THE GLASS FLOOR

Men have the power and women are the victims, or so The Story goes. Throughout history, whenever Woman looked up, she perceived what we now call the Glass Ceiling, a sort of semi-permeable membrane composed of social conditioning, gender roles, tradition, bias, and various legal and sociopolitical structures. In looking down, however, she might have noticed that she was walking on a kind of Glass Floor comprised of all the same stuff.

As seen from an equalist standpoint, parallel to the Glass Ceiling is the Glass Floor. As the Glass Ceiling, in myriad ways both nebulous and concrete, has always tended to thwart Woman's rise to the top, so the Glass Floor, in myriad ways both nebulous and concrete, has always tended



to safeguard her from sinking to the extreme bottom—of mine shafts, prison cells, foxholes. The Glass Floor has acted as partial insulation between women and the dark side of the world and human nature as well as most of life on earth's most deeply brutal, filthy, arduous, hazardous, and corrupting realities.

Through the Glass Ceiling a woman could view the tip of the success pyramid and see that it was mostly male occupied. In looking down through the Glass Floor, however, she could view the vast base of the pyramid and see that it too has been occupied mostly by men—men who were trained to kill in order to protect being killed or maimed by the thousands and the millions on battlefields (many tortured mercilessly in prisoner-of-war camps for months or years).

Too many of these unfortunate men end up on the streets to join the 85-percent-male street homeless. Less than a third of men are veterans, yet more than half of the imprisoned are veterans. Thus, veterans too often join other men—protector-providers corrupted in the pursuit of money (the root of all evil)—to be suffocated and tortured by the thousands and the millions in the penal system.

Consider also men obligated for toughness, strength, and courage who, throughout history, have been killed or maimed by the thousands and the millions through hard labor, the use of heavy machinery, and countless other at-work hazards. In recent decades women have comprised 45 percent of the workforce but a mere 6 percent of all work-related fatalities.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with being more loved, women are better protected.

Moreover, one woman's floor is another man's ceiling. A hefty proportion of men have always felt trapped beneath the Glass Floor down at the base of the human pyramid. When the likes of stigmatized prisoners, war-torn soldiers, and disabled laborers look up, the Glass Ceiling they experience is the Glass Floor women walk upon. For every one CEO there have been many POWs. Men have always occupied both extremes, the most and the least enviable positions on earth—the latter in far greater numbers than the former. Meanwhile, women have largely occupied the middle ground. In equalism, that is neither oppression nor victimization: that's an even deal.

## THE GLASS WALL

Actor Tim Allen breaks through millennia of male conditioning to express his situation with remarkable candor and vulnerability:

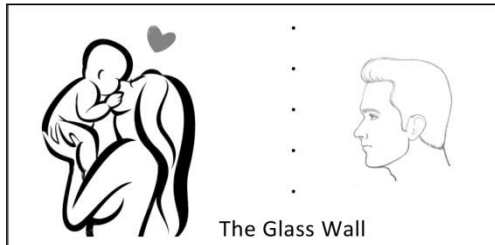
*The birth of a child—my wife's going, "Ohh"—I see them in love in a room, and my eyes are like I'm looking in Macy's at toys I'll never own. I'll never have that! And the two of them: "Ah"—these little coos. . . . And I was like, "Whooo!" I shrank down to this little man. So what I have to do is somehow—I have to get some reason for them to need me. <sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Farrell, Warren, Ph.D., *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men Are the Disposable Sex* (New York: Berkley Books, 1993) p.106. "6 percent of all work-related fatalities." Men comprise 94% of all work-related fatalities due to on-the-job injury (disease-related deaths caused by on-the-job exposure are not included in this figure). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health NIOSH, (Morgantown, West. Va.), on-line database titled "Basic Information on Workplace Safety and Health in the U.S."

<sup>2</sup> Paglia, Camille, "When Camille Met Tim," *Esquire*, February 1995, p. 70.

The father's experience of looking at the mother/child nexus as if through a store window is something we'll call the Glass Wall. To understand the Glass Wall requires understanding that the cost of being shut out, rendered less than (or both) in the world of men is matched in full by the cost of being shut out, rendered less than (or both) in the world of women: the world of



physical-and-emotional intimacy, relationship, love, vulnerability, marriage, home, family, parenting, children, and the social fabric. No wonder men (like those tribesmen of New Guinea) have endured hardships and even risked death to gain entrance.

What is life without an emotional life? For millennia, the realm of human birth was the sole province of women. Midwives officiated and kept their secrets. Eventually, the anesthesiologist could be there; men of practical value could be there. But this Glass Wall was not first cracked till husbands and fathers first gained admittance in the 1970s. Such men were granted a new form of value for the nurturance they offered their wives. For millennia, shrunken-little-men compensated by offering *extrinsic* value, but having male family members present was a nascent venture into granting men *intrinsic* value (not as human-*doings*, but rather as human-*beings*).

Conditions for women are not normally compared against conditions suffered by men occupying the true bottom rung. These *garbage men* and their sufferings have little presence in our minds and in our hearts. Even so, a world in which the Glass Ceiling is eliminated while the Glass Floor and Wall keep right on going is *not* a world of gender equality. Arguably, Gylany—a world in which women are often more-than, but *never* less-than—is the beginning of female supremacy and the *end* of equal partnership.

The opposite of love isn't hate: it is *indifference*. As Woman has been given reason to feel intellectually invisible, Man has been given reason to feel invisible with regard to compassion. Only those men who perform, achieve, and succeed rise to respect and visibility. Only the elite male is present enough in our minds to compare against. Naturally, if we only compare conditions for the *average* woman against conditions for the *elite* male, women will seem to be *the* powerless victims every time. But this erroneous conclusion is the standard conclusion only because it sustains a beloved illusion . . . it sustains The Story

## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Tim Goldich** is the president of the Chicago chapter of the National Coalition for Men and an avid member of the ManKind Project, two organizations that variously support men politically and emotionally. He is also an educator and mentor to boys on their way to becoming men. Goldich facilitates the personal growth work of men on New Warrior Training Adventure weekends and of men and women on personal growth weekends called Path to Spirit. He is the author of four books, including [\*Loving Men, Respecting Women: The Future of Gender Politics\*](#).

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