

Parenting Solo: "How to Raise a Pimp" Review

Written by Michelle Greenlee Harris, Columnist
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I chuckled in a combination of amusement and disbelief when I read the title my online search engine coughed up. "How to Raise a Pimp" it said. I was looking for articles about bitter and angry moms – BAMs I call them. Apparently my computer concluded that BAMs raise pimps. I had to know more.

This particular rant was penned by Dr. Darryl L. Fortson, a family practitioner who wrote a scathing article that had irresponsible solo moms in its crosshairs. While he made some valid points, I have a problem with the collateral damage this little essay could cause.

I have been known to be tough on my solo parent sisters but this article seems over the top. Solo parents already have a tarnished image in the eyes of many, so some of the generalizations the good doctor makes are troubling.

Dr. Fortson goes beyond the traditional image we may have of the law breaking, fur coat wearing, hoe slapping pimp- the Hollywood version that most of us know. His definition of a pimp includes any man who looks for a woman to take care of him financially. This could be a mother, wife or love interest.

Wouldn't that mean that many of us know a pimp? Shockingly, yes. But how many of their mothers are to blame? That answers depends on who you ask. The moms would say none. Dr. Fortson would say most and I would say not as many as you think.

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According to Dr. Fortson, a future pimp's mother exhibits certain reckless parenting skills. He points to things like focusing too much on their son's appearance, parading lots of men in front of him and using those men to pay the family bills. He also notes the mother's tendency to make excuses for their son and blame everyone else for his mistakes or misbehavior.

I agree that all of these things are potentially destructive when raising a child but I think they are exhibited by a vocal minority. I think that most solo moms want the best for their children and do not intend to be bad examples. I can see a guilt stricken single mother overcompensating by dressing her son in "the best" her money can buy. I can see a woman who has not healed from her last relationship making the same mistakes over and over again. I can also see a cash strapped mom accepting help from a supposedly well meaning male friend.

These are parenting mistakes – not a sinister plot to raise a generation of pimps. They are human frailties, ones that need to be recognized and corrected- not condemned. Most parents just need help, guidance and support. I'm sure Dr. Fortson is frustrated by what he sees in his practice but his message may be overshadowed by his harsh choice of words.

I will not sugar coat one reality that Dr. Fortson points out. All children need their father or a good father figure in their lives. More mothers need to keep the door open and even be a bridge to help foster that relationship. More women need to stop getting into relationships with men who are not standing up to their responsibilities as a father. This way no one is raising a pimp – by accident or on purpose.