



## **Reluctant Hero**

*Michael Benfante , Dave Hollander*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# Reluctant Hero

Michael Benfante , Dave Hollander

## **Reluctant Hero** Michael Benfante , Dave Hollander

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, Michael Benfante went to work, just like he had day after day, at his office on the eighty-first floor in the World Trade Center North Tower. Moments after the first plane struck, just twelve floors above him, Benfante organized his terrified employees, getting them out the office and moving down the stairwells. On his way down, he and another co-worker encountered a woman in a wheelchair on the sixty-eighth floor. Benfante, the woman and Benfante's co-worker then embarked on a ninety-six-minute odyssey of escape—the two men carrying the woman down sixty-eight flights of stairs out of the North Tower and into an ambulance that rushed her to safety just minutes before the tower imploded.

A CBS video camera caught Benfante just as he got out the building, and almost immediately, the national media came calling. Benfante sat on the couch with Oprah Winfrey, where she hailed him as a hero. Almost one year to the day after 9/11, Benfante got married and the woman in the wheelchair sat in the front row.

That's the storybook ending. But in the aftermath of 9/11, Benfante began a journey fraught with wrenching personal challenges of critical emotional and psychological depth. In *Reluctant Hero* Benfante shares the trappings of his public heroism, the loneliness of his private anguish, and the hope he finds for himself and for us. Because all of us—whether we were in the towers, in New York City, or someplace else—we are all 9/11 survivors.

## **Reluctant Hero Details**

Date : Published August 11th 2011 by Skyhorse (first published August 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781616082857

Author : Michael Benfante , Dave Hollander

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Biography, Autobiography, Memoir

 [Download Reluctant Hero ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Reluctant Hero ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Reluctant Hero Michael Benfante , Dave Hollander**

---

## From Reader Review Reluctant Hero for online ebook

### Paulinlong says

This is a very affective book, I had dreams about the feelings and events Michael Benfante described. It is repetitious in places, almost like those documentaries which keep summing up what has happened so far in case you haven't caught on; however, it is the narrative of a man coming to terms with himself and his emotional reactions and should be read as such. I was fascinated by his description of 9/11 but perhaps even more so by the speed at which the media expected him to be able to be on call, coherent, and available. Also by the context he placed 9/11 in in terms of Enron etc... the corporate greed and how these companies treat their staff. They should have been named as well as shamed. Part of his personality comes out in how he directly praises or rebuffs those who deserve it. I would love to know Ron on Oprah's reaction to this and hers too! What is most amazing of all is that he gets so close to the truth: that everything is random and cannot be controlled except in the kindness we show to each other, truly part of natural selection then his last words are about God. Unbelievable.

---

### Cherie says

Thank you, Michael.

---

### Annie says

Let me start by saying I am biased, but I honestly don't feel that my knowing "Harry" had any impact on me being so moved by his story. His story and actions are simply amazing. I felt as though I was there with him in that stairwell, and if I closed the book I was abandoning him, John and the woman they carried 68 stories to safety. I read it in one sitting this weekend in one sitting, hanging on with him through his struggles that followed. Any American alive that day should read this story so we can all be reminded how we rallied together, felt for one another, and bonded while wearing our red, white and blue proudly. Benfante and Hollander did a phenomenal job! Thank you for sharing your story with us, Harry.

---

### Trish says

The church library where I work recently had the opportunity to host Michael Benfante as a speaker. Many members of the congregation read the book before he came to town, and virtually everyone tore through it in one or two days. All those who came to return their copy to the library walked in open-mouthed, saying the same thing: "Wow." We own 25 copies of the book, and haven't been able to keep them on the shelves.

The first part of the book lays out Benfante's journey through hell on 9/11 in such unflinching detail that the experience felt immediate -- so much so that my heart was pounding and my hands were shaking. That being said, the real story follows what happens to Michael after the 9/11 media storm dies down. As a reader, this part of the book was equally gripping as Michael struggles through frustration, self-annihilation, anger and despair described in his down-to-earth, take-no-prisoners voice. I won't give anything away here, but Michael goes down a heartbreaking, dark path that has you pleading with him to return to the confident, charismatic, successful guy he was before 9/11, wrapping up the whole thing in a pretty bow at the end. But

life is not a Hallmark card; his eventual redemption, still a work in progress, lies in a simple yet powerful message he discovers in one small, beautiful moment with his young son.

Michael's hour-long presentation at my church left his audience transformed -- a powerful word, but the only way to adequately describe his influence. People stayed behind long after Benfante departed simply to discuss with each other how affected they were by his story and his not-preachy-but-nonetheless-spiritual message.

He states that writing this book was simply meant to be a cathartic exercise for him; he seems genuinely surprised by a generally-cynical public's positive embrace. Do yourself a favor and read this book.

---

### **Cindy says**

This book was a pleasant surprise. I could not put it down once I started reading it. Informative, thoughtful, emotional and well written.

---

### **Andrea Brankel says**

#### **Inspirational**

Told from the heart. I hope that all who read it will follow through with the proposal he makes. The book is also a reminder of how we prioritize when danger is around and a reminder that even the simplest and most natural things can get us thinking on the right track again

---

### **Melissa says**

Before I read the part in the book about the "forgotten truth of 9/11" that Michael states in the book, I was talking with my best friend about we thought this was in fact forgotten. It was great to get validation about that from someone who lived through that horrible day who was there in the towers.

Some parts were extremely difficult to read..especially certain things that Michael saw after getting out of the Tower. Nonetheless, reading this book puts into perspective what we should never forget from 9/11..the love and sacrifice thousands of people made that day that didn't make it into news stories or broadcasts. These unknown names and acts of heroism is what makes me proud to be born and raised in New York. Despite being a "reluctant hero", Michael Benfante is one of those people..even though he did only what he thought he did was right, some people aren't that selfless.

---

### **Kimberly says**

You can't really plan where you're going to be on the worst day of your life. And it's hard to imagine that the worst day of your life might also be one of the worst days in modern history.

It has made me realize that I have abilities— physical, analytical, intuitive— that other people don't have. When you see someone struggling with something, something that would be a snap for you because of your

strength, size, or intellect, then help them out!

How would I react if I was placed in the most dire of circumstances, forced to fight for something important to me? Would I have the salt to perform, to do my job in the face of death or facing the fear of death? Could I overcome that fear and react?

It's funny how faulty perception can work to your advantage in a situation like this. Even though you felt the impact and you felt the building shaking— and all of that felt catastrophic— you never think you are in real danger. You don't know what real danger is, because you've never been in it. That ignorance may have been the only thing that kept me from lapsing into petrified terror.

If we weren't moving, my mind shifted away from hopeful thinking about the next move to fearful thinking about why we were stopped. Any restriction of movement compromised my sense of invincibility and control, the belief that I could get out of a situation because of my speed or my strength. If you trap me, take away my ability to move, then who am I? I wasn't trapped helping this woman. I was merely slowed. As long as I was moving, I was still in control of my situation. When I wasn't moving, I was not in control; I was being controlled.

Offering to comfort another was one of the best ways to feel some power and control in what was a helpless situation. Little gestures like that, no matter how ineffectual, reminded you of your humanity. Those little gestures kept me grounded in reality, kept me sane, and kept me moving forward.

Under that truck, I measured my life by what I would have lost if I didn't make it out. The answer was simple: the human connection to the people I loved.

Work was where I had spent most of the hours of my life. The last few days were a massive interruption of that routine. Since that "interruption," ten years ago, it has been incredibly difficult for me to return comfortably to a sustained "work" routine of any kind. It no longer occupies that same place of importance in my life.

The way I see it, she is a woman who had sustained a dignified battle with rheumatoid arthritis since age three. She worked daily to eliminate dependence. In our story, on 9/11, she was the very thing she'd spent her whole life trying not to be: a victim. Why would she want to celebrate her victimhood?

After the incredibly positive experience with Oprah, I decided this is worth sharing. I believed it was important to say that in the midst of so much loss—in the wake of so much horror and in honor of so much sacrifice—there is so much value in staying together.

I now understood in my core that the only forces of the universe that held sway were randomness, luck, and indifference. And that it was, above all, beyond my meek powers to control any of it.

Here's the thing about isolation: It's not just about being alone, by yourself with nobody else there. It's also about feeling alone in a room full of people, people you know, people you love. And there's no lonelier feeling than that.

Joy sat me down. "Listen to me, Michael," she said. "When I first met you, you were a glass-half-full kind of guy—the most positive person in the room. That's who you always were, wherever you were. You are now totally the opposite of that person, and 9/11 was where it all changed. Just after 9/11, you at least thought you were a lucky person. You thought that 9/11 was a reason for you and others to be even more grateful and more appreciative of all the little things in life. That's not who you are now. You are angry and bitter. You fought so hard to get yourself and Tina out of that building. You fought so hard to stay alive while you were choking under that truck. And you did stay alive. Here we are, years later: There's no smoke, no fire, no

building collapsing around you, but you're letting it crush you. You're not even trying to beat it."

I don't need answers. I just need to do the next right thing. I just need to remember what was good in the first place: help people. Stop looking for meaning. Stop looking for the why. There is no answer. There is just the doing.

It was as if 9/11 happened, and then, for only a brief moment— during and shortly after the tragedy—the world stopped being a discordant mass of a billion competing and conflicting agendas and remembered its common humanity. But then the world quickly, unconsciously returned to business as usual.

The only reason I got called a hero is because I got caught doing what so many others did as well.

9/11 was the worst attack ever on American soil. To this day, there is no formal, official national observance. There is no united national symbolic gesture.

I propose a 9/11 National Day of Service (a.k.a. Be Kind When Nobody's Looking Day). Every year on 9/11, in observance of the events of that day, each of us, at least once that day, should do something kind for somebody else and not get caught doing it. That's the right tribute to the heroes of 9/11—the firemen, the co-workers who stuck together, strangers who comforted the injured and scared, the volunteers who dug for the remains.

This is how we should remember 9/11. By doing what the heroes did. If each of us does that—even if only 10 percent of us does that—imagine what a day it will be in this country.

---

### **Lori says**

I read an essay in my graduate English course about 9/11, so I conducted a little research and discovered this book about a 9/11 survivor who, with a coworker, carries a woman in a wheelchair down 60+ flights of stairs while the towers were burning. And then the trauma began for him. Inspirational, honest, and poignant. I could not stop reading.

---

### **Jen says**

This book was the true story of 9/11, not leaving out any of the disturbing details. That is one of the things that I liked about this book, he didn't try to sugar coat it. He told like it is, raw; and that's what 9/11 still is to a lot of people, raw. It is the story of how Michael Benfante (author) escaped the North Tower of the WTC on 9/11. How he and many others became heroes with selfless acts of kindness.

There were some definite parts of the book that I really enjoyed and there were some parts that I didn't. I enjoyed hearing the story of what happened from start to finish on 9/11, what he experienced, what he saw, what he did and how he felt. I enjoyed reading how how he dealt with it afterwards and how he felt and moved on from that day.

I did not like how many pages and times he repeated the same things over and over about his anger. I understand that anger comes out of that day, I also understand the survivors guilt that he was dealing with. I think it is an important part of his story which was a good thing to tell. However I felt like it was filling pages or just dragging it out for lack of a better word. In a way I felt like the resolution that he felt was

something that could have been added upon instead of dragging out the anger and hatred and despair he fell into. There could have been a better balance rather than leaving the "letting go" part to a page and a half. Overall it was an entertaining book for the most part, and will give you a good idea of what it was like to be in the towers on that day, outside of the towers when they fell and the time afterwards in which to deal with what was seen.

---

### **Patty Abrams says**

Michael Benfante and another man carried a woman in a wheelchair down 68 floors in the World Trade center on 9/11. He rolled under a truck when the tower collapsed and the gray ash rolled over him, getting into his lungs and almost killing him but he managed to walk away afterwards. This book tells his whole story of that day, plus about the difficult time he had for years dealing with depression and anger. Very well written.

---

### **Louise Pronovost says**

Reluctant Survivor is an emotional account of a 911 survivor's experience and the profound influence that day has had on his life. Benfante managed a telecom sales office on the 81st floor of the World Trade Center on the fateful day when a plane hit the building. He gathered his team and sent everyone down the stairs. All survived, one of the few team that was able to escape. On his way down the stairwell, he offered to help a woman in a wheelchair and carried her with a colleague all the way down from the 68th floor. He was captured on camera right after he got out of the building in an interview. Soon after, the building collapsed. The interview brought him to the attention of the media and he ended up famous, reluctantly.

Most of the book deals with his battle with PTSD and the effect it has had on his life. A natural helper, Benfante was reluctant to seek help for himself.

The last couple of chapter adopt a different tone and in my opinion, to the detriment of the book. At that point, the author moves on from his personal account and is trying to convey a message. As I understand it, the message is that during the 911 crisis and the following days, we were united in a spirit of cooperation that we have lost. And that we should strive to keep that spirit alive because it makes us stronger. Benfante attributes his survival to the fact that he stuck together with his colleague and the woman in the wheelchair. The whole story conveys that message clearly.

I wish him all the best and hope he finds inner peace eventually.

---

### **Sarah says**

I feel strange saying I "enjoyed" this book, given the subject matter, but I did. I enjoyed seeing Mike's journey from 9/11 to present and how he's dealt with unexpected fame, starting a family and moving on in his career after many rough patches.

## Dee Eisel says

This is the second of three books on September 11, 2001 I've read recently. At the moment I'm avoiding conspiracy-theory books, so I'm going with eyewitness reports, newspaper reporters, and Popular Mechanics.

Benfante won international fame as a networking geek who, along with another evacuee, carried a disabled woman down the stairs and to safety on that terrible day. Here I pause to mention that when I was eight months pregnant with my first child, we had to evacuate the building for a fire alert. There was no fire, but I had to go down eight flights of stairs. Only eight, but I was sore for two days and miserable, and my baby wasn't much happier inside me. To those who went down literally ten times that number of flights, you have my utmost respect. Had I been in the towers on that day on any floor above 50, I sincerely doubt I would be alive today. You are all champions.

Benfante and John Cerqueira, a co-worker, not only got themselves out but they saved Tina Hansen. In this book, Benfante describes his life before the events of that day: his courtship of his fiancée, the wedding planning, his love of his family. He goes into detail about how his life led him to be working in that place at that time. As a geek who has seen this kind of transferring within networking companies, I found myself able to relate to him on that level for sure.

Then all hell breaks loose. The basic emotion projected in this part of the book is bewildered more than scared. Eventually they get out, get Tina to an ambulance - and the first tower comes down.

Benfante is frank and open about his emotions from there out. The remainder of the book deals with his unexpected and very much unwanted fame, and how he struggles to do anything close to healing while these wounds are being constantly poked and reopened. I ache for him, and I am glad he has found as much peace as he has. I hope writing the book helped, and I wish him well.

Four of five stars.

---

## Carol says

A great book about 9/11 and the hero's and ordinary people who risked their lives for others. Also about Michael Benfante who carried a woman in a wheel chair 68 stories down to safety and made sure other people who he worked with were also exited the building to safety. Showed on that day that people helping people without race or giving of them selves not even knowing the people and risking their lives to help others!!!! A really great read!!!!

---