



The



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Feminism Is Mugged by Reality

Stay-at-Home Moms Back in Style

When *Time Magazine* runs a cover story called "The Case for Staying Home," and Reuters reports that housework is good for women because it can help prevent ovarian cancer, you know the feminists are on the run. Stay-at-home moms are coming back in style.

Time reports that there has been a dramatic "drop-off" in workplace participation by married mothers with infants less than a year old. The figure fell from 59% in 1997 to 53% in 2000, and the drop was mostly among well-educated women over age 30. It's big news that more mothers are dropping off the corporate or professional ladder, and that fewer babies are dropped off at daycare.

According to an Australian-Chinese study published in the *International Journal of Cancer*, moderate exercise such as housework decreases the risk of ovarian cancer in women. The more and the harder the housework the housewife does, the more she benefits.

Attendees at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research in Orlando this spring were told that a study at Women's Hospital in Boston showed that modest amounts of exercise can substantially improve women's chances of surviving breast cancer and help them to live longer. The doctor who presented the findings recommended the exercise of walking. (He neglected to suggest walking behind a vacuum cleaner).

Why you won't read optimistic news like this in the major women's magazines is entertainingly explained in the book by Myrna Blyth, editor-in-chief of *Ladies' Home Journal* for two decades, called *Spin Sisters: How the Women of the Media Sell Unhappiness and Liberalism to the Women of America*.

The Spin Sisters are the high-profile women in the media, both those who control the profitable women's magazines and the anorexic female hosts on television. They are all busy selling American women the ideology of victimhood, the attitude that women's lives are full of misery and threats, and that

women suffer from a constant state of stress that keeps them unable to cope with life's ordinary irritations.

The whole premise of female victimhood is false. American women today live longer, healthier lives than ever, filled with a multitude of opportunities for education, travel and employment. The feminist movement flowered in the 1970s, powered by Betty Friedan's invitation for fulltime homemakers to be liberated from an oppressive patriarchal society and the home she described as a "comfortable concentration camp." The purveyors of such radical rhetoric have grown old and tiresome, but their thesis has been eagerly espoused by the Spin Sisters, who have learned how to market victimhood for rich profits and their own luxurious lifestyle.

In the 1950s and 1960s, women's magazines were helpful and hopeful; we didn't need Zoloft or Prozac. Ms. Blyth's magazine, *Ladies' Home Journal*, built its original circulation on the positive slogan "Never underestimate the power of a woman."

Today's Spin Sisters tell women that they are living in a treacherous stress-filled world, confronted by threats from everything from abusive husbands to contaminated foods in their refrigerator. Women's worry list of fears and woes includes everything from the weight of the world's problems to the weight of extra fat on themselves. A typical article in a woman's magazine is "The Health Hazard in Your Handbag."

Ms. Blyth describes how the Spin Sisters on the TV networks (Barbara, Katie, Diane, Connie, etc.) are not really rivals, but are a Girls' Club with a mission. Abortion is their bonding factor; the Spin Sisters will never allow any challenge to it to emerge on their television screens or their magazine pages. The Girls' Club orchestrated a media campaign to promote their favorites Rosie O'Donnell, Hillary Clinton, and Jane Fonda, and used the same skills to vilify Katherine Harris.

Bernard Goldberg lifted the curtain on the how the media peddle the feminist promotion of daycare in his best-selling book *Bias*. He wrote that "the most important story you never saw on TV" is "the terrible things that are happening to America's children" because "mothers have opted for work

outside of the house over taking care of their children at home."

If you want to know why it's daycare babies (rather than their employed mothers) who are subjected to real stress and misery, and why fulltime motherhood is coming back in vogue, you should read Suzanne Venker's book *7 Myths of Working Mothers: Why Children and (Most) Careers Just Don't Mix* (Spence Publishing). It's no surprise that the Spin Sisters at *Glamour* magazine advise women **not** to read this helpful book.

'The Opt-Out Revolution'

The feminist revolution that swept across America in the 1970s promoted the dream of a land in which at least half of corporate officers, Fortune 500 C.E.O.s, partners in law firms, and doctors would be women. The feminist movement was always elitist; it was about getting political and corporate power for educated women.

But a funny thing happened on the way to achieving that promise. Feminism was mugged by the reality that most women don't seek those goals. How the best and the brightest are rejecting the career track laid out for them by the feminists was detailed in a lengthy article entitled "The Opt-Out Revolution" by Lisa Belkin in the persistently feminist *New York Times Magazine*. That's the same publication that a few years ago featured a cover glamorizing the feminists' number-one role model as Saint Hillary Clinton in radiant white robes.

Ms. Belkin interviewed hundreds of women. She described a group in Atlanta, all of whom had graduated from Princeton more or less 20 years ago, earned advanced degrees in law or business from other prestigious institutions such as Harvard and Columbia, and waited until their thirties to marry and have children because their careers were so exciting.

These women are typical of what is happening in America today. For the last couple of decades, roughly half of M.B.A.s, J.D.s, and M.D.s have been granted to women. In the feminist game plan, these are the very women who should now be at the top of the business and professional world, wielding the fantasy power attributed to the tiny percentage at the top. As one of them told Ms. Belkin, what she wanted when she graduated was to be "a confirmed single person, childless, a world traveler."

But of these ten Princeton graduates interviewed by Ms. Belkin at a book-club meeting, five are not employed outside the home, one is in business with her husband, one is employed part time, two freelance, and the only one with a full-time job has no children. Nationwide, only 16% of corporate officers are women, only eight Fortune 500 companies have female C.E.O.s., and only 38% of Harvard Business School 1980s female graduates are now working full time.

Feminist ideology for years has preached that if women fail to cross those thresholds of power, it is because women are held down by a "glass ceiling" imposed by a discriminatory and oppressive male-dominated society. But these smart, talented, successful women told Ms. Belkin that they opted out of their accelerating careers voluntarily. As their work days kept getting longer and longer, the women walked away from six-figure incomes.

One predictable explanation for this attitude is, in one Belkin quote, that many women never get near the glass ceiling because "they are stopped long before by the maternal wall."

But these Princeton women didn't admit they abandoned the workforce because their children needed them. They said they opted out because "life got in the way." They were "no longer willing to work as hard, commuting, navigating office politics," and "balancing all that with the needs of a family." Typical comments were: "I don't want to be on the fast track leading to a partnership at a prestigious law firm." "I don't want to conquer the world; I don't want that kind of life."

One woman told Ms. Belkin that she is just not interested "in forging ahead and climbing a power structure," and "that is one of the inherent differences between the sexes." She quickly caught herself after making such a politically incorrect statement.

One of the Atlanta group staunchly maintained that "the exodus of professional women from the workplace isn't really about motherhood; it's really about work.... Quitting is driven as much from the job-dissatisfaction side as from the pull-to-motherhood side."

Princeton University, a former male citadel, is now run largely by women, and Ms. Belkin interviewed the president, Shirley Tilghman. Commenting on her current crop of female students, she said that for every one "who looks at an Amy [Gutmann, the Provost] or an Ann-Marie [Slaughter, dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs] and says, 'I want to be like her,' there are three who say, 'I want to be anything *but* her.'"

It turns out that (like child care) the workplace has its drudgery, its long hours, its repetitious duties, its demands that an employee accommodate herself to the schedule of others. Maybe the home is a pleasanter and more fulfilling work environment than the office, after all.

I wonder if a feminist will ever admit that there is an eternal difference between men and women in their goals and in how they want to live their lives.

Mona Lisa Isn't Smiling

Mona Lisa Smile is a feminist propaganda movie that proves again that the feminists are an unhappy bunch whose

lifestyle leads to loneliness. The heroine, Katherine Watson (Julia Roberts), ends up single and jobless on a slow boat to Europe, having tossed aside the latest of her faithless lovers.

At least her fate wasn't as grim as that of other macho-feminist movie heroines who mouthed the irrelevant silliness that women need to be liberated to make their own choices free from male domination. The heroines of *Thelma and Louise* demonstrated their liberation by driving their automobile off a cliff to their death, Virginia Woolf in *The Hours* walked into a lake to drown herself, and *G.I. Jane* had herself beaten to a bloody pulp to prove that she could take it like any Navy SEAL.

Proclaimed by CBS-TV as "the best picture of the year by far," *Mona Lisa Smile* is a sanctimonious feminist homily preaching salvation through modern art and making one's own career choices just so long as career does not mean marriage and motherhood. But the sermon boomeranged on reality, and the movie proves again that those who follow that commandment travel a dead-end road.

Ms. Watson's erudition didn't extend to an ability to evaluate human nature. She was totally snowed by a dishonest fellow professor even though she knew he had the reputation of sleeping with his students.

A preachy professor of art history, Ms. Watson came from the University of California-Berkeley to pre-Hillary Clinton Wellesley College in 1953 determined to change the students' attitudes, expectations and career plans. She wanted them to work toward a J.D. rather than an MRS. Her strategy was to immerse them in Picasso rather than Michelangelo. She tried to replace their respect for artistic standards with a search for meaning in meaningless scribbles on a canvas.

Ms. Watson pressured her star student Joan to apply to law school and she was accepted at Yale Law School. When Joan told Ms. Watson in emphatic terms that she was rejecting this honor and choosing instead to become a wife and mother, the audience is supposed to think she is a fool.

Clearly, that's what Ms. Watson thought. The movie probably was designed to show that feminism is progressive and modern, and that courageous female professors of a generation ago challenged traditional orthodoxy and opened up new pathways for young women.

Feminist propaganda is not just humorless preaching about how work in a law office is so much more fulfilling than raising children. It's also an incessant put-down of the home-making role and even of traditional customs and morality.

The students and their Wellesley instructors are authentically costumed in the fashions of the fifties. Nobody wore torn blue jeans, purple hair, or the metallic items that require body piercing. The neatly dressed and bright Wellesley students had more self-confidence and self-esteem than the professor. But the movie caricatures them to look smug and old-fashioned.

The movie ridicules the notions that a wife would delight in displaying her new automatic washing machine and dryer (remember, this was the fifties), or take pride in keeping a kitchen clean. The movie showed a wife who didn't even look oppressed when she was mopping or vacuuming! Irrelevant advertisements from the fifties for Dutch Cleanser, an ironing board, and a girdle are what passes for humor during the dreary two-hour movie.

The audience is supposed to be unsympathetic to the student who had a big traditional wedding and soon discovered her husband was cheating on her. The audience is expected to think it served her right because she was dumb to choose marriage.

On the other hand, the audience is supposed to sympathize with the lesbian nurse who was fired for giving contraceptives to college students in violation of state law. The audience is expected to empathize with the student who was outrageously promiscuous.

Despite enormous advertising, the message of *Mona Lisa Smile* didn't sell. When Oprah featured the cast of the movie on her program with a live student audience, the final comment came from a student who rejected her mother's feminist ideas and said she wants to be a wife and mother. What's out of date today is not the fashions of the fifties but university-imposed political correctness of the nineties.

To enjoy the smiles you didn't have while watching *Mona Lisa Smile*, you could rent a video of the 1988 movie about another stereotypical feminist professor. The movie is called *Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death* and stars Bill Maher in the "politically incorrect" role of his life. (Caution: this movie is not for children.)

Fakery of the Gender Wage Gap

When John Kerry was making his campaign appeal for the women's vote, trying to get women to believe they are victims of George W. Bush's economy, Kerry regurgitated the old feminist falsehood that women make only 76 cents for every dollar made by men. That statement is a lie because it compares the average wage paid to *all* women with the average wage paid to *all* men *without* any reference to the work they do. That national statistic includes women like me who spent 25 years raising my children without any personal cash income and therefore will never reach the pay level of similarly qualified men.

To remedy this phantom inequality, the feminists demand wage control. But it's not just ordinary socialist-style wage control, it's wage control with a feminist twist. They want government apparatchiks in the bureaucracy or the judiciary to raise the pay of women while freezing the pay of men, plus federal inspectors to intimidate employers to acquiesce.

Unable to sell this nutty notion to any legislature, the femi-

nists do what liberals always do. They run to the judiciary to find an activist judge to force employers to give pay raises and promotions to women. This is what the current class-action lawsuit against Wal-Mart is all about — getting activist judges to take on the job of setting wages.

The feminists have a name for this racket: they call it Comparable Worth or Pay Equity. Their idea is to have bureaucratic or judicial commissions (of course, staffed with feminists whining about discrimination) to make subjective rulings that jobs held mostly by women are “worth” as much as jobs mostly held by men.

Americans don’t believe in the Marxist notion of equal pay for everyone; we believe in equal pay for equal work, and that has been the law of our land since the Equal Pay Act of 1963. People who work more hours, or work at more difficult, unpleasant or risky jobs, earn more and they should. Yet government statistics are based on 35 hours as the work week even though many (especially men) work far longer hours and men suffer 90% of occupational fatalities.

Comparable Worth is the concept of comparing the worth (not work) of groups of women with groups of men and, therefore, doesn’t reveal anything at all about justice to the individual. To use an analogy, if I tell you that women are only 90% as tall as men, you still will not have the slightest idea how tall I am.

The concept of Comparable Worth is that some commissar (or might we say commiczarina) of wages should use the power of government to make the wages of groups of jobs held traditionally by women (such as retail clerks) equal to the wages of groups of jobs held traditionally by men (such as prison guards). Which jobs get raises and how much, and which get pay cuts and how much, would be within the subjective and arbitrary discretion of the bureaucrats or judges making the decisions.

Statistics that indicate differentials in wages for jobs that are similarly qualified fail to recognize that you can’t judge qualifications by the number of years in college without recognizing the significant differences in different degrees. A degree in education or women’s studies simply doesn’t earn the same pay as a degree in engineering or science, yet more women persist in choosing the former and more men the latter.

The Comparable Worth notion assumes that people are (or should be) paid what they are “worth.” But almost everyone thinks he is worth more than he is being paid. Each of us is paid a compromise between what we think we’re worth and what someone is willing to pay. Those millions of decisions add up to what we call the free-market economy.

Why are football and baseball players paid more than the President? Lawyers more than ministers? Rock stars more than musicians in major symphony orchestras? Should government decide what they are worth?

The pay gap in America is not between men and women at all, but between married women and other women and men who spend their lifetimes in the workforce. That’s primarily the result of a voluntary domestic division of labor, not workforce discrimination by a conspiracy of male chauvinists. Women who remain single and childless, spend their college years more productively, stay in the labor force, and work long hours earn about as much as men.

Married men with children earn the most, while married women with children earn the least. As the number of children increases, a married man works more hours in the workforce and a married woman works fewer hours, and there will never be male-female pay parity so long as most women spend part of their lives caring for their children.

If it were really true that businesses pay women less than men for the same work, then cost-conscious bosses would hire only or mostly women. Since that doesn’t happen, there must be other factors. The proper role of government is to provide equal opportunity, not preferential treatment based on warped feminist theory, especially when that theory is so demonstrably false.



To be fully informed about feminism, you need to read *Feminist Fantasies* by Phyllis Schlafly (Spence Publishing Co., 2003). This book is must reading for all high school girls and young women, and a delightful read for all ages. Order from Eagle Forum: \$20 plus \$5 shipping = \$25.

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