

Can Powerful Women Be Righteous Women?

Shrink About This
By Molly Barrow, PhD

Importantly and correctly, our nation stands up to defend less powerful people and this is to be admired. However, public demeaning attacks of our most powerful women are gaining strength and need exposure. Jealousy and differing political postures alone would not generate this level of irrational and daily frenzied hatred directed at Laura Bush, Nancy Pelosi, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton. Have we slipped back to the fifties when little ladies need to stay in their place?

I always try to look for the positive motive when I observe negative behavior. What is there to be gained by the insidious lean on Hillary, Nancy, Rosie, Condoleezza, Barbara Boxer, and really, all women, to be quiet? This wave of paranoia is not from only media big mouths but from a strong societal base. In a study by Harvard Professor of Public Policy David King, King found that that Independents and Democratic voters are more willing to cross party lines. "Compared with the otherwise-identical male Republican, the female candidate was imputed to be far more trustworthy, far more likely to share one's own concerns, and far more likely to garner one's vote. The female candidate's advantage in terms of likely support is ten percent among Independent and Democratic voters. In competitive elections, holding everything else constant, a ten-point swing from Independents and Democrats is something Republican Party leaders should savor."

However something stands in the way of Republican women's success at the polls. King found "Republican respondents – of both genders – judge their own female candidates more harshly, however. Among Republicans, the female candidate is thought to be a weaker leader, while Independents and Democrats hold the reverse view... Compared with the otherwise-identical male Republican, strong Republicans are significantly less likely to support the female candidate. This is true of men and women Republican voters, and it survives multivariate tests controlling for age, income and race." (<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~dking/bulletin.pdf>)

Support for women politicians falls off sharply with the Republican base. A common denominator of the Republican base is a tendency toward the religious right. Perhaps the attack of sexist remarks has something to do with adhering to religious instructions, now thousands of years old. Written by men and reflecting attitudes of their ancient societies, all major religious works clearly define a woman's place. In most cases, religion requires the woman to be subservient to her man.

Following the teachings of spirituality and kindness raises men and women from base animal behavior origins to a higher level and saves our society from barbaric instincts. The words of years passed are essential to study yet, these early words must be analyzed in the context of the time period that they were written. Scholars can take the important lessons from great literary works and learn from the sum of people's experiences. However, literal and blind following of another's words has the potential to repeat the horrors of Jim Jones, suicide bombers or Hitler.

Imagine if your doctor blindly followed the medical books of three hundred years ago. Some of

the information is timeless and universal and some of it could destroy you. As a psychotherapist, if I followed the original psychological treatment plan, the best I could offer your depression is to strap you into a tub of water and perhaps, a useless lobotomy. We must think as individuals in our current times to avoid disastrous group-think that requires one to disengage from personal truth and reason. An absolute truth of yesterday is replaced by a completely new absolute truth of today more quickly than most people can adjust to the change.

One constant is that the struggle of all humans to be free of dominance by others has never been successfully suppressed. Once there were emperors, kings and royals who selected life and death for the rest. Their law was self serving and required armies of enforcers. As a democratic nation we posture ourselves as giving equal power to every vote. But our votes actually elect powerful representatives who then make all the real decisions for us. This archaic system was useful when the population was illiterate but modern Americans are kept strangely dependent. Democracy, freedom and science continue to evolve, but must religion also shift?

Now, we have women who have volunteered, been elected to school board, worked their way up politically while serving a billion cups of coffee to others. The media shouts these women down with personal attacks aimed at hurting their little girl feelings and making them go away. Is the motive not political at all, but an urgent and even righteous attempt to obediently follow narrowly defined roles for women from religious books and religious teachers of most faiths? Do some religious leaders need to maintain the status quo of ancient teachings for their corporations and big business product sales to survive? Or can religion grow and expand incorporating human history, the body of science and new roles for men and women. Religion need not fear loosening the rigidity of dogma because religion has always and may always trump science with the ultimate question, "What was the origin of the first speck?" Even science replies, "God."

The shaming name calling endured by assertive women who step away from religious definitions of themselves reveals the obvious double standard held for powerful, aggressive men who are complemented for the very same traits. Many deeply religious people find difficulty accepting new roles for men and women that defy a lifetime of religious practice. How can we question which words we make as our law and then choose thoughtfully without prejudice? Is there room in God's eyes for a non-subservient woman who seeks to right wrongs in a lawful, sane manner? Will our most strict religious leaders adjust their sermons to allow women to be respected as leaders in worship, legal or political arenas that were once reserved for men?

Do we as women take action to save our children from needless death from war, lack of health care or skyrocketing drug costs? Do we care when an African baby dies from hunger and thirst? Do we watch our men, tired from work, pay taxes that are squandered? Or do we sit passively and quietly with our hands folded in our lap like we did in the classroom, such good little girls? A beautiful speech by First Lady Laura Bush addresses the struggle of women in third world countries and her commitment to help.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050308-5.html>

Will the religious right expand the role of righteous women to include service to our country in a full political press? Can men unshackle their definition of women and still love them, even as leaders? Are sexist slurs simply a reflection of fearing God? Is there a place for the religious right female outside the home? The women who have made it to the top positions in our society could

not be where they are today if they were easily intimidated or stopped by negativity thrown at them. Have these women bypassed the religious requirements by expanding their definition of home to include our nation and planet? How wonderful could Earth be if female leaders cleaned up the mess?

BIO:

Dr. Molly Barrow holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and is the author of the new book, "Matchlines: A Revolutionary New Way of Looking at Relationships and Making the Right Choices in Love," ISBN 159507158X. She is an authority on relationship and psychological topics, a member of the American Psychological Association and a licensed mental health counselor. Dr. Molly has appeared as an expert in the film, My Suicide, documentaries Ready to Explode and KTLA Impact, NBC news, PBS In Focus, WBZT talk radio and in O Magazine, Psychology Today, Newsday, The Nest, MSN.com, Yahoo, Match.com, N Magazine, Women's Health, Women's World and Shrink About This columnist for Scripps newspapers. Please visit:

<http://www.askdrmolly.com/>

<http://www.DrMollyBarrow.com/>

To read articles by Dr. Molly please visit: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Molly_Barrow