



HILLARY CLINTON in the MASTER'S HOUSE

I am so sick of 2016. It's two years away yet, but the Cable News talking heads and internet political forecasters just will not keep their Presidential predictions at bay. Regardless of the midterm elections this Fall, the crumbling Domestic infrastructure, the disintegrating situations in Gaza, Ukraine, Libya, Iraq, et al, these "News" professionals have set their eyes two years into the future and refuse to sway in their dedication to prognosticating the Challengers-To-Be.

On the Republican side, I'll grant you, there is enough variety among the frontrunners to maintain public interest. Will it be another "Establishment" Republican, after the disasters of McCain and Romney? Could it be an Easterner, like Christie, who will terrify the Christian base with his Moderate positions? Or it could be Union-busting Walker from Wisconsin, whose personality ranges expansively from dour to tepid. But one thought surely terrifies the RNC above all others: Rand Paul.

What would they do with such a candidate, who is moderate on drug policy, Isolationist in foreign policy, and skeptical of the Surveillance State? Where will a George W. Bush Neo-Conservative find himself in a Rand Paul nomination? The talking heads who led us into Iraq, who wanted to lead us into Syria, and Iran, and God knows where else—where will they find safe haven and a steady income if international detachment is the modus operandi of their party's candidate? Jacob Heilbrunn, in a recent New York Times column, suggested they may just switch sides and support Hillary.



Can you imagine this? If Hillary Clinton does in fact secure the Democratic nomination, she could pull from the Republican Party some of its most abhorrent members and align them in the so-called "liberal" cause. And what a Liberal cause that would be—continual intervention overseas, ever-expanding surveillance by the NSA, CIA agents running amok in the affairs of whatever countries they fancy...Sound familiar?

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So you'll excuse me if I don't rise and cheer at the thought of a Clinton nomination.

It is an uncomfortable position for me, as a woman, to be opposed to the first nomination of a woman for President. It would be much more pleasant to count

myself among the Pro-Hillary camp. To buy the T-shirt, attach the bumper sticker, and chortle knowingly to myself whenever Karl Rove says something inescapably stupid and sexist about my candidate.

But I just can't step in line. I am too pained by the knowledge that, with Hillary as nominee, our first woman President would likely be no improvement on her male predecessors, and would possibly be even worse.

This is going to sound like bad feminism. It sounds, I know, as if I'm holding a woman to a higher standard than her male counterparts. And, in a way, I am. Not because I believe that women ought to be, by nature, "gentler" and less hawkish than their male colleagues—that would be unforgivably sexist. What I do believe is that a woman, by virtue of a lifetime spent on the fringes of power, should have learned from her experience the terror wrought by the "Hawk" mentality. She should have witnessed, from the outside, the failings of those men who came before her—the endless displays of macho preening, the fight for physical dominance played out on a global scale—and she should, when granted her moment in the seat of power, set aside that tired mentality and try something new.

If she doesn't, then, much like Obama, her historic presidency will disintegrate into, yawn, more of the same.

Let's talk, now, about Obama. As a candidate, Obama seemed to be precisely what I'm championing—an African-American, a member of a group whose numbers had been shut outside the doors of power for centuries, who was seeking "change." He was anti-war, anti-income inequality, anti-racism. Yes, he scared the crap out of a segment of the population, but he inspired so many more. He had been watching the powerful from the outside, as so many of us are, and this would be his chance to take the reins of power and CHANGE the system. He carried the hope of everyone who felt powerless, the hope that he would bring a fundamental change to the systems that had disenfranchised them.

And then he took office.

Six years later, where are those hopes? Where is the power that was meant to have trickled down to the dispossessed? Regardless of what conservatives might believe, there are no Kenyan Socialists roaming the halls of the White House. Obama's economic policy differs not even a little from that of his predecessors. And life for the average African-American is no better.

What's worse, Obama's become a bully. Unlike the thuggish Bush who came before him, Barack always seemed calm, intellectual, almost gentle. But someone on his team, either himself or some public relations "expert," decided that gentleness was a disadvantage. So Obama bulked up. He "manned" up, to use that horrible phrase, by murdering wedding parties in Pakistan, families at home in Yemen, funeral mourners in Somalia. He became the "enforcer" President, who placed a desire for vengeance above the requirements of justice.

And it absolutely more demoralizing for a Black President to be responsible for those innocent deaths than a White President. Not because Black people are "better than that." But because he has seen what it means to be unfairly targeted—to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and to end up on the wrong side of a bullet. We know this from his statements about Trayvon Martin. This President has seen the moral failings of the system—the system that values brown-skinned lives less than white-skinned. And he has used his substantial powers to continue that system, to rain down drone attacks on the homes of other brown-skinned men, women and children—many of whom, like Trayvon Martin, could have looked like his kin.

The ability to question the prevailing systems of the powerful does not come, simply, from being a woman, or from being Black or Hispanic, or Gay or Transgender. It comes from the experience of being "outside." It comes from having been told, "no," when knocking at the doors of power and having been turned away from the halls of commerce for centuries.

And here is where we are failing: we focus so much attention on getting minorities and women across the boundaries of power, into the houses that once held their masters, that we forget to instruct them on what to do when they've arrived. That entry, on its own, feels like victory. We're in! And we fail to notice the terms of our entry, which are to behave and speak just the same as those already inside. Because it is not so much our "womanness" or our "Blackness" which would make us so abhorrent. It is, rather, the threat that those "othering" qualities may pose to the business of lining the pockets of the wealthy.

And the system has evolved to recognize this. Sure, a woman can be the CEO

of a Fortune 500 company. A few of them have done it now, and that's a nice marker of some progress. But could a woman reach that position while also demanding living wages for all employees, free childcare, paid maternity or paternity leave and all the basic tools required to lift her more disadvantaged sisters into a better life? I think not.

The message relayed to the newly powerful seems to be, "Welcome in, Lady. And lock the door behind you."

What is the value in gaining power for individual women and minorities, if they then use that power to oppress others? For the already powerful—the corporate boardrooms—putting a female face on their company is the easiest way to make their war on the poor more palatable to the public. It's the same for politics. Just imagine how the Republican party salivates when an African-American joins their ranks. "Look!" They can say. "We aren't racist! Clarence Thomas agrees that poor people are just lazy!"

As the Audre Lorde once said, as a Black woman facing down a crowd of white faces at a Feminist conference, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support."

There is some value in being a "loser" in our society. As a member of the powerless classes, you can see clearly how the system works to keep 99% of the population out of power. Historically, as a woman, or a homosexual, or an African-American, or a Hispanic, you have been the "other." And, as an "other," you were in a position to question not just the specific methodology of your own oppression, but also the insidious and inhumane ideology that undergirds ALL oppression, and perpetuates a society with delineated "winners" and "losers."

Now, in our Brave New World, which selects from among the "others" a few choice members to elevate into power, questioning that ideology becomes more difficult. If there is a chance you might be elevated to the ranks of the powerful, you're far less likely question the means of your elevation. And once you've been accepted into the ranks of the "winners," you become comfortable among the mindset of the powerful, and those voices of protest diminish until they just



ring in your ears as background noise. You are a part of the fabric of society, and so you now have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

Audre Lorde, in the quotation above, was speaking of the tendency among White Feminists, and wealthy feminists, to disregard the experiences of minority women and the poor. She saw that these white women were very much concerned with their own struggles, the barriers to their ability to seek a career, the tendency of men to treat them like delicate flowers in need of constant protection. And she saw that, in the pursuit of eliminating their own barriers to success, these white women ignored the lives of the millions of women who had been working their entire lives, out of necessity,

in thankless jobs for little pay. Lorde was reminding the wealthy conference attendees that poor women and minority women had never been treated delicately. Rather, many had spent their lives mired in violence and exploitation.

And, much as it pains me to say it, these are precisely the same women who will continue to be ignored if Hillary Clinton wins the presidency. In America, these are the women who will not be "lifted" into the middle class by the same

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Clinton economic policies that devastated poor, Black women in the 90s. They will see their families destroyed by the same drug war that imprisoned their sons and husbands under the previous administrations. Internationally, these are the women who will continue to suffer the terrible effects of the wars Hillary Clinton supported in Afghanistan and Iraq. They will continue to suffer the effects of the destabilization of Libya. They will suffer the effects of the America-supported coup in Egypt.

Hillary Clinton has lived among the ranks of the powerful for so long that she cannot hear the voice inside herself that might have led her to question those around her. In truth, she has been so successful in politics because of that ability to suppress that desire for true change. She is a good politician, as good as any man who has held political office. And, as a good Feminist, I can tell you Hillary Clinton would be just as good a President as any of our male Presidents have been. Which is to say, she wouldn't be much good at all.



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