



**THIS IS MY
DILEMMA**

JANET KUYPERS

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THANK YOU, WOMEN WHO WORK I

*Thank you, women who work
In this way you make
an indispensable contribution
to the growth of a culture
which unites reason and feeling,
to a model of life ever open
to the sense of "mystery"*

*Letter to Women, Message of His Holiness POPE
JOHN PAUL II, July 10*

Thank you, women who work
because you take on the responsibilities of men
while still having to be mothers, wives
good little daughters a feminine creatures

Thank you, women who work
because you are the ones we can blame
when the family falls apart

Thank you, women who work
because you make a point to do more
than your fair share
even though
no man would do the same for you

Thank you, women who work
for you know you have to prove yourselves
over and over and over again
and that it still isn't enough, so
keep up the good work,

ladies

THANK YOU, WOMEN WHO WORK II

*Thank you, women who work
In this way you make
an indispensable contribution
to the growth of a culture
which unites reason and feeling,
to a model of life ever open
to the sense of "mystery"*

*Letter to Women, Message of His Holiness
POPE JOHN PAUL II, July 10*

Thank you, women who work
because you are supposed to be the ones
who rely on superstition, on
faith, more than men

Thank you, women who work
because you need to rely on something,
you're the inferior sex, remember?
rely on men, or rely on religion
either way, we'll make you dependent

Thank you, women who work
because that sense of mystery
we attribute to you
is really the sense of hopeless fear
our religion instills on people
who don't want to think for themselves
and turns people to us
because they have no other choice

Thank you, women who work
with your influence
we can get rid of this whole
reason thing altogether

THE MISTAKES HE MADE

I

Ralph
lost three of his fingers
while on the job
at his factory

at the time
medicine couldn't save
his fingers

after that,
whenever
Ralph
looked at his
fingers,
he thought
of the mistakes
he made

II

Ed
while working with a
circular table saw
reached up
above him
for a piece
of wood
and when the wood
slipped
he cut off
the tips of
two fingers

once at the
hospital
he called
his son
asked him to check
the sawdust-
covered floors
around the
workbench
to see if he could
find them

the doctors tried
to reattach
the tips,
but they
didn't take

after that,
whenever
Ed
looked at his
fingers,
he thought
of the mistakes
he made

III

Lester Massey
agreed with
a friend
to each chop off
a finger of
the other's

but after
his friend
chopped off
Lester Massey's
finger
he changed
his mind
about losing
his own

after that,
whenever
Lester Massey
looked at his
fingers,
he thought
of the mistakes
he made

THIS IS MY DILEMMA

should I go to you
this is my dilemma

should I just
not care anymore
should I just
act the part
should I just
not care anymore
should I just
let you fuck me
should I just
not care anymore
should I just
kiss you

who cares
suck me in
take me in
who cares
throw me around
it's okay
I've been thrown
around before

I'm used to this
I'm used to this routine:
back and forth,
and then forgetting

forgetting the feelings
forgetting your name

do it to me,
if you want

go ahead
enjoy
feel free

I've felt it before
I've lived it before
I've known it before
I've lived it before

and no emotion is new
to me anymore

so should I
this is my dilemma

TOO MUCH LIGHT

too much light makes the baby go blind
and too much light makes the moth
rush into the flame
and die in a glorious blaze of glory

and I have seen the light
and I have seen it

what is my choice:

burn in the flame
to burst quickly
to die young
or to slowly slip away
to die slowly
day by day
to let people in darkness
pull me in
inch by inch
until the light
kills me

WATCHING YOU EAT A DONUT (WITH LANCE)

How do I approach this? I remember the lines:
"the optomist and the pessimist,
the difference is quite droll:
the optomist sees the donut
and the pessimist sees the hole"
And I look over, see the consumption of
the wholeness, the nothingness.

I prefer nothing because there's
a whole lot of nothing
breathing nothing
nothing between the spaces
one naught two naught three.

But there's always so much to read
between the spaces, between the lines.
You see, it's all a matter of
what you choose to look for.
What you choose to look for. What you choose to find.

I look at the world and see nothing
I stare into nothing and see the world
I look at nothing and see memory
and all the faces caressed with eyes.

I run my fingers along the table, caressing
the granules flaking from the pastry
between two fingers. Like grains of sand,
ting beads. Caressed. Consumed.
This is nothing. This is everything.

WHAT DO WE SAY

What do we tell our youth
when we let them out on probation
for violent crimes
because there's no room in our jails

What does it say of us
when a painting of a clown
by John Wayne Gasey
sells for millions

What does it say of our self-esteem
when hundreds of women write letters
to Charles Manson
asking for his hand in marriage

What does it say of our media
when it glorifies these
dark heroes

Dear
Hero
I want to know how your mind works
I want to know why you did it
I want to know how you feel about politics
and love
and marriage
I hope you're not suffering too much
I love you

What rights do we really take away
from those who take our rights from us?

I hope you're not suffering too much

Richard Speck, convicted of killing
eight nurses, was videotaped in his
prison cell by cell mates with his
male lover, counting hundred
dollar bills, snorting mounds of
cocaine,
showing off his hormonally-
induced shapely breasts

When a member of society commits a crime
they relinquish the rights
they have taken from others

in theory

One man in prison filed a lawsuit
against the state
for serving peas to him too many
days in a row

One man in prison filed a lawsuit
against Ann Landers
because she published his letter
where he wrote he killed his wife

One man in prison filed lawsuit
after lawsuit against the state
solely because he felt a great joy
in uselessly spending
the taxpayers' money

What do we say to all of this
What do we say?

WHERE I BELONG

well, I have found
that I must
be the hound
enslaved
cause my hands
and my feet
they are bound
to the ground
and I struggle
to sing
just one sound

so thank you
for singing this song
for showing me wrong
is where I belong

I'm in a haze
yet I'm filled
with this rage
encaged
by the intricate maze
on this stage
and I'm dazed
as I page
through my wage
on the blaze

and thank you
for singing this song
for showing me wrong
is where I belong

I smell the mace
so I cover my face
in case
in my haste
I can trace
the harsh taste
is my pace
in this race
is it all
just a waste

yes, thank you
for singing this song
for showing me wrong
is where I belong

in homage to M. Gore

WOMEN'S VERY EXISTENCE

*rape is neither a sex crime
or a crime of passion*

*rape is not an isolated brutal crime
against women*

*rape is often premeditated
rape is a crime of violence
rather than sex
it is a crime of violence
against women*

*it is an attack by men
on women's bodies
on women's feelings
on women's very existence*

Bob Lamm, 1976

i still have to take showers a lot. i mean,
every once in a while, no matter how clean
i am to the rest of the world, i have to go
take a shower. i lock all the doors, i close
the shades on the windows, i put a towel
over the bathroom mirror. turn the water on,
piping hot, so steam is billowing out of
the bath tub. i finally undress, open the
curtain, put my foot in, burn my foot with
the water. i wish i could hold my foot there,
just a little longer. i turn down the water.
wait for it to cool down, then step in. then
i just put my head under the shower head. hold
it there for a while. catch my breath. get the
soap. start scrubbing. i use the soap first,
then i get the bath brush. scrub off a layer
of skin. i know this makes no sense. my skin
is red, from the heat, from the scrubbing.
but i know i'm still not getting it off, it's
down there, the molecules are embedded
deep inside of me, and i'll have to rip my skin
off, pull out my organs before it goes away.
but for now all i can do is take showers.

YOU ARE

you're pretty as a picture
you're as sweet as candy

you are like a brilliant light

you have pearly white teeth
you have chiseled features
you have piercing eyes

you have a heart of gold
and a sandpaper voice

you're postcard pretty

you're as meek as a lamb
you're clean as a bone
you're as faithful as a dog

you have a steel will
you're as strong as a bull

you're drunk as a sailor
you're like an idiot

you're like a broken heart
you're like a zombie

NEW TO CHICAGO

I'm still new to this city
I know, I know, I've been here for years
but I haven't gone to the Sears Tower Observatory
since my Junior Prom

but when I walk by the First Chicago building
the beams along the north side
sloping up, parabolic pillars curving up to the sky

when I walk by the First Chicago building
I walk up along the side
and lean up against one of the sloping pillars
press my body against the cold concrete
feel the cold against my chin, my breasts, by thighs

and look up along the curve, stretching up towards the sky

you know, these pillares look like race tracks
and I could see something come rushing down that curve
a matchbox car, a race car
a marble, a bowling ball
a two-ton weight

I see the seed, the power, and it
almost makes me afraid to look up

and every time I walk by the First Chicago building
I do the same thing, I do this little ritual
and it feels like the first time

A LETTER TO OUR POLITICAL LEADERS

After watching a few of our elections, I noticed that politicians were trying to warm up to the twenty-something crowd. It's a wise decision: we're a strong group of intelligent, new voters. And, as a rule, we're dissatisfied with the United States' current political system. It's a chance for either party to take a hold of a growing and promising voter group and insure additional votes in future elections.

It would help to know what this group is looking for, though, if there's a dissatisfaction with our current parties, and to understand this, it may help to learn a little more about this group. Although I claim to be no spokesperson for all people aged 20-29, I can give you some insight into how I think, as a member of this "age group."

I'm a twenty-something. But classifying us "twenty-somethings" or "generation x-ers" by our age is something I as an individual finds insulting. I know that we're Americans, but I also know that we as a group have differing opinions, and we have a right to those opinions. We can have different views on our careers, or families, our music. And that's something I value - and I feel like is constantly being taken away from us.

Other pressure groups may want you to pass laws telling them when a rapist moves into their neighborhood, but I know that that just causes more red tape and costs us through tax revenue more dollars, when that information is public; besides, it's not the government's responsibility to inform, it the individual's. Other pressure groups may want you to pass laws telling them that they need to wear their seat belts, but I know that in a Capitalistic society it's not the government's role to protect people from themselves, but from the force of others, and that is all. Other pressure groups may want you to pass all sorts of laws, but they are by and large laws that go beyond the jurisdiction of the American government. Other groups may want the government telling them what to do all the time, but I don't.

Part of the twenty-something's dissatisfaction (if I may speak for the group) with our current parties may be because neither party embodies a

consistent set of values. Granted, our government-sponsored school systems teach students in general that philosophy is too difficult a subject for a single person to understand. And religion may not offer a practical solution for anyone that believes in individual rights, the rights this country was founded on (I mean, Christianity telling people that the meek shall inherit the earth and the self-sacrifice for the benefit of others or good directly clashes with the idea that the individual has a brain and the right to use it, the right to claim what they have earned and even become successful). But young people, especially ones who still have a glimmer of hope that there is something out there that makes sense, when all their lives their schools and leaders have kept from them that their mind is the answer, young people want their political parties to make sense. Currently, neither platform, whether Democratic or Republican - is consistent or cohesive.

If a person believes that government intervention beyond the necessities - police protection from the force of others, for example - is wrong, neither political party supports them. Republicans believe in less government when it comes to leaving businesses alone - economically the government should let businesses prosper - but when it comes to personal parts of people's lives - choosing to have an abortion, whether consenting adults want to engage in sexual activities that are not what they consider "the norm," the kinds of art work people make and see - then Republicans know what's best for us, and want to tell us what to do.

Democrats believe in less government intervention when it comes to these personal issues, but when it comes to businesses and the economy, Democrats want to be able to regulate industries because they'll hurt people, they want to be able to tax businesses because big business is bad (Why? No answer.), and they want to be able to take money away from people, via business regulations and taxation, in order to give it away to people who haven't earned it (there's no more realistic explanation of the welfare system - other than robbery from the people who produce in this country).

Republicans and Democrats both believe the government should stay out of their business, whatever their business may happen to be. Other people's business? Feel free to meddle.

Even on more specific subjects both parties split their decisions moralistically. The religious right, a Christian group of Republicans, as well as Republicans in general, will tell you that it's horrible to kill an unborn child, but it's okay to kill someone that's already alive and that has committed a

crime (what happened to “turn the other cheek”?). If life is so sacred, why is capital punishment being pushed by Republicans? With our current appeals system, it is estimated that it takes six times as much money to kill someone as it does to keep them in jail for life. And who pays for it? We do, the individuals. The tax payers. The producers.

But the one thing both parties have in common is that they want to take away at least some of our rights. That’s why we’re so disenchanted with the political parties we have today.

Republicans want to take away our personal rights, Democrats want to take away our economic rights. Taxation, the Democrats’ answer (so that people can still have goods and services while not working for them) taxation for anything other than the essentials is forcibly taking away what individuals have earned. It’s forcibly taking away people’s money. That’s the definition of robbery. And laws instilled by Republicans to protect our private lives, so that we are just like them, are not only forcibly telling us how to live, but enacting laws that also cause paperwork costs and costs in enforcing them. Who does the government pay for these things?

Taxation, again, which means: we, the individuals, pay for the government telling us what to do.

Every election, I’m sure a good number of people, people with intelligence, people using reason and logic to the best of their ability in making a decision, go to the polls wondering, “Which rights am I willing to lose?”

Well, we shouldn’t be losing any of those rights. We should have less government intervention in all respects of our lives.

I’m a twenty-something. I’m a woman, but I don’t tell the government I need quotas to get a job, because I know that “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” means just that - it means I can pursue whatever I want. But it doesn’t mean the government should be handing it to me on a platter.

I’m a twenty-something. I’m intelligent, and I don’t need the government protecting me from myself. That’s not what I’m paying for it to do.

I’m a twenty-something. I’m looking for a political party that embodies not my beliefs, but the belief that people can have their own beliefs (whether or not people choose to live by logic and reason or not is not for the govern-

ment to control). I'm looking for a political party that knows that individuals can have their lives (that's the "life" part of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"), they can have the right to keep their lives (that no one has the right to take something that belongs to you, like taxation for the welfare state, or that no one has the right to try to take away your life, unlike what the government does to death-row prisoners, for instance). I'm looking for a political party that knows that individuals have the right to pursue their own goals, without intervention from the government and without help from the government (that you can't expect handouts, but you also can start a business to sustain your life without being burdened by overtaxation and regulation).

I'm a twenty-something. I'm looking for a political party that embodies not my beliefs, but the belief that people can have their own beliefs. I'm looking for a political party that knows that individuals can have their lives, they can have the right to keep their lives. I'm looking for a political party that knows that individuals have the right to pursue their own goals, without intervention from the government and without help from the government.

I'm a twenty-something, and I'm looking for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Can anyone give it to me?

THIS IS MY DILEMMA
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