

Closing the Book on Women's Rights

Janet Kuypers
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Equality Doesn't Mean Removing Rights

The other day was the anniversary of the day the
19th Amendment was certified in the United States,
Giving women the right to vote.

On anniversaries past, I have reflected upon
How we women have come a long way, baby*
But we have to keep looking happy*—

Like, we must be grateful for *all* women's strides
These men have let us accomplish — succeeding,
While we're still under their thumb.

So, I thought it was funny to see that yesterday
Our U.S. President called it “Women's Equality
Day”, and at the White House they'd

Focus the day on Abortion Rights.** How good
Of them, when another govt. branch (possibly
Rightfully so) Overturned Roe

V. Wade to allow the states to decide. I don't
Think the entire country realized what a giant
Catastrophe that might be for

Over half of the people in this nation. I didn't
Know if the White House would have some
Sort of festival for the day, or what,

Until I heard that they actually met with
State and local leaders to discuss ways to
Safeguard access to abortion...

Which has been under such duress, in such
Peril, since it seems half of these states now
Stole women's basic rights.

In fact, the President continues suggesting
That the only way to reverse this injustice
Is in our future voting choices.

So, how appropriate, on the anniversary
Of the day we gained the right to vote, that
I hear his call. Today of all days.

#

Have you ever heard the allegory, the story,
That a baby may seem content on their own,
But show them a treat —

Let them hold it for a while, then abruptly
Take it away from them. *That's* when the
Baby starts crying, now robbed.

This is what goes through my head now, after
Women have made such accomplishments in life
After being held back so long,

And then, with the stroke of a pen, it seems that
Floodgates have been opened for... usually rural,
Conservative, white men

To bring women back to the dark ages again.
They say we've accomplished so much, and then
I wonder: have we really.

* <http://scars.tv/kuypers/poems/2019/keep-looking-happy.htm>

** <https://www.reuters.com/legal/white-house-marks-womens-equality-day-with-abortion-rights-push-2022-08-26/>

It Really Is All About Choice

There are some who may argue
That a fetus with no mouth to
Express their lack of emotion
While inside a womb
Doesn't have a choice
when a woman
Terminates a pregnancy...
So religiously-infused legislators
Eliminate the choice of the woman,
The adult, full-grown, voting woman,
By giving that choice
To something that isn't even
Born.

After Roe v. Wade was overturned
Individuals gained their choice back—
As press polls indicated that
Parents with children
Going to colleges in states
Supporting restricting women's rights
Are telling their children
They would not pay
For them to continue school
In a state so restrictive to women.
To adult, full-grown, voting women.
“If a state does not tell a young woman
That they are entitled to terminate a
Pregnancy after a rape,
I'm not sure I'd be spending my money
On education in that state,”
If I may quote U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill...

High school students, junior year,
Senior year, approaching college
Now reconsider college choices
In these restrictive states
After the overturning
Of Roe v. Wade.

"I would not consider going to school
In a state where abortion is against the law,"
Is only one quoted teen,
But she is not alone.

But what of the women already in college
When sorority presidents even
Call the new abortion law
"Just terrifying" —

But there may be a mischievous
Light at the end of the tunnel
When even in Texas Tech University
In Lubbock, a self-described
"Sanctuary city for the unborn,"
Where abortion is banned,
Students pass around sticks of gum
In a "freedom of speech" zone with
Info on where to get medical abortion pills.

*Yes, it's come to this
Making it look like you're
sharing sticks of gum
To get info about
Protecting women's rights.*

Which means it's come *down* to this
For those stuck in these situations —
These adult, full-grown, voting women
May be able to vote for change
(though I'm sure they'll escape the
College states who kidnapped their rights
Long before they see real change).
What ripple effect will this
Overturning of women's rights cause?
Will school choice change,
Will voting choices change,
Will population numbers literally change
After some in government
Tried to turn their country
Back to the Dark Ages —

Religious people talk about
“Seeing the light”, but the
Repression they see is darkness
For far too many women.
Trust me.
Light *they* claim to see
Blinds them to equality
For *all, living* beings.

Key, you see

The world feels heavy
When women have carried the weight
Excelling at jobs
All while hosting parties
Where everything seems to fall into place
(After she worked endlessly behind the scenes
To make everything perfect)

In addition to all this,
She still manages
Household finances
(Usually better than any man)
Cares for a family
(If she chooses to have one)

That's the key, you see
Understanding the news of the world
Knowing that her place
Remains so much larger
Than anyone can realize

From the insect world
Through the animal world
Women have ruled over their family when
Matriarchs made sense and flourished

Other species kill their mates
After the deed is done...
But the beauty is when
(Without the death of full-grown males)
These queens can choose
How their family can grow

They've managed everything else,
They should be able to decide on this —

Until a religious and conservative
Male-dominated government
Decides to take those rights away
From the female sex

Suddenly these strong women,
After fighting to advance their rights,
Lose a most basic right over
Their body and their choice
To “men” who claim to know better

When men can choose
To relinquish nearly a year of their lives
With weight gains and
Hormone changes
That may force some men into a psych ward
Just to relinquish their lives again
Years, decades
For something they didn't want
Then men may choose
That it's better to not
Cut the seed of the weed
Before it grows so unmanageable
That they're forced to be a servant
To something they never wanted.

They shouldn't make that choice
For the stronger female sex
When it's a woman's body
And a woman's choice.

Jihad Against Free Choice

Bypassing my Poly-Sci school prerequisites,
I'm sure my early U.S. high school history class
Taught me the 10th Amendment clearly:
powers not stated in *this* Constitution "are
Reserved to the States respectively,
or to the people."

When the United States was founded, that
Worked — and we *were* separate nation states...

Until we made a Federal Reserve,
Until we mandated a Federal Income Tax,
And yes, Congress may have created
The US. Army, but in Article I, Section 8,
Clause 12 — it states (and let me quote)
"The Congress shall have Power To . . .
raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation
of Money to that Use shall be for a longer
Term than two Years." Even through the
Civil War, armies existed *by state*, but now
War becomes *national*. My military husband
Will quickly state that all recruits start
Their service with tours of four to eight years.

(If we support our Constitution so, then
Why do we allow our government to break it
By forcing people to serve *at a minimum*
two to four times longer than they're
politically, legally, supposed to?)

My point is, even if the national government
 Breaks its own laws — once they created
National banks, taxation, armies,
That is when we lost our autonomy as
 Individual nation-states. We're all one now,
 Like it or not. And... the overturning of
 Roe v. Wade explicitly pointed out: *that*
 Choice is too far for a national government;
 That power should remain with the states.

So yeah, in principle I get that.
 I don't like a national government
 Taking my rights away. But Roe v. Wade
 Didn't take our rights away, and after
 Signing this one document that *has*
 Given the go-ahead to let our
 States try to do that instead,
 We then learn the Christian
 Jihad against free choice will
 Try to force their beliefs on
 Everyone, and take rights away
 From over half of its people.

Is *that* how our Constitution is
 Supposed to work? *By* the
 People? *For* the people? For
We the people don't like one
 Religion trying to tell us what to do.
 Since the beginning, we're dealt with
 "In God We Trust" on our money,
 And they changed the Pledge of
 Allegiance to *include* "Under God"
 Thanks to Eisenhower because
 Us Americans were supposed to be
 Better than those godless communists
 (though I *do* remember seeing
 Far too many elaborate churches
 When I visited St. Petersburg...)

And I'm no history buff,
But now that I think about it,
Let's get back to that
First Amendment, and I quote,
"Congress shall make no law respecting
an establishment of religion"
 (this is *before* free speech,
 or freedom of the press)
And I bring this up, the *first* words
Of the *First* Amendment, because
Over half of these "United" States
Now try to establish *their* religious beliefs
By suppressing the rights of
Over *half* the people. Isn't that
Just one more thing expressly
Forbidden by our Constitution?

And really, I'm no history buff,
But it doesn't take much reading
To find so many things going wrong
After the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

It's a shame to think
We need to pass more laws
Just to get our rights back,
Because... I don't think marches
Are going to solve this one.
Granting rights to rational choices
Have only come after fighting
Tyrannical religious dogma
For centuries. Our people can't
Wait that long. When we've *had*
Our rights, we *can't* go back
To suppression, repression, oppression.
We know better. We deserve more.
And you can't fight reason forever.

Only Considering Women's Rights

Wondering if I was the only one,
Wondering if anyone considered women's rights
Especially after Roe v. Wade,

I watched a television interview
okay, it was on Comedy Central—
cut me some slack, The Daily Show
conducts daily interviews usually
about relevant lunchtime poll topics...

where the 70th Miss Universe
talked about how she was bullied
for gaining weight
(so... even those who are perceived of
as the most beautiful are also teased?)

but what stuck in my head
is how she was going to rural towns
to make feminine pads available to young girls
since many places don't even allow women
access to be most basic reproductive needs

—

Because, well, we forget

when, thanks to Obama
birth control's free
in the U S A
that some parts the world
have it so much worse —

I think of the 3rd world countries
Who restrict women's rights so...
I contemplate that hey, maybe
We women don't have it so bad
Here in the you ess ay—

That's when I have to stop myself,
Remind myself
That we women *all have* these rights
Or, wait a minute, we *had* these rights
After fighting for them for far too long
In these quote-unquote United States
...that if this is supposed to be
The land of the free
Then rights should be allowed to full-grown women
And not to missed menstrual cycles
And not to mistakes,
Not human life
Not living,
Breathing,
Voting human beings
Who do not have a heart
(*Go ahead, consider dates of fertilization,*
Don't consider the person hosting cells
That may, one day, be a human being)
For these chemical reactions,
If they only had a brain
With cognitive reasoning
They would beg you to
Respect the woman first

So, I was watching an interview with Miss Universe
(*What an outdated symbol for the value of women*),
A woman from India, talking about women's rights.
And— it made me wonder if I was the only one...
Wondering if anyone considered women's rights.

Fear for Their Safety

How women speak is interpreted

Under the cloak of womanhood

Well, she's just a woman,

How can *she* say that —

She doesn't know what she's talking about.

So, subliminally, all women couch what they say

Based on who's listening to them,

Based on how people interpret their words.

When a woman with any authority in a workplace

Says something strong, to correct a problem at work

Men will say she's being a bitch

When a man says the same things

They say he's being driven

#

When a woman went to a doctor

During menopause, complaining about hot flashes

The doctor suggested giving her Xanax

Which can impair memory, judgment, or coordination

Which can cause paranoia, or suicidal tendencies

The doctor doesn't deliver a remedy, he

Just prescribed her a pill to make her shut up

When a woman was hospitalized with an ulcer,

She came back, the pain remained, especially during menstruation —

There would be days at work when she would

Lay down underneath her desk, in pain.

Once I helped her walk to her train station during the day

Because she had to be bed-ridden and didn't know if she

Could walk one block to her train without collapsing.

She spoke of how uncomfortable she felt with her male doctor,

Who never listened to her, dismissing her problems

As if they were all in her head —

Doctors later suggested to her to go on the pill,
But she took that advice from a doctor years earlier,
And it made her more violently moody, and
Still didn't help with the pain.
She feared her only choice was to follow her doctor's orders.

When a woman went to a doctor
Complaining of stomach pains
They suggested she had a yeast infection
When she knew full well it was not that
When she told him that was ludicrous,
The doctor brushed her off.
Sharing her problems with another doctor,
He suggested it was the stomach flu,
Gave her a prescription, said she'd be fine soon.
Within two weeks she was admitted to the hospital
With a laceration in her stomach,
worsened because it was never treated —
Strong acidic fluids were seeping
through her body, infecting other organs.
Admitted to the hospital on a Friday,
By Saturday morning she was dead.

This says a lot about women's healthcare,
and how they value women.

#

After the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*,
Women's health doctors feel increased scrutiny
Amid abortion bans*, and patients now struggle
To find access to potentially lifesaving care**.
I read headlines like, "Four more Republican-led
US states ban almost all abortions"**** (that's not a
Shocker), and "The Link Between Abortion Rights and
Gender Equality"***** (did somebody actually need to
Research this to figure *that* out?) ... I see these

Battles as South Carolina republican women fight for
 Abortion rights****, and Kansas voting recounts confirm
 Abortion rights***** too. And as I seem like some
 Mad scavenger scooping up any news I can to
 Help women in this struggle, I suddenly
 Remember how women have been stripped of
 Healthcare rights *all across* the spectrum, from
 Prescribing crazy pills to never listening to female
 Patients, all leading to so much pain — and death.
 I've seen it. First-hand. How long must women
 Fight this battle, and if women win abortion rights,
 Do we think that everything is wonderful again?
 Because it never *was* wonderful, not for women.
 Continually ready to fight, it may take too long,
 Women may win battles, but after millennia women
 Lose the war. We women keep fighting, keep thinking
 We're making a difference, but... are we. Do we feel
 Comfortable walking down the street at night
 Without fearing the threat of theft or rape?
 Do we feel we can stand up for ourselves at work
 Without sounding to all men like a bitch,
 Instead of an insightful, valuable contributor.
 Will we ever feel comfortable with a male
 Doctor, at the *one* place where we should feel
 The *most* safe? Because I wonder how women
 Can talk about equality when, in all relaiity,
 women always have to fear for their own safety first.

* <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/wellness/story/womens-health-doctors-feel-increased-scrutiny-amid-abortion-87625799>

** <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3add8b/roe-v-wade-overturned-impact-abortion-rights-reproductive-healthcare>

*** <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/25/four-more-republican-led-us-states-ban-almost-all-abortions>

**** <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/how-abortion-rights-are-linked-to-gender-equality>

***** <https://www.counton2.com/news/south-carolina-news/sc-republican-women-fighting-for-abortion-rights/>

***** <https://apnews.com/article/kansas-abortion-vote-recount-e874f56806a9d63b473b24580ad7ea0c>

Expecting Rights after Losing Rights

Okay,
I have heard
That peaceful protests can lead to change...

I mean,
Consider this:
For years I have purchased iodized salt
From Morton's, in part because that logo of that
Little girl holding an umbrella was on display
At a huge manufacturing building
Downtown in the city where I worked for years.

*(when my friend from England visited,
this citizen of the once British Empire,
He even photographed that building...)*

But just once, I had to buy
Iodized salt from
Swad
Because of its logo
Of Mahatma Gandhi
Holding his now iconic cane...
For it's not that I lived through the Salt March in India,
But I was *in* India,
I *saw* that march emblazoned on their money,
I *saw* that march as their statue in New Delhi,
So... I connected with that image of protest
For something as basic as salt, and I
Love that I am not the first to realize
That peaceful protests *can* lead to change.

But really, Ladies,
When *some* basic rights have been taken away from you,
What made you think
That after peaceful protesting
You would have *other* basic rights to *help* you?
How silly of you.
How foolish of you.
You should have known better.

#

Three different women, from
Three different parts of these United States,
Attended a hearing open to the public
At the Supreme Court on the 2nd of November.
Now, I know protesting in the Supreme Court is
Forbidden, *despite* laws guaranteeing the
Right to peaceful protest, so I guess it's no
Surprise that these women were stopped,
Including a 71-year-old who needed a cane,
Or a CEO who, after protesting with a
Single statement in court, held her hands out
To show she carried no weapons.
Now, as I said, I know pretesting like this is
Illegal, but when non-violent protests like this
Happen, protesters may be arrested —
But they are not detained. But as for *these*
Three entirely different women... They
Were put in ankle, waist and wrist manacles,
transferred four times in dark, tightly packed
transport vehicles that were ~ 100°F (38°C)
with bars over their laps and under their chins.
They were jailed with no right to counsel,
Detained overnight in tiny feces-laden and
Urine-spattered cells, where they each
Had to sit on either a metal toilet
Or a metal bed-frame with no mattress, as
Bright lights kept them all awake all night.

Yes, they're looking into their mistreatment,
Which, in more than 30 hours of detention,
May violate constitutional and international rights.

*(For yes, it's not like they want any iodized salt
Rubbed into their already festering wounds...)*

And yes, they *were* let go and never were actually
Charged, so in some senses these jailhouses
Seem to be able to do whatever they want...

So really, when it comes down to it,
Ladies,

You should have known better. If these
Primarily bible-belt southerners with that
White male supremacy mentality — *who*
Prefer to repress women — can take away
Some of your rights, then did you really think
They'd let you keep *any* sense of your own
Morality if you tried to talk back? Because,
Really,

I'm sorry,

Ladies,

But you should have known better.





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