

Current event to american politicis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Irrespective of gender equality laws and public proclamations affirming respect for the equality of the sexes, the fact remains that women in positions of authority are a source of controversy. As liberal a culture as the United States may have, Elder and Greene (2004) emphasize that stereotypes against women persist and a significant percentage of Americans have difficulty accepting female authority. Rather than perceive of the election of women into positions of political authority as natural, or a consequence of the merit of capacities of these women, many still view female politicians as an anomaly. Indeed, a great many American males pay lip service to gender equality because it is politically correct to do so but, do not truly believe that women can function as effectively and as efficiently as males in positions of public political authority (Elder and Greene, 2007). At this current point in American history where the nation, for the first time ever, has a female speaker of the house and will probable witness Hilary Rodham Clinton as a serious contender for the 2008 Democratic Party's presidential nomination, the status of women in politics needs to be examined more closely. Engaging in precisely such an examination, Robin Toner suggests that, insofar as public political life is concerned, femininity is both an advantage and a disadvantage; an advantage because of its appeal to a wider political base and a disadvantage because of the persistency of gender stereotypes.

Within the context of political life, women are advantaged by their gender. As Toner (2007) asserts, many female politicians promote a tough image even as they project a maternal one. The implication here is that they are capable of being as strong and as tough on the issues as are the male politicians but, have a better understanding of familial and societal values.

Accordingly, they have it within them to both protect the country and look towards the future of its children. It is precisely because of this combination that female politicians, among whom Toner (2007) mentions Clinton and Pelosi, emphasize their gender.

At the same time, women seeking election to higher political offices are disadvantaged by their gender. Public opinion polls indicate that many Americans doubt that women can be as effective their male counterparts when it comes to taking a stand on the issues or projecting an image of strength (Toner, 2007). Indeed, despite female achievements there remains some underlying doubt that the female's psychological makeup is as suited for public political life, not to mention critical decision-making under stress, as is the male's (Toner, 2007). Consequently, even though their gender endows female politicians with an air of sympathy and compassion, it can also function to their disadvantage, effectively obscuring their individual qualifications and merits.

Even though Toner's (2007) representation of the controversies and issues surrounding the phenomenon of women in politics is valid, there are a number of important points which the article fails to mention. The first is that this is a cultural issue more than it is a political one. Prejudices and stereotypes exist within the culture and have been subsequently transferred to the political arena (Elder and Greene, 2007). The second is that this is not a partisan issue but a bipartisan one, whereby the aforementioned attitudes towards women in politics exist across party divides and are embraced by voters, irrespective of political affiliation (Elder and Greene, 2007).

Furthermore, both parties are adopting an equally strong position on equality and are promoting their female politicians. The implication here is, at least

from a personal perspective, is that the cultural foundations of gender prejudices have to be addressed and this can partially be accomplished by female politicians not placing the emphasis that they currently do on their gender identity. As Toner (2007) mentions, female politicians such as Clinton and Pelosi are stressing their gender, their identity as mothers and grandmothers. If they are truly serious about the public moving beyond perceptions of them as women, they need to stop emphasising their gender. As a matter of fact, Toner (2007) suggests this.

In the final analysis, one can safely say that women have made their mark on public political life and many have proven themselves as capable as any male. Indeed, the performance of some such as Nancy Pelosi, proves that women are just as capable as their male counterparts. If the public, at large, is to recognize this, female politicians need to end their emphasis on their gender identity.

Bibliography

Elder, L. and Greene, S. (2007) The myth of security moms and NASCAR dads: Parenthood, political stereotypes and the 2004 elections.' *Social Science Quarterly*, 88(1), 1-19.