

A Woman Just Sat at the Head of the Table

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By Jan Collins

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Finally.

It has taken more than two centuries, but we finally have a presidential nominee of a major political party who looks like me, and my sister, and my daughter, and my daughter-in-law, and my granddaughters.

Now I know there are people who say, “Yes, but Hillary Clinton is the wrong woman.” I would refer them to a column written by Batchelor Warnke in *The Los Angeles Times*, who said that “regardless of how you feel about Hillary, I encourage you to recognize the significance of this moment. It will not come again.” For more than two centuries, Warnke reminds us, women have “worked... so hard to get a seat at the table. A woman just sat at the head of the table.”

As Donald Trump would say, “This is big.” Actually, this is revolutionary. Hillary Clinton splintered the second-to-last glass ceiling by winning the Democratic nomination for president. But there is one more ceiling left to fracture, and to do that, she must win in November.

No one should vote for Hillary Clinton simply because she is a woman. Her competence, experience, character, stability, and stance on the issues must be taken into account before deciding which lever to pull in November. (Ditto for Donald Trump.)

While the misogyny being expressed during this campaign is nauseating, one of most interesting dynamics playing out here is why, in America, there is prejudice against women who seek power.

This doesn't seem to be the case in countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, South Korea, India, and Pakistan, which have already placed women in the top spot, often decades ago. In America, however, according to a Harvard study cited by freelance journalist Sady Doyle, when men seek power, they're perceived as more competent, while when women seek power, they face “contempt, anger, and/or disgust.”

It has been this way since the historic women's convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y., 168 years ago; since Shirley Chisholm ran for president 44 years ago; since Geraldine Ferraro was nominated for vice president 32 years ago.

Studies show, according to Democratic pollster Anna Greenberg, that women who break gender-role barriers are rarely popular. In the end, though, Greenberg adds, "the most admired women are the ones who challenge gender norms, even if it is unpopular [to do so] and makes them unpopular." Apparently this is why polls show that Hillary Clinton is the most admired woman in the United States; she is also, however, viewed unfavorably by nearly 60 percent of Americans.

If Clinton becomes the first female president of the United States in January, some of that anger and contempt against powerful women might lessen. (Then again, maybe it won't.) What *will* happen, though, is that more women will run for elective office; research indicates that once a country elects a woman to its highest office, it starts electing more women to the legislature, as well.

There will be a second bonus, too. According to historian and author Nancy Cohen, as quoted in *The Washington Post*, as more women gain power, they push for policies that help women, such as paid family leave, equal pay, reproductive rights, and stronger laws against rape and domestic violence. These policies, argues Cohen, "accelerate gains made by women, thereby elevating more women to power."

Lastly, there is a third bonus: little girls will see that someday, they too can be president.

Little boys will realize that, too. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, tells the story of three young boys who attended a recent White House reception. One of the boys "pointed to a painting on the wall and asked, 'Who is that a painting of?' His friend told him it was Bill Clinton, but the child didn't know who that was. 'That's Hillary's husband,' replied the third child."

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Jan Collins is a Columbia-based freelance journalist, writer, and editor. A former Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, she is the co-author of *Next Steps: A Practical Guide to Planning for the Best Half of Your Life* (Quill Driver Books, 2009).

