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## brainwashed

When a crowd adopts a point of view en masse, all critical thinking stops.  
—William Powers

When it comes to women in America, progress is the operative word. According to the Free Online Dictionary, progress means “steady improvement, as of a society or civilization.” It’s a relative term—how to improve something is entirely subjective. Yet when we talk about women in America, progress is never defined, debated, or qualified. The topic is misleading right out of the gate.

For the past several decades, it has been widely accepted that women in America usually, if not always, get the short end of the stick. According to feminists, women, like blacks, have been oppressed for centuries. We’re told not enough progress has been made and that society still hasn’t leveled the playing field. This philosophy is so embedded in our culture that Americans don’t question it. We don’t even label it “feminist” to think this way; it’s just commonplace to believe women suffer discrimination. Turn on the television, flip through a magazine, or search America’s airwaves, and you’ll be deluged with stories about women who wonder how their needs can best be met, how they can balance their lives better, or how they can deal with the myriad of problems and dangers they face. Women’s grievances dominate the conversation.

But grievances are like crabgrass: the more heat they get, the more it spreads. And that is precisely what has happened with modern women. Feminist organizations even promote the growth of grievances by consciousness-raising sessions, where feminists exchange tales of how badly some man treated them and what government’s role should be as compensation. (See the NOW Resolutions on the Equal Rights Amendment in Appendix C.)

In the meantime, buried beneath the surface lies the truth: American women are the most fortunate human beings who have ever lived. No one has it better. No one. This is a new twist to an old debate, one that elicits shock. It even sounds wrong on a piece of paper or rolling off the tongue. That’s because Americans have been conditioned to believe otherwise. Millions of Americans think progress requires women’s liberation—from men, from children, from society’s constructs, from just about anything that makes women feel morally obligated to someone or something other than themselves.

The saddest part of this misguided view of human nature is that it hasn’t made women any happier. In fact, it has done just the opposite. According to a 2007 report from the National Bureau of Economic Research, “As women have gained more freedom, more education, and more power, they have become less happy.”<sup>1</sup>

The authors of this report, Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, suggest that “the salience of the women’s movement fueled elation in the 1970s that has dissipated in the ensuing years.”<sup>2</sup> That isn’t surprising. Most women in America are a right-of-center bunch and don’t want what women on the left want. The majority of women in this country are traditionalists and don’t want to change America.

Feminists do. They’ve spent decades trying to convince women that America needs to accommodate them so women can be unshackled, free, and presumably happy. It has been an alluring concept. Certainly women like the idea of being free from their responsibilities from time to time; they may like the thought of being liberated from husbands and children occasionally. Who wouldn’t? Marriage and motherhood require a lot of work and sacrifice. But women don’t want to be “free” if being free means being single, dependent on the government, or even being a big-shot powerhouse with no time for family. Most women in America want what any reasonable person wants: a family to love and—yes—even depend on.

The female left wants something else. “As we approach a new century—and a new millennium—it’s the men who have to break through to a new way of thinking about themselves and society,” wrote Betty Friedan in the 2001 edition of her 1963 landmark book, *The Feminine Mystique*. “Too bad women can’t do it for them, or go much further without them. Because it’s awesome to consider how women have changed the possibilities of our lives since we broke through the feminine mystique only two generations ago.”<sup>3</sup>

Those powerful words helped to shape a generation of American women. Implicit in Friedan’s worldview—the worldview so many Americans have been raised to accept—is the notion that women are oppressed, and that men are the ones who need to change. Friedan believed the odds are severely stacked against women. The only way to eliminate female oppression, she said, is to change men and society—to create a different America, one that’s more fair and just to women.

Those who are tempted to write off Betty Friedan as a has-been shouldn’t. Her words live on in the minds of influential female leftists whose goals are no different from Friedan’s. In November 2009, Maria Shriver, along with the left-wing think tank Center for American Progress, produced an exhaustive, four-hundred-page document titled *The Shriver Report: A Woman’s Nation Changes Everything*. Its fundamental argument is that government policies and laws “continue to rely on an outdated model of the American family.”<sup>4</sup>

Shriver and company—which includes Oprah Winfrey—seek to remedy this supposed problem by proving we are no longer living in a “man’s world” but are now living in a “woman’s world.” They consider the traditional family a thing of the past, which is fine with them because what feminists really want is a matriarchy. And now they’ve admitted it. The Shriver Report boasted, “As we move into this phase we’re calling a woman’s nation, women can turn their pivotal role as wage-earners, as consumers, as bosses, as opinion-shapers, as co-equal partners in whatever we do into a potent force for change. Emergent economic power gives women a new seat at the table—at the head of the

table.”<sup>5</sup>

Every couple of years *Time* and *Newsweek* ask, “Is Feminism Dead?” It is not dead. While people associate feminism with the 1960s revolution, since that is when feminism began, feminism and feminists didn’t disappear just because they’re no longer marching in the streets. They simply chucked the loud protests and morphed into the fabric of society. The left offered feminists a home, a place where they could comfortably hang out—along with the Barack Obamas of the world—and plot their strategy to “fundamentally transform” America.