

Hillary Clinton's Gender Argument

Exclusive: Hillary Clinton calls on women to support her to be the first female President, but all Americans should look carefully at her record advocating bloody, neocon "regime change" wars, says ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

Not race nor gender – nor any other innate characteristic – should be **the** touchstone in voting for President of the United States. Yet, as I have traveled the country these past several years, I have been amazed at how many Americans have no qualms in stating that their support for President Barack Obama is based solely – or mostly – on his being black. Equally amazing is the unabashedly indiscriminate support I hear voiced by highly educated women for Hillary Clinton – "because she is a woman and it's our turn," as they put it.

Five years ago in Atlanta, I sat down with Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery, then 90 and a legendary leader of the African-American-church-led struggle for human rights in the South. We met in an historic building used 50 years before by the courageous young leaders of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

I had been a longtime admirer of Dr. Lowery, who acted very much in the tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when Lowery chose the occasion of Coretta Scott King's funeral (Feb. 7, 2006) to admonish a captive audience that included Presidents Bush-41, Bush-43, Carter and Clinton.

"We know now there were no weapons of mass destruction over there [in Iraq]. But Coretta knew and we know that there are weapons of misdirection right down here," Dr. Lowery said. "Poverty abounds. For war billions more but no more for the poor!"

So I was pleased to meet with Dr. Lowery in early May 2011 and felt comfortable enough to voice disappointment at how Barack Obama, despite his rhetoric, seemed to be pursuing the pro-war/pro-Wall-Street policies of his predecessor. But I was brought up short when Lowery reacted quite strongly.

"Obama is one of us," he said. "We will support him no matter what!"

Sensitive Topic

I am aware of the delicacy involved in saying these things and the criticism one can expect. Granted, I carry the proverbial knapsack of white/male privilege. I do make a constant effort to reflect on the very real implications of that reality, rather than give it mere lip service. I have been working at a black-led nonprofit in inner-city Washington for the past 18 years; I worship at a

predominantly African-American church, and just this week I was “Best Man” at the marriage of black friends.

If that sounds a little like “some of my best friends are black,” well, they are. I do try hard to divest myself of the knapsack of white/male privilege that is mine by accident of birth. Recognizing that unearned privilege will always be part of my DNA, I feel all the more conscience bound to put those unmerited gifts to good use. Often this means risking opprobrium attached to telling it like it is – or, admittedly, like I think it is.

Twenty-five years ago I earned the epithet “radical feminist” (not a good thing in Catholic circles) to which I proudly plead guilty. Rather than take the chance that our three daughters end up with the idea that they were second-class citizens, and not having any better idea, I stood up in silence in the middle of my parish congregation for the entire Sunday Mass for almost five years. It was a witness to the reality that the Catholic liturgy itself is flawed with fundamental injustice when women are barred from presiding. From time to time other “radical feminists,” women and men parishioners, joined me.

But for many it was a most unwelcome reminder – a disruption. I was treated like a leper by some of my most “progressive” co-parishioners, until I left the parish after those five years (1991-96) of standing. (*Catholics in Crisis*, a book by Jim Naughton centers on the bitter controversy sparked by what came to be known as “The Standing.”)

Gender and Justice

In the midst of such witness, there seemed to be signs of some progress – at least in the secular world. In 1993, I rejoiced that our country was getting a “two-for” with Hillary Clinton as a new kind of First Lady, essentially a partner in governance with her husband. And just four years later, another breakthrough, Madeleine Albright became the first female Secretary of State and the highest-ranking woman in the history of the U.S. government.

But, alas: as U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Albright had justified the brutal effects of the sanctions imposed on Iraq (later branded “unconscionable” by the U.S. Catholic bishops). When asked in May 1996 about the U.N. finding that the sanctions had taken the lives of 500,000 Iraqi children, Albright told CBS’s Leslie Stahl, “We think the price is worth it.” Albright displayed not only callousness, but entitlement.

In February of this year, while on the campaign trail in New Hampshire for former Secretary of State Clinton, Albright condescendingly chided and challenged women, especially the young who were rallying to Sen. Bernie Sanders:

“You have to help. Hillary Clinton will always be there for you. And just remember, there’s a special place in Hell for women who don’t help each other.”

Hillary Clinton is clearly expecting the votes of many women who believe she is entitled to become President because “it is time.” While I agree that it is well past time for a woman to be President, I disagree that it should be Hillary Clinton. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us that people should not be judged by external factors (whether the color of their skin or, in this case, their gender) “but by the content of their character.”

Hillary Clinton’s record as Secretary of State makes it unmistakably clear that – like her hawkish predecessor Albright – she lacks the level-headedness, vision, and, yes, compassion without which the country’s top diplomat or (even more importantly) the commander in chief can be outright dangerous.

If there is a Hell, I could visualize a special place for both men and women who operate with the cold-blooded, unfeeling cruelty toward victims of American power. What brought this to mind was the way Clinton exulted shortly after getting word that Muammar Gaddafi had been killed.

The Libyan leader had been flushed out of a culvert hiding place, tortured, sodomized with a bayonet and murdered. Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chose to rejoice with undisguised glee, using a riff on words attributed to Julius Caesar, “I came; I saw; I conquered.” Hillary said: “We came; we saw; he died!”

Chaos now reigns in Libya and, according to Colin Powell’s “Pottery Barn” rule, Clinton broke it, so she now owns it. And Obama has just conceded publicly that if he could get a do-over, it would be Libya. He recently expressed open regret over the aftermath of the U.S. military involvement championed by Secretary of State Clinton, calling it the “worst mistake” of his presidency.

In Lock-Step With Neocons

Frankly, it is hard to distinguish Clinton’s foreign policy from the neocons’ “regime change” obsession. Like the neocons, Clinton expresses full support for whatever Israel does and applies the same step-by-step approach toward dragging the United States into more “regime change” wars against governments and political movements that don’t toe Washington’s line.

Currently, she’s pushing for the U.S. military to impose a “safe zone” or “no-fly zone” in Syria, nice-sounding phrases that mean in reality a direct U.S. invasion of Syria, requiring the violent destruction of Syria’s air force and air defenses. It is the same ploy that Clinton used in beginning the disastrous “regime change” in Libya: start with sweet phrases like “responsibility to

protect” and “no-fly zones” and then escalate to another “regime change.”

President George W. Bush and his neocon advisers pulled a similar stunt in drawing the United States into the Iraq War. Bush insisted that he simply needed the authority to use force to pressure Saddam Hussein to surrender his WMD; then U.S. troops were deployed to the region to show that the U.S. meant business; then, U.S. “credibility” would be impaired if the troops simply had to wait around until the U.N. weapons inspectors searched for the WMD, so the invasion began.

Clinton has consistently been onboard such neocon bandwagons, famously voting for and supporting the Iraq War as a U.S. senator. She also has favored coups and wars to remove troublesome leaders whom she demonizes much as the neocons do, understanding the importance of propaganda and “perception management” to bring a sometimes reluctant U.S. population along for the blood-soaked ride.

As Secretary of State, Clinton supported the 2009 coup in Honduras that ousted a relatively progressive president who had offended powerful corporate and oligarchic interests. Also in 2009, she joined hawkish Republican holdovers inside the Obama administration to push for what turned out to be a pointless but bloody “counterinsurgency” escalation in Afghanistan.

In 2011, Clinton tipped the balance in convincing Obama to support the Western invasion of Libya. And in seeking another “regime change” in Syria, she advocated arming Syrian rebels, even though many fought side-by-side with Al Qaeda’s Nusra Front.

Clinton also has voiced excessive hostility toward Iran, heightening the confrontation during her years as Secretary of State and threatening to renew it if she becomes President. With Iranian hardliners already questioning the value of Iran’s accepting extraordinary constraints on its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief (when much of that relief has not materialized), it’s not hard to imagine how a President Clinton-45 might push Iran into renouncing the deal, thus reopening the “bomb-bomb-bomb-Iran” option favored by the neocons.

Only the blindest supporters of Secretary Clinton could fail to acknowledge that there is little or no daylight between her and the neocons.

Full Disclosure

I should note that five years ago as Secretary Clinton began a major speech at George Washington University on the imperative of respecting dissent (in Iran), she did not miss a syllable as “security” officers brutally assaulted me and hauled me away directly in front of her. My crime? Standing silently with my back to her.

Clinton's confidant Sidney Blumenthal sent her a quick email, telling her that I was well known in the U.S. intelligence community, where I had long served as a CIA analyst, though since then I had "become a Christian antiwar leftist who goes around bearing witness." He added, "Whatever his views, he's harmless."

Harmless or not, I ended up with cuts and bruises, far less than the slaughter and maiming of the millions of victims of Clinton's misbegotten policies. Her gender does not excuse her for that suffering nor does it mean that we should ignore her judgment when deciding whether she should be elevated to the most powerful office on earth.

Ray McGovern is a former Army officer and CIA analyst. He prepared the *President's Daily Brief* for Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, and conducted the morning briefings, one-on-one, of Reagan's most senior advisers. He is a member of the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).
