

GENDERSCOPE

Girl Power

Women's struggles not limited to United States, Europe

Every year, the media applaud women musicians for the great strides they've made in the rock 'n' roll world. Columnists print articles announcing "The Year of Women Rock."



**CALEB
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columnist

The Grammy Awards join in a chorus by decorating women from Celine Dion to Alanis Morissette with the highest honors in the music industry can bestow. The Spice Girls, arguably the spiciest in the world that are completely tasteless, gallivant across the globe reading "Girl Power." And women's rights activists equate the success of female entertainers with the success of their movement.

But think about this. Last year, while Gwen Stefani joined "I'm Just a Girl," Paula Cole wondered where the cowboys went and Lilith Fair stormed across the country, women in Turkey were being legally beaten by their husbands.

Only two weeks ago, the Turkish parliament passed the country's first law against domestic violence. And the law barely passed because the wife-protecting lobby worked overtime. Islamists in the legislature opposed the measure because they believed it would lead to a breakdown in family harmony. The mostly male parliament had previously holed the law for almost two years, and only concerted efforts of secular women's rights groups made the law possible.

Or consider this. While Meredith Brooks enjoyed a surprising success of her mediocre music, Ellen DeGeneres got her way and Lisa Loeb worked on the ease of her second album, women in Afghanistan are not allowed to leave their houses unless escorted by a male relative. The troubled Afghan govern-

ment has also forbidden foreign-aid agencies from directly assisting females.

According to a report from CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour, "Today Afghan women cannot even expect proper medical care." In September, a government order banned female patients from all of the main hospitals in the capital city. After returning from an October visit to Afghanistan, Amanpour reported that "sick women are being sent to a crumbling old building that has no windowpanes, no running water, no proper operating room and barely enough electricity to power light bulbs."

In other words, as Americans self-righteously celebrate the recognition of women in the entertainment industry, many women in the world are still struggling for

basic human rights, much less Grammy nominations. Of course, the success of female rockers is no small thing.

But there is an increasing danger of commercializing the women's-rights movement by exalting women like the Spice Girls or Meredith Brooks as the princesses of "Girl Power." Op-

pressed women need more than cute slogans and pop songs. The Spice Girls complain their identities as women have been repressed because a cold, prudish world frowns on the fact their dresses look more like long blouses. Boo-hoo. Meanwhile, Afghan women cannot even wear white socks because they are thought to be too sexually alluring.

The point is this: There are serious problems facing women around the world, and they require serious solutions. Even under Uncle Sam's roof, the struggle for women's rights is far from over. Every 15 seconds, an American woman is beaten by her husband or boyfriend. Every 45 seconds, an American woman is sexually assaulted. These women need help. They are the victims here — not the Spice Girls.

So let us stop speaking of how Lilith Fair has finally liberated women and has proven once and for all the girls can rock better than the boys. Let the press stop acting as if Baby Spice were the reincarnation of Susan B. Anthony herself. There is no time for such caricatures of the crusade for women's rights. Women in Afghanistan are being operated on in buildings without running water. These are genuinely oppressed women who need genuine compassion.

The women's movement has accomplished an incredible amount in the United States. Women have become a powerful voting block and women's groups have established themselves as important political lobbyists. The Secretary of State and the Attorney General are both women. According to census statistics, women own one-third of American businesses, and the growth of woman-owned businesses is greater than the national average in all fifty states. Women are more active in the work force than ever before.

But society cannot be satisfied with these advances. People cannot conscientiously turn their attention to fighting for the rights of female Grammy nominees while women around the world are still struggling for basic civil liberties. The women's movement is too important to be trivialized by bad music. There is much work to be done. "Human Power" and "God's Power" are needed to seriously and soberly better the lives of women everywhere.

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PERSPECTIVES

Death of child crosses line of weight, becomes neglect

When Christina Corrigan died on Nov. 19, 1996, her body was found lying naked on a living room floor, surrounded by empty food containers.



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columnist

The room reeked of urine. Feces were found in the folds of her flesh and her body was covered in open bedsores. The coroner found evidence that insects had been feeding on flesh. It's hard to imagine that anyone could demand Marlene Corrigan's treatment of Christina. But when Corrigan was brought on charges of felony child endangerment, supporters rallied around her, claiming Corrigan was not to blame for the condition of her child lived in.

See, one thing separated the case of Christina Corrigan from other cases of neglect and abuse. At the age of 13, Christina Corrigan was 5'3" and weighed 680 pounds.

And the self-proclaimed "fats rights" groups that banded together to support Marlene Corrigan announced that the issue of the trial was not Christina's death, but Christina's weight.

"It's not a crime to be fat and it's not a crime to have a fat child," said Marilyn Wann, author of *FatSo?*, a fats rights magazine. Yes, it's not a crime to be fat or to have a fat child. However, it is a crime to allow a child to live in conditions that would not be tolerated for a dog. It is a crime to allow a child to have open, untreated wounds, some of which are months old. It is a crime to allow a child, who is in obvious need of medical attention, to avoid going to see a doctor for four years.

It seems ironic that groups who are so adamant about gaining acceptance for overweight people and trying to get society to look past a person's weight are the ones who are making the biggest fuss about child neglect. This is not a case about weight, it is a case about neglect.

But the fats rights activists have found themselves a poster child, and hell hath no fury like an activist group that has found a child to plead. It is useless to point out that these groups are undermining their own cause by promoting Marlene Corrigan, a woman who did almost nothing to take care of her child.

The fats rights activists claim that they stand on solid ground in defending Corrigan. Parents might now start pressuring their children even more, because they are afraid they

are going to get sent to jail if their kids get too fat," claims Judy Freespirit of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance.

It is highly doubtful that a single judge in this country would send a parent to jail for having an overweight child. What is more likely is a parent being sent jail for leaving a child "lying in her own filth." According to Detective Don Horgan of the El Cerrito Police Department, that was exactly how Christina was found.

But the activists still refuse to see the actual matter at hand.

"There are things that she is not guilty of that she is being prosecuted for, like being responsible for a child who weighed 680 pounds," said Freespirit.

Funny thing is, that is precisely the reason Corrigan is being prosecuted: because she wasn't being responsible for a child who weighed 680 pounds.

At every turn, Marlene Corrigan showed that she was not going to take responsibility for her child and that she was not going to look out for Christina's well-being.

When Christina refused to go and see the doctor, despite the fact that it had been four years since her last visit, what did Marlene Corrigan do? Nothing. She let Christina have her way.

When Christina constantly demanded more and more food, did Marlene Corrigan try to get her child to eat sensibly? No, she gave in and let Christina have her way. Corrigan hoped that Christina would decide to stop eating so much on her own.

And what about the food containers and the waste that Christina lived in? Michael Cardoza, Corrigan's lawyer, defended her inaction by saying the following: "Adolescents are not neat. What was her mother supposed to do, be her kid's maid?"

Oh, yes, heaven forbid that Marlene Corrigan should try and keep her daughter in a clean environment. Heaven forbid that she should actually, for once, act like a parent.

So, if the fats rights groups claim that Christina's death was Corrigan's fault, who's was it? According to Freespirit, the schools are guilty, the medical establishment is guilty, and society is guilty; Marlene Corrigan, just like her daughter, is simply a victim.

But how many responsible parents would allow their child to choose when and how much he or she wants to eat and whether he or she wants to go to the doctor? None.

The only thing Marlene Corrigan is a victim of is her own inaction and irresponsibility. And Christina was the one who paid the price.

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STATE OF THE UNION

Presidency should not protect if criminal actions are discovered

In Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, the embattled president reminds his advisers it is not the crime, but "it's the lie that gets you." Twenty-three years later, the specter of perjury again looms over a troubled presidency.

At the center of Bill Clinton's most serious crisis are charges he urged a former White House intern to lie about an affair to attorneys in Paula Jones' sexual harassment lawsuit. If they are true, the Clinton Administration's five-year flirtation with impeachment could end in the president's disgraceful removal from office.

Clinton could face charges of suborning to perjury and obstruction of justice, both of which are impeachable offenses. If the allegations are true and he pressured a young intern to lie about their affair in a sworn deposition, the House Judiciary Committee should draw up articles of impeachment and the Senate should remove Clinton from office.

• THE NATURE OF THE CHARGES

In a Jan. 7 sworn statement in Paula Jones' lawsuit against Clinton, former White House intern Monica Lewinsky denied she and the president had a sexual relationship. However, in a secretly taped conversation six days later, she talked at length about she and Clinton engaged in oral sex and explicit phone conversations, and how he pressured her to lie under oath about it.

In the 20 hours of tape, she told her friend, equipped with a hidden microphone, how Clinton told her, "There is no evidence, so you can deny, deny, deny," and that Washington lawyer Vernon Jones would help her craft a plausible affidavit. Interestingly enough, Jones is accused of similar allegations involving Whitewater figure Webster Hubbell.

Clinton's private relations with Lewinsky, if any, are not the issue. The issue is whether or not Clinton instructed Lewinsky to lie under oath in a sworn deposition involving a lawsuit against him.

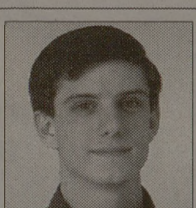
If he did so, he could be found guilty of suborning to perjury and obstruction of justice.

Unlike the campaign fundraising and FBI file scandals, these charges are leveled directly at Clinton, not a litany of Democratic figures. Unlike Whitewater and Gennifer Flowers, these charges involve a crime committed while in office. Unlike the other scandals, these charges are not being pursued by Republican politicians, but by the FBI and an independent prosecutor. And unlike the other scandals, a powerful boss strong-arming a young intern to lie to attorneys about sexual liaisons is easily understood by the public, and more easily prosecuted.

• THE EVIDENCE AGAINST CLINTON

In the Lewinsky tapes, the former intern tells her friend about her fear that independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr's lawyers would find out about the gifts and trinkets given to her by Clinton. Among them are a dress and a photograph bearing an intimate inscription, uncommon gifts for an unpaid intern.

According to one source close to the investigation, after one sexual encounter, Clinton's semen stained Lewinsky's dress, which she saved as a "souvenir." If the stained dress exists, and if forensic experts can link it to Clinton, there may be enough evidence for an indictment, or impeachment.



**DONNY
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columnist

Among the other items sought as evidence in the investigation are White House logs and employment records. White House interns often only see the President once, at the annual photo op. Lewinsky, however, reportedly had frequent access to Clinton and was issued a "blue pass," giving her access to the White House, and Clinton.

Two sources told CNN she frequently visited the West Wing, often late at night and usually signed in saying she was visiting Clinton's secretary, Betty Currie. One of the sources reports she was almost always alone and often at the White House well past midnight. Such high-level and frequent access is unheard of among interns.

Once source also tells CNN Lewinsky was "mesmerized" by Clinton and frequented the West Wing where, "she would bump into him." Other sources describe her "slight crush" on Clinton and corroborated she and Clinton did have some form of a personal relationship. Whether it was sexual has yet to be proven.

• CONGRESS HAS AN OBLIGATION TO IMPEACH

If the claims made by Lewinsky are indeed true, Congress must impeach Clinton.

Suborning to perjury and obstruction of justice are serious crimes which must be punished. After five years of what many see as illegal activities by Clinton, concrete evidence of a crime committed while in office may exist. If he did pressure Lewinsky to lie about their affair, if it ever exists, it undermines his credibility, damages his job performance and derails the business of the nation.

In the Watergate affair, Richard Nixon realized a convicted felon could not lead the nation. Rather than force Americans through the pain of impeachment proceedings, he resigned from office. If Clinton is guilty of obstruction of justice, he should take the moral high road and resign from office.

Unlike the other scandals, if the charges are proven, they will destroy his base of support in Congress. Democrats are wary of Clinton's political future and certainly will not support the agenda of a criminal, for it will drag the party down with him.

As former Clinton chief of staff, Leon Panetta, said, "You're dealing with a Congress that is likely to move against him in the Judiciary Committee. And unless he's got a clear resolution of this matter, Congress itself is going to be paralyzed." With important issues like education funding, tax cuts and Medicare reform on the agenda, the business of the nation will be seriously damaged if it is controlled by a politically dead president.

If Lewinsky's allegations Clinton urged her to lie under oath are true, Congress must remove him from office and allow the national agenda to move forward. To vote against impeachment in the case the charges are proven would place personal political ties ahead of the good of the nation.

Richard Nixon stepped down because Republicans would not support their president in the event he was linked to Watergate break-ins. If Monica Lewinsky's claims about Bill Clinton are true, all lawmakers, Democrat and Republican, must remove him from office.

If he obstructed justice, the matter is not one of liberal vs. conservative or President Gore vs. no President Gore. The impeachment and removal of President Clinton, in the event the charges are true, should be one of what is right for the nation.

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