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Editor's Notebook: "Remembering the Ladies"

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Editor’s Notebook
“Remember the Ladies”
by Michael Kryzanek

The next presidential election is not until 2008 and already there is speculation that the choices of the major party candidates will both be women. Dick Morris, Bill Clinton’s White House strategist, has come out with a book in which he sees the next election as a contest between Hillary Clinton and Condeleeza Rice. Of course, writing a book about two prominent women running for the highest office in the land gets people’s attention and sells copies. But whether Morris is right or wrong, women may finally be on the threshold of real political power, at least that is the hope.

To date, the history of women in American politics has been, to say the least, disappointing. Since the founding of the nation about 12,000 people have served in the Congress, but only 215 of those legislators have been women. Also since the founding, 582 people have held cabinet positions, but only 29 have been women, 20 of whom were appointed only in the last decade. The situation at the state and local level is even worse as about 12% of the nation’s governors and mayors of the 100 most populous cities are women. One glimmer of hope is that since the founding, 582 people have held cabinet positions, but only 29 have been women, 20 of whom were appointed only in the last decade.

While progress in bringing more women into positions of authority within our political system has been slow in recognizing the leadership talents of individuals, the proportion of women in Congress has increased significantly. In the most recent German election Angela Merkel became the first female chancellor in the history of this major European power. Women are better at consensus building, interpersonal communications, collaboration, and power sharing. Women are more apt to use negotiation rather than aggression to solve a problem and clearly are better listeners, willing to involve a broad range of sources before coming to a decision. Women are less prone to be impulsive, rigid and isolated. Women, quite simply, bring a whole new set of qualities and skills to leadership that has been absent from male dominated government in this country.

And yet, despite the benefits that would accompany a woman president, the prospects that someone like Hillary Clinton or Condeleeza Rice would be able to break through the presidential glass ceiling are dim. Though there is poll data that shows an increase in support for a woman president, and less of a willingness to buy into the stereotypes, unfortunately, are difficult to remove. Women may finally be on the threshold of real political power, at least that is the hope.

I long to hear that you have declared an independence. And, by the way, in the new code of laws, which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

—Abigail Adams in a letter to John Adams, 1776

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power office fearing that she would not be able to act decisively during a crisis, or would be unwilling to flex our military muscles. There is no evidence that a woman would be unprepared or incapable of defending this nation, or exercising the military option in order to protect national interests. But stereotypes, unfortunately, are difficult to remove from the national psyche.

What evidence is available shows that women have unique talents that may make them better leaders and more effective proponents of national interests. Women are better at consensus building, interpersonal communications, collaboration, and power sharing. Women are more apt to use negotiation rather than aggression to solve a problem and clearly are better listeners, willing to involve a broad range of sources before coming to a decision. Women are less prone to be impulsive, rigid and isolated. Women, quite simply, bring a whole new set of qualities and skills to leadership that has been absent from male dominated government in this country.

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1984–2004: Twenty Years of Adult Literacy Education in South Africa
A Chronicle of Frustration
by Ruth D. Farrar

KwaZulu-Natal can be a shockingly deceptive place. This small province in eastern South Africa is one of the country’s premier vacation areas. It boasts the highest and most beautiful mountains, some of the finest game reserves, a balmy subtropical climate, sweet-smelling sugar plantations, a breath-taking coastline, and beaches that reach out to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. Durban, its capital, is South Africa’s third largest city, and home to the busiest port in all of Africa.

During a recent trip to KwaZulu-Natal I drove from Durban inland on Highway N1 toward the Drakensburg mountain range and my eyes feasted on rolling green hills, lush pastures, cottages with thatched roofs, farms with grazing cattle and battle grounds with aging war memorials. As I moved with rush-hour traffic the highway was suddenly pierced by a strikingly different and unsettling image. On the hills to my right, a green collection of mud shacks huddled together. No matter how many times I have traveled this route, I am never prepared for the sight of a squatter camp—hundreds of family-inhabited boxes made of “zinc” (corrugated metal sheets), crammed together in promontory squatting, pressing against the razor-wire walls of a sprawling, white, middle class home and bordering the highway. The car went on, but I strained backward to see more from the rear window. The shackstretchered and faded all together, sucked up by another bend in the road. Yes, there will be many more such scenes, largely unobserved by the visitor—the squatting shacks, single-room mud houses—a patchwork-quilt of cardboard, tarp, sticks, and wire, with occasional wisps of smoke curling into the sky above.

INTRODUCTION
In a recent State of the Nation address, South African President Thabo Mbeki emphasized the need for a second decade of democracy in which a “people-centered society with peace and democracy for all” was created. He connected these themes to the challenges posed by the “second economy” which has trapped millions of South Africans in poverty and has resulted in their marginalization and exclusion through problems of poverty, including unemployment, disease, violence, illiteracy and inadequate education.

Under today’s post-apartheid economy and free-market policies it is estimated that among the adult population more than 30 per cent has HIV/AIDS (with many more suspected cases), 45 per cent is unemployed, and 50 per cent is illiterate. Black South Africans make up more than 80 per cent of the provincial population, and for a large majority of them the quality of life has not changed since apartheid or the decades since colonialism. These large groups of historically disadvantaged and marginalized South Africans continue to live in oppression. Their lives in a post-apartheid democracy bear an eerie resemblance to their previous lives under apartheid.

EDUCATION POLICIES DURING APARTHEID
Instituted in 1953, education of Black South Africans, commonly called Bantu education, became central to sustaining the apartheid system because it grouped