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by Bryce J. Christensen, Ph.D.

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Upon their return from a fact-finding mission to Iraq late in 2003, members of a congressional delegation expressed keen dismay at what they perceived as excessively negative media coverage of American involvement there. “I’m afraid,” said Representative Jim Marshall (D-GA), “the news media are hurting our chances [of success]; they are dwelling upon the mistakes, the ambushes, the soldiers killed.... The falsely bleak picture weakens our national resolve, discourages Iraqi cooperation, and emboldens our enemy.”¹ One of Marshall’s companions, Rep. Todd Tiahart (R-KS), spoke in the same vein, decrying the media reports of “chaos in the streets” of Iraq and of “Iraqis resent[ing] our presence” as “totally false.”²

Other commentators have since echoed Marshall and Tiahart’s complaints. Editorialist John Leo has characterized media coverage of the Iraq war as “skewed,” asserting that there is “not much room for good news in [the] media’s view of Iraq.”³ And journalist Rod Blum has deplored the way the mainstream media have become so negative in their coverage of the war that they have been “ignoring the positive and dramatic changes occurring in Iraq.”⁴

Why have the media depicted American involvement in Iraq in such a negative light? One thing seems certain: in depicting the war in Iraq unfavorably, the mainstream media are not taking their cues from “anti-war conservatives.” Yes, there are people on the right who argue that invading Iraq was imprudent and wonder why President Bush ever abandoned the conservative principles he espoused in 2000 when attacking the Clinton Administration for “extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions.”⁵ But it has been neither anti-war conservatives nor pro-war conservatives who have generally set the agenda for media coverage of the war in Iraq. Nationally syndicated columnist Joseph Perkins clearly identifies just who has set the media agenda when he asserts that those governing “much of the U.S. media...[have been] blinded by their contempt for President Bush.”⁶

Perkins indeed links the negative portrayal of the war in Iraq to the much more pervasive bias which aligned the national media with Blue America (its champion the liberal Senator Kerry) and against Red America (its standard bearer the conservative President Bush). Writing in October of 2004, Perkins remarked, “The mainstream media have chosen sides in the presidential election. The news networks, the major newspapers (and magazines) overwhelmingly favor Kerry.”⁷ Because Bush advocated invasion of Iraq as essential to the war on terror, while Kerry withdrew his initial support, accusing the President of using misleading justifications for sending U.S. forces to Iraq, negative coverage of the Iraq war fitted quite naturally into a broader effort to elect Kerry and to discredit Bush and his conservative allies.⁸ In a remarkably candid essay, Kerry partisan Bob Levin frankly acknowledged that opposition to the “senseless march to Baghdad” was part of the Blue ideological package of urban media types like him, people who are less religious, more liberal and Democratic, and more favorable to gay marriage and

elective abortion than are the Red-thinking supporters of President Bush.⁹

The surprisingly deep connection in Blue ideology linking liberal positions on family issues such as gay marriage and elective abortion on the one hand and ideological opposition to the war on the other shows through in a remarkable way when the media focus shifts away from the anti-terrorist actions of the American military in general or the decisions of the Commander in Chief in particular and toward the non-traditional activities of female soldiers in Iraq (or Afghanistan or Guantanamo Bay). Revealingly, news commentators who usually can say nothing good about American involvement in Iraq dissolve in unrestrained enthusiasm when the camera focuses on a woman soldier who has rejected the traditional at-home roles of wife or mother in order to fly an attack helicopter or drive a Humvee in Baghdad.

In the astonishing shift in media attitudes whenever female soldiers come into view, Americans can glimpse something of the profound difference between the war efforts Red America supports and the ones that Blue America endorses. For while Red America (including even its anti-war conservatives) cherishes America's family-centered cultural and social traditions and will defend them against the violent threat of terrorism, Blue America disdains every American cultural norm or social tradition that reinforces family life and would rather attack than defend such norms and traditions.

Red America is willing to wage a military war to defend America as the family-centered country it has been since its founding. Blue America supports the military war only insofar as it coincides with their cultural war to destroy every family-centered practice that impedes the march toward a Brave New World of trans-gendered and post-familial lifestyle freedom. So while Red America recognizes in Osama Bin-Laden and his allies a terrible threat to what America is and has always been, Blue America fears these terrorists principally because they threaten to interrupt their own project of ideologically remaking

America into a post-familial society it has never been before. Even as it criticizes the Bush Administration for a costly military neo-imperialism that turns foreign countries into dependents or into captive markets, Blue America quietly enlarges an even more costly bureaucratic empire at home that turns ever more socially rootless citizens into captive clients of a burgeoning government apparatus for social engineering. Red America wants to use tanks and smart bombs to destroy al-Qaeda and the remnants of the Afghan Taliban and the Iraqi Republican Guard. Blue America relies on an enfilade of subversive laws (many created by judicial fiat) and intrusive bureaucracies to decimate even more families; the most fundamental of what Edmund Burke aptly called "the little platoons" of society.¹⁰

Given Blue America's political agenda for undermining the traditional gender complementarity undergirding marriage and family, perhaps it should come as no real surprise that the media periodically interrupt their generally negative coverage of the war in Iraq to laud and praise the female soldiers in the theater. Looking specifically at media coverage of the Iraq War, a *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter acknowledges a clear pattern: "The news is different when women are involved."¹¹ And behind that difference we see the pronounced effects of Blue American feminism. "They buckle themselves into B-52s," writes one typical journalist covering the Iraq war. "They deploy bombs by the ton. They launch missiles. They question suspicious Iraqis. More than ever, women are involved in combat. Women are being taken prisoner—and proving their heroism—on ever murkier battlefields where nearly everyone is at risk, whether on the front lines or ferrying food or supplies." In all of this expanded female militarism, the writer sees "women gain[ing] ground," as their exploits provide new opportunities "to smash barriers" that have limited women in the past.¹²

In the same feminist spirit, another media representative hails the fight for Iraq as "an historic moment for American women on the fields of war. More women are fighting—and dying—in military combat zones now than at any time in the past 50 years, and maybe ever." To drive home the ideological point, she quotes a female sergeant in the Military Police in Iraq: "This is not (just) a man's job anymore."¹³ The gender egalitarianism of Blue America likewise weaves itself through the commentary of a reporter thrilled that "the war in Iraq has placed women in harm's way as never before ... [as] their [military] roles have greatly expanded." This overawed reporter listens with rapture to a female pilot of an attack helicopter, who "sounded as gung-ho as any of her male colleagues, whose ships took heavy fire. 'It made me a little bit mad to think I didn't even get a bullet,' she said." The reporter's ideological focus could almost make one forget that the war is between Americans and Iraqi Bathists, not between women and their patriarchal oppressors: "In the war zone..." he writes, "the women have won." So confident is he in the prowess of the new generation of G.I. Janes that the reporter turns fears about their security into a bravado warning to their foes: "The enemy isn't safe from the women of the U.S. military, either."¹⁴

The choir of usually anti-war reporters, who still cannot help but see portents of Blue ideological progress in female soldiers' involvement in Iraq includes yet another journalist delighted that "American women have participated more extensively in combat in Iraq than in any previous war in U.S. history. They've taken roles nearly inconceivable just a decade or two ago—flying fighter jets and attack helicopters, patrolling streets armed with machine guns and commanding units of mostly male soldiers."¹⁵

When the media are reporting on female soldiers, reporters frequently underscore the Blue feminism that justifies the temporary abandonment of their generally anti-war Blue posture. One commentator draws "a lesson on gender equality" from the death of a female civil-affairs specialist killed in Iraq by a roadside bomb: "Women should be respected more than what they are. They are doing this tremendous duty for us.... [I]t takes courage for women to do that. It does. Women are out there on the battlefields. Fighting for us, for our freedom. Just like a man." The ideological transformation of female soldiers of women into creatures "just like a man" requires, of course, the repudiation of traditional femininity: the reporter stresses that the civil-affairs specialist killed by the roadside bomb had left behind a world in which she was "so girly-like" that she "could spend hours piling her curly hair atop her head" and would pick "a new dress for every dance."¹⁶

Perhaps more important to most Blue Americans, however, is that the gender transformation of female soldiers into male-equivalents requires the rejection of women's traditional family roles. And in this rejection, the Blue media positively exult. "A single mother Army cook," one reporter rhapsodizes, "...faces death or captivity [just] like [her] male counterparts."¹⁷ Another excited reporter hands the microphone to one of the forward-thinking female soldiers who has left children behind to become like a man on the battlefields of Iraq: "I would love to be at home with my kids, but I'm doing this for them. I wouldn't want to do anything else."¹⁸

Because media excitement about female soldiers as post-family gender pioneers springs from Blue feminist ideology, reporters particularly relish the way these soldiers are defying the traditional patriarchy of the lands where they are now deployed. For a Blue reporter, few things could be sweeter than the "delicious irony" of female soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, "the birthplace of the Taliban, the hard-line Islamist regime that forced women to quit their jobs and wear head-to-toe veils." "Afghan men," the reporter rejoiced, "are getting an object lesson in women's empowerment."¹⁹ The object lessons are even more pointed at the prison at Guantanamo Bay, where the media take keen delight in the spectacle of "Taliban fighters who wouldn't allow women to study in Afghanistan and punished them if a veil slipped or ankle showed are now getting orders from women guards." "In their culture," one of Guantanamo's female guards asserts, "they [the detainees] get to tell the females what to do. Well, they are now in a new culture, and I get to tell them what to do." "I believe everything should be 50/50," one of the glamorized guards explains. "If a woman does dishes, a man should too. I'm sure they (the detainees) don't feel that way."²⁰ Nor do Blue commentators take pleasure just in what America's female soldiers are doing to Muslim males; they are also thrilled that the deployment of America's female soldiers to their country helped inspire 47 Saudi women to take an illegal joy ride in Riyadh to protest Saudi Arabia's ban on female drivers.²¹

But the fullest, most convincing dramatization of the foundational premise of Blue feminism, requires female soldiers to match or eclipse the battlefield heroics of the men traditional family-oriented women relied on to protect them. So eager were the nation's Blue media to find such a dramatization that they made a woman (Jessica Lynch) "the Iraq War's most famous soldier" on the basis of wildly inaccurate and irresponsible journalism.²² In a front-page story published in April 2003, *The Washington Post* (among the Bluest of Blue newspapers) reported that Lynch, who had just been rescued from an Iraqi hospital by a male special operations team, was initially captured "fighting to the death." The breathless *Washington Post* reporters asserted that Lynch had "fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers," that she had continued "firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition," that she "didn't want to be taken alive," and that she had been both shot and stabbed before being taken captive.²³ This inspiring story quickly went out over the wires and was loudly amplified by the Blue media throughout the country. Very quickly, Lynch found herself one of *Glamour* magazine's Women of the Year, received an offer from CBS for the rights for her story for a made-for-TV movie, and became the subject of a laudatory book written by a Pulitzer Prize winner (for which the publisher—Alfred A. Knopf—paid a large advance), and received invitations to join the nation's glitterati at Golden Globe parties.²⁴ At last Blue America had found the heroic post-family Amazon they had been seeking.

Unfortunately, later investigation revealed “the coverage about Lynch [to be], in nearly every particular, inaccurate.”²⁵ Far from fighting ferociously until her ammunition ran out at the time of her capture, Lynch did not fire a single shot and “spent much of the firefight curled up in a fetal position.” And contrary to the early reports, Lynch sustained not even one gunshot or knife wound from her captors: her injuries (which were indeed serious) resulted from the crash of the vehicle she was riding in. Military officers issued a 15-page report thoroughly discrediting the Blue media reporting that had turned Lynch into “Barbie Army,” and *The Washington Post* was compelled to retract its original story of her capture after its own ombudsman sharply criticized that story as “wrong in its most compelling aspects.”²⁶

Of course, the Blue media handled the retraction of the Lynch-as-hero story quietly enough that many Americans never even realized how erroneous the initial hype had been. Certainly, the Blue media were less than eager to acknowledge that “the Iraq War’s most famous soldier,” the female warrior on whose shoulders “a nation’s expectations r[o]de,” had behaved like “a terrified little girl” during the firefight preceding her capture and had suffered the ugly indignity of having been anally raped by her captors.²⁷ Indeed, some Blue commentators still cling with remarkable tenacity to the initial Lynch-as-hero story even after the brutal realities of Lynch’s very sad experience has been exposed. Thus, although a Blue reporter for Gannett News Service grudgingly acknowledges that the early reports of Lynch’s battlefield exploits “were later questioned,” he persists in viewing Lynch as a hero who has “challenge[d] old conventions.” “The very fact that [Lynch]... survived capture with a back injury,” writes this dogged Blue ideologue, “has made her one of the war’s first named heroes.”²⁸

The glaring discrepancy between media image of Jessica Lynch and the unfortunate reality she experienced never in any way reflected a lack of truthfulness and candor on the part of the 19-year-old female supply clerk, who never asked to face battlefield danger and who never sought the media celebrityhood thrust upon her. She has indeed repeatedly rebutted the fantasies built up around her name. But feminist ideology had given Blue America such a tremendous appetite for female heroics that the Blue media enthusiastically generated these remarkably long-lived fantasies before even trying to learn the facts of her case. It was not the merely random inaccuracies that inevitably mar wartime reportage but rather the deeply Blue ideology of feminism that created the Lynch fantasies. “The gender factor,” Roeper admits, “played a huge role in the initial burst of publicity that [surrounded] Lynch.”²⁹

Feminist skewing of war reportage is even more apparent in the way the Blue media handle the grim news of battlefield deaths. The deaths of male soldiers in Iraq frequently occasion sharp Blue criticisms of the Bush Administration’s handling of the war, frequently drawing unpleasant comparisons to Vietnam. The tragic deaths of over 1,000 male soldiers in Iraq is thus often cited by Blue commentators as strong evidence that Bush’s wrongheaded war policy has landed the United States in “another Vietnam.”³⁰ The deaths of thousands of Iraqis—especially Iraqi civilians—likewise receive attention in Blue attacks on “[Bush’s] invasion over false claims of weapons of mass destruction.”³¹ But the Blue media shift into a remarkably positive tone—almost ebullient—when they begin reporting on the female soldiers who have fallen beneath the Grim Reaper’s scythe.

Thus, when male GIs kill enemy soldiers, the Blue media report that fact as a deeply unfortunate wartime necessity. But Blue reporters can scarcely restrain their excitement when reporting that “female American troops in Iraq have killed Iraqis with bombs and bullets.”³² A tone of feminist triumph, verging on blood thirst, even pervades reports of the deaths of America’s female soldiers themselves. For the Blue media, the fact that more women have died in Iraq than in any American war in the last century occasions far less grief and dismay than pleasure and satisfaction over the mortuary evidence that we have reached “a historic moment” in gender equality.³³ The Blue media seem to take it as a kind of social accomplishment that an unprecedented number of “female American troops in Iraq...[have been] killed by enemy fire and buried as heroes in Arlington National Cemetery.”³⁴ So determined are the feminist Blue media to see progress in the female military role in Iraq, that they apparently see “women gain[ing] ground” even when that ground is the soil shoveled over female soldiers’ coffins.³⁵

Blue feminist commentators have particularly celebrated—even exulted in—the battlefield death of 23-year-old supply clerk Lori Piestewa, the first Native American woman ever to die in foreign combat. Killed in the same military action in which Jessica Lynch was taken captive, this economically struggling single mother of two young children has been the focal point of numerous laudatory media reports about her as an exemplary “Hopí warrior.” She has had a mountain peak in Arizona re-named for her and now holds

a place in the women's military memorial at Arlington.³⁶ But for the progressive Blue media, "the best way to honor [Piestewa] would be to remove the prohibition on women in combat."³⁷ Never mind that the death of Piestewa itself resulted from the previous Clinton-era success of feminist ideologues crusading for the removal of restrictions on combat involvement of female soldiers. Blue America apparently does not mind that Piestewa never herself asked for exposure to battlefield danger that would imperil her life. Nor does it bother Blue America that putting women into front-line combat roles cruelly contradicts the pacific Hopi traditions in which Piestewa was reared. And Blue America seems utterly blind to the plight of Piestewa's two young children, left now with no parent to care for them.

But while Blue America seizes upon Piestewa's tragic death as a wonderful opportunity to press for policies drawing young mothers more deeply into deadly combat, Red America laments Piestewa's passing and worries deeply about the difficult circumstances her children will face. Consequently, while Blue America applauds mothers killed in combat as gender revolutionaries, Red America calls for renewed protection of these women in their traditional maternal roles. Historian Allan Carlson thus spoke for the deepest feelings of Red America when he responded to Piestewa's death by decrying the policies that put her in harm's way: "Healthy, responsible nations do not send the mothers of small children to or near the front lines—that violates the most basic human instincts."³⁸ Another voice for Red America, conservative columnist Linda Chavez marveled at the social blindness of Blue Americans who could not see the special tragedy of a single mother such as Piestewa: "As tragic as the death of a father is in a young child's life, it simply can't compare to the loss of a mother."³⁹

What Chavez—and other Red Americans like her—cannot quite grasp is that when Blue ideologues celebrate rather than mourn the battlefield death of military mothers such as Piestewa, it is precisely because they despise motherhood, precisely because they despise the traditional family. It is motherhood and all the other traditional family roles assigned to women that Blue ideologues most want to kill. So when single mothers die in battle, these ideologues hope above all that traditional family roles are perishing with them. So while Red America fervently wages a war against terrorism in order to defend motherhood and family, the ideologues of Blue America reserve their fervor for those aspects of the war that can be turned against motherhood and family.

Of course, Blue feminists understand that not all of the American women they want to coax, persuade, or push into non-family social roles will need to face battlefield danger. But advancing the Blue feminist project for re-making American society does require putting ever more women into the unmarried social status shared by Lynch and Piestewa. For it is deep hostility to wedlock and the complementary social roles that have traditionally defined it that explains much of the Blue media's enthusiasm for female soldiers, very few of whom are married and none of whom are dependent upon husbands for economic support. As one of the more candid authorities in Women's Studies, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese well understands the anti-marital dynamics of Blue feminist psychology. "If truth be told," Fox-Genovese has written, "...feminists do not much like marriage. Indeed, many feminists would credit marriage with a primary responsibility for women's centuries-long subordination to men.... Second-wave feminists ...sought not marriage's reform but...its abolition."⁴⁰

But the Blue feminist project of undermining wedlock does not in itself make women economically independent. Particularly if they become mothers, unmarried women need income and support from some surrogate. As economist Jennifer Roback Morse has pointed out, the "single mother" is almost always a myth: "Some third party is always in the background, helping the mother who is unconnected to the father of her child.... The person who appears to be raising a child all by herself has substituted for the other parent some combination of market-provided child care, employment income, and government assistance."⁴¹ It is, of course, the militarized State that looms large as a surrogate parent in the lives of the tens of thousands of single mothers now in the military, relying on the armed forces for a paycheck and on the growing number of feminist-lauded military day-care centers for child care.⁴²

But the fatherless families of single military mothers are actually only one manifestation of "the mother-state-child family" that Blue ideologues would like to multiply in their social engineering of the country. True, sociologists typically have in view welfare-dependent mothers when they speak of "the mother-state-child family."⁴³ But the family of the single military mother answers well to the same label. And even single mothers who receive benefits neither from a welfare office or a military paymaster are often noticeably dependent upon the State to subsidize the care of their young children, to supervise the after-school activities of their older children, to collect child support from former lovers or husbands, and to

advance their careers through Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity programs. Is it any wonder that Blue America is distinctively supportive of Big Government?⁴⁴

Blue America's partisan support for Big Government lends piquant irony to Blue criticisms of the Bush Administration for advancing a costly "neo-imperialism" that benefits profiteering corporations and jeopardizes human rights by sending the military abroad. For with every year it becomes clearer that Blue ideologues are building their own fiefdoms here at home, fiefdoms that grow rich and powerful by first attacking the "little platoons" of the family and then supplying palliative services to the rootless and legally disenfranchised remnants of those platoons.

Except when focusing on the female soldiers involved in its prosecution, Blue ideologues have voiced numerous fears about the negative domestic and international consequences of the war against terrorism. The Blue media are greatly worried about "the soaring costs of the war in Iraq" and how those costs will affect the American economy.⁴⁵ Some of these ideologues have expressed suspicions that as a result of the war in Iraq, "American corporations will colonize Iraq, and they'll make billions of dollars in the process."⁴⁶ These Blue activists have discerned dark ulterior motives behind the official justifications for foreign campaigns against terrorism. They see the Bush Administration using the military to establish an Iraqi regime that will "guarantee unfettered American access and influence," a puppet regime under which "the United States will unilaterally assume responsibility for decisions that will determine the future course of Iraq's oil and gas industries."⁴⁷ Some Blue radicals even darkly suggest that the real reason for the invasion of Afghanistan was that of installing a puppet regime that would permit U.S. interests to build an oil pipeline through the country.⁴⁸

Mainstream Blue media commentators have, it is true, generally not endorsed the more sweeping and ideological accusations allegations of corporate imperialism. But the captains of the Blue media have zealously pressed charges of wartime profiteering leveled against the Halliburton Corporation (former employer of the Vice President, Dick Cheney), so fostering the impression that America is now "fighting Halliburton's War."⁴⁹ What is more, the mainstream Blue media have frequently opened their forums to radicals characterizing the war against terrorism as merely a cover for neo-imperialism and warning that such imperialism will bring upon America "the sorrows of Empire," including "a state of perpetual war" and "a loss of democracy and constitutional rights."⁵⁰ Far from protecting America, the war in Iraq serves—in the view of Blue critics—"only [to] create more terrorists and a more dangerous world for our children."⁵¹ These Blue critics decry the way abusive military guards have violated the rights of foreign prisoners and the way overzealous national security agents fighting the war against terrorism here at home have violated the rights of American citizens, especially Arab Americans.⁵²

With ceaseless vigilance, Blue ideologues point out the high costs and political liabilities of a Big Government that tries to *defend* American families by sending (male) soldiers to fight terrorism abroad or empowers security agents to guard against terrorist strikes at home. But these same Blue ideologues turn blind and mute when Big Government tries to *weaken* American families by paying a huge army of bureaucrats, lawyers, judges, and therapists to undermine traditional family ties and to supplant them with new politically engineered ties. Blue ideologues recognize "the sorrows of empire" when the American military effects the hegemony of American interests over foreign interests. They somehow cannot see the sorrows of empire when an American court or bureaucracy establishes an ideological fiefdom in which a partisan coterie takes unjust advantage of—and often dismembers—ordinary families.

Thus Blue commentators complaining about the high costs to the taxpayer of putting men in Iraq will never complain about the rapidly escalating public costs of putting children in day care, of putting state officers on staff to collect child support, of putting lawyers on retainer to speak on behalf of children involved in divorce proceedings, or of putting more corrections officers into youth correction centers. These Blue commentators will indeed only rarely acknowledge the way in which casual divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing has driven up the public costs of providing Americans with welfare benefits, medical and psychological care, remedial education, drug therapy, and protection from crime.⁵³ Blue ideologues may allege that America's foreign wars serve to set up puppet foreign regimes serving the interests of profiteering corporations; they will rarely acknowledge that in the endless ideological war against the family, single mothers have become mere puppets for "those who ha[ve] made an industry of 'helping them.'"⁵⁴ (Just how much they had become puppets of Blue government bureaucrats came as something of a shock to some single welfare mothers when welfare reform suddenly forced them into employment. They suddenly discovered that they were as subject to the orders of government masters as

female soldiers were subject to orders of military commanders. Poor single mothers who felt their children were “too young” to leave in day care while they went to work found that they were in much the same situation as single military mothers on orders to leave for Iraq.⁵⁵ But Blue commentators who never cared much about the disappearance of fathers have not worried overmuch about taking welfare mothers away from their children: Blue pundits have pronounced welfare reform “largely successful,” while still complaining about the low pay in the jobs welfare mothers typically must take and calling for more public funding for pre-employment training, for housing and medical care, and—above all—for day care.⁵⁶ A renewed appreciation for wedlock and for maternal child care has never been part of the Blue critique of welfare reform.)

The Blue media often complain that conservative Republicans are “playing politics” with the War on Terror as they engage in “scare-mongering” that wins them votes.⁵⁷ The Blue media never suggest that liberal Democrats are finding political advantage in excusing the divorces and non-marital childbirths and full-time maternal employment that make women more feminist (and therefore more Blue).⁵⁸ Nor do the Blue media criticize politicians whose political fortunes rise when policies encourage young people to cut their ties to family and to “shift allegiance to increasingly to themselves and to the State.”⁵⁹ The Blue media frequently air suspicions about contracts granted to corporations linked to conservative Republicans. The Blue media remain mute about the cozy ties between feminist politicians and the public bureaucracies that have become “almost a woman’s preserve.”⁶⁰

Blue editorialists inveigh against Bush Administration policies that helped foster the abuse of Afghan and Iraqi prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.⁶¹ But they never acknowledge that policies that foster divorce and illegitimacy also foster the abuse of American children in Detroit, Philadelphia, and Atlanta.⁶² Nor do the Blue intelligentsia acknowledge that the programs they favor for preventing child abuse—namely, educational programs in the schools—yield no demonstrable benefits and yet “overload children with suspicion and fear” in ways that “adversely affect [them] in their comfort with nonsexual contact between themselves and their parents.”⁶³ The Blue media blame Bush’s invasion of Iraq for “chaos in the streets” of Baghdad. The Blue media rarely acknowledge that the root cause of “the wave of black inner-city male violence that began building during the 1960s and 1970s...was the decline of stable two-parent families.”⁶⁴

Blue guardians of the First Amendment complain that the Bush Administration has tried to censor and manipulate media coverage of the war against terrorism, thus “prevent[ing] the American people from seeing the truth about what’s happening.”⁶⁵ No Blue watchdogs worry about the way a left-leaning professoriate enforces a “family taboo” that prevents young students from even considering the possibility that “the nuclear family proves the best unit of social well-being.”⁶⁶

In the Bush Administration’s handling of Afghan and Iraqi prisoners, Blue commentators see policies “allowing the war on terrorism to trump basic rights” and court proceedings that “d[o]n’t look anything like justice” and instead suggest “kangaroo courts.” Some Blue media writers have even described “a legal black hole” in proceedings that pronounce prisoners “‘guilty’ without any trial.” Even in its legal proceedings involving American citizens, Blue critics accuse the Bush Administration of “open hostility to protecting civil liberties” and of committing “egregious governmental abuses of power, all in the name of combating terrorism.”⁶⁷ But Americans may well wonder just where all these Blue defenders of legal rights have been the last three decades when anti-family politicians, judges, and bureaucrats have stripped wives and husbands, mothers and fathers of many fundamental legal protections.

True, on rare occasions, a Blue commentator has protested against the way permissive no-fault divorce statutes have impoverished betrayed wives denied the economic settlement and alimony that traditional divorce law would have given them.⁶⁸ But where are the Blue guardians of legal rights who have ever decried the way new divorce laws have scripted a scenario in which “a blameless father ... emerges from divorce courts with all the financial responsibilities of marriage and none of its emotional or economic rewards,” as he is “saddled with children whom he never sees and who may even have been turned against him”?⁶⁹ Where are the Blue defenders of civil rights ready to denounce the legally abusive bureaucracy collecting child support (almost exclusively from non-custodial fathers, many of whom did not want to lose wife or children and did nothing to violate their wedding vows)? Judging from their thundering silence on the issue, Americans can only assume that Blue legal theorists see nothing wrong with a bureaucracy that treats divorced fathers as “quasi-criminals,” monitors their employment through computerized system allowing “the government [to] keep closer tabs on where *everyone* is working,” and

adopts a presumption of guilt under which thousands of innocent men are “erroneously ensnared by computer error,” and then are forced to prove their innocence.⁷⁰

The vocal Blue champions of the legal rights of Afghans and Iraqis imprisoned in the war against terrorism have likewise been utterly silent about the judicial-bureaucratic apparatus that has forced tens of thousands of blameless parents into costly court proceedings to prove their innocence and regain custody of their children. For all of their solicitude for imprisoned Afghans and Iraqis and for all their outrage over the legal defects in the way they have been handled, Blue commentators seem remarkably insouciant about a national child-abuse system that “seems determined to err on the side of assuming [parental] guilt” and that consequently devastates “increasing numbers of families falsely accused of abuse.” The same Blue media who have roundly denounced the erosion of civil rights in the war against terrorism have said almost nothing about the emergence of a child-protection system marred by “a bias toward over-reporting and over-labeling child abuse and neglect” and by legal proceedings conducted entirely without “the legal system’s traditional truth-finding tools-witness confrontation, cross examination, restrictions on hearsay and ‘expert’ opinion.”⁷¹ Apparently, Blue ideologues care much more about Afghans captured in Kandahar or Iraqis taken in Mosul than about parents falsely accused of abuse in Denver or Indianapolis.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, along the nation’s borders and in its courtrooms, the war against terrorism will go on. Unfortunately, it promises to last a long time and to make demands upon all Americans. But let no one suppose that in their objectives or their hopes, the ordinary family-loving citizens of Red America will be fighting the same war as the ideologues of the Blue confederacy.

Endnotes

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- 2 Tiahart qtd. in Norma D. Dicks, “‘I Think We Can Do This,’” *Wall Street Journal* 3 October 2003: A18.
- 3 John Leo, “Not much room for good news in media’s view of Iraq,” *The Grand Rapids Press*, 4 Oct. 2003: A18.
- 4 Rod Blum, “Double Take: Is Bush Administration’s course in Iraq correct? Much good being done, but media ignores it,” *Telegraph-Herald* 5 October 2003: A17.
- 5 Cf. Howard Kurtz, “War in Iraq opens a rift on the right,” *Washington Post* 25 March 2003: C8; John Donnelly, “Bush Shifts on Nation-Building,” *Boston Globe* 26 June 2002: A1.
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