

## **Commentary: a political tango backwards and in high heels**

An acquaintance of mine reminded me that in spite of the protestations to the contrary, there are still messages to our daughters that we must be diligent to counter. On the Lexington Center for parents and youth Yahoo group, questions may at times tangential to parenting but often prompt discussions that hit the center. This one for me was right on the target in light of our current political situation and the possible exit of the first real woman contender for president.

A parent asked for recommendations for family-friendly movies. At this stage father of older girls added words of caution regarding hidden negative messages for young women: the Muppets, Miss Piggy's raison d'être is the pursuit of an unrequited love for someone who rejects her for her body type and her forceful character; the Little Mermaid sacrifices in an elemental part of her identity for a man and love: Beauty and the Beast is about an abusive relationship and imprisonment in which the message is that if you stick with the guy he will turn from beast into handsome prince.

As a parent of a "coloring outside of the lines" kind of nine-year-old girl, I was grateful for his experience perspective to be honest, she has never been interested in these movies or in these characters, but she was very interested in who I was voting for in the primary.

There was a great deal of discussion in our house; I am the only registered voter, therefore, my vote is something of a collective rather than an individual decision. She wanted me to vote for a woman. There are many younger women out there who say that gender issues did not matter anymore, sexism is part of my generation and in the past. I hope that this is true, but I feel there is still some road to hoe.

There's some that say: "a woman yes, but not this woman", "we don't like her husband or her marriage choices" or "she's part of the problem not part of the solution".

In light of her valedictorian tone in the recent debate and recent polls it may be time to reflect on why she may not become our first woman president. We did not hear the pundits discuss Obama's or McCain's hair, or their tears or their lack of tears. Or indeed did they address them by their first names, or call them Mr. McCain rather than Sen. McCain. Finally a few words about that which is in front of Sen. Clinton: much was made of her clothes in the cleavage exposure.

Every day we are bombarded by images of women who are picked apart on the covers of gossip magazines and the checkout aisles, castigated for two being too fat or recently for being stick thin. The images as Britney Spears and leg restraints is just a recent manifestation of her mental breakdown, one cannot imagine that the filleting she received for her zaftig body image at last year's Grammys cannot have been helpful.

We voted for Hillary Clinton when she showed signs of weakness in New Hampshire and cried and reject her when she shows signs of strength. I'm sure we will see other women candidates for president in the future, but we as parents of daughters should keep a keen eye on the hidden messages and drag them into the light.

My daughter asked me if Hillary Clinton was as qualified as the other candidates; why not vote for her because she is a woman? I did not have a good answer.

As I put in a black and white DVD for my daughter, I reflect that she only may be nine but she already knows what we all knew about Ginger Rogers: she did everything Fred Astaire did but backwards and in high heels.