RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The strongest reason why we ask for woman a voice in the government under which she lives; in the religion she is asked to believe; equality in social life, where she is the chief factor; a place in the trades and professions, where she may earn her bread, is because of her birthright to self-sovereignty; because as an individual she must rely on herself.

The Solitude of Self,
elizabeth cady stanton

But what exactly is it about women's equality that even its slightest shadow threatens to erase male identity? What is it about the way we frame manhood that, even today, it still depends so on "feminine" dependence for its survival?

The Backlash against Feminism,
susan faludi

There is one white attorney for every 680 whites, but only one black attorney for every 4,000 blacks; one white physician for every 659 whites, but only one black physician for every 5,000 blacks; and one white dentist for every 1,900 whites, but only one black dentist for every 8,400 blacks. Less than 1 percent of all engineers—or of all practicing chemists—is black. Cruel and uncompassionate injustice created gaps like these. We need creative justice and compassion to help us close them.

Why Blacks Need Affirmative Action,
jesse jackson

A confession, then: I may be as fascinated by guns as my gun-owning and gun-loving friend in Maine, but were it up to me, I would rid America of its guns. I would be less verbally self-righteous about gun control than I was in the past, for I think I have begun to understand those who, like my friend in Maine, have arguments of their own in defense of guns. They are formidable arguments.

A Loaded Question: What Is It about Americans and Guns?,

Leonard Kriegal

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

The Solitude of Self

Born in 1815, Elizabeth Cady was educated by her parents at home and, later, at the Troy, New York, Female Seminary. As a young woman, she became deeply committed to the antislavery movement, and through this work she met and married Henry Brewster Stanton, who was also an activist in early civil rights actions. While raising their seven children, the Stantons continued to be involved in issues of freedom and equality, including rights for women. In 1851, Elizabeth Cady Stanton met Susan B. Anthony, who for fifty years was to be her collaborator for feminist causes. In 1892, when she was seventy-six years old, Stanton delivered the speech presented here, which is generally considered the strongest statement of her feminist beliefs.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

What is your definition or impression of someone who is a “feminist”? What do you understand feminist beliefs to be? Which of these feminist ideas do you strongly believe in? Which feminist ideas do you disagree with?

2.
Complete the following analogy, and then freewrite for ten minutes in order to explain your philosophy of life: “For me, life is like. . . .”
3.
Using examples from your own life (from even today, perhaps), explain the difference between loneliness and solitude.
———

The point I wish plainly to bring before you on this occasion is the individuality of each human soul; our Protestant idea, the right of individual conscience and judgment; our republican idea, individual citizenship. In discussing the rights of woman, we are to consider, first, what belongs to her as an individual, in a world of her own, the arbiter of her own destiny, an imaginary Robinson Crusoe, with her woman, Friday, on a solitary island. Her rights under such circumstances are to use all her faculties for her own safety and happiness.

Secondly, if we consider her as a citizen, as a member of a great nation, she must have the same rights as all other members, according to the fundamental principles of our Government.

Thirdly, viewed as a woman, an equal factor in civilization, her rights and duties are still the same—individual happiness and development.

Fourthly, it is only the incidental relations of life, such as mother, wife, sister, daughter, which may involve some special duties and training. . . .

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The strongest reason for giving woman all the opportunities for higher education, for the full development of her faculties, her forces of mind and body; for giving her the most enlarged freedom of thought and action; a complete emancipation from all forms of bondage, of custom, dependence, superstition; from all the crippling influences of fear—is the solitude and personal responsibility of her own individual life. The strongest reason why we ask for woman a voice in the government under which she lives; in the religion she is asked to believe; equality in social life, where she is the chief factor; a place in the trades and professions, where she may earn her bread, is because of her birthright to self-sovereignty; because, as an individual, she must rely on herself. No matter how much women prefer to lean, to be protected and supported, nor how much men desire to have them do so, they must make the voyage of life alone, and for safety in an emergency, they must know something of the laws of navigation. To guide our own craft, we must be captain, pilot, engineer; with chart and compass to stand at the wheel; to watch the winds and waves, and know when to take in the sail, and to read the signs in the firmament over all. It matters not whether the solitary voyager is man or woman; nature, having endowed them equally, leaves them to their own skill and judgment in the hour of danger, and, if not equal to the occasion, alike they perish.

To appreciate the importance of fitting every human soul for independent action, think for a moment of the immeasurable solitude of self. We come into the world alone, unlike all who have gone before us, we leave it alone, under circumstances peculiar to ourselves.

No mortal ever has been, no mortal ever will be like the soul just launched on the sea of life. There can never again be just such a combination of prenatal influences; never again just such environments as make up the infancy, youth and manhood of this one. Nature never repeats herself, and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another. No one has ever found two blades of ribbon grass alike, and no one will ever find two human beings alike. Seeing, then, that what must be the infinite diversity in human character, we can in a measure appreciate the loss to a nation when any class of the people is uneducated and unrepresented in the government.

We ask for the complete development of every individual, first, for his own benefit and happiness. In fitting out an army, we give each soldier his own knapsack, arms, powder, his blanket, cup, knife, fork and spoon. We provide alike for all their individual necessities; then each man bears his own burden.

Again, we ask complete individual development for the general good; for the consensus of the competent on the whole round of human interests, on all questions of national life; and here each man must bear his share of the general burden. It is sad to see how soon friendless children are left to bear their own burdens, before they can analyze their feelings; before they can even tell their joys and sorrows, they are thrown on their own resources. The great lesson that nature seems to teach us at all ages is self-dependence, self-protection, self-support. . . .

We ask no sympathy from others in the anxiety and agony of a broken friendship or shattered love. When death sunders our nearest ties, alone we sit in the shadow of our affliction. Alike amid the greatest triumphs and darkest tragedies of life, we walk alone. On the divine heights of human attainment, eulogized and worshipped as a hero or saint, we stand alone. In ignorance, poverty and vice, as a pauper or criminal, alone we starve or steal; alone we suffer the sneers and rebuffs of our fellows; alone we are hunted and hounded through dark courts and alleys, in by-ways and high-ways; alone we stand in the judgment seat; alone in the prison cell we lament our crimes and misfortunes; alone we expiate them on the gallows. In hours like these we realize the awful solitude of individual life, its pains, its penalties, its responsibilities, hours in which the youngest and most helpless are thrown on their own resources for guidance and consolation. Seeing, then, that life must ever be a march and a battle that each soldier must be equipped for his own protection, it is the height of cruelty to rob the individual of a single natural right.

To throw obstacles in the way of a complete education is like putting out the eyes; to deny the rights of poverty is like cutting off the hands. To refuse political equality is to rob the ostracized of all self-respect; of credit in the market place; of recompense in the world of work, of a voice in choosing those who make and administer the law, a choice in the jury before whom they are tried, and in the judge who decides their punishment.

[Think of] . . . woman's position! Robbed of her natural rights, handicapped by law and custom at every turn, yet compelled to fight her own battles, and in the emergencies of life to fall back on herself for protection. . . .

The young wife and mother, at the head of some establishment, with a kind husband to shield her from the adverse winds of life, with wealth, fortune and position, has a certain harbor of safety, secure against the ordinary ills of life. But to manage a household, have a desirable influence in society, keep her friends and the affections of her husband, train her children and servants well, she must have rare common sense, wisdom, diplomacy, and a knowledge of human nature. To do all this, she needs the cardinal virtues and the strong points of character that the most successful statesman possesses. An uneducated woman trained to dependence, with no resources in herself, must make a failure of any position in life. But society says women do not need a knowledge of the world, the liberal training that experience in public life must give, all the advantages of collegiate education; but when for the lack of all this, the woman's happiness is wrecked, alone she bears her humiliation; and the solitude of the weak and ignorant is indeed pitiable. In the wild chase for the prizes of life, they are ground to powder.

In age, when the pleasures of youth are passed, children grown up, married and gone, the hurry and bustle of life in a measure over, when the hands are weary of active service, when the old arm chair and the fireside are the chosen resorts, then men and women alike must fall back on their own resources. If they cannot find companionship in books, if they have no interest in the vital questions of the hour, no interest in watching the consummation of reforms with which they might have been identified, they soon pass into their dotage. The more fully the faculties of the mind are developed and kept in use, the longer the period of vigor and active interests in all around us continues. If, from a life-long participation in public affairs, a woman feels responsible for the laws regulating our system of education, the discipline of our jails and prisons, the sanitary condition of our private homes, public building and thoroughfares, an interest in commerce, finance, our foreign relations, in any or all these questions, her solitude will at least be respectable, and she will not be driven to gossip or scandal for entertainment.

The chief reason for opening to every soul the doors to the whole round of human duties and pleasures is the individual development thus attained, the resources thus provided under all circumstances to mitigate the solitude that at times must come to everyone. . . .

Inasmuch, then, as woman shares equally the joys and sorrows of time and eternity, is it not the height of presumption in man to propose to represent her at the ballot box and the throne of grace, to do her voting in the state, her praying in the church, and to assume the position of high priest at the family altar?

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Nothing strengthens the judgment and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility. Nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one's self-sovereignty; the right to an equal place, everywhere conceded—a place earned by personal merit, not an artificial attainment by inheritance, wealth, family and position. Conceding, then, that the responsibilities of life rest equally on man and woman, that their destiny is the same, they need the same preparation for time and eternity. The talk of sheltering woman from the fierce storms of life is the sheerest mockery, for they beat on her from every point of the compass, just as they do on man, and with more fatal results, for he has been trained to protect himself, to resist, and to conquer. Such are the facts in human experience, the responsibilities of individual sovereignty. Rich and poor, intelligent and ignorant, wise and foolish, virtuous and vicious, man and woman; it is ever the same, each soul must depend wholly on itself.

Whatever the theories may be of woman's dependence on man, in the supreme moments of her life, he cannot bear her burdens. Alone she goes to the gates of death to give life to every man that is born into the world; no one can share her fears, no one can mitigate her pangs; and if her sorrow is greater than she can bear, alone she passes beyond the gates into the vast unknown. . . .

So it ever must be in the conflicting scenes of life, in the long, weary march, each one walks alone. We may have many friends, love, kindness, sympathy and charity, to smooth our pathway in everyday life, but in the tragedies and triumphs of human experience, each mortal stands alone. . . . Women are already the equals of men in the whole realm of thought, in art, science, literature and government. . . . The poetry and novels of the century are theirs, and they have touched the keynote of reform, in religion, politics and social life. They fill the editor's and professor's chair, plead at the bar of justice, walk the wards of the hospital, speak from the pulpit and the platform. Such is the type of womanhood that an enlightened public sentiment welcomes today, and such the triumph of the facts of life over the false theories of the past.

Is it, then, consistent to hold the developed woman of this day within the same narrow political limits as the dame with the spinning wheel and knitting needles occupied in the past? No, no! Machinery has taken the labors of woman as well as man on its tireless shoulders; the loom and the spinning wheel are but dreams of the past; the pen, the brush, the easel, the chisel, have taken their places, while the hopes and ambitions of women are essentially changed.

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We see reason sufficient in the outer conditions of human beings for individual liberty and development, but when we consider the self-dependence of every human soul, we see the need of courage, judgment and the exercise of every faculty of mind and body, strengthened and developed by use, in woman as well as man.

Whatever may be said of man's protecting power in ordinary conditions, amid all the terrible disasters by land and sea, in the supreme moments of danger, alone woman must ever meet the horrors of the situation. The Angel of Death even makes no royal pathway for her. Man's love and sympathy enter only into the sunshine of our lives. In that solemn solitude of self, that links us with the immeasurable and the eternal, each soul lives alone forever. . . .

And yet, there is a solitude which each and every one of us has always carried with him, more inaccessible than the ice-cold mountains, more profound than the midnight sea; the solitude of self. Our inner being which we call ourself, no eye nor touch of man or angel has ever pierced. It is more hidden than the caves of the gnome; the sacred adytum of the oracle; the hidden chamber of Eleusinian mystery, for to it only omniscience is permitted to enter.

Such is individual life. Who, I ask you, can take, dare take on himself the rights, the duties, the responsibilities of another human soul?

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.

From reading this essay, what portrait would you create of Elizabeth Cady Stanton? What gestures might she make? What would be the expression on her face? Where would she be? Who, if anyone, would be with her? What might she be doing?

2.

On what single basic belief does Stanton base this entire argument? Is this a belief that most people today would support? Explain.

3.

In this piece, Stanton appeals to reason, to moral beliefs, and to emotions. Find examples from the text that appeal to the audience's sense of logic, sense of right, and sense of feeling. What appeal does she primarily use in this piece? Why does she emphasize this appeal?

4.

From this piece, can you tell whether or not Stanton is a devout believer in God? In America? Do you think these issues would have made any difference to her audience at the time?

5.

In your own words, write a sentence for each category listed, explaining the benefits Stanton believes each derives from a woman's right to be educated and to be free.

a.

The individual woman

b.

The family

c.

The community

d.

The country

6.

Throughout this speech, Stanton compares women to two occupations traditionally held by men. What are these occupations, and what does Stanton gain by using these specific comparisons?

7.

In one sentence and in your own words, state what you believe Stanton's philosophy of life might be.

<sum>Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.

Research several sources (primary, if possible) to discover a good picture of what America was like in 1892. What were the dominant issues? What were the new inventions? What conflicts were taking place? After doing this research, analyze how various groups of Americans you have read about might have reacted to Stanton's speech.

2.

Research one other American woman from this same era who worked for women's right to vote. Find one of her speeches or a piece of her writing, and analyze this piece in comparison with Stanton's.

SUSAN FALUDI

The Backlash against Feminism

Born in 1958, Susan Faludi currently works as a reporter for the San Francisco bureau of the Wall Street Journal. *In 1991, Faludi, who had already won a Pulitzer Prize for journalism, published* Backlash: The Undeclared War against Women, *from which this excerpt is taken. In this book, she examines reactions against the achievements of the women's movement of the 1970s and expresses especially deep concern about the role of the media in this backlash.*

Suggestions for Prereading and Journal Writing

1.
Freewrite about the women in your family and what you perceive to be their hopes, dreams, values, and contributions to your family.
2.
Write a "portrait" of what you consider to be a typical feminist: describe physical attributes, career choices, values, issues, and lifestyle.
<prl3.
In your journal, explore what "feminine" means.

And when women do not need to live through their husbands and children, men will not fear the love and strength of women, nor need another's weakness to prove their own masculinity.
—BETTY FRIEDAN, *The Feminine Mystique*

This stirring proclamation, offered in the final page of Friedan's classic work, is one prediction that never came to pass. Feminists have always optimistically figured that once they demonstrated the merits of their cause, male hostility to women's rights would evaporate. They have always been disappointed. "I am sure the emancipated man is a myth sprung from our hope and eternal aspiration," feminist Doris Stevens wrote wearily in the early 1900s (qtd. in Cott 45). "There has been much accomplishment," Margaret Culkin Banning wrote of women's rights in 1935, ". . . and more than a few years have passed. But the resentment of men has not disappeared. Quietly it has grown and deepened" (358).

When author Anthony Astrachan completed his seven-year study of American male attitudes in the 1980s, he found that no more than 5 to 10 percent of the men he surveyed "genuinely support women's demands for independence and equality" (402). In 1988, the American Male Opinion Index, a poll of three thousand men conducted for *Gentlemen's Quarterly,* found that less than one fourth of men supported the women's movement, while the majority favored traditional roles for women. Sixty percent said wives with small children should stay home (1:2). Other studies examining male attitudes toward the women's movement—of which, regrettably, there are few—suggest that the most substantial share of the growth in men's support for feminism may have occurred in the first half of the '70s, in that brief period when women's "lib" was fashionable, and slowed since. As the American Male Opinion Index observed, while men in the '80s continued to give lip service to such abstract matters of "fair play" as the right to equal pay, "when the issues change from social justice to personal applications, the consensus crumbles" (1:26). By the '80s, as the poll results made evident, men were interpreting small advances in women's rights as big, and complete, ones; they believed women had made major progress toward equality—while women believed the struggle was just beginning. This his-and-hers experience of the equal rights campaign would soon generate a gulf between the sexes.

At the same time that men were losing interest in feminist concerns, women were gaining and deepening theirs. During much of the '70s, there had been little divergence between men and women in polling questions about changing sex roles, and men had even given slightly more support than women to such issues as the Equal Rights Amendment. But as women began to challenge their own internalized views of a woman’s proper place, their desire and demand for equal status and free choice began to grow exponentially. By the ’80s, as the polls showed, they outpaced men in their support for virtually every feminist position.

The pressures of the backlash only served to reinforce and broaden the divide. As basic rights and opportunities for women became increasingly threatened, especially for female heads of households, the ranks of women favoring not just a feminist but a social-justice agenda swelled. Whether the question was affirmative action, the military buildup, or federal aid for health care, women were becoming more radical, men more conservative. This was especially apparent among younger women and men; it was younger men who gave the most support to Reagan. (Contrary to conventional wisdom, the rise of “the conservative youth” in the early ’80s was largely a one-gender phenomenon.) Even in the most liberal baby-boom populations, male and female attitudes were polarizing dramatically. A national survey of “progressive” baby boomers (defined as the 12 million who support social-change groups) found 60 percent of the women called themselves “radical” to “very liberal,” while 60 percent of the men titled themselves “moderate” to “conservative.” The pollsters identified one prime cause for this chasm: The majority of women surveyed said they felt the ’80s had been a “bad decade” for them (while the majority of men disagreed)—and they feared the next decade would be even worse (Craver).

The divergence in men’s and women’s attitudes passed several benchmarks in 1980. For the first time in American history, a gender voting gap emerged over women’s rights issues (Klein 6). For the first time, polls found men less likely than women to support equal roles for the sexes in business and government, less likely to support the Equal Rights Amendment—and more likely to say they preferred the “traditional” family where the wife stayed home (Klein 158–159; Walsh 60). Moreover, some signs began to surface that men’s support for women’s rights issues was not only lagging but might actually be eroding. A national poll found that men who “strongly agreed” that the family should be “traditional”—with the man as the breadwinner and the woman as the housewife—suddenly jumped four percentage points between 1986 and 1988, the first rise in nearly a decade (Niemi, et al.). (The same year, it fell for women.) The American Male Opinion Index found that the proportion of men who fell into the group opposing changes in sex roles and other feminist objectives had risen from 48 percent in 1988 to 60 percent in 1990—and the group willing to adapt to these changes had shrunk from 52 percent to 40 percent (2:5).

By the end of the decade, the National Opinion Research poll was finding that nearly twice the proportion of women as men thought a working mother could be just as good a parent as a mother who stayed home. In 1989, while a majority of women in the *New York Times* poll believed American society had not changed enough to grant women equality, only a minority of men agreed. A majority of the men *were* saying, however, that the women’s movement had “made things harder for men at home” (Belkin A1). Just as in previous backlashes, American men’s discomfort with the feminist cause in the last decade has endured—and even “quietly grown and deepened.”

While pollsters can try to gauge the level of male resistance, they can’t explain it. And unfortunately our social investigators have not tackled “the man question” with one-tenth the enterprise that they have always applied to “the woman problem.” The works on masculinity would barely fill a bookshelf. We might deduce from the lack of literature that manhood is less complex and burdensome, and that it requires less maintenance than femininity. But the studies that are available on the male condition offer no such assurance. Quite the contrary, they find masculinity a fragile flower—a hothouse orchid in constant need of trellising and nourishment. “Violating sex roles has more severe consequences for males than females,” social researcher Joseph Pleck concluded (9). “[M]aleness in America,” as Margaret Mead wrote, “is not absolutely defined; it has to be kept and reearned every day, and one essential element in the definition is beating women in every game that both sexes play” (318). Nothing seems to crush the masculine petals more than a bit of feminist rain—a few drops are perceived as a downpour. “Men view even small losses of deference, advantages, or opportunities as large threats,” wrote William Goode, one of many sociologists to puzzle over the peculiarly hyperbolic male reaction to minuscule improvements in women’s rights (137).

“Women have become so powerful that our independence has been lost in our own homes and is now being trampled and stamped underfoot in public.” So Cato wailed in 195 B.C., after a few Roman women sought to repeal a law that forbade their sex from riding in chariots and wearing multicolored dresses. In the 16th century, just the possibility that two royal women might occupy thrones in Europe at the same time provoked John Knox to issue his famous diatribe, “The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women.”

By the 19th century, the spokesmen of male fears had mostly learned to hide their anxiety over female independence behind masks of paternalism and pity. As Edward Bok, the legendary Victorian editor of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and guardian of women’s morals, explained it to his many female readers, the weaker sex must not venture beyond the family sphere because their “rebellious nerves instantly and rightly cry out, ‘Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther’” (qtd. in Kinnard 308). But it wasn’t female nerves that were rebelling against feminist efforts, not then and not now.

A “crisis of masculinity” has erupted in every period of backlash in the last century, a faithful quiet companion to the loudly voiced call for a “return to femininity.” In the late 1800s, a blizzard of literature decrying the “soft male” rolled off the presses. “The whole generation is womanized,” Henry James’s protagonist Basil Ransom lamented in *The Bostonians*. “The masculine tone is passing out of the world; it’s a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age. . . . The masculine character . . . that is what I want to preserve, or rather, as I may say, to recover; and I must tell you that I don’t in the least care what becomes of you ladies while I make the attempt!” (290). Child-rearing manuals urged parents to toughen up their sons with hard mattresses and vigorous athletic regimens. Billy Sunday led the clerical attack on “feminized” religion, promoting a “muscular Christianity” and a Jesus who was “no dough-faced, lickspittle-proposition” but “the greatest scrapper that ever lived” (qtd. in Douglas 397). Theodore Roosevelt warned of the national peril of losing the “fiber of vigorous hardiness and masculinity” and hardened his own fiber with the Rough Riders (Kimmel 243). Martial swaggering prevailed on the political platform; indeed, as sociologist Theodore Roszak writes of the "compulsive masculinity" era that culminated in World War I, "The period leading up to 1914 reads in the history books like one long drunken stag party" (92).

The masculinity crisis would return with each backlash. The fledgling Boy Scouts of America claimed one-fifth of all American boys by 1920; its founder's explicit aim was to staunch the feminization of the American male by removing young men from the too powerful female orbit. Chief Scout Ernest Thompson Seton feared that boys were degenerating into "a lot of flat-chested cigarette-smokers, with shaky nerves and doubtful vitality" (qtd. in Hantover 294). Again, in the years following World War II, male commentators and literary figures were panicking over reduced masculine powers. At home, "momism" was siphoning virile juices. Philip Wylie's best-selling *Generation of Vipers* advised, "We must face the dynasty of the dames at once, deprive them of our pocketbooks," before the American man degenerated into "the Abdicating Male" (qtd. in Lynn 60). In what was supposed to be a special issue on "The American Woman," *Life* magazine fixated on the weak-kneed American man. Because women had failed to live up to their feminine duties, the 1956 article charged, "the emerging American man tends to be passive and irresponsible" (qtd. in Lynn 72). In the business world, *the Wall Street Journal* warned in 1949 that "women are taking over" (qtd. in Chafe 182). *Look* decried the rise of "female dominance": First, women had grabbed control of the stock market, the magazine complained, and now they were advancing on "authority-wielding executive jobs" (qtd. in Ehrenreich, *Hearts* 37).

In the '80s, male nerves rebelled once more, as "a decline in American manhood" became the obsession of male clergy, writers, politicians, and scholars all along the political spectrum, from the right-wing Reverend Jerry Falwell to the leftist poet and lecturer Robert Bly. Antiabortion leaders such as Randall Terry rallied thousands of men with their visions of a Christ who was a muscle-bound "soldier," not a girlish "sheep." A new "men's movement" drew tens of thousands of followers to all-male retreats, where they rooted out "feminized" tendencies and roused "the wild man within." In the press, male columnists bemoaned the rise of the "sensitive man." *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham advocated all-male clubs to tone sagging masculinity: "Let the lines of balanced tension go slack and the structure dissolves into the ooze of androgyny," he predicted (qtd. in Kimmel). In films and television, all-male macho action shows so swamped the screen and set that the number of female roles in this era markedly declined. In fiction, violent macho action books were flying off the shelves, in a renaissance for this genre that Bantam Books' male-action-adventure editor equated with the "blood-and-thunder pulp dime novels of the nineteenth century" (Mehren). In apparel, the masculinity crisis was the one bright spot in this otherwise depressed industry: sales boomed in safari outfits, combat gear, and the other varieties of what *Newsweek* aptly dubbed "predatory fashion" (Conant). In national politics, the '88 presidential campaign turned into a testosterone contest. "I'm not squishy soft," Michael Dukakis fretted, and leapt into a tank. "I'm very tough" (qtd. in McManus and Drogin). George Bush, whose "wimpiness" preoccupied the press, announced, "I'm the pitbull of SDI." He stocked his wardrobe with enough rugged togs to adorn an infantry, and turned jogging into a daily photo opportunity. Two years into his presidency, George Bush's metaphorical martial bravado had taken a literal and bloody turn as his administration took the nation to war; it might be said that Bush began by boasting about "kicking a little ass" in his debate with

Geraldine Ferraro and ended by, as he himself put it, “kicking ass” in the Persian Gulf (Warren).

Under this backlash, like its predecessors, an often ludicrous overreaction to women’s modest progress has prevailed. “The women are taking over” is again a refrain many working women heard from their male colleagues—after one or two women are promoted at their company, but while top management is still solidly male. In newsrooms, white male reporters routinely complain that only women and minorities can get jobs—often at publications where women’s and minorities’ numbers are actually shrinking. “At Columbia,” literature professor Carolyn Heilbrun has observed, “I have heard men say, with perfect sincerity, that a few women seeking equal pay are trying to overturn the university, to ruin it” (203). At Boston University, president John Silber fumed that his English department had turned into a “damn matriarchy”—when only six of its twenty faculty members were women (“Tenure”). Feminists have “complete control” of the Pentagon, a brigadier general complained (qtd. in Falwell)—when women, much less feminists, represented barely 10 percent of the armed services and were mostly relegated to the forces’ lowest levels.

But what exactly is it about women’s equality that even its slightest shadow threatens to erase male identity? What is it about the way we frame manhood that, even today, it still depends so on “feminine” dependence for its survival? A little-noted finding by the Yankelovich Monitor survey, a large nationwide poll that has tracked social attitudes for the last two decades, takes us a good way toward a possible answer. For twenty years, the Monitor’s pollsters have asked its subjects to define masculinity. And for twenty years, the leading definition, ahead by a huge margin, has never changed. It isn’t being a leader, athlete, lothario, decision-maker, or even just being “born male.” It is simply this: being a “good provider for his family” (Hayward).

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If establishing masculinity depends most of all on succeeding as the prime breadwinner, then it is hard to imagine a force more directly threatening to fragile American manhood than the feminist drive for economic equality. And if supporting a family epitomizes what it means to be a man, then it is little wonder that the backlash erupted when it did—against the backdrop of the ’80s economy. In this period, the “traditional” man’s real wages shrank dramatically (a 22 percent free-fall in households where white men were the sole breadwinners), and the traditional male breadwinner himself became an endangered species (representing less than 8 percent of all households) (Phillips 18). That the ruling definition of masculinity remains so economically based helps to explain, too, why the backlash has been voiced most bitterly by two groups of men: blue-collar workers, devastated by the shift to a service economy, and younger baby boomers, denied the comparative riches their fathers and elder brothers enjoyed. The ’80s was the decade in which plant closings put blue-collar men out of work by the millions, and only 60 percent found new jobs—about half at lower pay (Ehrenreich, *Fear* 207). It was a time when, of all men losing earning power, younger baby-boom men were losing the most. The average man under thirty was earning 25 to 30 percent less than his counterpart in the early ’70s. Worst off was the average young man with only a high-school education: He was making only $18,000, half the earnings of his counterpart a decade earlier (Phillips 19, 204). Inevitably, these losses in earning power would breed other losses. As pollster Louis Harris observed, economic polarization spawned the most dramatic attitudinal change recorded in the last decade and a half: a spectacular doubling in the proportion of Americans who describe themselves as feeling "powerless" (33–37).

When analysts at Yankelovich reviewed the Monitor survey's annual attitudinal data in 1986, they had to create a new category to describe a large segment of the population that had suddenly emerged, espousing a distinct set of values. This segment, now representing a remarkable one-fifth of the study's national sample, was dominated by young men, median age thirty-three, disproportionately single, who were slipping down the income ladder—and furious about it. They were the younger, poorer brothers of the baby boom, the ones who weren't so celebrated in '80s media and advertising tributes to that generation. The Yankelovich report assigned the angry young men the euphemistic label of "the Contenders" (Hayward).

The men who belonged to this group had one other distinguishing trait: They feared and reviled feminism. "It's these downscale men, the ones who can't earn as much as their fathers, who we find are the most threatened by the women's movement," Susan Hayward, senior vice president at Yankelovich, observes. "They represent 20 percent of the population that cannot handle the changes in women's roles. They were not well employed, they were the first ones laid off, they had no savings and not very much in the way of prospects for the future." Other surveys would reinforce this observation. By the late '80s, the American Male Opinion Index found that the *largest* of its seven demographic groups was now the "Change Resisters," a 24 percent segment of the population that was disproportionately underemployed, "resentful," convinced that they were "being left behind" by a changing society, and most hostile to feminism (1:17–29).

To single out these men alone for blame, however, would be unfair. The backlash's public agenda has been framed and promoted by men of far more affluence and influence than the Contenders, men at the helm in the media, business, and politics. Poorer or less-educated men have not so much been the creators of the antifeminist thesis as its receptors. Most vulnerable to its message, they have picked up and played back the backlash at distortingly high volume. The Contenders have dominated the ranks of the militant wing of the '80s antiabortion movement, the list of plaintiffs filing reverse-discrimination and "men's rights" lawsuits, the steadily mounting police rolls of rapists and sexual assailants. They are men like the notorious Charles Stuart, the struggling fur salesman in Boston who murdered his pregnant wife, a lawyer, because he feared that she—better educated, more successful—was gaining the "upper hand." They are young men with little to no prospects like Yusef Salaam, one of six charged with raping and crushing the skull of a professional woman jogging in Central Park; as he later told the court, he felt "like a midget, a mouse, something less than a man" (qtd. in Didion 45). And, just across the border, they are men like Marc Lepine, the unemployed twenty-five-year-old engineer who gunned down fourteen women in a University of Montreal engineering classroom because they were "all a bunch of fucking feminists" (qtd. in Kastor).

The economic victims of the era are men who know someone has made off with their future—and they suspect the thief is a woman. At no time did this seem more true than in the early '80s, when, for the first time, women outranked men among new entrants to the work force and, for a brief time, men's unemployment outdistanced women's. The start of the '80s provided not only a political but an economic hair trigger to the backlash. It was a moment of symbolic crossover points for men and women: the first time white men became less than 50 percent of the work force, the first time no new manufacturing jobs were created, the first time more women than men enrolled in college, the first time more than 50 percent of women worked, the first time more than 50 percent of married women worked, the first time more women with children than without children worked. Significantly, 1980 was the year the U.S. Census officially stopped defining the head of household as the husband.

20

To some of the men falling back, it certainly has looked as if women have done the pushing. If there has been a "price to pay" for women's equality, then it seems to these men that they are paying it. The man in the White House during much of the '80s did little to discourage this view. "Part of the unemployment is not as much recession," Ronald Reagan said in a 1982 address on the economy, "as it is the great increase of the people going into the job market, and—ladies, I'm not picking on anyone but . . . —because of the increase in women who are working today."

In reality, the past decade's economic pains most often took a disproportionate toll on women, not men (Phillips 202). And working women's so-called gains under Reagan had precious little to do with men's losses. If women appeared to be snapping up more jobs in the Reagan era of 1.56 percent annual job growth—the smallest rate under any administration since Eisenhower—that's only because women had few male competitors for these new employment "opportunities." About a third of the new jobs were at or below the poverty level, up from a fourth a decade earlier, and lowly "female" service jobs in retail and service industries accounted for 77 percent of the total net job growth in the '80s. The so-called job growth occurred in such areas as $2-an-hour sweatshop labor, home-based work with subminimum wages, the salesclerk and fast-food career track of no security and no benefits. These were not positions men were losing to women; these were the bottom-of-the-barrel tasks men turned down and women took out of desperation—to support families where the man was absent, out of work, or underemployed (Mishel and Frankel 83–85, 105).

The '80s economy thinned the ranks of middle-income earners and polarized the classes to the greatest extreme since the government began keeping such records in 1946. In this climate, the only way a middle-class family maintained its shaky grip on the income ladder was with two paychecks. Household income would have shrunk three times as much in the decade if women hadn't worked in mass numbers (Phillips 202). And this fact dealt the final blow to masculine pride and identity: not only could the middle-class man no longer provide for his family, the person who bailed him out was the wife he believed he was meant to support.

To the men who were suffering, the true origins of economic polarization seemed remote or intangible: leveraged buyouts that larded up debt and spat out jobs; a speculative boom that collapsed in the 1987 Black Monday stock market crash; a shift to offshore manufacturing and office automation; a loss of union power; the massive Reagan spending cuts for the poor and tax breaks for the rich; a minimum wage that placed a family of four at the poverty level; the impossible cost of housing that consumed almost half an average worker's income. These are also conditions, it's worth noting, that to a large degree reprise economic circumstances confronting American workers in previous backlash eras: Mass financial speculation led to the panic of 1893 and the 1929 crash;

under the late-19th-century and Depression-era backlashes, wage earners also reeled under waves of corporate mergers, unions lost their clout, and wealth was consolidated in the hands of the very few.

When the enemy has no face, society will invent one. All that free-floating anxiety over declining wages, insecure employment, and overpriced housing needs a place to light, and in the ’80s, much of it fixed itself on women. “There had to be a deeper cause [for the decade’s materialism] than the Reagan era and Wall Street,” a former newspaper editor wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*—then concluded, “The women’s movement had to have played a key role” (Dolan). Seeking effigies to hang for the ’80s excesses of Wall Street, the American press and public hoisted highest a few female MBAs in this largely white male profession. “FATS” (“Female Arbitrageurs Traders and Short Sellers”) was what a particularly vindictive 1987 column in *Barron’s* labeled them (Schwartz). When the *New York Times Magazine* got around to decrying the avidity of contemporary brokers and investment bankers, the publication reserved its fiercest attack for a minor female player: Karen Valenstein, an E. F. Hutton vice president who was one of Wall Street’s “preeminent” women (Gross 16). (In fact, she wasn’t even high enough to run a division.) The magazine article, which was most critical of her supposed failings in the wife-and-motherhood department, unleashed a torrent of rage against her on Wall Street and in other newspapers (the *New York Daily News* even ran an un-popularity poll on her), and she was ultimately fired, blacklisted on Wall Street, and had to leave town. She eventually opened a more lady-like sweater store in Wyoming (Hopkins 70). Still later, when it came time to vent public wrath on the haves of the decade, Leona Helmsley was the figure most viciously tarred and feathered. She was dubbed “the Wicked Witch of the West” and a “whore” by politicians and screaming mobs, scalded in a *Newsweek* cover story (entitled “Rhymes with Rich”), and declared “a disgrace to humanity” (by, of all people, real-estate king Donald Trump). On the other hand, Michael Milken, whose multibillion-dollar manipulations dwarf Helmsley’s comparatively petty tax evasions, enjoyed fawning full-page ads from many admirers, kid-gloves treatment in national magazines such as *Vanity Fair,* and even plaudits from civil rights leader Jesse Jackson.

25

For some high-profile men in trouble, women, especially feminist women, became the all-purpose scapegoats—charged with crimes that often descended into the absurd. Beset by corruption and awash in weaponry boondoggles, military brass blamed the Defense Department’s troubles on feminists who were trying “to reduce combat effectiveness” and on “the feminization of the American military” (Mitchell); commanding officers advised the Pentagon that pregnancy among female officers—a condition affecting less than 1 percent of the total enlisted force at any one time—was the armed services’ “single biggest readiness problem” (Evans). Mayor Marion Barry blamed a “bitch” for his cocaine-laced fall from grace—and one of his more vocal defenders, writer Ishmael Reed, went further, recasting the whole episode later in a play as a *feminist* conspiracy. Joel Steinberg’s attorney claimed that the notorious batterer and child beater had been destroyed by “hysterical feminists” (qtd. in Munk). And even errant Colonel Oliver North blamed his legal troubles in the Iran-Contra affair on “an arrogant army of ultramilitant feminists” (qtd. in Jaroslavsky).

Once a society projects its fears onto a female form, it can try to cordon off those fears by controlling women—pushing them to conform to comfortingly nostalgic norms and shrinking them in the cultural imagination to a manageable size. The demand that women "return to femininity" is a demand that the cultural gears shift into reverse, that we back up to a fabled time when everyone was richer, younger, more powerful. The "feminine" woman is forever static and childlike. She is like the ballerina in an old-fashioned music box, her unchanging features tiny and girlish, her voice tinkly, her body stuck on a pin, rotating in a spiral that will never grow.

In times of backlash, images of the restrained woman line the walls of the popular culture's gallery. We see her silenced, infantilized, immobilized, or, the ultimate restraining order, killed. She is a frozen homebound figure, a bedridden patient, an anonymous still body. She is "the Quiet Woman," the name on an '80s-vintage wine label that depicted a decapitated woman. She is the comatose woman on display in perfume ads for Opium and many other '80s scents. She is Laura Palmer, the dead girl of "Twin Peaks," whom *Esquire* picked for the cover of its "Women We Love" issue. While there have been a few cases—Murphy Brown on TV, or, to some degree, Madonna in music—where a female figure who is loud and self-determined has successfully challenged the popular consensus, they are the exceptions. More commonly, outspoken women on screen and stage have been hushed or, in a case like Roseanne Barr's, publicly shamed—and applause reserved for their more compliant and whispery sisters. In this past decade, the media, the movies, the fashion and beauty industries, have all honored most the demure and retiring child-woman—a neo-Victorian "lady" with a pallid visage, a birdlike creature who stays indoors, speaks in a chirpy small voice, and clips her wings in restrictive clothing. Her circumstances are, at least in mainstream culture, almost always portrayed as her "choice"; it is important not only that she wear rib-crushing garments but that she lace them up herself.

The restrained woman of the current backlash distinguishes herself from her predecessors in earlier American backlashes by appearing to choose her condition twice—first as a woman and second as a feminist. Victorian culture peddled "femininity" as what "a true woman" wants; in the marketing strategy of contemporary culture, it's what a "liberated" woman craves, too. Just as Reagan appropriated populism to sell a political program that favored the rich, politicians, and the mass media, and advertising adopted feminist rhetoric to market policies that hurt women or to peddle the same old sexist products or to conceal antifeminist views. Bush promised "empowerment" for poor women—as a substitute for the many social-service programs he was slashing (Murray and Wessel). Even *Playboy* claimed to ally itself with female progress. Women have made such strides, the magazine's spokeswoman assured the press, "there's no longer a stigma attached to posing" (Carter).

The '80s culture stifled women's political speech and then redirected self-expression to the shopping mall. The passive consumer was reissued as an ersatz feminist, exercising her "right" to buy products, making her own "choices" at the checkout counter. "You *can* have it all," a Michelob ad promised a nubile woman in a bodysuit—but by "all," the brewing company meant only a less-filling beer. Criticized for targeting young women in its ads, an indignant Philip Morris vice president claimed that such criticism was "sexist," because it suggested that "adult women are not capable of making their own decisions about whether or not to smoke" (Waldman). The feminist entreaty to follow one's own instincts became a merchandising appeal to obey the call of the market—an appeal that diluted and degraded women's quest for true self-determination. By returning women to a view of themselves as devoted shoppers, the consumption-obsessed decade succeeded in undercutting one of the guiding principles of feminism: that women must think for themselves. As Christopher Lasch (who would himself soon be lobbing his own verbal grenades at feminists) observed in *The Culture of Narcissism,* consumerism undermines women's progress most perniciously when it "seems to side with women against male oppression."

> The advertising industry thus encourages the pseudo-emancipation of women, flattering them with its insinuating reminder, "You've come a long way, baby" and disguising the freedom to consume as genuine autonomy. . . . It emancipates women and children from patriarchal authority, however, only to subject them to the new paternalism of the advertising industry, the industrial corporation, and the state. (139–40)

30

The contemporary counterassault on women's rights contributes still another unique tactic to the old backlash strategy books: the pose of a "sophisticated" ironic distance from its own destructive ends. To the backlash's list of faked emotions—pity for single women, worry over the fatigue level of career women, concern for the family—the current onslaught adds a sneering "hip" cynicism toward those who dare point out discrimination or anti-female messages. In the era's entertainment and advertising, aimed at and designed by baby boomers, the self-conscious cast of characters constantly let us know that *they* know their presentation of women is retrograde and demeaning, but what of it? "Guess we're reliving 'Father Knows Best,'" television figures ironically chuckle to each other, as if women's secondary status has become no more than a long-running inside joke. To make a fuss about sexual injustice is more than unfeminine; it is now uncool. Feminist anger, or any form of social outrage, is dismissed breezily—not because it lacks substance but because it lacks "style."

It is hard enough to expose antifeminist sentiments when they are dressed up in feminist clothes. But it is far tougher to confront a foe that professes not to care. Even the unmitigated furor of an antiabortion "soldier" may be preferable to the jaundiced eye of the sitcom spokesmen. Feminism is "so '70s," the pop culture's ironists say, stifling a yawn. We're "postfeminist" now, they assert, meaning not that women have arrived at equal justice and moved beyond it, but simply that they themselves are beyond even pretending to care. It is an affectlessness that may, finally, deal the most devastating blow to American women's rights.

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Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
In your own words, explain your understanding of the opening quote by Friedan. If you have any questions about this quote, raise those as well.
2.
Go back to this piece and isolate any five statements with which you strongly agree or disagree—or find five statements or facts that took you by surprise. In small groups, share your responses and find the statements that most members had in common.
3.
To what factors does Faludi attribute the change in men’s attitudes toward feminist views in these recent years? What other factors would you consider plausible?
4.
According to Faludi, what part does economics play in gender roles and subsequent surges for power and identity crises?
5.
In general, how sound do you find Faludi’s reasoning? Which points, if any, require more sustenance, more facts, in order to be more fair-minded?
6.
Why doesn’t Faludi address how other women address feminist policies in this country? In what way do both men and women today fit into Faludi’s final statement?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.
Write a fair, unbiased argument in which you discuss the pros and cons of a woman’s choosing to stay at home with her children or choosing to go out to work. After discussing both sides of this issue in a balanced manner, find a turning point that explains where you stand on this issue.
2.
Read one of the major pieces from the *New Yorker* magazine’s special women’s issue (February 26 and March 4, 1996) and analyze the author’s tone, purpose, and theme in comparison with Faludi’s article.
3.
Write an essay in which you detail and explain the current female fashions in a specific culture (on a TV show, in a popular magazine, on campus, in a downtown city area, in a high school, and so on), and analyze the possible connotations of these fashions.

4.

Get a copy of any one of the sources Faludi uses in this essay (check the Works Cited), and analyze its contribution to Faludi's essay in general.

JESSE JACKSON

Why Blacks Need Affirmative Action

Born in South Carolina in 1941, Jesse Jackson became a Baptist minister who actively followed in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, Jr. Jackson served as director of Project Breadbasket and headed the 1968 Poor People's Campaign. In 1971, he founded PUSH (People United to Save Humanity). In addition, Jackson has been active in national politics, including campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination. This argument first appeared in Regulation *in September/October 1978.*

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

Write about a time when you were a victim of discrimination or an instance when you observed discrimination. Describe the circumstances, feelings, and outcomes of this event.

2.

Write about a time in your life when you or someone you know received "preferential treatment" over someone else. Looking back on this now, would you say that, as a result of the preferential treatment, some other person was a victim of discrimination? Explain your answer.

According to a recent publication of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, at the present rate of "progress" it will take forty-three years to end job discrimination—hardly a reasonable timetable.

If our goal is educational and economic equity and parity—and it is—then we need affirmative action to catch up. We are behind as a result of discrimination and denial of opportunity. There is one white attorney for every 680 whites, but only one black attorney for every 4,000 blacks; one white physician for every 659 whites, but only one black physician for every 5,000 blacks; and one white dentist for every 1,900 whites, but only one black dentist for every 8,400 blacks. Less than 1 percent of all engineers—or of all practicing chemists—is black. Cruel and uncompassionate injustice created gaps like these. We need creative justice and compassion to help us close them.

Actually, in the U.S. context, "reverse discrimination" is illogical and a contradiction in terms. Never in the history of mankind has a majority, with power, engaged in programs and written laws that discriminate against itself. The only thing whites are giving up because of affirmative action is unfair advantage—something that was unnecessary in the first place.

Blacks are not making progress at the expense of whites, as news accounts make it seem. There are 49 percent more whites in medical school today and 64 percent more whites in law school than there were when affirmative action programs began some eight years ago.

5

In a recent column, William Raspberry raised an interesting question. Commenting on the *Bakke* case, he asked, "What if, instead of setting aside 16 of 100 slots, we added 16 slots to the 100?” That, he suggested, would allow blacks to make progress and would not interfere with what whites already have. He then went on to point out that this, in fact, is exactly what has happened in law and medical schools. In 1968, the year before affirmative action programs began to get under way, 9,571 whites and 282 members of minority groups entered U.S. medical schools. In 1976, the figures were 14,213 and 1,400 respectively. Thus, under affirmative action, the number of “white places” actually rose by 49 percent: white access to medical training was not diminished, but substantially increased. The trend was even more marked in law schools. In 1969, the first year for which reliable figures are available, 2,933 minority-group members were enrolled; in 1976, the number was up to 8,484. But during the same period, law school enrollment for whites rose from 65,453 to 107,064—an increase of 64 percent. In short, it is a myth that blacks are making progress at white expense.

Allan Bakke did not really challenge preferential treatment in general, for he made no challenge to the preferential treatment accorded to the children of the rich, the alumni and the faculty, or to athletes or the very talented—only to minorities.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
What is Jackson’s main point in this argument? How might Stimpson or Steele (pages 408–411 and 413–419) respond to this point? How might Jackson respond to Stimpson’s or Steele’s main point?

2.
Both Jackson and Steele address the issue of “reverse discrimination.” What exactly does this phrase mean according to Steele, and what exactly does it mean according to Jackson? Which version are you most apt to agree with? Explain.

3.
Jackson claims that a gap between blacks and whites in different occupations exists primarily because of discrimination and lack of opportunity for black people. In the area of medicine, for example, he states that there is only one black physician for every 5,000 blacks, but one white physician for every 659 whites. Explain what specific discriminatory practices and what lack of opportunities might, indeed, contribute to this gap. Can you think of other factors that might be involved?

4.
How convincing is Jackson’s argument to you? What sections of this piece are especially convincing? What sections or comments do you find yourself arguing against?

5.
Analyze Jackson’s use of statistics in this piece. Does he misuse or skew any information here? Do you find any examples in which statistics are missing?

6.
Describe Jackson’s tone and voice in this piece. Do you feel that Jackson is initiating an idea in this argument or counterattacking a criticism? Explain your response.

7.
What would Jackson say is the employer’s responsibility in hiring practices?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.

Research articles in the *New York Times* regarding the Bakke case. Find out what this case was about: Who was Bakke, what were the circumstances in this case, what was the major complaint, what was the outcome and the reaction to this outcome?

2.

Research any current case regarding discrimination of any kind. What are the circumstances surrounding this case? What is the major complaint? In what way is this case like others you've read about? After carrying out this research, write an argument related to some aspect of the issues it raises.

3.

Write an argument showing why you agree or disagree with Jackson (or why you take yet another point of view).

CATHARINE STIMPSON

It Is Time to Rethink Affirmative Action

Catharine Stimpson is a professor of English as well as dean of the Graduate School at Rutgers University. This selection, which calls for a reexamination of affirmative action policies, first appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education *in 1992.*

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

Choose any one social tradition or institution in this country (kindergarten, education, college, graduation, Thanksgiving, recreational sports, and so on) and explore the ways in which it has changed since its beginnings or since your first remembrance of it.

2.

Think about an injustice this country has addressed in the past and explore the effectiveness of the remedies against this injustice.

On December 4, Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander proposed new rules governing the legality of scholarships for minority students. They declare campus diversity a good thing, but race-specific scholarships a bad thing—unless a private donor or Congress creates them.

Mr. Alexander's action leaves unanswered questions about civil-rights law, educational policy, and the politics of the ruling. By the first week in March, responses to the proposals must be in. Yet no matter what they are, no matter what the Secretary's final regulations ultimately are, the issue of affirmative action will still be with us—because educational inequities will still be with us.

The birth of affirmative action in the late 1960's and 1970's was a struggle. Its most principled opponents argued honorably that American law and public policy ought to be color-blind. Anything that was limited to one race, no matter how well intentioned, was wrong. Unfortunately, not every opponent was principled. The argument about affirmative action also was divisive and prejudicial, a misinformation campaign that demonstrated more hostility about a remedy for injustice than about the injustice itself.

After the 1970's, the struggle became less rancorous in higher education. Indeed, during the 1980's, the Department of Education received fewer than a dozen inquiries or complaints about race-specific scholarships. However, during the same decade, the opposition to affirmative action gained two weapons. First, the elections of Ronald Reagan and George Bush to the Presidency permitted lower federal officials to translate ideological opposition to affirmative action into practice. Second, some highly accomplished African-American intellectuals began to criticize the programs that had, ironically, often aided their education.

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Of these writers, I find the most persuasive to be Stephen L. Carter, the Yale Law School professor and author of *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby* (Basic Books, 1991). Speaking to a black audience, he defends the right to dissent from communal orthodoxies. Speaking to people like me, he claims that affirmative action has had its day. To its credit, affirmative action has nurtured a black middle class, Carter says, but its members pay the price of being stigmatized as people who made it only because of that remedy.

Given the persistence of the resistance to affirmative action, it might be tempting to toss up one's compliance plans and agree that affirmative action has gone astray, over the top, beyond the pale. Certainly, it has not brought a paradise of equity, and its administration has often been clumsy. Institutions have made some bad, cynical faculty hires and admitted some students without sufficient preparation and support. A very few faculty members and students have ripped off the system by manipulating it, for example by playing on racial guilt. I have occasionally groaned at the ways of bureaucracy as I have read and written affirmative-action reports.

Despite all this, affirmative action has not gone astray. If anything, it has been driven astray by sloppiness, indifference, and belligerence. I have heard faculty members and administrators say biased things about women and minorities and deliberately ignorant things about affirmative action, such as "it's forcing quotas down my throat"—their behavior revealing why affirmative action was necessary in the first place. I have listened to members of the same groups rationalize their inability to hire anyone other than a clone by blaming a "limited pool" of minority candidates or the "dual career" demands of women of all races.

The important reality is this: Affirmative action has worked. To be sure, it has lumbered and creaked. It has worked slowly, unevenly, and incompletely—particularly when support for equity has been mean and opposition to it lavish. Arguably, it has worked least well for black males. Nevertheless, affirmative action has served us.

The process of doing affirmative action has demonstrated that the pool of qualified candidates was wider and deeper than the academy had previously admitted. The process also has released talent and industry. Think, for example, of the career of Dolores E. Cross. At 19, she was married, a clerk at the Newark Board of Education, pregnant with her second child. She entered college in 1955, received her Ph.D. in 1971, and is now the president of Chicago State University.

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Moreover, as the heroic example of President Cross shows, the academy now has greater diversity among students, staffs, and faculties. In 1990, the United States awarded the greatest number of doctorates ever: 36,027. From 1960 to 1990, the proportion of women earning them increased from 11 per cent to 36 per cent, including more women from every racial group.

Yet, even if affirmative action has not gone astray, it is time to rethink it. This proposal is not a craven submission to the anti-affirmative actioneers but the recognition of another reality: Affirmative action was the creation of a historical period, meant to heal its historical problems. Then, despite the passage of several civil-rights laws, virtually no members of minority groups and only a handful of white women were being allowed to advance in predominantly white institutions. This period is receding. The problems have mutated. One reason they have done so is that affirmative action did work to a degree, because it did help to nurse affirmative-action babies.

In 1975, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education foresaw such an evolution. Its valuable study, "Making Affirmative Action Work in Higher Education," describes affirmative action as a "transition period between actual past deficiencies of major proportions and potential future achievements of true equality of opportunity." Because affirmative action *is* such a transitional program, the book concluded that it needs periodic reviews to see "what amount and kind of federal involvement is still necessary."

In the harsh early light of the 1990's, a broad review is due, a rethinking that avoids both the easy comforts of hysteria about any change and the denunciation of affirmative action's mere existence. Rethinking entails seven steps: the purpose of affirmative action, which was to remove prejudice and open the gates of higher education. Today, because class and the economy, perhaps as much as race, are closing these gates, the process should take a student's economic background into account, in addition to minority status.

Enlarging the meaning of affirmative action. Narrowly construed, it is a legally mandated employment practice. Broadly construed, it is the umbrella term for all the programs that reflect a community's commitment to equity. The broader the construction, the more successful the practices for advancing underrepresented groups seem to become.

Creating a national "equity ledger" setting out what equity means in student admissions, financial aid, and retention and what it means in employment. We should rigorously examine *all* the preferences that now exist in these areas. We would then ask who breathes deeply enough of the air of equity on that fabled site, the level playing field, to drop the oxygen mask of affirmative action—and, crucially, who does not.

Strengthening the links among various kinds of schools and colleges. Disadvantaged junior-high and high-school students feel more comfortable in college if they have some experience of college—even a visit—before they get into first-year English. Community-college students need good transfer programs to four-year institutions; many poor and/or minority students are in community colleges. For example, the number of Asian Americans enrolled in all higher education grew from 198,000 in 1976 to 497,000 in 1988. Most of these students attend public institutions, and almost one-half are in a two-year college.

Nurturing the historically black colleges and universities. Of the baccalaureate institutions in the United States whose minority graduates went on to earn Ph.D.'s between 1986 and 1990, 17 of the top 20 were historically black colleges and universities. The other three were urban institutions: Wayne State University, City College of the City University of New York, and New York University. At Howard and

Hampton, Spelman and Fisk are many of the next generation of black scholars, researchers, and teachers.

Remembering the obvious, that the purpose of higher education is education. Thus, rethinking affirmative action means accepting the new scholarship about women and gender, race and ethnicity, domination and freedom, class and sexuality. The syllabi of an equitable community will reflect these intellectual movements, not because faculties are filled with Dr. Feelgoods of thought, but because they are thoughtful.

Expanding, with more passion than many of us in higher education have shown, affirmative action for children. Any rethinking for higher education is chaff unless we feed, shelter, love, and educate all children. In my neighborhood is Scotty, a retired man and shrewd observer, who gets his coffee and hangs out at the delicatessen next to my Victorian house. For two years, Scotty has babysat for a husky, bright little kid, Luther, the child of a single, working mother. Recently, when I had not seen Luther with Scotty for several days, I asked where Luther was. “Oh,” said Scotty, with relief, pride, and happiness, “he got into the Head Start program. He’s in that Head Start. He’s on his way.” Here, in my neighborhood, is a dollop of affirmative action for children. How many neighborhoods have programs for a Luther?

In Adrienne Rich’s newest book, she has a title poem, “An Atlas of the Difficult World.” There she writes of the waste of “those who could bind, join, reweave, cohere, replenish . . . those needed to teach, advise, persuade, weigh arguments / those urgently needed for the work of perception / work of the poet, the astronomer, the historian, the architect of new streets.”

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Affirmative action is a meritorious plan against obscene waste. We need to rethink it so that it can better bind and reweave the present. If we fail to do so, we will have pushed it further astray, to be devoured by its enemies or to atrophy on a diet of inertia.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
In general, what would you say is Stimpson’s main point regarding affirmative action, and what is your reaction to her point? Do you agree with her? Disagree? Why? Why not?
2.
As a reading critic, how effective do you find Stimpson’s argument? Point to what you consider to be her “finest” and “weakest” argumentative moments in this piece.
3.
How would you describe the author’s tone in this piece? Does she sound fair-minded? Angry? Noncommital? Scholarly? Something else? List examples that support your stance here.
4.
On what main sources does Stimpson base her stand, and how effective do you find these authorities?
5.

What are some possible reasons why Stimpson refers to Adrienne Rich's poem at the end of this piece? How effective did you find this closing?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.
Choose one of the suggestions that Stimpson lists at the end of her essay, and write a proposal in which you specify how to go about implementing this step.

2.
Read Rich's poem, "An Atlas of a Different World," and then write an initial reaction to this poem. After you've reacted to this piece, read it again to analyze the author's possible purposes in writing the poem.

SHELBY STEELE

The Price of Preference

Shelby Steele grew up in the Chicago area, where, during the 1950s, a segregated education system was maintained. During his school years, Steele experienced brutal discrimination, including physical and emotional humiliation that prompted his parents to instigate a boycott of his school, an action that led, finally, to the firing of a racist teacher. Steele later went on to college and graduate school, earning a Ph.D. in English from the University of Utah. Throughout his life, Steele has been deeply committed to the cause of civil rights, yet he believes that these rights must be attained without recourse to affirmative action, which he sees as stigmatizing African Americans. In 1990, Steele published The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America, *a collection of essays that first appeared in* Harper's *and the* American Scholar. *This selection, which examines the problems Steele considers to be part of the affirmative action process, appears in that collection.*

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.
What are your initial thoughts? Should minorities be given preferential treatment as far as educational or career opportunities go? Why or why not?

2.
If you were in charge of this country, what steps would you take to eradicate racism and prejudice?

In a few short years, when my two children will be applying to college, the affirmative action policies by which most universities offer black students some form of preferential treatment will present me with a dilemma. I am a middle-class black, a college professor, far from wealthy, but also well-removed from the kind of deprivation that would qualify my children for the label "disadvantaged." Both of them have endured racial insensitivity from whites. They have been called names, have suffered slights, and have experienced firsthand the peculiar malevolence that racism brings out in people. Yet, they have never experienced racial discrimination, have never been stopped by their race on any path they have chosen to follow. Still, their society now tells them that if they will only designate themselves as black on their college applications, they will likely do better in the college lottery than if they conceal this fact. I think there is something of a Faustian bargain in this.

Of course, many blacks and a considerable number of whites would say that I was sanctimoniously making affirmative action into a test of character. They would say that this small preference is the meagerest recompense for centuries of unrelieved oppression. And to these arguments other very obvious facts must be added. In America, many marginally competent or flatly incompetent whites are hired everyday—some because their white skin suits the conscious or unconscious racial preference of their employer. The white children of alumni are often grandfathered into elite universities in what can only be seen as a residual benefit of historic white privilege. Worse, white incompetence is always an individual matter, while for blacks it is often confirmation of ugly stereotypes. The Peter Principle was not conceived with only blacks in mind. Given that unfairness cuts both ways, doesn't it only balance the scales of history that my children now receive a slight preference over whites? Doesn't this repay, in a small way, the systematic denial under which their grandfather lived out his days?

So, in theory, affirmative action certainly has all the moral symmetry that fairness requires—the injustice of historical and even contemporary white advantage is offset with black advantage; preference replaces prejudice, inclusion answers exclusion. It is reformist and corrective, even repentent and redemptive. And I would never sneer at these good intentions. Born in the late forties in Chicago, I started my education (a charitable term in this case) in a segregated school and suffered all the indignities that come to blacks in a segregated society. My father, born in the South, only made it to the third grade before the white man's fields took permanent priority over his formal education. And though he educated himself into an advanced reader with an almost professorial authority, he could only drive a truck for a living and never earned more than ninety dollars a week in his entire life. So yes, it is crucial to my sense of citizenship, to my ability to identify with the spirit and the interests of America, to know that this country, however imperfectly, recognizes its past sins and wishes to correct them.

Yet good intentions, because of the opportunity for innocence they offer us, are very seductive and can blind us to the effects they generate when implemented. In our society, affirmative action is, among other things, a testament to white goodwill and to black power, and in the midst of these heavy investments, its effects can be hard to see. But after twenty years of implementation, I think affirmative action has shown itself to be more bad than good and that blacks—whom I will focus on in this essay—now stand to lose more from it than they gain.

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In talking with affirmative action administrators and with blacks and whites in general, it is clear that supporters of affirmative action focus on its good intentions while detractors emphasize its negative effects. Proponents talk about "diversity" and "pluralism"; opponents speak of "reverse discrimination," the unfairness of quotas and set-asides. It was virtually impossible to find people outside either camp. The closest I came was a white male manager at a large computer company who said, "I think it amounts to reverse discrimination, but I'll put up with a little of that for a little more diversity." I'll live with a little of the effect to gain a little of the intention, he seemed to be saying. But this only makes him a halfhearted supporter of affirmative action. I think many people who don't really like affirmative action support it to one degree or another anyway.

I believe they do this because of what happened to white and black Americans in the crucible of the sixties when whites were confronted with their racial guilt and blacks tasted their first real power. In this stormy time white absolution and black power coalesced into virtual mandates for society. Affirmative action became a meeting ground for these mandates in the law, and in the late sixties and early seventies it underwent a remarkable escalation of its mission from simple anti-discrimination enforcement to social engineering by means of quotas, goals, timetables, set-asides and other forms of preferential treatment.

Legally, this was achieved through a series of executive orders and EEOC guidelines that allowed racial imbalances in the workplace to stand as proof of racial discrimination. Once it could be assumed that discrimination explained racial imbalances, it became easy to justify group remedies to presumed discrimination, rather than the normal case-by-case redress for proven discrimination. Preferential treatment through quotas, goals, and so on is designed to correct imbalances based on the assumption that they always indicate discrimination. This expansion of what constitutes discrimination allowed affirmative action to escalate into the business of social engineering in the name of anti-discrimination, to push society toward statistically proportionate racial representation, without any obligation of proving actual discrimination.

What accounted for this shift, I believe, was the white mandate to achieve a new racial innocence and the black mandate to gain power. Even though blacks had made great advances during the sixties without quotas, these mandates, which came to a head in the very late sixties, could no longer be satisfied by anything less than racial preferences. I don’t think these mandates in themselves were wrong, since whites clearly needed to do better by blacks and blacks needed more real power in society. But, as they came together in affirmative action, their effect was to distort our understanding of racial discrimination in a way that allowed us to offer the remediation of preference on the basis of mere color rather than actual injury. By making black the color of preference, these mandates have reburdened society with the very marriage of color and preference (in reverse) that we set out to eradicate. The old sin is reaffirmed in a new guise.

But the essential problem with this form of affirmative action is the way it leaps over the hard business of developing a formerly oppressed people to the point where they can achieve proportionate representation on their own (given equal opportunity) and goes straight for the proportionate representation. This may satisfy some whites of their innocence and some blacks of their power, but it does very little to truly uplift blacks.

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A white female affirmative action officer at an Ivy League university told me what many supporters of affirmative action now say: “We’re after diversity. We ideally want a student body where racial and ethnic groups are represented according to their proportion in society.” When affirmative action escalated into social engineering, diversity became a golden word. It grants whites an egalitarian fairness (innocence) and blacks an entitlement to proportionate representation (power). *Diversity* is a term that applies democratic principles to races and cultures rather than to citizens, despite the fact that there is nothing to indicate that real diversity is the same thing as proportionate representation. Too often the result of this on campuses (for example) has been a democracy of colors rather than of people, an artificial diversity that gives the appearance of an educational parity between black and white students that has not yet been achieved in reality. Here again, racial preferences allow society to leapfrog over the difficult problem of developing blacks to parity with whites and into a cosmetic diversity that covers the blemish of disparity—a full six years after admission, only about 26 percent of black students graduate from college.

Racial representation is not the same thing as racial development, yet affirmative action fosters a confusion of these very different needs. Representation can be manufactured; development is always hard-earned. However, it is the music of innocence and power that we hear in affirmative action that causes us to cling to it and to its distracting emphasis on representation. The fact is that after twenty years of racial preferences, the gap between white and black median income is greater than it was in the seventies. None of this is to say that blacks don't need policies that ensure our right to equal opportunity, but what we need more is the development that will let us take advantage of society's efforts to include us.

I think that one of the most troubling effects of racial preferences for blacks is a kind of demoralization, or put another way, an enlargement of self-doubt. Under affirmative action the quality that earns us preferential treatment is an implied inferiority. However this inferiority is explained—and it is easily enough explained by the myriad deprivations that grew out of our oppression—it is still inferiority. There are explanations, and then there is the fact. And the fact must be borne by the individual as a condition apart from the explanation, apart even from the fact that others like himself also bear this condition. In integrated situations where blacks must compete with whites who may be better prepared, these explanations may quickly wear thin and expose the individual to racial as well as personal self-doubt.

All of this is compounded by the cultural myth of black inferiority that blacks have always lived with. What this means in practical terms is that when blacks deliver themselves into integrated situations, they encounter a nasty little reflex in whites, a mindless, atavistic reflex that responds to the color black with alarm. Attributions may follow this alarm if the white cares to indulge them, and if they do, they will most likely be negative—one such attribution is intellectual ineptness. I think this reflex and the attributions that may follow it embarrass most whites today, therefore, it is usually quickly repressed. Nevertheless, on an equally atavistic level, the black will be aware of the reflex his color triggers and will feel a stab of horror at seeing himself reflected in this way. He, too, will do a quick repression, but a lifetime of such stabbings is what constitutes his inner realm of racial doubt.

The effects of this may be a subject for another essay. The point here is that the implication of inferiority that racial preferences engender in both the white and black mind expands rather than contracts this doubt. Even when the black sees no implication of inferiority in racial preferences, he knows that whites do, so that—consciously or unconsciously—the result is virtually the same. The effect of preferential treatment—the lowering of normal standards to increase black representation—puts blacks at war with an expanded realm of debilitating doubt, so that the doubt itself becomes an unrecognized preoccupation that undermines their ability to perform, especially in integrated situations. On largely white campuses, blacks are five times more likely to drop out than whites. Preferential treatment, no matter how it is justified in the light of day, subjects blacks to a midnight of self-doubt, and so often transforms their advantage into a revolving door.

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Another liability of affirmative action comes from the fact that it indirectly encourages blacks to exploit their own past victimization as a source of power and privilege.

Victimization, like implied inferiority, is what justifies preference, so that to receive the benefits of preferential treatment one must, to some extent, become invested in the view of one's self as a victim. In this way, affirmative action nurtures a victim-focused identity in blacks. The obvious irony here is that we become inadvertently invested in the very condition we are trying to overcome. Racial preferences send us the message that there is more power in our past suffering than our present achievements—none of which could bring us a *preference* over others.

When power itself grows out of suffering, then blacks are encouraged to expand the boundaries of what qualifies as racial oppression, a situation that can lead us to paint our victimization in vivid colors, even as we receive the benefits of preference. The same corporations and institutions that give us preference are also seen as our oppressors. At Stanford University minority students—some of whom enjoy as much as $15,000 a year in financial aid—recently took over the president's office demanding, among other things, more financial aid. The power to be found in victimization, like any power, is intoxicating and can lend itself to the creation of a new class of super-victims who can feel the pea of victimization under twenty mattresses. Preferential treatment rewards us for being underdogs rather than for moving beyond that status—a misplacement of incentives that, along with its deepening of our doubt, is more a yoke than a spur.

But, I think, one of the worst prices that blacks pay for preference has to do with an illusion. I saw this illusion at work recently in the mother of a middle-class black student who was going off to his first semester of college. "They owe us this, so don't think for a minute that you don't belong there." This is the logic by which many blacks, and some whites, justify affirmative action—it is something "owed," a form of reparation. But this logic overlooks a much harder and less digestible reality, that it is impossible to repay blacks living today for the historic suffering of the race. If all blacks were given a million dollars tomorrow morning it would not amount to a dime on the dollar of three centuries of oppression, nor would it obviate the residues of that oppression that we still carry today. The concept of historic reparation grows out of man's need to impose a degree of justice on the world that simply does not exist. Suffering can be endured and overcome, it cannot be repaid. Blacks cannot be repaid for the injustice done to the race, but we can be corrupted by society's guilty gestures of repayment.

Affirmative action is such a gesture. It tells us that racial preferences can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The corruption here is in the hidden incentive *not* to do what we believe preferences will do. This is an incentive to be reliant on others just as we are struggling for self-reliance. And it keeps alive the illusion that we can find some deliverance in repayment. The hardest thing for any sufferer to accept is that his suffering excuses him from very little and never has enough currency to restore him. To think otherwise is to prolong the suffering.

Several blacks I spoke with said they were still in favor of affirmative action because of the "subtle" discrimination blacks were subject to once on the job. One photojournalist said, "They have ways of ignoring you." A black female television producer said, "You can't file a lawsuit when your boss doesn't invite you to the insider meetings without ruining your career. So we still need affirmative action." Others mentioned the infamous "glass ceiling" through which blacks can see the top positions of authority but never reach them. But I don't think racial preferences are a protection against this subtle discrimination; I think they contribute to it.

In any workplace, racial preferences will always create two-tiered populations composed of preferreds and unpreferreds. This division makes automatic a perception of enhanced competence for the unpreferreds and of questionable competence for the preferreds—the former earned his way, even though others were given preference, while the latter made it by color as much as by competence. Racial preferences implicitly mark whites with an exaggerated superiority just as they mark blacks with an exaggerated inferiority. They not only reinforce America's oldest racial myth but, for blacks, they have the effect of stigmatizing the already stigmatized.

I think that much of the "subtle" discrimination that blacks talk about is often (not always) discrimination against the stigma of questionable competence that affirmative action delivers to blacks. In this sense, preferences scapegoat the very people they seek to help. And it may be that at a certain level employers impose a glass ceiling, but this may not be against the race so much as against the race's reputation for having advanced by color as much as by competence. Affirmative action makes a glass ceiling virtually necessary as a protection against the corruptions of preferential treatment. This ceiling is the point at which corporations shift the emphasis from color to competency and stop playing the affirmative action game. Here preference backfires for blacks and becomes a taint that holds them back. Of course, one could argue that this taint, which is, after all, in the minds of whites, becomes nothing more than an excuse to discriminate against blacks. And certainly the result is the same in either case—blacks don't get past the glass ceiling. But this argument does not get around the fact that racial preferences now taint this color with a new theme of suspicion that makes it even more vulnerable to the impulse in others to discriminate. In this crucial yet gray area of perceived competence, preferences make whites look better than they are and blacks worse, while doing nothing whatever to stop the very real discrimination that blacks may encounter. I don't wish to justify the glass ceiling here, but only to suggest the very subtle ways that affirmative action revives rather than extinguishes the old rationalizations for racial discrimination.

In education, a revolving door; in employment, a glass ceiling.

I believe affirmative action is problematic in our society because it tries to function like a social program. Rather than ask it to ensure equal opportunity we have demanded that it create parity between the races. But preferential treatment does not teach skills, or educate, or instill motivation. It only passes out entitlement by color, a situation that in my profession has created an unrealistically high demand for black professors. The social engineer's assumption is that this high demand will inspire more blacks to earn Ph.D.'s and join the profession. In fact, the number of blacks earning Ph.D.'s has declined in recent years. A Ph.D. must be developed from preschool on. He requires family and community support. He must acquire an entire system of values that enables him to work hard while delaying gratification. There are social programs, I believe, that can (and should) help blacks *develop* in all these areas, but entitlement by color is not a social program; it is a dubious reward for being black.

It now seems clear that the Supreme Court, in a series of recent decisions, is moving away from racial preferences. It has disallowed preferences except in instances of "identified discrimination," eroded the precedent that statistical racial imbalances are *prima facie* evidence of discrimination, and in effect granted white males the right to challenge consent decrees that use preference to achieve racial balances in the workplace.

One civil rights leader said, “Night has fallen on civil rights.” But I am not so sure. The effect of these decisions is to protect the constitutional rights of everyone rather than take rights away from blacks. What they do take away from blacks is the special entitlement to more rights than others that preferences always grant. Night has fallen on racial preferences, not on the fundamental rights of black Americans. The reason for this shift, I believe, is that the white mandate for absolution from past racial sins has weakened considerably during the eighties. Whites are now less willing to endure unfairness to themselves in order to grant special entitlements to blacks, even when these entitlements are justified in the name of past suffering. Yet the black mandate for more power in society has remained unchanged. And I think part of the anxiety that many blacks feel over these decisions has to do with the loss of black power they may signal. We had won a certain specialness and now we are losing it.

But the power we’ve lost by these decisions is really only the power that grows out of our victimization—the power to claim special entitlements under the law because of past oppression. This is not a very substantial or reliable power, and it is important that we know this so we can focus more exclusively on the kind of development that will bring enduring power. There is talk now that Congress will pass new legislation to compensate for these new limits on affirmative action. If this happens, I hope that their focus will be on development and anti-discrimination rather than entitlement, on achieving racial parity rather than jerry-building racial diversity.

I would also like to see affirmative action go back to its original purpose of enforcing equal opportunity—a purpose that in itself disallows racial preferences. We cannot be sure that the discriminatory impulse in America has yet been shamed into extinction, and I believe affirmative action can make its greatest contribution by providing a rigorous vigilance in this area. It can guard constitutional rather than racial rights, and help institutions evolve standards of merit and selection that are appropriate to the institution’s needs yet as free of racial bias as possible (again, with the understanding that racial imbalances are not always an indication of racial bias). One of the most important things affirmative action can do is to define exactly what racial discrimination is and how it might manifest itself within a specific institution. The impulse to discriminate *is* subtle and cannot be ferreted out unless its many guises are made clear to people. Along with this there should be monitoring of institutions and heavy sanctions brought to bear when actual discrimination is found. This is the sort of affirmative action that America owes to blacks and to itself. It goes after the evil of discrimination itself, while preferences only sidestep the evil and grant entitlement to its *presumed* victims.

But if not preferences, then what? I think we need social policies that are committed to two goals: the educational and economic development of disadvantaged people, regardless of race, and the eradication from our society—through close monitoring and severe sanctions—of racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination. Preferences will not deliver us to either of these goals, since they tend to benefit those who are not disadvantaged—middle-class white women and middle-class blacks—and attack one form of discrimination with another. Preferences are inexpensive and carry the glamour of good intentions—change the numbers and the good deed is done. To be against them is to be unkind. But I think the unkindest cut is to bestow on children like my own an undeserved advantage while neglecting the development of those disadvantaged children on the East

Side of my city who will likely never be in a position to benefit from a preference. Give my children fairness; give disadvantaged children a better shot at development—better elementary and secondary schools, job training, safer neighborhoods, better financial assistance for college, and so on. Fewer blacks go to college today than ten years ago; more black males of college age are in prison or under the control of the criminal justice system than in college. This despite racial preferences.

The mandates of black power and white absolution out of which preferences emerged were not wrong in themselves. What was wrong was that both races focused more on the goals of these mandates than on the means to the goals. Blacks can have no real power without taking responsibility for their own educational and economic development. Whites can have no racial innocence without earning it by eradicating discrimination and helping the disadvantaged to develop. Because we ignored the means, the goals have not been reached, and the real work remains to be done.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
Where, exactly, is the reader introduced to Steele's position on affirmative action, and what purpose does the information leading up to it serve?

2.
List five statements with which you strongly agree and five with which you strongly disagree. For what reasons do you find yourself siding with Steele, and what are the main reasons for your disagreement?

3.
What reasons does Steele give for affirmative action's past effectiveness, and what reasons does he offer for rethinking this national policy?

4.
Throughout his essay, Steele refers only to blacks and whites as the players in this controversy, and uses only the pronoun "he" when referring to any member within these groups. What are some possible reasons why Steele might have limited himself to these choices, and what do you think of his choices?

5.
What changes does Steele believe have to take place in society for blacks to achieve the rights to which they are entitled? How does Steele propose going about implementing these changes, and what are your thoughts on this matter?

6.
Look back to your initial journal response and analyze whether Steele's essay has altered your initial thoughts about affirmative action in any way.

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.
Write down the strongest statement you can make about your position in regard to affirmative action. With this thought in mind, write a persuasive essay in which you argue the opposite of your stated position with fervor and passion.

2.
Working in small groups, hold a panel debate on this issue, and then write an analysis of how well your group performed in this debate.

t this argument does not get around the fact that racial preferences now taint this color with a new theme of suspicion that makes it even more vulnerable to the impulse in others to discriminate. In this crucial yet gray area of perceived competence, preferences make whites look better than they are and blacks worse, while doing nothing whatever to stop the very real discrimination that blacks may encounter. I don't wish to justify the glass ceiling here, but only to suggest the very subtle ways that affirmative action revives rather than extinguishes the old rationalizations for racial discrimination.

In education, a revolving door; in employment, a glass ceiling.

I believe affirmative action is problematic in our society because it tries to function like a social program. Rather than ask it to ensure equal opportunity we have demanded that it create parity between the races. But preferential treatment does not teach skills, or educate, or instill motivation. It only passes out entitlement by color, a situation that in my profession has created an unrealistically high demand for black professors. The social engineer's assumption is that this high demand will inspire more blacks to earn Ph.D.'s and join the profession. In fact, the number of blacks earning Ph.D.'s has declined in recent years. A Ph.D. must be developed from preschool on. He requires family and community support. He must acquire an entire system of values that enables him to work hard while delaying gratification. There are social programs, I believe, that can (and should) help blacks *develop* in all these areas, but entitlement by color is not a social program; it is a dubious reward for being black.

It now seems clear that the Supreme Court, in a series of recent decisions, is moving away from racial preferences. It has disallowed preferences except in instances of "identified discrimination," eroded the precedent that statistical racial imbalances are *prima facie* evidence of discrimination, and in effect granted white males the right to challenge consent decrees that use preference to achieve racial balances in the workplace. One civil rights leader said, "Night has fallen on civil rights." But I am not so sure. The effect of these decisions is to protect the constitutional rights of everyone rather than take rights away from blacks. What they do take away from blacks is the special entitlement to more rights than others that preferences always grant. Night has fallen on racial preferences, not on the fundamental rights of black Americans. The reason for this shift, I believe, is that the white mandate for absolution from past racial sins has weakened considerably during the eighties. Whites are now less willing to endure unfairness to themselves in order to grant special entitlements to blacks, even when these entitlements are justified in the name of past suffering. Yet the black mandate for more power in society has remained unchanged. And I think part of the anxiety that many blacks feel over these decisions has to do with the loss of black power they may signal. We had won a certain specialness and now we are losing it.

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But the power we've lost by these decisions is really only the power that grows out of our victimization—the power to claim special entitlements under the law because of past oppression. This is not a very substantial or reliable power, and it is important that we know this so we can focus more exclusively on the kind of development that will bring enduring power. There is talk now that Congress will pass new legislation to compensate for these new limits on affirmative action. If this happens, I hope that their focus will be on development and anti-discrimination rather than entitlement, on achieving racial parity rather than jerry-building racial diversity.

I would also like to see affirmative action go back to its original purpose of enforcing equal opportunity—a purpose that in itself disallows racial preferences. We cannot be sure that the discriminatory impulse in America has yet been shamed into extinction, and I believe affirmative action can make its greatest contribution by providing a rigorous vigilance in this area. It can guard constitutional rather than racial rights, and help institutions evolve standards of merit and selection that are appropriate to the institution's needs yet as free of racial bias as possible (again, with the understanding that racial imbalances are not always an indication of racial bias). One of the most important things affirmative action can do is to define exactly what racial discrimination is and how it might manifest itself within a specific institution. The impulse to discriminate *is* subtle and cannot be ferreted out unless its many guises are made clear to people. Along with this there should be monitoring of institutions and heavy sanctions brought to bear when actual discrimination is found. This is the sort of affirmative action that America owes to blacks and to itself. It goes after the evil of discrimination itself, while preferences only sidestep the evil and grant entitlement to its *presumed* victims.

But if not preferences, then what? I think we need social policies that are committed to two goals: the educational and economic development of disadvantaged people, regardless of race, and the eradication from our society—through close monitoring and severe sanctions—of racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination. Preferences will not deliver us to either of these goals, since they tend to benefit those who are not disadvantaged—middle-class white women and middle-class blacks—and attack one form of discrimination with another. Preferences are inexpensive and carry the glamour of good intentions—change the numbers and the good deed is done. To be against them is to be unkind. But I think the unkindest cut is to bestow on children like my own an undeserved advantage while neglecting the development of those disadvantaged children on the East Side of my city who will likely never be in a position to benefit from a preference. Give my children fairness; give disadvantaged children a better shot at development—better elementary and secondary schools, job training, safer neighborhoods, better financial assistance for college, and so on. Fewer blacks go to college today than ten years ago; more black males of college age are in prison or under the control of the criminal justice system than in college. This despite racial preferences.

The mandates of black power and white absolution out of which preferences emerged were not wrong in themselves. What was wrong was that both races focused more on the goals of these mandates than on the means to the goals. Blacks can have no real power without taking responsibility for their own educational and economic development. Whites can have no racial innocence without earning it by eradicating discrimination and helping the disadvantaged to develop. Because we ignored the means, the goals have not been reached, and the real work remains to be done.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.

Where, exactly, is the reader introduced to Steele's position on affirmative action, and what purpose does the information leading up to it serve?

2.

List five statements with which you strongly agree and five with which you strongly disagree. For what reasons do you find yourself siding with Steele, and what are the main reasons for your disagreement?

3.

What reasons does Steele give for affirmative action’s past effectiveness, and what reasons does he offer for rethinking this national policy?

4.

Throughout his essay, Steele refers only to blacks and whites as the players in this controversy, and uses only the pronoun “he” when referring to any member within these groups. What are some possible reasons why Steele might have limite*Harper’s* Aug. 1935: 354–358.

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Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1. In your own words, explain your understanding of the opening quote by Friedan. If you have any questions about this quote, raise those as well.
2. Go back to this piece and isolate any five statements with which you strongly agree or disagree—or find five statements or facts that took you by surprise. In small groups, share your responses and find the statements that most members had in common.
3. To what factors does Faludi attribute the change in men’s attitudes toward feminist views in these recent years? What other factors would you consider plausible?
4. According to Faludi, what part does economics play in gender roles and subsequent surges for power and identity crises?
5. In general, how sound do you find Faludi’s reasoning? Which points, if any, require more sustenance, more facts, in order to be more fair-minded?
6. Why doesn’t Faludi address how other women address feminist policies in this country? In what way do both men and women today fit into Faludi’s final statement?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1. Write a fair, unbiased argument in which you discuss the pros and cons of a woman’s choosing to stay at home with her children or choosing to go out to work. After

discussing both sides of this issue in a balanced manner, find a turning point that explains where you stand on this issue.
2.
Read one of the major pieces from the *New Yorker* magazine's special women's issue (February 26 and March 4, 1996) and analyze the author's tone, purpose, and theme in comparison with Faludi's article.
3.
Write an essay in which you detail and explain the current female fashions in a specific culture (on a Tdaily indignities the city imposes.

During the summer of 1977, I lived within a different moral geography. I was teaching a graduate seminar on Manhood and American Culture at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, tracing the evolution of the American man from Ben Franklin's sturdy, middle-class acolyte to the rugged John Wayne of *Stagecoach*. Enchanted by the New Mexico landscape, I would frequently drive off to explore the small towns and brilliant canyons in whose silences ghosts still lingered. One day a friend volunteered to drive with me into the Manzano Mountains. I had announced my desire to look at the ruins of a seventeenth-century mission fort at Gran Quivira, while he wanted me to meet a man who had, by himself, built a house in those haunting, lovely mountains.

Tension between Anglos and Hispanics was strong in New Mexico in the summer of 1977. Even a stranger could feel a palpable, almost physical, struggle for political and cultural hegemony. Coming from a New York in which the growing separation of black and white was already threatening to transform everyday life into a racial battlefield, I did not feel particularly intimidated by this. Instead of black and white, New Mexico's ethnic and racial warfare would be between Anglo, Hispanic, and Indian. Mountainair, where we were to visit my friend's friend, was considered an Anglo town. Chilili, some miles up the road, was Hispanic.

My friend's friend had built his house on the outskirts of Mountainair, with a magnificent view of ponderosa pine. He was a man in his early sixties and had come to New Mexico from Virginia soon after World War II to take a job as a technical writer in a nuclear research laboratory in Albuquerque. Before the war he had done graduate work in literature at the University of Virginia, but the demands of fatherhood had decided him against finishing his doctorate. Like so many Americans before him, he had taken wife and young children to start over in the West.

In the warmth and generosity of his hospitality, however, he remained a true Southerner. As we sat and talked and laughed in the huge sun-drenched living room that opened onto that magnificent view of mountains and pines and long New Mexico sky, I could not help but feel that here was the very best of this nation—a man secure in himself, a man of liberal sympathies and a broad understanding of human behavior and a love of children and grandchildren and wife, a man who spoke perceptively of Jane Austen's novels and spoke sadly of the savage threat of drugs (his oldest son, a veteran of the war in Vietnam, was living with him, along with wife and three-year-old daughter, trying to purge the heroin addiction that threatened to wreck his life).

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I remember him happily holding forth on Jane Austen's *Persuasion* when his body suddenly seemed to freeze in mid-sentence. I could hear a motor in the distance. Without another word, he turned and crossed the room. Twin double-barreled shotguns hung on

the wall above the fireplace. He took one, his right hand scooping shells from a canvas bag hanging from a thong looped around a horseshoe nail banged shoulder-high into the wall. His son, the ex-Marine, grabbed the other gun and scooped shells from the same bag. Through the glassed-in cathedral living room leading to the porch, I watched the two of them stand side by side, shotguns pointed at a pickup truck already out of range.

“Those bastards!” I heard my host snarl.

“We’ll get ’em yet, Pop,” his son said. “I swear it.”

After we left to drive on to the ruins at Gran Quivira, I asked the friend who had accompanied me to explain what had happened. “A pickup truck from Chilili. Hispanics driving up the mountain to cut trees. It’s illegal. But they do it anyway.”

“Do the trees belong to your friend?”

“Not his trees. Not his mountain.” Then he shrugged.

“But it’s his gun.”

I angrily cast my eyes at the man and find myself staring into the twin barrels of a shotgun loosely held but pointed directly at me. It is that same summer in Albuquerque, three weeks later, and I am sitting in the driver’s seat of my car, my ten-year-old son, Bruce, directly behind me. Alongside him is the eleven-year-old daughter of the man who had invited me to teach at the University of New Mexico. I have just backed my car away from a gasoline pump to allow another car to move out of the garage into the road. As the other car came out of the gas station, the man with the shotgun adroitly cut me off and maneuvered his rust-pocked yellow pickup ahead of me in line before I could get back to the gas pump.

My first reaction is irritation with my car, as if the steel and chrome were sentient and responsible. It is the same ugly gold 1971 Buick in which, five summers earlier, I had driven through a Spanish landscape remarkably similar to the New Mexico in which I now find myself. Bruce had been with me then, too, along with his older brother and mother. But it is not the Buick that attracts men with guns. Nor is it that mythical violence of American life in which European intellectuals believe so fervently. In Spain we had been stopped at a roadblock, a sandbagged machine gun aimed by one of Franco’s troops perusing traffic like a farmer counting chickens in a henhouse. The soldiers had asked for passports, scowled at the children, examined the Buick as if it were an armored tank, inspecting glove compartment and trunk and wedging their hands into the spaces between seat and back. At the hotel restaurant at which we stopped for lunch twenty minutes later, we learned that two *guardia civil* had been ambushed and killed by Basque guerrillas. During Franco’s last years, such acts grew more and more frequent. Spain was filled with guns and soldiers. One was always aware of the presence of soldiers patrolling the vacation beaches of the Costa del Sol—and particularly aware of their guns.

As I am aware of the shotgun now. And as I am growing aware of that same enraged sense of humiliation and helplessness that seized me as those Spanish soldiers examined car and sons and wife, their guns casually pointed at all I loved most in the world, these other lives that made my life significantly mine. “Guns don’t kill, people do!” Offer that mind-deadening cliché to a man at a roadblock watching the faces of soldiers for whom the power of a gun is simply that it permits them to feel contempt for those without guns.

Tell that to a man sitting in a car with two young children, contemplating doing what he knows he cannot do because the gun is in another man’s hands. Both in Spain and in this New Mexico that Spain had planted in the New World like a genetic acorn breeding prerogatives of power, guns endowed men with a way to settle all questions of responsibility.

The man with the shotgun says nothing. He simply holds the weapon in his beefy hand, its muzzle casually pointed in my direction. I toy with the notion of getting out of the car and confronting him. I am angry, enraged. I don’t want to give in to his rude power. Only my son and my colleague’s daughter are in the back of the car. Defensively, I turn to look at them. My colleague’s daughter is wide-eyed and frightened. Bruce is equally frightened, but his eyes are on me. I am his father and he expects me to do something, to say something, to alter the balance of expectation and reality. Our car was on line for gas first. To a ten-year-old, justice is a simple arithmetic.

To that ten-year-old’s father it is not necessarily more complex. I could tell myself that it was insane to tell a man pointing a shotgun at me and these two children that he has broken the rules. Chances are he wouldn’t have fired, would probably have responded with a shrug of the shoulders no more threatening than a confession of ignorance. Obviously, none of this mattered. My growing sense of humiliation and rage had nothing to do with having to wait an extra minute or two while the station attendant filled the tank of the pickup. I was in no particular rush. I was simply returning home from a day-long excursion to a state park, where my son and his new friend had crawled through caves and climbed rocks splashed by a warm spring. But I was facing a man with a shotgun, a man who understood that people with guns define options for themselves.

The man with the gun decides whether or not to shoot, just as he chooses where to point his gun. It is not political power that stems from the barrel of a gun, as Maoists used to proclaim so ritualistically. It is individual power, the ability to impose one’s presence on the world, simply because guns always do what language only sometimes does: Guns command! Guns command attention, guns command discipline, guns command fear. And guns bestow rights and prerogatives, even to those who have read Jane Austen and engaged the world in their own comedy of manners. There is a conditional nature to all rights. And there are obligations that should not be shunted aside. Guns are many things, some symbolic, some all too real. But in real life they are always personal and rarely playful. They measure not capacity but the obligation the bearer of the gun has to believe that power belongs not to the gun but to him. And yet were I to tell this to my friend in Maine—that sophisticated, literate, humane man—I suspect he would turn to me and say, “That’s right. There’s always got to be somebody’s finger on the trigger.”

A confession, then: I may be as fascinated by guns as my gun-owning and gun-loving friend in Maine, but were it up to me, I would rid America of its guns. I would be less verbally self-righteous about gun control than I was in the past, for I think I have begun to understand those who, like my friend in Maine, have arguments of their own in defense of guns. They are formidable arguments. Their fear matches mine, and I assume that their anguish over the safety of their children is also equal to mine. I, too, know the statistics. I can repeat, as easily as he can, that in Switzerland, where an armed citizenry is the norm, the homicide rate is far lower than in many countries that carefully control the distribution of guns to their populace. Laws are simply words on paper—unless they embody what a population wants.

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There is no logic with which I can convince my gun-owning friend in Maine. But there are images I wish I could get him to focus on. Like me, he is a writer. Only I write about cities, and my friend writes about the Maine woods. He is knowledgeable about animals and rocks and trees and silence, and I am knowledgeable about stubs of grass growing between cracks in a concrete sidewalk and the pitch and pull of conflicting voices demanding recognition. I wish I could explain to him the precise configuration of that double-barreled shotgun pointing at me and those two children. Maybe then I could convince him that truth is not merely a matter of geography. Yes, guns don't kill and people do—but in the America he and I share, those people usually kill with guns.

Four years after that incident at the gas station, I was sitting with Bruce in a brasserie in Paris. It was a sunny July afternoon and we were eating lunch at a small outside table, the walls of the magisterial Invalides beckoning to us from across the street. Bruce was fourteen, and fifteen minutes earlier he had returned from his first trip alone on the Paris Metro. Suddenly a man approached, eyes menacing and bloodshot. He was short and thick, his body seemingly caked by the muscularity of a beaten-down club fighter or an unemployed stevedore. He stared at us, eyes filled with the rage of the insane. Then he flexed his muscles as if he were on exhibit as a circus strong man, cried out something—a sound I remember as a cross between gargling and choking—and disappeared just as suddenly down the street.

The incident still haunts me. The French, I suspect, are as violent as they like to claim we Americans are. But in Paris it is difficult for a man filled with rage and craziness to get hold of a gun. Not impossible, mind you, just difficult. Somewhere along the line, the French have learned not that guns don't kill and people do but that people with guns can kill. And they know what we have yet to acknowledge—that when the Furies dance in the head it's best to keep the weapons in display cases in the museum. For that, at least, I wish my friend in Maine could learn to be grateful. As I was, eating lunch with my son in Paris.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1. After reading this piece all the way through, stop for a minute and think about one specific section that affected you most. What part comes to mind? Why do you think that particular section affected you?
2. If you had to categorize this piece, would you classify it as an argument, a personal narrative, or an essay that explains? Give your reasons for your choice.
3. When do you think Kriegel solidified his position on gun control? Why did this event have such an impact on him?
4. Do you think this piece would convince Kriegel's friend in Maine to put away his guns? Why or why not? Write a dialogue between the two men, showing how each would counter the arguments of the other.

5.
What does Kriegel accomplish with the detailed explanation of his first exposure to guns in this piece? How does this experience relate to Kriegel's main point about guns? How does Kriegel's inability to walk relate to his early response to guns?
6.
Although Kriegel's main question is "What is it about Americans and guns?" in this piece he refers only to one specific group of Americans and their fascination with guns: American males. Why does Kriegel exclude women in his discussion of Americans and guns? Is his approach blatantly sexist?
7.
Concerning handling guns, Kriegel writes that "one man's fear and suffering is another man's freedom and pleasure." Can you think of any other material possessions that also fit this statement? Are these possessions also legal?
8.
Explain what Kriegel means by the following statement: "When the Furies dance in the head it's best to keep the weapons in display cases in the museum."

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.
Write a letter to Kriegel in response to this piece—you are the best friend, living in Maine, whom he mentions in the article.
2.
If you have had a firsthand experience with guns, write a personal narrative about this experience. However, do not come out and state your personal belief about guns—let the story reveal your thesis.
3.
Research the correlation between guns and killings in our country. Present your findings and recommendations to the class.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

Here Comes the Groom

Andrew Sullivan earned a doctoral degree in government at Harvard University. He has written widely on gay issues. This article was published in the New Republic, *where, until recently, Sullivan worked as editor-in-chief.*

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.
What differences do you see between living together and being married? Do you believe those differences are significant? Explain.
2.
Freewrite for ten minutes on your initial reaction to allowing gay and lesbian couples the right to marriage.

A (Conservative) Case for Gay Marriage

Last month in New York, a court ruled that a gay lover had the right to stay in his deceased partner's rent-control apartment because the lover qualified as a member of the deceased's family. The ruling deftly annoyed almost everybody. Conservatives saw judicial activism in favor of gay rent control: three reasons to be appalled. Chastened liberals (such as the *New York Times* editorial page), while endorsing the recognition of gay relationships, also worried about the abuse of already stretched entitlements that the ruling threatened. What neither side quite contemplated is that they both might be right, and that the way to tackle the issue of unconventional relationships in conventional society is to try something both more radical and more conservative than putting courts in the business of deciding what is and is not a family. That alternative is the legalization of civil gay marriage.

The New York rent-control case did not go anywhere near that far, which is the problem. The rent-control regulations merely stipulated that a "family" member had the right to remain in the apartment. The judge ruled that to all intents and purposes a gay lover is part of his lover's family, inasmuch as a "family" merely means an interwoven social life, emotional commitment, and some level of financial interdependence.

It's a principle now well established around the country. Several cities have "domestic partnership" laws, which allow relationships that do not fit into the category of heterosexual marriage to be registered with the city and qualify for benefits that up till now have been reserved for straight married couples. San Francisco, Berkeley, Madison, and Los Angeles all have legislation, as does the politically correct Washington, D.C. suburb, Takoma Park. In these cities, a variety of interpersonal arrangements qualify for health insurance, bereavement leave, insurance, annuity and pension rights, housing rights (such as rent-control apartments), adoption and inheritance rights. Eventually, according to gay lobby groups, the aim is to include federal income tax and veterans' benefits as well. A recent case even involved the right to use a family member's accumulated frequent-flier points. Gays are not the only beneficiaries; heterosexual "live-togethers" also qualify.

There's an argument, of course, that the current legal advantages extended to married people unfairly discriminate against people who've shaped their lives in less conventional arrangements. But it doesn't take a genius to see that enshrining in the law a vague principle like "domestic partnership" is an invitation to qualify at little personal cost for a vast array of entitlements otherwise kept crudely under control.

To be sure, potential DPs have to prove financial interdependence, shared living arrangements, and a commitment to mutual caring. But they don't need to have a sexual relationship or even closely mirror old-style marriage. In principle, an elderly woman and her live-in nurse could qualify. A couple of uneuphemistically confirmed bachelors could be DPs. So could two close college students, a pair of seminarians, or a couple of frat buddies. Left as it is, the concept of domestic partnership could open a Pandora's box of litigation and subjective judicial decision-making about who qualifies. You either are or are not married; it's not a complex question. Whether you are in a "domestic partnership" is not so clear.

More important, the concept of domestic partnership chips away at the prestige of traditional relationships and undermines the priority we give them. This priority is not necessarily a product of heterosexism. Consider heterosexual couples. Society has good reason to extend legal advantages to heterosexuals who choose the formal sanction of marriage over simply living together. They make a deeper commitment to one another and to society; in exchange, society extends certain benefits to them. Marriage provides an anchor, if an arbitrary and weak one, in the chaos of sex and relationships to which we are all prone. It provides a mechanism for emotional stability, economic security, and the healthy rearing of the next generation. We rig the law in its favor not because we disparage all forms of relationships other than the nuclear family, but because we recognize that not to promote marriage would be to ask too much of human virtue. In the context of the weakened family's effect upon the poor, it might also invite social disintegration. One of the worst products of the New Right's "family values" campaign is that its extremism and hatred of diversity has disguised this more measured and more convincing case for the importance of the marital bond.

The concept of domestic partnership ignores these concerns, indeed directly attacks them. This is a pity, since one of its most important objectives—providing some civil recognition for gay relationships—is a noble cause and one completely compatible with the defense of the family. But the way to go about it is not to undermine straight marriage; it is to legalize old-style marriage for gays.

The gay movement has ducked this issue primarily out of fear of division. Much of the gay leadership clings to notions of gay life as essentially outsider, antibourgeois, radical. Marriage, for them, is co-optation into straight society. For the Stonewall generation, it is hard to see how this vision of conflict will ever fundamentally change. But for many other gays—my guess, a majority—while they don't deny the importance of rebellion twenty years ago and are grateful for what was done, there's now the sense of a new opportunity. A need to rebel has quietly ceded to a desire to belong. To be gay and to be bourgeois no longer seems such an absurd proposition. Certainly since AIDS, to be gay and to be responsible has become a necessity.

Gay marriage squares several circles at the heart of the domestic partnership debate. Unlike domestic partnership, it allows for recognition of gay relationships, while casting no aspersions on traditional marriage. It merely asks that gays be allowed to join in. Unlike domestic partnership, it doesn't open up avenues for heterosexuals to get benefits without the responsibilities of marriage, or a nightmare of definitional litigation. And unlike domestic partnership, it harnesses to an already established social convention the yearnings for stability and acceptance among a fast-maturing gay community.

Gay marriage also places more responsibilities upon gays: It says for the first time that gay relationships are not better or worse than straight relationships, and that the same is expected of them. And it's clear and dignified. There's a legal benefit to a clear, common symbol of commitment. There's also a personal benefit. One of the ironies of domestic partnership is that it's not only more complicated than marriage, it's more demanding, requiring an elaborate statement of intent to qualify. It amounts to a substantial invasion of privacy. Why, after all, should gays be required to prove commitment before they get married in a way we would never dream of asking of straights?

Legalizing gay marriage would offer homosexuals the same deal society now offers heterosexuals: general social approval and specific legal advantages in exchange for a deeper and harder-to-extract-yourself-from commitment to another human being. Like straight marriage, it would foster social cohesion, emotional security, and economic prudence. Since there's no reason gays should not be allowed to adopt or be foster parents, it could also help nurture children. And its introduction would not be some sort of radical break with social custom. As it has become more acceptable for gay people to acknowledge their loves publicly, more and more have committed themselves to one another for life in full view of their families and their friends. A law institutionalizing gay marriage would merely reinforce a healthy social trend. It would also, in the wake of AIDS, qualify as a genuine public health measure. Those conservatives who deplore promiscuity among some homosexuals should be among the first to support it. Burke could have written a powerful case for it.

The argument that gay marriage would subtly undermine the unique legitimacy of straight marriage is based upon a fallacy. For heterosexuals, straight marriage would remain the most significant—and only legal—social bond. Gay marriage could only delegitimize straight marriage if it were a real alternative to it, and this is clearly not true. To put it bluntly, there's precious little evidence that straights could be persuaded by any law to have sex with— let alone marry—someone of their own sex. The only possible effect of this sort would be to persuade gay men and women who force themselves into heterosexual marriage (often at appalling cost to themselves and their families) to find a focus for their family instincts in a more personally positive environment. But this is clearly a plus, not a minus: Gay marriage could both avoid a lot of tortured families and create the possibility for many happier ones. It is not, in short, a denial of family values. It's an extension of them.

Of course, some would claim that any legal recognition of homosexuality is a de facto attack upon heterosexuality. But even the most hardened conservatives recognize that gays are a permanent minority and aren't likely to go away. Since persecution is not an option in a civilized society, why not coax gays into traditional values rather than rail incoherently against them?

There's a less elaborate argument for gay marriage: It's good for gays. It provides role models for young gay people who, after the exhilaration of coming out, can easily lapse into short-term relationships and insecurity with no tangible goal in sight. My own guess is that most gays would embrace such a goal with as much (if not more) commitment as straights. Even in our society as it is, many lesbian relationships are virtual textbook cases of monogamous commitment. Legal gay marriage could also help bridge the gulf often found between gays and their parents. It could bring the essence of gay life—a gay couple—into the heart of the traditional straight family in a way the family can most understand and the gay offspring can most easily acknowledge. It could do as much to heal the gay-straight rift as any amount of gay rights legislation.

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If these arguments sound socially conservative, that's no accident. It's one of the richest ironies of our society's blind spot toward gays that essentially conservative social goals should have the appearance of being so radical. But gay marriage is not a radical step. It avoids the mess of domestic partnership; it is humane; it is conservative in the best sense of the word. It's also practical. Given the fact that we already allow legal gay relationships, what possible social goal is advanced by framing the law to encourage those relationships to be unfaithful, undeveloped, and insecure?

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.

Why does Sullivan consider his proposal for allowing gays and lesbians to engage in civil marriage a “conservative” solution?

2.

What are the problems inherent in “domestic partnership” laws? Who, really, is protected under these laws?

3.

Why, according to Sullivan, is marriage a better arrangement for gay people than simply living together?

4.

Do you think Sullivan is right? Would family members be more apt to accept a gay relationship if the couple were married? Predict your own family’s reactions about such an arrangement.

5.

One of Sullivan’s underlying points is that marriage, as an institution, places more responsibility upon couples. What’s your reaction or response to this statement?

6.

What might be some opposing viewpoints to gay marriages that Sullivan fails to address? How would you address those viewpoints?

7.

Carefully read Sullivan’s last sentence in this piece. Respond to his question as well as to the word choices he makes to conclude his piece.

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.

Research the laws in your state to discover what legal issues relate to gay rights. Report on your findings to the class.

2.

Read articles by gay activists on the issues with which they are concerned. Do any advocate marriage for gays? Do their reasons coincide with Sullivan’s? Would any of them disagree with Sullivan’s proposal?

MICHAEL LEVIN

The Case against Civil Rights for Homosexuals

In this essay, Michael Levin, who is a professor of philosophy at the City University of New York, argues against protecting the rights of homosexuals. This excerpt appeared originally as part of an essay refuting the pro-choice position that abortion should remain a woman’s personal decision—outside of government interference or regulation. Levin contends that if the individual conscience can be the guide when a woman elects abortion, it should also be the guide for those who wish to discriminate against gay people.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

From the title alone, what do you think Levin’s main point will be, and what’s your reaction to this point?

2.

What are your thoughts: what moral choices should be left to individual conscience, and which moral choices should be legislated?

Pleas for the sovereignty of individual conscience become yet more puzzling when entered by supporters of laws banning private discrimination against homosexuals. The laws in question have nothing to do with guaranteeing homosexuals the right to do as they please in private; these laws, rather, would forbid the private use of “sexual preference” as a criterion for employment and housing decisions. These laws forbid third parties to refuse to associate with homosexuals on the basis of beliefs about and possible aversion to homosexual practices. It is unnecessary here to decide whether homosexuality is “unnatural” or whether distaste for homosexuals is “prejudice.” The fact is that many people dislike homosexuals. They think homosexuality is intrinsically abhorrent, a violation of divine commands, a threat to their children. How is one to justify denying to such people the freedom to avoid homosexuals if they conscientiously feel that avoidance of homosexuality is desirable? Surely one’s willingness to hire or rent to homosexuals can be seen as a matter of private conscience, one’s “right to one’s own body” (a landlord may not wish to rent rooms to a homosexual in the same building his own body is situated in), one’s “right to choose.”

The analogy often drawn between homosexuals, blacks, and Jews is obviously less than perfect. A black man cannot hide his race but a homosexual can hide his sexual impulses. True, a Jew can also remove his head cover if he is indoors with an anti-Semitic hiring officer, and perhaps has only himself to blame if he does not get the job—but if the Jew does choose to lose the job in preference to (as he sees it) offending God, that is a matter of religious conviction. It is hard to think of a comparable motive that could induce a homosexual to refuse to disguise his homosexuality from a prospective employer. The point is that the analogy impresses some people but not others. Blacks and Jews no doubt have their own opinion of it. Genuine respect for freedom of conscience would allow each person to make up his own mind about it, and about whether to ignore “sexual preference” in those situations in which he is required by law to ignore race and religion. Perhaps permitting freedom of conscience will permit mistakes; perhaps some people will choose (wrongly, in some eyes) to consider sexual preference important. Perhaps as a result of such choices, many homosexuals will be worse off than they would have been had freedom of conscience been forbidden. Anyone who considers this possibility too awful for the state to countenance, but also supports decriminalizing abortion, must consider the happiness of homosexuals more important than the lives of fetuses.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
From this short piece, what’s your impression of the author? Is he a fair-minded person? An angry person? A scholarly, reserved person? A laid-back, easy-going soul? Why?
2.
React to this statement in Levin’s first paragraph: “The fact is that many people dislike homosexuals.” Then analyze your reaction: how much did this quote affect you, and why do you think you had this reaction?
3.

In essence, Levin is using the issue of homosexual rights as a weapon against those who support individual choice when it comes to abortion. In this short argument, what he is basically saying is this: If individuals should be free to choose to act upon their own consciences when it comes to abortion, then shouldn't landowners be free to act upon theirs when it comes to dealing with homosexuals? With two or three peers, discuss the logic inherent in this reasoning and the appropriateness of using such an analogy.

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.
Research any current laws in your state that deal with homosexuality, and write a report on your findings.

2.
Write a fully developed argument in which you take one of two positions: you either agree that homosexual rights need to be protected legally, or you disagree with protecting an individual's rights based on his or her sexual preferences.

LESLIE MARMON SILKO

Lullaby

Leslie Marmon Silko was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1948 and grew up on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. After graduating from the University of New Mexico and attending law school, she returned to the Laguna Pueblo, where she currently lives and writes. She has published many short stories and poems, including a volume of poetry, Laguna Woman: Poems *(1974), and a novel,* Ceremony *(1977). In 1974 she received the Award for Poetry from the* Chicago Review, *and in 1975, this story, "Lullaby," was chosen to appear in Martha Foley's* Best Short Stories of 1975.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.
Think about events that you've read about in the newspapers or seen on television this past year. What story (or types of stories) moved you strongly? Write about one of these stories and describe your response to it.

2.
Under what circumstances should authorities take children away from their family? Explain.

3.
If you are a parent, what was the most difficult situation that you and your children faced? As a child, what was the most difficult situation that you and your parents faced?

The sun had gone down but the snow in the wind gave off its own light. It came in thick tufts like new wool—washed before the weaver spins it. Ayah reached out for it like her own babies had, and she smiled when she remembered how she had laughed at them. She was an old woman now, and her life had become memories. She sat down with her back against the wide cottonwood tree, feeling the rough bark on her back bones; she faced east and listened to the wind and snow sing a high-pitched Yeibechei song. Out of the wind she felt warmer, and she could watch the wide, fluffy snow fill in her tracks, steadily, until the direction she had come from was gone. By the light of the snow she could see the dark outline of the big arroyo a few feet away. She was sitting on the edge of Cebolleta Creek, where in the springtime the thin cows would graze on grass already chewed flat to the ground. In the wide, deep creek bed where only a trickle of water flowed in the summer, the skinny cows would wander, looking for new grass along winding paths splashed with manure.

Ayah pulled the old Army blanket over her head like a shawl. Jimmie's blanket—the one he had sent to her. That was a long time ago and the green wool was faded, and it was unraveling on the edges. She did not want to think about Jimmie. So she thought about the weaving and the way her mother had done it. On the tall wooden loom set into the sand under a tamarack tree for shade. She could see it clearly. She had been only a little girl when her grandma gave her the wooden combs to pull the twigs and burrs from the raw, freshly washed wool. And while she combed the wool, her grandma sat beside her spinning a silvery strand of yarn around the smooth cedar spindle. Her mother worked at the loom with yarns dyed bright yellow and red and gold. She watched them dye the yarn in boiling black pots full of beeweed petals, juniper berries, and sage. The blankets her mother made were soft and woven so tight that rain rolled off them like birds' feathers. Ayah remembered sleeping warmly on cold windy nights, wrapped in her mother's blankets on the hogan's sandy floor.

The snow drifted now, with the northwest wind hurling it in gusts. It drifted up around her black overshoes—old ones with little metal buckles. She smiled at the snow which was trying to cover her little by little. She could remember when they had no black rubber overshoes; only the high buckskin leggings that they wrapped over their elkhide moccasins. If the snow was dry or frozen, a person could walk all day and not get wet; and in the evenings the beams of the ceiling would hang with lengths of pale buckskin leggings drying out slowly.

She felt peaceful remembering. She didn't feel cold any more. Jimmie's blanket seemed warmer than it had ever been. And she could remember the morning he was born. She could remember whispering to her mother, who was sleeping on the other side of the hogan, to tell her it was time now. She did not want to wake the others. The second time she called to her, her mother stood up and pulled on her shoes; she knew. They walked to the old stone hogan together, Ayah walking a step behind her mother. She waited alone learning the rhythms of the pains while her mother went to call the old woman to help them. The morning was already warm even before dawn and Ayah smelled the bee flowers blooming and the young willow growing at the springs. She could remember that so clearly, but his birth merged into the births of the other children and to her it became all the same birth. They named him for the summer morning and in English they called him Jimmie. 5

It wasn't like Jimmie died. He just never came back, and one day a dark blue sedan with white writing on its doors pulled up in front of the boxcar shack where the rancher let the Indians live. A man in a khaki uniform trimmed in gold gave them a yellow piece of paper and told them that Jimmie was dead. He said the Army would try to get the body back and then it would be shipped to them; but it wasn't likely because the helicopter had burned after it crashed. All of this was told to Chato because he could understand English. She stood inside the doorway holding the baby while Chato listened. Chato spoke English like a white man and he spoke Spanish too. He was taller than the white man and he stood straighter too. Chato didn't explain why; he just told the military man they could keep the body if they found it. The white man looked bewildered; he nodded his head and left. Then Chato looked at her and shook his head, and then he told her, "Jimmie isn't coming home anymore," and when he spoke, he used the words to speak of the dead. She didn't cry then, but she hurt inside with anger. And she mourned him as the years passed, when a horse fell with Chato and broke his leg, and the white rancher told them he wouldn't pay Chato until he could work again. She mourned Jimmie because he would have worked for his father then; he would have saddled the big bay horse and ridden the fence lines each day, with wire cutters and heavy gloves, fixing the breaks in the barbed wire and putting the stray cattle back inside again.

She mourned him after the white doctors came to take Danny and Ella away. She was at the shack alone that day they came. It was back in the days before they hired Navajo women to go with them as interpreters. She recognized one of the doctors. She had seen him at the children's clinic at Cañoncito about a month ago. They were wearing khaki uniforms and they waved papers at her and a black ball-point pen, trying to make her understand their English words. She was frightened by the way they looked at the children, like the lizard watches the fly. Danny was swinging on the tire swing on the elm tree behind the rancher's house, and Ella was toddling around the front door, dragging the broomstick horse Chato made for her. Ayah could see they wanted her to sign the papers, and Chato had taught her to sign her name. It was something she was proud of. She only wanted them to go, and to take their eyes away from her children.

She took the pen from the man without looking at his face and she signed the papers in three different places he pointed to. She stared at the ground by their feet and waited for them to leave. But they stood there and began to point and gesture at the children. Danny stopped swinging. Ayah could see his fear. She moved suddenly and grabbed Ella into her arms; the child squirmed, trying to get back to her toys. Ayah ran with the baby toward Danny; she screamed for him to run and then she grabbed him around his chest and carried him too. She ran south into the foothills of juniper trees and black lava rock. Behind her she heard the doctors running, but they had been taken by surprise, and as the hills became steeper and the cholla cactus were thicker, they stopped. When she reached the top of the hill, she stopped to listen in case they were circling around her. But in a few minutes she heard a car engine start and they drove away. The children had been too surprised to cry while she ran with them. Danny was shaking and Ella's little fingers were gripping Ayah's blouse.

She stayed up in the hills for the rest of the day, sitting on a black lava boulder in the sunshine where she could see for miles all around her. The sky was light blue and cloudless, and it was warm for late April. The sun warmth relaxed her and took the fear and anger away. She lay back on the rock and watched the sky. It seemed to her that she could walk into the sky, stepping through clouds endlessly. Danny played with little pebbles and stones, pretending they were birds' eggs and then little rabbits. Ella sat at her feet and dropped fistfuls of dirt into the breeze, watching the dust and particles of sand intently. Ayah watched a hawk soar high above them, dark wings gliding; hunting or only watching, she did not know. The hawk was patient and he circled all afternoon before he disappeared around the high volcanic peak the Mexicans called Guadalupe.

Late in the afternoon, Ayah looked down at the gray boxcar shack with the paint all peeled from the wood: the stove pipe on the roof was rusted and crooked. The fire she had built that morning in the oil drum stove had burned out. Ella was asleep in her lap now and Danny sat close to her, complaining that he was hungry; he asked when they would go to the house. “We will stay up here until your father comes,” she told him, “because those white men were chasing us.” The boy remembered then and he nodded at her silently.

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If Jimmie had been there he could have read those papers and explained to her what they said. Ayah would have known then, never to sign them. The doctors came back the next day and they brought a BIA policeman with them. They told Chato they had her signature and that was all they needed. Except for the kids. She listened to Chato sullenly; she hated him when he told her it was the old woman who died in the winter, spitting blood; it was her old grandma who have given the children this disease. “They don’t spit blood,” she said coldly. “The whites lie.” She held Ella and Danny close to her, ready to run to the hills again. “I want a medicine man first,” she said to Chato, not looking at him. He shook his head. “It’s too late now. The policeman is with them. You signed the paper.” His voice was gentle.

It was worse than if they had died: to lose the children and to know that somewhere, in a place called Colorado, in a place full of sick and dying strangers, her children were without her. There had been babies that died soon after they were born, and one that died before he could walk. She had carried them herself, up to the boulders and great pieces of the cliff that long ago crashed down from Long Mesa; she laid them in the crevices of sandstone and buried them in fine brown sand with round quartz pebbles that washed down the hills in the rain. She had endured it because they had been with her. But she could not bear this pain. She did not sleep for a long time after they took her children. She stayed on the hill where they had fled the first time, and she slept rolled up in the blanket Jimmie had sent her. She carried the pain in her belly and it was fed by everything she saw: the blue sky of their last day together and the dust and pebbles they played with; the swing in the elm tree and broomstick horse choked life from her. The pain filled her stomach and there was no room for food or for her lungs to fill with air. The air and the food would have been theirs.

She hated Chato, not because he let the policeman and doctors put the screaming children in the government car, but because he had taught her to sign her name. Because it was like the old ones always told her about learning their language or any of their ways: It endangers you. She slept alone on the hill until the middle of November when the first snows came. Then she made a bed for herself where the children had slept. She did not lie down beside Chato again until many years later, when he was sick and shivering and only her body could keep him warm. The illness came after the white rancher told Chato he was too old to work for him anymore, and Chato and his old woman should be out of the shack by the next afternoon because the rancher had hired new people to work there. That had satisfied her. To see how the white man repaid Chato’s years of loyalty and work. All of Chato’s fine-sounding English talk didn’t change things.

It snowed steadily and the luminous light from the snow gradually diminished into the darkness. Somewhere in Ceboletta a dog barked and other village dogs joined with it. Ayah looked in the direction she had come, from the bar where Chato was buying the wine. Sometimes he told her to go on ahead and wait; and then he never came. And when she finally went back looking for him, she would find him passed out at the bottom of the wooden steps to Azzie’s Bar. All the wine would be gone and most of the money too, from the pale blue check that came to them once a month in a government envelope. It was then that she would look at his face and his hands, scarred by ropes and the barbed wire of all those years, and she would think, this man is a stranger; for forty years she had smiled at him and cooked his food, but he remained a stranger. She stood up again, with the snow almost to her knees, and she walked back to find Chato.

It was hard to walk in the deep snow and she felt the air burn in her lungs. She stopped a short distance from the bar to rest and readjust the blanket. But this time he wasn’t waiting for her at the bottom step with his old Stetson hat pulled down and his shoulders hunched up in his long wool overcoat.

She was careful not to slip on the wooden steps. When she pushed the door open, warm air and cigarette smoke hit her face. She looked around slowly and deliberately, in every corner, in every dark place that the old man might find to sleep. The bar owner didn’t like Indians in there, especially Navajos, but he let Chato come in because he could talk Spanish like he was one of them. The men at the bar stared at her, and the bartender saw that she left the door open wide. Snowflakes were flying inside like moths and melting into a puddle on the oiled wood floor. He motioned to her to close the door, but she did not see him. She held herself straight and walked across the room slowly, searching the room with every step. The snow in her hair melted and she could feel it on her forehead. At the far corner of the room, she saw red flames at the mica window of the old stove door; she looked behind the stove just to make sure. The bar got quiet except for the Spanish polka music playing on the jukebox. She stood by the stove and shook the snow from her blanket and held it near the stove to dry. The wet wool smell reminded her of newborn goats in early March, brought inside to warm near the fire. She felt calm.

In past years they would have told her to get out. But her hair was white now and her face was wrinkled. They looked at her like she was a spider crawling slowly across the room. They were afraid; she could feel the fear. She looked at their faces steadily. They reminded her of the first time the white people brought her children back to her that winter. Danny had been shy and hid behind the thin white woman who brought them. And the baby had not known her until Ayah took her into her arms, and then Ella had nuzzled close to her as she had when she was nursing. The blonde woman was nervous and kept looking at a dainty gold watch on her wrist. She sat on the bench near the small window and watched the dark snow clouds gather around the mountains; she was worrying about the unpaved road. She was frightened by what she saw inside too: the strips of venison drying on a rope across the ceiling and the children jabbering excitedly in a language she did not know. So they stayed for only a few hours. Ayah watched the government car disappear down the road and she knew they were already being weaned from these lava hills and from this sky. The last time they came was in early June, and Ella stared at her the way the men in the bar were now staring. Ayah did not try to pick her up; she smiled at her instead and spoke cheerfully to Danny. When he tried to answer her, he could not seem to remember and he spoke English words with the Navajo. But he gave her a scrap of paper that he had found somewhere and carried in his pocket; it was folded in half, and he shyly looked up at her and said it was a bird. She asked Chato if they were home for good this time. He spoke to the white woman and she shook her head. “How much longer?” he asked, and she said she didn’t know; but Chato saw how she stared at the boxcar shack. Ayah turned away then. She did not say good-bye.

She felt satisfied that the men in the bar feared her. Maybe it was her face and the way she held her mouth with teeth clenched tight, like there was nothing anyone could do to her now. She walked north down the road, searching for the old man. She did this because she had the blanket, and there would be no place for him except with her and the blanket in the old adobe barn near the arroyo. They always slept there when they came to Cebolleta. If the money and the wine were gone, she would be relieved because then they could go home again; back to the old hogan with a dirt roof and rock walls where she herself had been born. And the next day the old man could go back to the few sheep they still had, to follow along behind them, guiding them, into dry sandy arroyos where sparse grass grew. She knew he did not like walking behind old ewes when for so many years he rode big quarter horses and worked with cattle. But she wasn't sorry for him; he should have known all along what would happen.

There had not been enough rain for their garden in five years; and that was when Chato finally hitched a ride into the town and brought back brown boxes of rice and sugar and big tin cans of welfare peaches. After that, at the first of the month they went to Ceboletta to ask the postmaster for the check; and then Chato would go to the bar and cash it. They did this as they planted the garden every May, not because anything would survive the summer dust, but because it was time to do this. The journey passed the days that smelled silent and dry like the caves above the canyon with yellow painted buffaloes on their walls.

He was walking along the pavement when she found him. He did not stop or turn around when he heard her behind him. She walked beside him and she noticed how slowly he moved now. He smelled strong of woodsmoke and urine. Lately he had been forgetting. Sometimes he called her by his sister's name and she had been gone for a long time. Once she had found him wandering on the road to the white man's ranch, and she asked him why he was going that way; he laughed at her and said, "You know they can't run that ranch without me," and he walked on determined, limping on the leg that had been crushed many years before. Now he looked at her curiously, as if for the first time, but he kept shuffling along, moving slowly along the side of the highway. His gray hair had grown long and spread out on the shoulders of the long overcoat. He wore the old felt hat pulled down over his ears. His boots were worn out at the toes and he had stuffed pieces of an old red shirt in the holes. The rags made his feet look like little animals up to their ears in snow. She laughed at his feet; the snow muffled the sound of her laugh. He stopped and looked at her again. The wind had quit blowing and the snow was falling straight down; the southeast sky was beginning to clear and Ayah could see a star.

"Let's rest awhile," she said to him. They walked away from the road and up the slope to the giant boulders that had tumbled down from the red sandrock mesa throughout the centuries of rainstorms and earth tremors. In a place where the boulders shut out the wind, they sat down with their backs against the rock. She offered half of the blanket to him and they sat wrapped together.

The storm passed swiftly. The clouds moved east. They were massive and full, crowding together across the sky. She watched them with the feeling of horses—steely blue-gray horses startled across the sky. The powerful haunches pushed into the distances and the tail hairs streamed white mist behind them. The sky cleared. Ayah saw that there was nothing between her and the stars. The light was crystalline. There was no shimmer, no distortion through earth haze. She breathed the clarity of the night sky; she smelled the purity of the half moon and the stars. He was lying on his side with his knees pulled up near his belly for warmth. His eyes were closed now, and in the light from the stars and the moon, he looked young again.

She could see it descend out of the night sky: an icy stillness from the edge of the thin moon. She recognized the freezing. It came gradually, sinking snowflake by snowflake until the crust was heavy and deep. It had the strength of the stars in Orion, and its journey was endless. Ayah knew that with the wine he would sleep. He would not feel it. She tucked the blanket around him, remembering how it was when Ella had been with her; and she felt the rush so big inside her heart for the babies. And she sang the only song she knew to sing for babies. She could not remember if she had ever sung it to her children, but she knew that her grandmother had sung it and her mother had sung it:

The earth is your mother,
she holds you.
The sky is your father,
he protects you.
Sleep,
sleep.
Rainbow is your sister,
she loves you.
The winds are your brothers,
they sing to you.
Sleep,
sleep.
We are together always
We are together always
There never was a time
when this
was not so.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
In “Lullaby,” Silko writes that Ayah “was an old woman now, and her life had become memories.” What are the most joyful memories Ayah recalls? What are the most painful? Are there many in between?

2.
As she sits against the cottonwood tree, what would Ayah say she has learned during her lifetime? How might Ayah complete the following? “For me, life has been like. . . .”

3.
In what ways did the world change between the time of Jimmie’s birth and the time the story ends? What, if any, changes did Ayah make during this time?

4.
Silko writes that even though Ayah knew Chato for over forty years, he “remained a stranger to her.” Why do you think this is?

5.

When Ayah's children come for a visit the last time, why doesn't she say good-bye to them? Who has changed in this scene? Why?

6. How does this piece relate to the chapter theme "Rights and Responsibilities"? Explain.

7. Although this is a fictional short story, can you imagine any parts that might be true? What parts reveal the writer's knowledge? How were you affected by this piece?

8. If Hollywood were to produce this story, who would be depicted as the hero (or heroes), and who would be depicted as the villain (or villains)?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1. Research what happened to the Navajos once the American government took over their lives. How many Navajos are living today? What are their lives like? Where do they live? What work do they do? What are their average wages or salaries? How many go on to higher education?

2. Read and analyze one of Silko's poems from her collection *Laguna Woman: Poems*.

3. Write a poem based on your reactions to "Lullaby."

LINDA PASTAN

Ethics

Born in 1932, Linda Pastan lives in Potomac, Maryland. She has published five volumes of poetry. Her poems have appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, *the* New Republic, *and the* American Poetry Review. *She has received the Dylan Thomas Award, the diCastagnola Award, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.*

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1. Freewrite for ten to fifteen minutes using this starter: "When I was young, I used to think———, but now that I'm older I think———."

2. If you could choose, what would you prefer to be right now: an adult or a child? Why?

In ethics class so many years ago
our teacher asked this question every fall:
if there were a fire in a museum
which would you save, a Rembrandt painting
or an old woman who hadn't many
years left anyhow? Restless on hard chairs
caring little for pictures or old age
we'd opt one year for life, the next for art
and always half-heartedly. Sometimes

the woman borrowed my grandmother’s face
leaving her usual kitchen to wander
some drafty, half-imagined museum.
One year, feeling clever, I replied
why not let the woman decide herself?
Linda, the teacher would report, eschews
the burdens of responsibility.
This fall in a real museum I stand
before a real Rembrandt, old woman,
or nearly so, myself. The colors
within this frame are darker than autumn,
darker even than winter—the browns of earth,
though earth’s most radiant elements burn
through the canvas. I know now that woman
and painting and season are almost one
and all beyond saving by children.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1. What was your initial response to the question posed by the teacher every fall?
2. What impression do you have of the students in the first sixteen lines of this poem? What words, images, and phrases lead you to this impression?
3. What are the implications of “this frame” (line 20) if the speaker is referring to the Rembrandt painting? What are the implications if “this frame” refers to the body of the old woman?
4. Contrast the mood in the first sixteen lines with the mood in the last nine lines of this poem. In what ways does this change reflect a change in the speaker?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1. Go back to your initial journal entry for this piece and turn it into a short poem. Try using Pastan’s poem as your model.
2. Take the student’s point of view in the first sixteen lines of this poem, and write a journal entry, about the ethical dilemma that’s been posed, as well as about other thoughts that may be rambling through your teenage mind.
3.

Imagine you are the “almost” old woman in this poem (lines 17–25), and write about what it feels like to be old. Expand the poem with details and flashbacks that will enable the reader to see your life as it is now—as you stand old and alone in a museum.

TOPICS FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Choose two characters from the selections in this chapter to participate in a conversation regarding the following statement: “We don’t need any laws in this country and we don’t need the Constitution. All we need to do is treat people with respect.”
2. Imagine that the young mother in “Lullaby” has written you a letter asking for your advice. What encouragement or advice do you give her, considering her situation? Whom can you advise her to turn to for help? What do you tell her to believe in? What action can she possibly take to help herself?
3. What makes an effective argument? Compare and contrast one piece that moved or convinced you the most and one that had little or no effect on you. Analyze what elements of writing appeal to you as a reader.
4. Imagine a meeting between Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Ayah, the Indian woman in “Lullaby.” What advice would Stanton give to Ayah? What could Ayah offer as her philosophy on life? What questions would Ayah ask of Stanton regarding the progress women have made? How might Stanton respond?
5. Write an essay in which you argue that democracy can or cannot work in a country in which capitalism, by its very nature, fosters class and economic inequalities.
6. Working in a small group, research the hiring and promotion policies of several large corporations to discover how many positions of power are held by women and minorities. Argue for or against the continuation (or institution) of affirmative action policies in these companies.
7. Make a guess about what three of the following people would say is wrong with American government today: Jesse Jackson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Andrew Sullivan, Michael Levin. Write the argument they, as a committee, would formulate to support their contentions.
8. Argue for or against the following proposition: Education is essential if all humans are to achieve equal rights. Refer to several sources in this chapter as you write your argument.

IRA GLASSER

Artistic Freedom: A Gathering Storm

Ira Glasser (born in 1938 in Brooklyn) has been the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) since 1978. Previously, he was director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. In 1991, the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, he wrote Visions of Liberty: The Bill of Rights for All Americans. His essays have appeared in the New York Times, the Village Voice, Harper’s, the New Republic, The Nation, and Christianity and Crisis, among other periodicals. This selection originally appeared in Civil Liberties, the publication of the ACLU.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

On the debate over flag burning, where do you stand? Should it be illegal, or is it a person's right to do as he or she pleases?

2.

How would you describe yourself: as someone who follows conventions and is of a more conservative nature, or as someone who tends to be unconventional and liberal on most issues?

The roots of current efforts to curb freedom of artistic expression reach back to the early 1980s, when religious fundamentalists and other authoritarians attempted to censor books, films and television. Libraries, museums, schools, theaters, television stations, bookstores and video shops all came under sustained pressure to restrict the display or availability of images and words felt to offend various self-appointed monitors of morality and taste.

This censorship movement found powerful allies in government. Attorney General Edwin Meese enthusiastically joined the crusade, heading up a Presidential commission convened to establish a behavioral link between vaguely defined "pornography" and sex crimes (a link that has eluded social scientists for decades), and to establish a rationale for prosecuting the purveyors of "offensive" artworks.

Today, we are reaping the harvest of those earlier efforts: a climate in which artistic expression—from rock music lyrics to unconventional imagery in photography, to political symbolism in paintings and sculpture, to unique cinematic visions of reality—is under sustained assault. Today, artistic freedom is threatened across the country by escalating (if more refined) pressure from private groups, new censorship laws, and politically-inspired spending cuts.

For example, in 1985 Tipper Gore's Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) pressured record companies to label song lyrics that allegedly encourage sex, suicide, drugs, alcohol and belief in "the occult." The Recording Industry Association of America, feeling the heat from the PMRC, agreed to support "warning" labels. Today, retail outlets around the country are using such labels to decide what records to sell, and to whom. Hastings, the nation's eighth largest book and music store chain, places "18 for Purchase" stickers on 74 rock albums and refuses to sell them to underage consumers. The other large chains are similarly restricting record sales, according to what criteria no one knows. One chain recently decided not to stock labeled records at all. Obviously, these actions on the part of the large chains, which dominate record sales nationwide, are bound to engender self-censorship tendencies in composers and recording artists—who need the chains to gain access to their market.

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Predictably, these retail labeling practices, combined with the recording industry's drift toward self-censorship, are now prompting politicians to begin introducing laws that *require* labeling.

In December 1989, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a bill banning the sale to minors of "sexually explicit" albums, unless the album covers bear a day-glo label that reads: "WARNING: May contain explicit lyrics descriptive of or advocating one or more of the following: suicide, incest, bestiality, sadomasochism, sexual activity in a violent context, murder, morbid violence, illegal use of drugs or alcohol. PARENTAL ADVISORY." Retailers caught selling such material without a label are subject to a $300 fine and 90 days in jail.

The state representative who introduced the bill was quoted recently as saying that his intent is not to censor song lyrics, but to label them “just as we do for corn flakes and pesticides and many other things.”

Similar legislation has been introduced in Missouri, Virginia, Arizona, Iowa, New Mexico, Illinois, Oklahoma, Delaware, Kansas and Florida. The Missouri bill adds nudity and adultery to the danger zone; Florida includes books and magazines and would prohibit the sale of labeled materials to minors. Maryland would also label racist and anti-Semitic content in music lyrics (presumably, local prosecutors would identify the guilty lyrics). The state representative who introduced the Missouri bill has sent a copy of it to his counterparts in 35 states, encouraging them to duplicate his effort. One wonders, if it is acceptable to label records, whether labels on books are next.

In some states, prosecutors are not waiting for these new censorship proposals to become law. For example, the ACLU represented an Alabama retailer whose record store was raided in June 1988; 25 rap music tapes were confiscated and he was arrested, under the state’s obscenity law. The day before the raid, the store owner had sold a rap cassette containing lyrics that were “offensive” to an undercover police officer. This was the first case in which recorded music was the basis for an obscenity prosecution.

The store owner was convicted in municipal court and fined $500. He then requested a jury trial, as was his right under Alabama law. At the trial, held this February, the ACLU presented a music critic and linguist as expert witnesses to argue that such obscenity convictions would have a widespread chilling effect on artists. On February 22, the jury overturned the conviction. We regard it as a hopeful sign that the people of Alabama would chafe so readily at the threat of prosecutors deciding what music they can and cannot hear.

The visual arts are also under assault. Only a few weeks into 1990, the city of New Haven, Connecticut, ordered the dismantling of an exhibition of Vietnam War photographs on the grounds that they were “too explicit.” In November 1989, in Washington, D.C., a black artist’s outdoor portrait of Jesse Jackson as blond, blue-eyed and white-skinned was attacked with sledgehammers by a group of offended black men. A painting that depicts the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington in women’s underwear, when exhibited last year at the Art Institute of Chicago, provoked offended city aldermen to call out the police to literally arrest the painting and remove it from the premises. The ACLU is suing the city for damages and injunctive relief on behalf of the artist, to whom the painting was later returned in a damaged condition.

Another controversy at the Art Institute of Chicago last summer, surrounding the display of a sculpture by “Dread” Scott Tyler that invited viewers to tread upon an American flag spread out on the floor, ultimately led to the enactment of new city, state and federal bans on flag desecration! Senator Robert Dole (R-KA) said at the time, “I don’t know much about art, but I know desecration when I see it.”

The flag issue did not go away. On June 21, 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its anxiously awaited decision in the flag burning case, *Texas v. Johnson.* The Texas statute that banned flag-burning as part of a political protest, said the Court, was unconstitutional under the First Amendment. Ironically, the decision ignited a firestorm that raged so out of control as to underscore the total insignificance of the conflagration Gregory Johnson had visited upon the 1984 Republican convention in Dallas.

Let's amend the Constitution, said President Bush one week after the decision. And so commenced a campaign to attach to the First Amendment an exception that would allow enactment of a law prohibiting "desecration" of the American flag. With great haste and nearly without dissent, Congress passed "sense of the Congress" resolutions condemning the Supreme Court decision.

Mercifully, the proposed constitutional amendment did not pass. But a new federal law prohibiting "desecration" of the flag did. That law has now been declared unconstitutional by two federal courts, and appeals are on the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. If the Supreme Court upholds the lower court decisions, that could recharge efforts to amend the Constitution. And while proponents of flag desecration laws are primarily interested in restricting political expression, if such laws are allowed to stand there will be no way to limit their sweep through the arts.

Censorship of visual images has also been enabled by federal funding restrictions. Last summer, Senator Jesse Helms, outraged by two exhibits underwritten by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), one of them featuring homoerotic photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, introduced a federal law that would have broadly restricted NEA funding of "offensive" art. The mere introduction of the Helms bill had an immediate censorious effect: The Corcoran Gallery in Washington cancelled its plans to mount the Mapplethorpe exhibit that had been the object of Helms' wrath. Congress rejected the initial Helms bill but enacted legislation that prohibits funding of "obscene" art, seems to define all homoerotic art as *per se* obscene, and establishes a regime of surveillance over artistic expression.

To even *read* the restrictions and guidelines that the new law imposes on the NEA is to be chilled! The law establishes a federal commission to review the NEA's grant-making process; requires the NEA to give Congress 30 days notice of its intention to award further grants to the institutions responsible for the Mapplethorpe exhibit, so that Congress may review the plan; and puts Congress on record as disavowing the previous NEA grants to those institutions, as well as the NEA fellowship awarded to painter Andres Serrano, who created a work thought to defame the Christian religion.

The very first application of the guidelines realized their potential for being wielded as a political weapon. Prior to enactment of the law, a small New York City gallery called Artists' Space had obtained a $10,000 NEA grant to help mount a show dealing with AIDS. After the new legislation took effect, the gallery director reported to the NEA that the show's catalogue and some of its imagery might be controversial. Incoming NEA chair John Frohnmeyer responded by threatening to withdraw the grant entirely, on the grounds that an essay in the catalogue criticized public officials—including Senator Helms. Said Frohnmeyer: "Political discourse ought to be in the political arena and not in a show sponsored by the Endowment."

One of the most disturbing things about current efforts to corral expression in the arts and in popular culture is that such efforts are increasingly broad-based.

For example: In the early 1980s, some feminists and legal scholars began to argue that pornography is a type of civil rights violation and gained passage of local ordinances broadly outlawing images that “denigrate” women. The ACLU challenged these laws and helped strike them down in court.

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Interestingly, these laws are founded on the same reasoning that the Meese Commission on Pornography used to advocate the shutting down of bookstores and video shops, and prosecution of their owners for trafficking in “obscene” materials.

Similar efforts to categorize speech that “denigrates” as a civil rights violation are now occurring on numerous college and university campuses. As deeply troubling as the resurgence of racial tensions among students is, it is also troubling that the regulations and policies being devised by universities to respond to these tensions echo the standards of Jesse Helms. The original Helms law would have prohibited grants of NEA funds for artistic expression that “denigrates, debases or reviles a person, group or class of citizens on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap or national origin,” or that “denigrates any religion or non-religion.”

Thus, it turns out that overbroad campus regulations intended to protect minorities and women from racial and sexual harassment are lending a veil of legitimacy to the efforts of people like Jesse Helms, whose targets are unconventional art. Similarly, restrictions on rock lyrics are now not only rationalized on the grounds that the music presumably encourages drug use, promiscuity and violence, but also because its content is presumably racist, sexist, anti-Semitic and/or homophobic. Wrote Tipper Gore, on the op-ed page of the *Washington Post* January 8, 1990: “Words like ‘bitch’ and ‘nigger’ are dangerous. Racial and sexual epithets, whether screamed across a street or camouflaged by the rhythms of a song, turn people into objects less than human . . . [w]e must raise our voices in protest and put pressure on those who not only reflect this hatred but also package, polish, promote, and market it.”

Another, and inevitable, twist of fate is the fact that campus rules prohibiting racist speech are being turned against minority students themselves and their kinfolk in the arts. Recently, a student group at Columbia University tried to invoke campus rules against racist speech to bar an appearance on campus by a controversial member of the black rap group Public Enemy, who had made some allegedly anti-Semitic remarks last summer.

Permitting restraints on expression in one area only fuels efforts to restrain it in another. Censorship is as indivisible as the First Amendment itself. That is why the ACLU challenges *all* censorship—whether it is an attempt to prohibit “unpatriotic” uses of the flag, racist speech on campuses, sexually explicit rock lyrics, the banning of films or NEA funding for certain artistic expression.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.

What is the author’s basic premise about artistic expression and freedom? Where do you find it, either implied or directly stated, in the text?

2.

What sources does this piece use to prove the statement that artistic freedom is threatened in America? How reliable and valid do you find these sources to be?

3.

According to the information in this piece, where do the courts, in general, stand when it comes to cases involving artistic freedom? How does this answer contradict or reinforce the belief that artistic freedom is being threatened today?

4.

What are the most common arguments against “free speech”? Which one of these arguments do you find reasonable?

5.

After looking at the author’s premise, the support, and the opposition, how effective do you find this argument to be? What suggestions would you make for strengthening it? Explain.

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.

Research any current case involving free speech and censorship. Write an essay in which you analyze the arguments on both sides of this case. Then find a turning point for yourself, and state which side of the argument you favor.

2.

Write an essay in which you argue, point for point, against Glasser’s reasons in this piece. Aim to bring in traditional authorities to which you can appeal for your support.

3.

Reflecting on your prereading response to the type of person you are, write a piece in which you extol the merits of being either a conservative or a liberal.

TAMAR LEWIN

Marriage Ed

Tamar Lewin is a national reporter for the New York Times. He has also contributed articles about children and teenagers to several other publications, such as Trends among U.S. Children and the Seattle Times.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

From whom and how do children learn about love?

2.

Respond to this quote by Elizabeth Wurtzel, author of *The Prozac Generation:* “My generation is afraid to love.”

As conservatives and liberals alike have come to agree on the importance of marriage and the need to strengthen families, a growing number of high schools across the country are requiring students to undergo marriage education.

On Jan. 1, Florida will become the first state to require all public high schools to teach marriage and relationship skills, such as how to resolve conflicts. In other states, hundreds of individual schools and school districts are adding classes—some a semester long, some a two-week unit within another course—to teach students the skills to make marriage work and avoid divorce.

The movement to teach relationship skills, however, is only part of a growing debate over what, and where, American children should be taught about love and marriage.

Given the nation’s high divorce rates, some educators and social policy analysts say, schools have an obligation to help students think not only about relationships, but also about the role that marriage has played in history and the deeper human issues of love, intimacy and commitment.

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But there is no consensus on what should be taught: some see the courses as an introduction to premarital counseling, while others want character education or teaching on divorce law.

Others question the whole concept of marriage education in the schools, arguing that it is an area best left to churches and community groups and reserved for adults in a relationship—not high-school students working through a crowded curriculum that too often fails to cover basic academic skills.

“We have schools that can’t teach reading, writing and arithmetic,” said Midge Decter, the conservative writer. “The idea that schools should even be touching this chills my blood.”

Advocates of the programs believe they can teach young people how to avoid divorce.

“This isn’t rocket science; it’s more like driver’s ed,” said Diane Sollee, whose experience as a marriage counselor led her to found the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education, a group that promotes schools’ teaching of marriage skills. “It’s about teaching kids the basic communication skills they need for a healthy marriage.”

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“People in marriages that succeed fight about all the same things as people in marriages that fail,” she said. “The research shows that what distinguishes them is how they handle their disagreements. That’s a skill we can teach.”

Because the marriage-skills programs are so new, there is no research on whether they actually prevent divorce.

But some students seem to feel that they fill a need.

In Philadelphia, 19 students at Martin Luther King High School, mostly seniors, enrolled in this semester’s elective marriage-skills class, which is based on a curriculum developed by the family law section of the American Bar Association and is now in use in more than 400 schools. Only four lived with two married parents, and most said they hoped the course—alternating discussion of divorce law and domestic violence with exercises in budgeting and conflict resolution—would help them avoid their parents’ mistakes.

“My parents broke up when I was 2,” said Marcus Wright, an 18-year-old senior in the class, which is sponsored by, and mostly taught at, Wolf, Block, Schorr & Solis-Cohen, a local law firm. “I’m taking this course because I want to get married, and I don’t want to break up.”

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Currently, most high schools discuss marriage as one part of a health or “life skills” class giving practical information on everything from nutrition and balancing a checkbook to AIDS prevention and first aid.

Many districts have chosen the health model as the best way to avoid controversy in an era when teaching about sexuality or values can cause school-board headaches.

“The left is afraid that schools are going to be used for religious indoctrination, and the right is afraid they’ll push liberal views, so the public-school textbooks describe everything as if it’s plumbing, which makes it safe, but doesn’t help the children,” said Amitai Etzioni, a professor at George Washington University who writes frequently on the need for moral education.

It is not yet clear just what will be in the curriculum in Florida, where it was a liberal Democrat, state Rep. Elaine Bloom, who pushed the legislation requiring marriage-skills education, with backing from some conservative groups, including the local Christian Coalition. Nationally, though, many conservatives say that home, church and community organizations are the places to talk about marriage, not the public schools.

Last month, the Institute for American Values, a nonpartisan group concerned with family issues, issued a study critical of the most commonly used textbooks. The study analyzed the six textbooks, published from 1993 to 1997 and used in the 20 states that have adopted specific health texts, and concluded that they generally avoided discussion of love, religion, commitment, values and spirituality, and focused strongly on self-esteem and self-actualization.

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“Most of the big, interesting words—mystery, romance, love, flirtation, jealousy, courtship, passion—are simply left unexamined, as if they were not relevant,” the report stated, “replaced instead by smaller and ultimately sadder words such as dysfunction, self-esteem, responsibility, stress, coping, disease, and, most of all, health.”

It questioned whether marriage was appropriately a chapter sandwiched between “Mental Disorders and Suicide” and “Digestion and Excretion.”

“The textbooks emphasize the health-benefit aspect, as if the question about marriage is, what am I going to get for it,” said Paul Vitz of New York University, the author of the report. “That me-generation psychology is incompatible with successful marriages and families, which require love and self-sacrifice.”

His report quoted one of the texts that says, “The most important relationship in your life is the relationship you have with yourself,” and another that has 31 pages on self-esteem and seven on marriage.

The Institute for American Values report included three recommendations for improving marriage education: use examples from literature and art, shift the emphasis from health to character, and, if health textbooks are to be used, make sure they recognize the religious and sociological perspectives on marriage, and incorporate material from marriage-skills research.

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Some see the textbooks as a sign of the times, a reflection of how sexual liberation has been accompanied by an odd revaluing, in which graphic sexual talk has become a staple of public affairs while intense emotions have come to be seen as unseemly.

“The Victorians could not discuss the shape of a piano leg without blushing, but they could describe fervent, almost religious, passion for a friend,” said Kay S. Hymowitz, a contributing writer to the conservative Manhattan Institute. “Now, we talk with strangers about pubic hair, but if we talk about love, we turn red with shame. The idea of belonging to someone else threatens contemporary values, which have to do with being tough, being independent.

"It's hard to say where kids would learn the cultural construct of romantic love," she said. "It's not in the school curriculum. It's not in rap music. On many campuses, there is no such thing as dating anymore. And when parents talk about what they say to their adolescents, you hear about responsibility, about saying what you mean, but you never hear about love."

Most of the new marriage-education programs now trickling into high schools still tend to focus on practical skills like conflict resolution, but one popular program, "The Art of Loving Well," developed at Boston University, uses an anthology of literary selections to spur discussion of love, loss, romance, commitment and marriage.

In "Connections," a 15-lesson curriculum now used in several hundred schools, mostly in California, students choose a partner for a pretend marriage, and meet for seven days to divide household duties, plan a wedding, make career choices, create a budget, plan a family vacation and face a randomly-assigned crisis, like being dismissed from a job.

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"The game comes after they've gone through lessons on understanding themselves, relationships, and communications, and they really get a chance to work through problems," said Kay Reed, of the Berkeley, Calif., Dibble Fund, created by a philanthropist concerned about divorce rates, which distributes the curriculum.

"Some people choose a boyfriend or girlfriend to work with, some people a friend of the same sex," she said. "In one class, after the quarterback on the football team chose a girl as his partner, the girl, who wasn't in the class, came in to tell the teacher she would never even think about marrying him because he just didn't listen to her."

The idea of teaching relationship skills in high school has trickled down from the adult world in the last few years, as educators, therapists, divorce lawyers, family court judges and legislators have become familiar with adult marriage-skills courses. Since several states have rejected legislation to require skills counseling for everyone married, some supporters of marriage education now see the high schools as an easier place to spread the word.

"Let's face it, this is America, and we're not going to force people into counseling," said Ms. Sollee. "In high school, it's clearer that this isn't therapy, it's learning skills."

And in Florida, at least, the high-school curriculum is only part of a larger marriage-skills effort, including a discount on marriage licenses for couples that take a four-hour skills course.

35

"Our legislation is about skills that will help children in all their relationships: with their parents, their peers, their brothers and sisters, and ultimately with choosing and staying with their mate," said Representative Bloom.

But even some proponents of marriage-skills courses for adults question whether they belong in high school.

"There are plenty of community settings or religious settings for learning relationship skills," said Howard Markman, of the University of Denver's Center for Marital and Family Studies, who teaches adult marriage-skills courses. "I think relationship skills need to be developed in the context of the relationship, and trying to reach kids in schools may be too early."

An exchange last month at a New York City symposium sponsored by the Institute for American Values encapsulated the debate over the schools' role: "A lot of these kids don't know who Abraham Lincoln is," said Ms. Decter, arguing for a traditional academic curriculum.

"They don't need to know who Abraham Lincoln is to stay married," retorted Ms. Sollee.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
What is your overall reaction to this piece? Do you think this program is a good idea, a waste of time, or harmful? Explain.

2.
Find several places in this piece where facts and statistics would add support to the writer's argument.

3.
With which one statement in this piece do you most agree? Why?

4.
With which one statement do you most disagree? Why?

5.
Examine the difference in words in paragraph 20. What are the basic differences between these lists of words? Which list do you think represents the current outlook on love today? Explain.

Suggestions for Extended Writing and Thinking

1.
Research the current statistics on divorce as well as the main reasons couples today are seeking divorce. With the information you find, comment on whether schools can indeed teach students how to avoid such conflicts in marriage.

2.
Write an essay in which you argue that learning about Lincoln (or history, or any other subject of your choice) is more important to students today than learning about how to foster relationships.

3.
Choose any one word from the lists presented in paragraph 20. Define this word through examples and metaphors, and analyze the implications of what this definition might reflect about those who adhere to it.

MARGOT HORNBLOWER

Benevolent Bribery—or Racism?

Born in New York City, Margot Hornblower is a graduate of Harvard University. She worked as a staff correspondent at the Washington Post for thirteen years before becoming a Time magazine correspondent. From 1988 to 1994, she was stationed at Time's Paris bureau. Hornblower is currently a West Coast–based national correspondent for Time. During her time as a correspondent, she has covered political, environmental, cultural, and diplomatic stories, as well as the 1992 and 1994 Olympics.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

Drugs and America: What do you think about this problem? How great is it? Who's affected? Who should be concerned?

2.

What's your definition of "a good mother"? What's your definition of "a bad mother"?

At the dining-room table, Isiah, an eight-year-old with a toothy grin, carefully creases paper airplanes, enlisting his mother to staple them together. "Nobody makes them as well as you," she says. Can this be the same foster baby that Barbara Harris carried home from the hospital—a stiff-limbed infant who couldn't sleep more than 15 minutes at a stretch, who would wake screaming and vomiting? "He was a bundle of nerves," recalls Harris, who adopted Isiah and three of his siblings, all born with crack cocaine in their systems. "He had the shakes. All you could do was have patience."

Yet Harris is anything but patient with the drug-addicted women who each year give birth to some 500,000 drug-exposed children in the U.S., many of them brain-damaged and HIV-infected. As Isiah's birth mother "popped out babies every year," Harris says, "I got angrier and angrier." Harris adopted the last four of the woman's eight children. But she also "called the D.A. and the police to see if I could make a citizen's arrest of the mother for endangering her kids. I wrote the politicians, but they don't care. The social workers were helpless. Finally I realized that if I wanted these women to take birth control, I'd have to do it on my own."

So Harris, 47, a homemaker in Stanton, Calif., came up with a market-based proposition: she would pay drug addicts $200 to get sterilized or take long-term birth control. Since November 1997, Harris' nonprofit organization, Children Requiring a Caring Kommunity, has paid 61 women to follow her program: 44 had their tubes tied; the remainder took time-release birth-control drugs. Before they signed up, Harris says, the women acknowledged having experienced a total of 446 pregnancies, of which 169 were aborted. Twenty-three of their children were stillborn, 22 died later, and 185 were placed in foster care.

A former waitress with a cheerful, assertive manner, Harris runs CRACK from a two-room office above a dental clinic, working mornings while her children are in school. Her board of directors includes a law professor, a retired police officer, three social workers and a foster mother who has taken in seven drug-addicted babies. CRACK has mounted a toll-free hot line, a website (*cracksterilization.com*) and billboards in four states. It opened a chapter in Chicago last month and has garnered attention from the likes of Oprah Winfrey and Barbara Walters. Radio shrink Dr. Laura Schlessinger contributed $5,000.

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In the past three weeks Harris has sent out forms to about 200 addicts, including 10 men who can qualify with vasectomies. From her home computer she answers scores of supportive e-mails—and occasional hate messages—that pour into her mailbox: *Luvbabies@aol.com.*

To critics, Harris' activities amount to eugenics: bribing befuddled women to give up their reproductive rights. "Two hundred dollars could lead these women to make a decision they would later regret," says Gloria Feldt, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. "It is unethical because they cannot give their informed consent." American Civil Liberties Union lawyers and a host of university bioethics scholars concur, claiming the addicts are insufficiently protected—even by the 30-day consent period and counseling required by law before federal funds can be spent on sterilization. Several clients referred by Harris are willing to defend the program publicly. Sharon Adams, 39, says she prostituted herself for 12 years to pay for crack and bore 14 children—eight of them born addicted. Now drug free and working as a pizza-delivery driver, she says, “This program isn’t forcing anybody to do anything.” Sherry Golding, 29, a former methamphetamine addict who struggled to regain custody of her three children, says the $200 she got to have her tubes tied was “a lifesaver. It helped me get my life together.”

While some detractors accuse Harris, who is white, of racism, she shrugs it off. Her husband, a surgical technician, is African American. Her three grown biological sons are biracial. The four children they adopted are black. The women who have accepted her offer so far constitute a mixed group: 26 Caucasians, 24 African Americans and 11 Hispanics. From her narrow kitchen, where the fax machine is wedged between the microwave and the electric grill pan, Harris heaps scorn on the naysayers as she whips up cheese sandwiches for lunch. “The people who yell the loudest aren’t the ones raising these kids,” she scoffs. “Unless you’re willing to take these babies into your home for 18 years, your opinion means nothing to me.”

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
From the opening paragraph alone, how would you describe Barbara Harris? From the details in the last paragraph, how would you describe her?

2.
The underlying assumption of Harris’s program is that the mothers who are addicts are unfit mothers. What information does this article include to prove this point?

3.
How does your prereading definition mesh with the assumption that drug users are unfit to be parents?

4.
What is the strongest point against Harris and her organization?

5.
In this piece, the opposing points are ordered back to back, in paragraphs 6 and 7. If you had only these two paragraphs to go on, which one would you say contains the strongest argument? Explain.

Suggestions for Extended Writing and Thinking

1.
Check out Harris’s Website (cracksterilization.com) and write an essay in which you analyze this site. How effective is it? What words are used? What are the rhetorical devices at work here?

2.
The “either-or” statement is considered a logical fallacy, since most issues are not completely black or white. Write an essay in which you argue for a title change for this piece, one that would reflect your opinion on this topic.

3.

Conduct several interviews with students and professors on campus in order to get a pulse on how your community feels on this issue. Write a report in which you present your method, your findings, your conclusions, and your own opinion on the subject. Whose arguments did you find to be the strongest? With whom did you disagree?

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ANNA QUINDLEN

The War on Alcohol

Anna Quindlen (born in 1953 in Philadelphia) won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for her New York Times column "Public and Private." A number of these columns were published as Thinking Out Loud: On the Personal, the Political, the Public, and the Private in 1994. In addition to other books of essays and children's books, she has also written three novels: Object Lessons (1992), about a thirteen-year-old girl growing up in suburban New York, One True Thing (1994), about a daughter who postpones a high-powered career to care for her dying mother (made into a 1998 movie starring Meryl Streep), and Black and Blue (1998), about a battered woman. Lately, she has also been writing occasional "The Last Word" columns for Newsweek.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.
How concerned are you with alcohol consumption in this country? Explain.
2.
Freewrite about someone you know, or someone you've observed, who is negatively affected by the use of alcohol.

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When she was in fourth grade the girl wrote, "What do you think it does to somebody to live with a lot of pressure?" Starting at age 8 she had been cashing the public assistance check each month, buying money orders, paying the bills and doing the grocery shopping. One little brother she walked to school; the other she dressed and fed before leaving him at home.

Their mother drank.

"The pressure she was talking about wasn't even the pressure of running an entire household," said Virginia Connelly, who oversees substance abuse services in schools in New York City. "She didn't know there was anything strange about that. The pressure she was talking about was the pressure of leaving her younger brother at home."

Surgeon General Antonia Novello has opened fire on the alcohol industry, complaining that too much beer and wine advertising is aimed at young people. Her predecessor, C. Everett Koop, did the same in 1988, and you can see how radically things have changed: Spuds MacKenzie is out and the Swedish bikini team is in. There's a move afoot to have warning labels on ads for beer, wine and liquor, much like the ones on cigarettes. Dr. Novello didn't mention that; she said she would be taking a meeting with the big guys in the liquor industry. That's not enough.

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There's no doubt that beer ads, with their cool beaches, cool women and cool parties, are designed to make you feel you're cool if you drink, milking a concern that peaks in most human beings somewhat shy of the legal drinking age. And those sneaky little wine coolers are designed to look like something healthy and fruit-juicy; kids will tell you they're sort of like alcohol, but not really. This has joined "it's only beer" as a great kid drinking myth.

(I've got a press release here from an organization called the Beer Drinkers of America that notes that "many of the Founding Fathers were private brewers" and goes on to rail against "special interests" that would interfere with the right to a cold one. Isn't it amazing how much time people have on their hands?)

But Dr. Novello should take note of what many counselors discover: that the drinking problem that damages kids most is the one that belongs to their parents. The father who gets drunk and violent, the mother who drinks when she's depressed, the parents whose personality shifts with the movements of the sun and the bottle. The enormous family secret.

"An Elephant in the Living Room" is the title of one book for kids whose parents drink. "When I was about ten years old, I started to realize that my dad had a drinking problem," it begins. "Sometimes he drank too much. Then he would talk loudly and make jokes that weren't funny. He would say unkind things to my mom in front of the neighbors and my friends. I felt embarrassed."

That's the voice of an adult who has perspective on her past. This is the voice of a 12-year-old at a school in the kind of neighborhood where we talk, talk, talk about crack though the abuse of alcohol is much more widespread. She is talking about her father, who drinks: "I hate him. He should just stay in his room like a big dog." This would make a good commercial—the moment when your own kid thinks of you as an animal.

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The folks who sell alcohol will say most people use it responsibly, but the fact remains that many people die in car accidents because of it, many wind up in the hospital because of it, and many families are destroyed because of it. Dr. Novello is right to excoriate the commercials; it is not just that they make drinking seem cool, but that they make it seem inevitable, as though parties would not take place, Christmas never come, success be elusive without a bottle. It's got to be confusing to see vodka as the stuff of which family gatherings are made and then watch your mother pass out in the living room.

This is the drug that has been handed down from generation to generation, that most kids learn to use and abuse at home. I'd love to see warning labels, about fetal alcohol syndrome and liver damage and addiction. But it's time for a change, not just in the ads, but in the atmosphere that assumes a substance is innocuous because it's not illegal. For most of our children, the most powerful advertisement for alcohol may be sitting at the kitchen table. Or sleeping it off in the bedroom.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1\.

Examine the language and sentence structures Quindlen uses in the opening two paragraphs. What effect do they have on the reader?

2\.

In paragraph 3, Quindlen writes, "You can see how radically things have changed." Examine the examples that follow this statement to determine exactly what Quindlen means by that statement.

3\.

Who does Quindlen "blame" for the problems caused by alcohol in this country? Do you agree with her?

4.

What opposing arguments does Quindlen not address in this piece? Do you think this piece would be more effective if she did? Explain.

5.

How do the final two lines reinforce Quindlen's point? How might they also undermine it?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.

Research the current statistics on alcoholism in America, and write a brief essay that takes a fact-based and statistical approach to this subject. Then compare your report to Quindlen's to determine which specific audiences might react to yours in a more favorable light and which ones would be more moved by Quindlen's.

2.

According to statistics, every family has been affected by alcohol or alcoholism in some way, no matter whether that family is rich or poor. Write an essay in which you explain the way in which alcohol has affected your own family.

3.

Write an essay in which you argue for or against lowering the legal drinking age to eighteen.

LESLIE MARMON SILKO

Lullaby

Leslie Marmon Silko (born in 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico) grew up on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. After graduating from the University of New Mexico and attending law school, she returned to the Laguna Pueblo. She has published many short stories, essays, and poems and three acclaimed novels: Ceremony *(1977), about the spiritual healing of a Native American veteran of World War II who had been a Japanese prisoner of war,* Almanac of the Dead *(1992), a magical realist novel about five centuries of struggle between Native Americans and Europeans, and* Garden in the Dunes *(1999), about a Native American girl adopted by a Victorian family. This selection appeared in* Best Short Stories of 1975.

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.

Think about events that you've read about in the newspapers or seen on television this past year. What story (or types of stories) moved you strongly? Write about one of these stories and describe your response to it.

2.

Under what circumstances should authorities take children away from their family? Explain.

3.

If you are a parent, what was the most difficult situation that you and your children faced? As a child, what was the most difficult situation that you and your parents faced?

The sun had gone down but the snow in the wind gave off its own light. It came in thick tufts like new wool—washed before the weaver spins it. Ayah reached out for it like her own babies had, and she smiled when she remembered how she had laughed at them. She was an old woman now, and her life had become memories. She sat down with her back against the wide cottonwood tree, feeling the rough bark on her back bones; she faced east and listened to the wind and snow sing a high-pitched Yeibechei song. Out of the wind she felt warmer, and she could watch the wide, fluffy snow fill in her tracks, steadily, until the direction she had come from was gone. By the light of the snow she could see the dark outline of the big arroyo a few feet away. She was sitting on the edge of Cebolleta Creek, where in the springtime the thin cows would graze on grass already chewed flat to the ground. In the wide, deep creek bed where only a trickle of water flowed in the summer, the skinny cows would wander, looking for new grass along winding paths splashed with manure.

Ayah pulled the old Army blanket over her head like a shawl. Jimmie’s blanket—the one he had sent to her. That was a long time ago and the green wool was faded, and it was unraveling on the edges. She did not want to think about Jimmie. So she thought about the weaving and the way her mother had done it. On the tall wooden loom set into the sand under a tamarack tree for shade. She could see it clearly. She had been only a little girl when her grandma gave her the wooden combs to pull the twigs and burrs from the raw, freshly washed wool. And while she combed the wool, her grandma sat beside her spinning a silvery strand of yarn around the smooth cedar spindle. Her mother worked at the loom with yarns dyed bright yellow and red and gold. She watched them dye the yarn in boiling black pots full of beeweed petals, juniper berries, and sage. The blankets her mother made were soft and woven so tight that rain rolled off them like birds’ feathers. Ayah remembered sleeping warmly on cold windy nights, wrapped in her mother’s blankets on the hogan’s sandy floor.

The snow drifted now, with the northwest wind hurling it in gusts. It drifted up around her black overshoes—old ones with little metal buckles. She smiled at the snow which was trying to cover her little by little. She could remember when they had no black rubber overshoes; only the high buckskin leggings that they wrapped over their elkhide moccasins. If the snow was dry or frozen, a person could walk all day and not get wet; and in the evenings the beams of the ceiling would hang with lengths of pale buckskin leggings drying out slowly.

She felt peaceful remembering. She didn’t feel cold anymore. Jimmie’s blanket seemed warmer than it had ever been. And she could remember the morning he was born. She could remember whispering to her mother, who was sleeping on the other side of the hogan, to tell her it was time now. She did not want to wake the others. The second time she called to her, her mother stood up and pulled on her shoes; she knew. They walked to the old stone hogan together, Ayah walking a step behind her mother. She waited alone learning the rhythms of the pains while her mother went to call the old woman to help them. The morning was already warm even before dawn and Ayah smelled the bee flowers blooming and the young willow growing at the springs. She could remember that so clearly, but his birth merged into the births of the other children and to her it became all the same birth. They named him for the summer morning and in English they called him Jimmie.

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It wasn't like Jimmie died. He just never came back, and one day a dark blue sedan with white writing on its doors pulled up in front of the boxcar shack where the rancher let the Indians live. A man in a khaki uniform trimmed in gold gave them a yellow piece of paper and told them that Jimmie was dead. He said the Army would try to get the body back and then it would be shipped to them; but it wasn't likely because the helicopter had burned after it crashed. All of this was told to Chato because he could understand English. She stood inside the doorway holding the baby while Chato listened. Chato spoke English like a white man and he spoke Spanish too. He was taller than the white man and he stood straighter too. Chato didn't explain why; he just told the military man they could keep the body if they found it. The white man looked bewildered; he nodded his head and left. Then Chato looked at her and shook his head, and then he told her, "Jimmie isn't coming home anymore," and when he spoke, he used the words to speak of the dead. She didn't cry then, but she hurt inside with anger. And she mourned him as the years passed, when a horse fell with Chato and broke his leg, and the white rancher told them he wouldn't pay Chato until he could work again. She mourned Jimmie because he would have worked for his father then; he would have saddled the big bay horse and ridden the fence lines each day, with wire cutters and heavy gloves, fixing the breaks in the barbed wire and putting the stray cattle back inside again.

She mourned him after the white doctors came to take Danny and Ella away. She was at the shack alone that day they came. It was back in the days before they hired Navajo women to go with them as interpreters. She recognized one of the doctors. She had seen him at the children's clinic at Cañoncito about a month ago. They were wearing khaki uniforms and they waved papers at her and a black ball-point pen, trying to make her understand their English words. She was frightened by the way they looked at the children, like the lizard watches the fly. Danny was swinging on the tire swing on the elm tree behind the rancher's house, and Ella was toddling around the front door, dragging the broomstick horse Chato made for her. Ayah could see they wanted her to sign the papers, and Chato had taught her to sign her name. It was something she was proud of. She only wanted them to go, and to take their eyes away from her children.

She took the pen from the man without looking at his face and she signed the papers in three different places he pointed to. She stared at the ground by their feet and waited for them to leave. But they stood there and began to point and gesture at the children. Danny stopped swinging. Ayah could see his fear. She moved suddenly and grabbed Ella into her arms; the child squirmed, trying to get back to her toys. Ayah ran with the baby toward Danny; she screamed for him to run and then she grabbed him around his chest and carried him too. She ran south into the foothills of juniper trees and black lava rock. Behind her she heard the doctors running, but they had been taken by surprise, and as the hills became steeper and the cholla cactus were thicker, they stopped. When she reached the top of the hill, she stopped to listen in case they were circling around her. But in a few minutes she heard a car engine start and they drove away. The children had been too surprised to cry while she ran with them. Danny was shaking and Ella's little fingers were gripping Ayah's blouse.

She stayed up in the hills for the rest of the day, sitting on a black lava boulder in the sunshine where she could see for miles all around her. The sky was light blue and cloudless, and it was warm for late April. The sun warmth relaxed her and took the fear and anger away. She lay back on the rock and watched the sky. It seemed to her that she could walk into the sky, stepping through clouds endlessly. Danny played with little pebbles and stones, pretending they were birds' eggs and then little rabbits. Ella sat at her feet and dropped fistfuls of dirt into the breeze, watching the dust and particles of sand intently. Ayah watched a hawk soar high above them, dark wings gliding; hunting or only watching, she did not know. The hawk was patient and he circled all afternoon before he disappeared around the high volcanic peak the Mexicans called Guadalupe.

Late in the afternoon, Ayah looked down at the gray boxcar shack with the paint all peeled from the wood: the stove pipe on the roof was rusted and crooked. The fire she had built that morning in the oil drum stove had burned out. Ella was asleep in her lap now and Danny sat close to her, complaining that he was hungry; he asked when they would go to the house. "We will stay up here until your father comes," she told him, "because those white men were chasing us." The boy remembered then and he nodded at her silently.

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If Jimmie had been there he could have read those papers and explained to her what they said. Ayah would have known then, never to sign them. The doctors came back the next day and they brought a BIA policeman with them. They told Chato they had her signature and that was all they needed. Except for the kids. She listened to Chato sullenly; she hated him when he told her it was the old woman who died in the winter, spitting blood; it was her old grandma who have given the children this disease. "They don't spit blood," she said coldly. "The whites lie." She held Ella and Danny close to her, ready to run to the hills again. "I want a medicine man first," she said to Chato, not looking at him. He shook his head. "It's too late now. The policeman is with them. You signed the paper." His voice was gentle.

It was worse than if they had died: to lose the children and to know that somewhere, in a place called Colorado, in a place full of sick and dying strangers, her children were without her. There had been babies that died soon after they were born, and one that died before he could walk. She had carried them herself, up to the boulders and great pieces of the cliff that long ago crashed down from Long Mesa; she laid them in the crevices of sandstone and buried them in fine brown sand with round quartz pebbles that washed down the hills in the rain. She had endured it because they had been with her. But she could not bear this pain. She did not sleep for a long time after they took her children. She stayed on the hill where they had fled the first time, and she slept rolled up in the blanket Jimmie had sent her. She carried the pain in her belly and it was fed by everything she saw: the blue sky of their last day together and the dust and pebbles they played with; the swing in the elm tree and broomstick horse choked life from her. The pain filled her stomach and there was no room for food or for her lungs to fill with air. The air and the food would have been theirs.

She hated Chato, not because he let the policeman and doctors put the screaming children in the government car, but because he had taught her to sign her name. Because it was like the old ones always told her about learning their language or any of their ways: It endangers you. She slept alone on the hill until the middle of November when the first snows came. Then she made a bed for herself where the children had slept. She did not lie down beside Chato again until many years later, when he was sick and shivering and only her body could keep him warm. The illness came after the white rancher told Chato he was too old to work for him anymore, and Chato and his old woman should be out of the shack by the next afternoon because the rancher had hired new people to work there. That had satisfied her. To see how the white man repaid Chato's years of loyalty and work. All of Chato's fine-sounding English talk didn't change things.

It snowed steadily and the luminous light from the snow gradually diminished into the darkness. Somewhere in Ceboletta a dog barked and other village dogs joined with it. Ayah looked in the direction she had come, from the bar where Chato was buying the wine. Sometimes he told her to go on ahead and wait; and then he never came. And when she finally went back looking for him, she would find him passed out at the bottom of the wooden steps to Azzie's Bar. All the wine would be gone and most of the money too, from the pale blue check that came to them once a month in a government envelope. It was then that she would look at his face and his hands, scarred by ropes and the barbed wire of all those years, and she would think, this man is a stranger; for forty years she had smiled at him and cooked his food, but he remained a stranger. She stood up again, with the snow almost to her knees, and she walked back to find Chato.

It was hard to walk in the deep snow and she felt the air burn in her lungs. She stopped a short distance from the bar to rest and readjust the blanket. But this time he wasn't waiting for her at the bottom step with his old Stetson hat pulled down and his shoulders hunched up in his long wool overcoat.

She was careful not to slip on the wooden steps. When she pushed the door open, warm air and cigarette smoke hit her face. She looked around slowly and deliberately, in every corner, in every dark place that the old man might find to sleep. The bar owner didn't like Indians in there, especially Navajos, but he let Chato come in because he could talk Spanish like he was one of them. The men at the bar stared at her, and the bartender saw that she left the door open wide. Snowflakes were flying inside like moths and melting into a puddle on the oiled wood floor. He motioned to her to close the door, but she did not see him. She held herself straight and walked across the room slowly, searching the room with every step. The snow in her hair melted and she could feel it on her forehead. At the far corner of the room, she saw red flames at the mica window of the old stove door; she looked behind the stove just to make sure. The bar got quiet except for the Spanish polka music playing on the jukebox. She stood by the stove and shook the snow from her blanket and held it near the stove to dry. The wet wool smell reminded her of newborn goats in early March, brought inside to warm near the fire. She felt calm.

In past years they would have told her to get out. But her hair was white now and her face was wrinkled. They looked at her like she was a spider crawling slowly across the room. They were afraid; she could feel the fear. She looked at their faces steadily. They reminded her of the first time the white people brought her children back to her that winter. Danny had been shy and hid behind the thin white woman who brought them. And the baby had not known her until Ayah took her into her arms, and then Ella had nuzzled close to her as she had when she was nursing. The blonde woman was nervous and kept looking at a dainty gold watch on her wrist. She sat on the bench near the small window and watched the dark snow clouds gather around the mountains; she was worrying about the unpaved road. She was frightened by what she saw inside too: the strips of venison drying on a rope across the ceiling and the children jabbering excitedly in a language she did not know. So they stayed for only a few hours. Ayah watched the government car disappear down the road and she knew they were already being weaned from these lava hills and from this sky. The last time they came was in early June, and Ella stared at her the way the men in the bar were now staring. Ayah did not try to pick her up; she smiled at her instead and spoke cheerfully to Danny. When he tried to answer her, he could not seem to remember and he spoke English words with the Navajo. But he gave her a scrap of paper that he had found somewhere and carried in his pocket; it was folded in half, and he shyly looked up at her and said it was a bird. She asked Chato if they were home for good this time. He spoke to the white woman and she shook her head. "How much longer?" he asked, and she said she didn't know; but Chato saw how she stared at the boxcar shack. Ayah turned away then. She did not say good-bye.

She felt satisfied that the men in the bar feared her. Maybe it was her face and the way she held her mouth with teeth clenched tight, like there was nothing anyone could do to her now. She walked north down the road, searching for the old man. She did this because she had the blanket, and there would be no place for him except with her and the blanket in the old adobe barn near the arroyo. They always slept there when they came to Cebolleta. If the money and the wine were gone, she would be relieved because then they could go home again; back to the old hogan with a dirt roof and rock walls where she herself had been born. And the next day the old man could go back to the few sheep they still had, to follow along behind them, guiding them, into dry sandy arroyos where sparse grass grew. She knew he did not like walking behind old ewes when for so many years he rode big quarter horses and worked with cattle. But she wasn't sorry for him; he should have known all along what would happen.

There had not been enough rain for their garden in five years; and that was when Chato finally hitched a ride into the town and brought back brown boxes of rice and sugar and big tin cans of welfare peaches. After that, at the first of the month they went to Ceboletta to ask the postmaster for the check; and then Chato would go to the bar and cash it. They did this as they planted the garden every May, not because anything would survive the summer dust, but because it was time to do this. The journey passed the days that smelled silent and dry like the caves above the canyon with yellow painted buffaloes on their walls.

He was walking along the pavement when she found him. He did not stop or turn around when he heard her behind him. She walked beside him and she noticed how slowly he moved now. He smelled strong of woodsmoke and urine. Lately he had been forgetting. Sometimes he called her by his sister's name and she had been gone for a long time. Once she had found him wandering on the road to the white man's ranch, and she asked him why he was going that way; he laughed at her and said, "You know they can't run that ranch without me," and he walked on determined, limping on the leg that had been crushed many years before. Now he looked at her curiously, as if for the first time, but he kept shuffling along, moving slowly along the side of the highway. His gray hair had grown long and spread out on the shoulders of the long overcoat. He wore the old felt hat pulled down over his ears. His boots were worn out at the toes and he had stuffed pieces of an old red shirt in the holes. The rags made his feet look like little animals up to their ears in snow. She laughed at his feet; the snow muffled the sound of her laugh. He stopped and looked at her again. The wind had quit blowing and the snow was falling straight down; the southeast sky was beginning to clear and Ayah could see a star.

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“Let’s rest awhile,” she said to him. They walked away from the road and up the slope to the giant boulders that had tumbled down from the red sandrock mesa throughout the centuries of rainstorms and earth tremors. In a place where the boulders shut out the wind, they sat down with their backs against the rock. She offered half of the blanket to him and they sat wrapped together.

The storm passed swiftly. The clouds moved east. They were massive and full, crowding together across the sky. She watched them with the feeling of horses—steely blue-gray horses startled across the sky. The powerful haunches pushed into the distances and the tail hairs streamed white mist behind them. The sky cleared. Ayah saw that there was nothing between her and the stars. The light was crystalline. There was no shimmer, no distortion through earth haze. She breathed the clarity of the night sky; she smelled the purity of the half moon and the stars. He was lying on his side with his knees pulled up near his belly for warmth. His eyes were closed now, and in the light from the stars and the moon, he looked young again. She could see it descend out of the night sky: an icy stillness from the edge of the thin moon. She recognized the freezing. It came gradually, sinking snowflake by snowflake until the crust was heavy and deep. It had the strength of the stars in Orion, and its journey was endless. Ayah knew that with the wine he would sleep. He would not feel it. She tucked the blanket around him, remembering how it was when Ella had been with her; and she felt the rush so big inside her heart for the babies. And she sang the only song she knew to sing for babies. She could not remember if she had ever sung it to her children, but she knew that her grandmother had sung it and her mother had sung it:

The earth is your mother,
 she holds you.
The sky is your father,
 he protects you.
Sleep,
sleep.
Rainbow is your sister,
 she loves you.
The winds are your brothers,
 they sing to you.
Sleep,
sleep.
We are together always
We are together always
There never was a time
when this
was not so.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
In “Lullaby,” Silko writes that Ayah “was an old woman now, and her life had become memories.” What are the most joyful memories Ayah recalls? What are the most painful? Are there many in between?
2.
As she sits against the cottonwood tree, what would Ayah say she has learned during her lifetime? How might Ayah complete the following? “For me, life has been like. . . .”
3.
In what ways did the world change between the time of Jimmie’s birth and the time the story ends? What, if any, changes did Ayah make during this time?
4.
Silko writes that even though Ayah knew Chato for over forty years, he “remained a stranger to her.” Why do you think this is?
5.
When Ayah’s children come for a visit the last time, why doesn’t she say good-bye to them? Who has changed in this scene? Why?
6.
How does this piece relate to the chapter theme “Rights and Responsibilities”? Explain.
7.
Although this is a fictional short story, can you imagine any parts that might be true? What parts reveal the writer’s knowledge? How were you affected by this piece?
8.
If Hollywood were to produce this story, who would be depicted as the hero (or heroes), and who would be depicted as the villain (or villains)?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.
Research what happened to the Navajos once the American government took over their lives. How many Navajos are living today? What are their lives like? Where do they live? What work do they do? What are their average wages or salaries? How many go on to higher education?
2.
Read and analyze one of Silko’s poems from her collection *Laguna Woman: Poems*.
3.
Write a poem based on your reactions to “Lullaby.”

LINDA PASTAN

Ethics

Linda Pastan (born in 1932 in New York City), Poet Laureate of Maryland from 1991 to 1993, writes about the complexity of daily life. A reviewer of her first book, published in 1971, described her poetry as “the revelation of ‘the miraculous in the common.’” “Ethics” first appeared in PM/AM: New and Selected Poems *(1981). Her latest collection of poems,* Carnival Evening: New and Selected Poems: 1968–1999 *(1998) was selected as a finalist for the National Book Award for Poetry.*

Suggestions for Prereading or Journal Writing

1.
Freewrite for ten to fifteen minutes using this starter: “When I was young, I used to think ——— , but now that I’m older I think ——— .”
2.
If you could choose, what would you prefer to be right now: an adult or a child? Why?

———

In ethics class so many years ago
our teacher asked this question every fall:
if there were a fire in a museum
which would you save, a Rembrandt painting
or an old woman who hadn’t many

years left anyhow? Restless on hard chairs
caring little for pictures or old age
we’d opt one year for life, the next for art
and always half-heartedly. Sometimes
the woman borrowed my grandmother’s face

leaving her usual kitchen to wander
some drafty, half-imagined museum.
One year, feeling clever, I replied
why not let the woman decide herself?
Linda, the teacher would report, eschews

the burdens of responsibility.
This fall in a real museum I stand
before a real Rembrandt, old woman,
or nearly so, myself. The colors
within this frame are darker than autumn,

darker even than winter—the browns of earth,
though earth’s most radiant elements burn
through the canvas. I know now that woman
and painting and season are almost one
and all beyond saving by children.

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1.
What was your initial response to the question posed by the teacher every fall?
2.
What impression do you have of the students in the first sixteen lines of this poem? What words, images, and phrases lead you to this impression?
3.

What are the implications of “this frame” (line 20) if the speaker is referring to the Rembrandt painting? What are the implications if “this frame” refers to the body of the old woman?

4.

Contrast the mood in the first sixteen lines with the mood in the last nine lines of this poem. In what ways does this change reflect a change in the speaker?

Suggestions for Extended Thinking and Writing

1.

Go back to your initial journal entry for this piece and turn it into a short poem. Try using Pastan’s poem as your model.

2.

Take the student’s point of view in the first sixteen lines of this poem, and write a journal entry, about the ethical dilemma that’s been posed, as well as about other thoughts that may be rambling through your teenage mind.

3.

Imagine you are the “almost” old woman in this poem (lines 17–25), and write about what it feels like to be old. Expand the poem with details and flashbacks that will enable the reader to see your life as it is now—as you stand old and alone in a museum.

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TOPICS FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS:
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.Choose two characters from the selections in this chapter to participate in a conversation regarding the following statement: “We don’t need any laws in this country and we don’t need the Constitution. All we need to do is treat people with respect.”

2.Imagine that the young mother in “Lullaby” has written you a letter asking for your advice. What encouragement or advice do you give her, considering her situation? Whom can you advise her to turn to for help? What do you tell her to believe in? What action can she possibly take to help herself?

3.What makes an effective argument? Compare and contrast one piece that moved or convinced you the most and one that had little or no effect on you. Analyze what elements of writing appeal to you as a reader.

4.Imagine a meeting between Anna Quidlen and Ira Glasser in which the two of them discuss the rights of the individual versus the effect the individual’s behavior has on others. You may choose to set these two in a television debate format and let them answer questions as designed by you, the moderator. (In this same fashion, hold a meeting between the mother in “Lullaby” and Barbara Harris in “Benevolent Bribery” in which the two women discuss what makes a “fit” mother.)

5.Write an essay in which you argue that democracy can or cannot work in a country in which capitalism, by its very nature, fosters class and economic inequalities.

6.Make an educated guess as to what three of the following people would say is wrong with the American government today: Ira Glasser, Anna Quidlen, the mother in “Lullaby,” Tamar Lewin, and Shelby Steele.

7.Make a guess about what three of the following people would say is wrong with American government today: Jesse Jackson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Andrew Sullivan,

Michael Levin. Write the argument they, as a committee, would formulate to support their contentions.
7.Argue for or against the following proposition: Education is essential if all humans are to achieve equal rights. Refer to several sources in this chapter as you write your argument.

What rights and responsibilities are suggested by each of these photos? What similarities do you see between the photos?