Close Reading

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| 1. According to Phyllis Schlafly, why are women the “most privileged” people in American society? 2. Would all women agree with Schlafly’s claim regarding the “greatest achievement of women’s rights”? Why or why not? 3. What is the difference between the African and American Indian civilizations and the American civilization? 4. According to Schlafly, why are American women “so well-off”? 5. According to Schlafly, why is the equal rights amendment dangerous to the “special privilege” enjoyed by American women? [List at least 3 arguments] 6. How does Phyllis Schlafly refer to feminists who participate in the women’s liberation movement? Who is the feminist who was named as an example? 7. According to Schlafly, what is wrong with feminist publications such as *Ms. Magazine*? Is this description similar to popular magazines today that attract women? 8. Explain why according to Schlafly, the women’s liberation movement fails to speak to for the majority of American women? [List at least 3 arguments] | **“What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?”** Phyllis Schlafly (1972)  Of all the classes of people who ever lived, the American woman is the most privileged. We have the most rights and rewards, and the fewest duties. Our unique status is the result of a fortunate combination of circumstances.  1. We have the immense good fortune to live in a civilization which respects the family as the basic unit of society. This respect is… based on the fact of life…that women have babies and men don’t. If you don’t like this fundamental difference, you will have to take up your complaint with God because He created us this way.  THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS …The institution of the family… is the greatest single achievement in the entire history of women’s rights. It assures a woman the most precious and important right of all—the right to keep her own baby and to be supported and protected in the enjoyment of watching her baby grow and develop. The institution of the family is advantageous for women for many reasons. After all, what do we want out of life? To love and be loved? …A sense of achievement? A man may search 30 to 40 years for accomplishment in his profession. A woman can enjoy real achievement when she is young—by having a baby.  THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF CHIVALRY 2. The second reason why American women are a privileged group is that we are the beneficiaries of a tradition of special respect for women which dates from the Age of Chivalry… In other civilizations, such as the African and the American Indian, the men strut around wearing feathers and beads and hunting and fishing (great sport for men!), while the women do all the hard, tiresome drudgery including the tilling of the soil (if any is done), the hewing of wood, the making of fires, the carrying of water, as well as the cooking, sewing and caring for babies. This is not the American way because we were lucky enough to inherit the traditions of the Age of Chivalry. In America, a man’s first significant purchase is a diamond for his bride, and the largest financial investment of his life is a home for her to live in. American husbands work hours of overtime to buy a fur piece or other finery to keep their wives in fashion  **“What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?”** Phyllis Schlafly (1972)  THE REAL LIBERATION OF WOMEN 3. The third reason why American women are so well off is that the great American free enterprise system has produced remarkable inventors who have lifted the backbreaking “women’s work” from our shoulders.  The great heroes of women’s liberation are not the straggly-haired women on television talk shows and picket lines, but Thomas Edison who brought the miracle of electricity to our homes … Or Elias Howe who gave us the sewing machine which resulted in such an abundance of readymade clothing. Or Clarence Birdseye who invented the process for freezing foods. Or Henry Ford, who mass-produced the automobile so that it is within the price-range of every American, man or woman.  …Thus, household duties have been reduced to only a few hours a day, leaving the American woman with plenty of time to moonlight. She can take a full or part-time paying job, or she can indulge to her heart’s content in a tremendous selection of interesting educational or cultural or homemaking activities.  THE FRAUD OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT In the last couple of years, a noisy movement has sprung up agitating for “women’s rights.” Suddenly, everywhere we are afflicted with aggressive females on television talk shows yapping about how mistreated American women are, suggesting that marriage has put us in some kind of “slavery,” that housework is menial and degrading, and—perish the thought—that women are discriminated against.  …The truth is that American women never had it so good. Why should we lower ourselves to “equal rights” when we already have the status of special privilege? The proposed Equal Rights Amendment states: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.” So what’s wrong with that? Well, here are a few examples of what’s wrong with it. This Amendment will absolutely and positively make women subject to the draft.  … Another bad effect of the Equal Rights Amendment is that it will abolish a woman’s right to child support and alimony, and enact a more “equal” policy, that “such decisions should be within the discretion of the Court and should be made on the economic situation and need of the parties in the case.”  …By law and custom in America, in case of divorce, the mother always is given custody of her children unless there is overwhelming evidence of mistreatment, neglect or bad character. This is our special privilege because of the high rank that is placed on motherhood in our society. Do women really want to give up this special privilege and lower themselves to “equal rights”, so that the mother gets one child and the father gets the other? I think not....  **“What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?”** Phyllis Schlafly (1972)  WHAT “WOMEN’S LIB” REALLY MEANS Many women are under the mistaken impression that “women’s lib” means more job employment opportunities for women, equal pay for equal work, appointments of women to high positions, admitting more women to medical schools, and other desirable objectives which all women favor. We all support these purposes, as well as any necessary legislation which would bring them about. But all this is only a sweet syrup which covers the deadly poison masquerading as “women’s lib.” The women’s libbers are radicals who are waging a total assault on the family, on marriage, and on children. Don’t take my word for it—read their own literature and prove to yourself what these characters are trying to do. The most pretentious of the women’s liberation magazines is called *Ms. Magazine*, with Gloria Steinem listed as president and secretary. Reading the Spring 1972 issue of Ms. gives a good understanding of women’s lib, and the people who promote it. It is anti-family, anti-children, and pro-abortion. …They view the home as a prison, and the wife and mother as a slave. To these women’s libbers, marriage means dirty dishes and dirty laundry. One article lauds a woman’s refusal to carry up the family laundry as “an act of extreme courage.” Another tells how satisfying it is to be a lesbian. (page 117) The women’s libbers don’t understand that most women want to be wife, mother and homemaker—and are happy in that role.  …A count of the advertisements in Ms. shows that the principal financial backer is the liquor industry. There are 26 liquor ads in this one initial issue.  WOMEN’S LIBBERS DO NOT SPEAK FOR US The “women’s lib” movement is not an honest effort to secure better jobs for women who want or need to work outside the home.  …They are promoting Federal “day-care centers” for babies instead of homes. They are promoting abortions instead of families. Why should we trade in our special privileges and honored status for the alleged advantage of working in an office or assembly line? Most women would rather cuddle a baby than a typewriter or factory machine. Most women find that it is easier to get along with a husband than a foreman or office manager. Offices and factories require many more menial and repetitious chores than washing dishes and ironing shirts.  Women’s libbers do not speak for the majority of American women. American women do not want to be liberated from husbands and children. We do not want to trade our birthright of the special privileges of American women  If the women’s libbers want to reject marriage and motherhood, it’s a free country and that is their choice. But let’s not permit these women’s libbers to get away with pretending to speak for the rest of us. Let’s not permit this tiny minority to degrade the role that most women prefer. Let’s not let these women’s libbers deprive wives and mothers of the rights we now possess. Tell your Senators now that you want them to vote NO on the Equal Rights Amendment. Tell your television and radio stations that you want equal time to present the case FOR marriage and motherhood.  **Source**: Phyllis Schlafly Report 5, no. 7 (February 1972) . "WOMEN’S LIBERATION AND OTHER MOVEMENTS." The African American Experience. Greenwood Publishing Group. 2 Jun 2010. [online] Available 3 June 2010. |