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**Laws Should Honor the Mutual Superiority of the Sexes**

*Former President Jimmy Carter, writing this month on behalf of a dozen world leaders including Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, condemned "the male interpretations of religious texts" that have "provided a reason or excuse for the deprivation of women's equal rights . . . This is in clear violation not just of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, Moses and the prophets, Muhammad, and founders of other great religions. / Carter and his fellow Elders issues this statement: "The justification of discrimination against women and girls on grounds of religion or tradition, as if it were prescribed by a Higher Authority, is unacceptable." / What is your reaction to these statements? Are 'male interpretations of religious texts' to blame for the 'deprivation of women's equal rights'?*

Before getting into the complexities of the issue, I hasten to say that excluding women from leadership in religion violates the essence of religion. I have helped educate and ordain women, including my wife, who is a Hospice chaplain (retired). I have a high view of women's rights in religion and in all of life, though I am against "equality."

1.....In our species, the bio-family's securities have been (1) father/mother/child mutual *affections* and (2) the husband-father's superior *musculature* (the latter, for both family cohesion and family defense). Various cultures, rooted in various religions, variously construed these two facts of nature. The Enlightenment, worshiping the goddess of Reason, diminished the importance of the first (namely, natural affections) and came to despise the second (namely, the husband-father's muscular superiority and responsibilities pertaining thereto).

2.....The waves of feminism have resented adult male muscular superiority and rejected it as a factor in the man/woman relationship. In this, Judaism and Christianity have more easily accommodated feminism than has Islam. The Bible nowhere advises a man to use his muscles to keep his woman/women in line, but the Qur'an does (1.1.4: "Men are the managers of the affairs of women....[If all else fails,] beat them.").

3.....Since among human forces physical is the visible, the fact of superior adult male musculature feeds the illusion that men are *overall* superior to women. Ashley Montagu, in his "The Natural Superiority of Women" (1953), made a convincing case of the opposite. In my writings, I've made as strong a case as I could for the mutual superiority of the sexes. Not just that each is demonstrably superior to the other, but that these superiorities are (by divine intention through natural selection) mutually reinforcing.

4.....To be just in the sense of *fairness*, laws must meet not the rough standard of equality but the precise standard ofequity: "women's equal rights" fails this test, fails to honor the superiority/inferiority of each sex. For example, a worker who becomes pregnant should have the superior right to special employer-accommodations to her pregnancy. Special is not equal, but it's fair. Words govern behavior, and women's "equality" has had some pernicious effects on women, the family, and society.

5.....Custom and law should adjust to the reality that men and women abuse each other differently, using their superiorities against each other. Generally speaking, men are better with their muscles and women are better with their mouths. In court, a man is in the inferior position that her damage from him is visible, while his from her is invisible.

6.....A further qualifier of the ideological-egalitarian view that women and girls have been "discriminated against" is the inequality of males/females with regard to *parentage*. Women are in the superior position of maternity *known*(though with the extreme unlikelihood of baby-switching in a hospital): men are in the inferior position of paternity*assumed*. If a man's "selfish genes" are suspicious that he is a cuckold, that the baby is not his, he can (without his wife's knowledge) have a DNA test. If the baby proves to be another man's, should the husband have any legal responsibility for the rearing of the child? / Historically, this pregnancy problem was addressed by limiting the social freedom of females subject to pregnancy by rape or seduction. This biological "discrimination" was and is unequal, but was/is it inequitable?

7.....The title of Jimmy Carter's article ("The words of God do not justify cruelty to women" -- The Guardian Observer, 12 July 09) is ho-hum. Why not add "...or to animals"? He enumerates a few clear cruelties, and for that I am grateful to him. And I'm grateful to Mandela for calling "the Elders" together to declare for "women's rights." But to blur this with the phrase "women's *equal* rights" is propaganda for a questionable ideology, namely, egalitarianism. That phrase is not synonymous with Carter's affirmation of "all the rights and freedoms" in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. / And I must object to Carter's blurring of church and world in his use of Galatians 3:28, which says that in church (in the Christian community, "in Christ Jesus"), the world's distinctions between Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female do not exist, all are "one" - but those distinctions were sharp in that ancient Mediterranean world. To infer that Christian ideals apply to the world is a sentimental Christian imperialism. / But I agree with Carter that women should have "fair access to education, health, employment and influence in their communities." "Fair" is a more complex word than "equal."

8.....As for the "On Faith" question, I have dealt with "women's *equal* rights," so I am changing the wording to "women's rights." Now I must object to "to blame": "male interpretations of religious texts" are only one factor in "the deprivation of women's rights." A more serious factor is the largely-if-not-exclusively-male-written religious texts themselves. But a balancing factor is that many of the world's scriptures are themselves rich mines of material affirming and defending women's rights. The text Carter quoted - Galatians 3:28 - is evidence that women in early Christianity were more free, had more rights, than in later Christianity.

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  JULY 20, 2009; 4:38 PM ETSAVE & SHARE:  [Send E-mail](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/emailalink?sent=no&link=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html&title=Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes)   [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html&t=Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes)   [Twitter](http://twitter.com/home?status=Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes%20-%20http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html)   [Digg](http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html&title=Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes)   [Yahoo Buzz](http://buzz.yahoo.com/buzz?publisherurn=washington_po284&guid=washington_po284:http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html)   [Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/post?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html;&title=Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes%20-%20On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog;)   [StumbleUpon](http://www.stumbleupon.com/submit?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html)   [Technorati](http://technorati.com/search/http:/onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/07/laws_should_honor_the_mutual_superiority_of_the_sexes.html)    
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Thanks for comments. A few replies:  
1  
Yes, superior musculature has been of declining societal value, so male superiority has been declining while female superiority has not. The resultant imbalance has lead past "feminism" (a rights movement) to "feminization" (a gender-dominance fact undervaluing the male as the previous patriarchy undervalued the female). This unintentional demotion of the male has led to male irresponsibility, absence, irrelevance: boys grow up to be old boys instead of men. The (father/mother/child) bio-family is best for children but is in some demographics becoming rare. (A decade ago, I sparked a conference on "How to Make Men out of Boys." As the importance of musculature declines, what other male superiority can be encouraged so as to restore the male/female balance of superiorities? / It may be only a nurture factor, but nature may be involved: when men lead, men & women are present; when women lead, women are present.  
2  
Yes, male/female parenting has been changing. The most significant change is the disappearance of the male parent: the vast & tragic increase of "the single-parent family." A less but hopeful development is more male responsibility in parenting, especially where the female is the bio-family's main breadwinner.  
3  
Women more free in earlier times? I said in early Christianity in comparison with later, more institutionalized   
Christianity.  
4  
"Restricting women's social interaction" & not men's was & is a biology-is-destiny matter: only women can become pregnant victims of rape & seduction, & only men can become parent cuckolds. But I have no rigid ideas on the restricting. Nothing can change the bio-fact that sexual intercourse has potentially more serious consequences for females than for males. Does that mean tight sex for women & loose sex for men? Biologically, yes. Morally (I say as a Christian), no): I believe in male-&-female tight sex before marriage: as a virgin, I married a virgin, & for 64 years we have been virgins except to each other.  
5  
Yes, I favor paternity leave. But only materity leave is a bio-given (brief as it may be).  
6  
"Equality before the law" does mean equal, identical treatment; but the legal functioning of the term of fairness, equity. "Equitable treatment" does not bear the ideological, leveling burden of "equality." / Some men wouldn't want to marry a woman who would not take "equal" financial responsibility in marriage and parenthood, but is that "fair"?  
7  
Yes, the anthropological fact of superior male musculature & superior female mouth as some personal & some demographic excedtions. I wasn't surprise to hear from a big-mouth, big-bicepts female (no insult, but some humor, intended).

**POSTED BY: ELLIOTTWL | JULY 24, 2009 7:04 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20elliottwl%20%20|%20%20Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes%20%20|%20%204695287&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4695287%26blog_id=618)

The fact that man has ruled so far because strength has been most important in human society is just a fact of the past. I think that since strength has become less important things are naturally levelling out. Regardless of micro-scale events as feminism I think fair or equal treatment and respect would still have happened. If ever strength becomes important again, then things might shift back, if strength would have been a major flaw maybe roles might have been inversed.

8-What evidence is there that women were more free in earlier times?

**POSTED BY: BIOS | JULY 23, 2009 9:07 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Bios%20%20|%20%20Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes%20%20|%20%204695199&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4695199%26blog_id=618)

Back in the day when survival depended on being able to club your dinner and drag it back to the cave, the muscular differences between males and females was significant, and females were to a great extent dependent on males for survival. But with the advent of agriculture and the invention of tools and increasingly sophisitcated weapons, that dependency no longer exists; natural differences in musculature are no longer relevant.

4. When I was pregnant, the only accomodation that was made for me at the animal hospital where I worked was that I did not shoot x-rays. After my daughter was born and I went back to work, I pumped milk for her on my regular break time.   
And I am all for fathers getting paternity leave after a baby is born, whether or not either parent plans to stay at home with the baby full-time. Dad and baby need time to bond, and Mom needs rest along with time to bond with baby, not immediate full-time diaper duty. In addition, Mom and Dad need time together to re-structure their bond with each other to include Junior.

6. Restricting women's social interaction to prevent cuckolding of their husbands was/is both unequal and inequitable. The good reverend seems to feel that it was somhow justifiable. I have to wonder how he would feel if men's social interaction had been curtailed instead to prevent their "sowing" other men's "fields?"

**POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | JULY 22, 2009 10:36 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20lepidopteryx%20%20|%20%20Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes%20%20|%20%204694884&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4694884%26blog_id=618)

Rev. Elliott,

On equality: Gender discourse has long recognized that equality does not equal identity.

Male/Female parenting: It's changed. Fathers, at least, here in New York, have a very different relation, much, much closer with their infants, children, teens, than in the past.

Further, although it is more common for women to be the homemakers/breadwinners with men being the breadwinners/homemakers(?), some men do now place career second and devote the bulk of their time to child-rearing while their wives become the full-time breadwinners. I've seen amazingly positive results in two such cases.

"5.....Custom and law should adjust to the reality that men and women abuse each other differently, using their superiorities against each other. Generally speaking, men are better with their muscles and women are better with their mouths. In court, a man is in the inferior position that her damage from him is visible, while his from her is invisible."

Speechless am I. Utterly. Without words. Sans mots. Palabras escape me. I am silenced, though a woman. (However, you should see my biceps.)

**POSTED BY: FARNAZ1MANSOURI1 | JULY 22, 2009 1:57 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Farnaz1Mansouri1%20%20|%20%20Laws%20Should%20Honor%20the%20Mutual%20Superiority%20of%20the%20Sexes%20%20|%20%204694846&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4694846%26blog_id=618)

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