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Don't Vote Chromosomes: The First Woman Must Be The *Right* Woman

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I was talking to a friend about the tortured persistence of the Clinton campaign and she said: "She needs to stay in. This will be the last chance in my lifetime to vote for a woman for president."

There are a lot of women of a certain age saying the same thing. And I can only ask: what?

Could this really be the reason that Hillary polls best among older white women? Will we really vote for a woman simply based on the fact that she happens to be one?

Don't get me wrong. After a combined 16 years of intern abuse, lying to Congress, bullying, and macho posturing, I would love to see a woman's imprint on the Oval Office. But not to score one for our side. That makes as much sense as choosing Pepsi over Coke because Pepsi is run by a female.

Female management styles swing from the neighborly Meg Whitman of eBay to the head-butting Carly Fiorina, formerly of Hewlett Packard. But across the spectrum of types, women do bring a more collaborative style to leadership - a more even-handed willingness to form consensus and consider opinions counter to our own. Before she went before the cameras to scare us with tales of weapons of mass destruction, might a woman have listen more closely to evidence that didn't exist? I think so.

And I also like the idea of voting for a woman who truly cares about women's' issues. Without that, I'm not sure why women should get all that excited. In fact, a Yale study looked at voting records and found that legislators most likely to favor women's issues are men - with daughters.

Before we vote for someone simply because of chromosomes in common, it might be helpful to put the candidate to the test on both counts.

Leadership style? I see in Hillary the same calculating, "bring em on" swagger of the last eight years: Dick Cheney - only better accessorized.

With Hillary we're talking about a woman who added assassination to possibilities of the early summer political season; who threatened to "obliterate" Iran; who declared herself the candidate of "hard working Americans - white Americans."

As for her concern for women's issues, Hillary has made promises on choice, reproductive services, expanded women's health care and pay parity. Where in her Senate career do we see any serious tenure-defining effort to protect or achieve any of that?

In fact, Hillary is not nearly as progressive as some might hope. She supported the Defense of Marriage Act, she co-sponsored a flag burning amendment, she voted to send our sons and daughters into the meat grinder of an unnecessary war. And with close to 70 percent of women in most polls favoring stricter gun control laws, what are we to make of her snuggling up to the NRA with tales of her childhood shooting lessons?

You can argue that Hillary would roll back George Bush's assaults on humanity - like denying US aid to any organization that even talks about abortion as birth rates of the world's desperately poor explode. But I would answer: so would any other rational human being not in the talons of the lunatic right.

I would also kind of like to vote for a woman who earned it. It's true that a woman with Barack Obama's skimpy bona fides could never have launched a campaign. (I can't name another man who could have pulled it off either.) But you can just as easily argue that Hillary Clinton would not be where she is without a Senate seat gained largely on the fact that she was married to the former leader of the free world.

As Kate Zernike pointed out recently in the New York Times, there are more women in the pipeline than the last-chancers fear: in the Senate, in the House, in governors offices. Three years ago, who knew the name Obama? One of them might, in fact, find their way onto the ticket. I hope so.

I really do believe that America is ready - more than ready after eight years in hell - to elect a woman. But we can't simply pick the one who happens to be available, especially when she is so divisive and brings along a time bomb of a husband. Instead of moving us forward, it could set us back decades.

Our women president is out there. And I believe we'll find her sooner than we think.

Let's wait and get it right.