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## Women, Listen to Me. John McCain Is Not Your Friend

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I was watching formidable reporter Christiane Amanpour on *Real Time with Bill Maher* this week as she argued that Sarah Palin "connects" and, "whether you agree with her policies or not, it's actually good there is a woman on a major ticket... it's important... it's progress."

With the greatest respect for a woman who can do her job with bullets whizzing past her head, I must ask: are you nuts?"

A statement like that from such a tough and accomplished woman is another reminder that even as Palin's shortcomings have come so painfully, embarrassingly obvious, she still gets a pass based on her gender.

If you are a woman who believes that every home should have an assault weapon, that government should have dominion over our bodies, that the future defender of our educational system has yet to have a child who made it past high school, that stem cell research is evil, that Adam and Eve kept pet dinosaurs, that shooting wolves from helicopters makes for a fun afternoon -- then by all means, vote for McCain-Palin.

But if you are voting because there is a woman on the ticket, then you have fallen for one of the cynically sexist scams in campaign history.

Palin is on the ticket because of the same triumph of allure over ability that has denied women opportunities for decades. She is here because a campaign that is going down the drain in tighter and tighter circles said "What the hell, we have nothing to lose. Let's get us a babe."

The electoral realities were certainly becoming clear to McCain campaign insiders long before they made it to CNN's maps, as was the coming Republican judgment day over an economic implosion that took shape on their proud deregulatory watch.

Romney, Huckabee, Lieberman, Pawlenty, Ridge and other men who were said to have made the finals were not game changers. Some were game losers.

So picking a woman could be an inspired move -- especially with the angry cloud of Hillary supporters looking for a place to swarm. And there were women available; senators, governors, cabinet members -- even women from the world of business.

The leading contenders from those lists all differed from Palin in significant respects. They had long track records. They were known quantities. They were seasoned politicians, not media-friendly curiosities.

But they weren't babes -- not the wiggling, winking embarrassment we have come to know over the past month. Imagine for a second Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison snuggling up to a debate opponent like a high school girl ready for a good night kiss and asking in a little girl voice -- "Is it ok if I call you Joe?"

So to Ms. Amanpour and all who celebrate the simple fact of a female on the Republican ticket; help me out here. Why is Palin good? How can she be important? And how can this be progress?