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Women of the Tea Party: Who Are You, and What Do You Want?

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There's no doubt that women are good for the Tea Party. But is the Tea Party good for women?

There is no simple answer to that because the Tea Party is notably short on simple answers to anything. But much we do know: they have had a real impact on the Republican primaries -- including shockers from Delaware to New York to Alaska.

We also know that, contrary to the early image of a fraternity of angry white men, women are the heart of the movement. Thinking began to change with the March release of the Quinnipiac University [poll](#) that revealed that 55 percent of those identifying themselves as members of the Tea Party are female.

It is also now clear that women have a seat at the grownups' table. Writing in *Slate*, Hanna Rosin [points out that](#), to the extent the movement has leaders, it is dominated by women. One example: of the eight Board members of the influential Tea Party Patriots, six are women.

Sara Palin, the movement's acknowledged alpha female, drew a fusillade of brickbats from traditional feminists when she said that "momma grizzlies" like those of the Tea party were the real feminists. When you strip the term down to the base metal of equality without excuses, she has a point. These are women rising up to confront a world they feel threatens their families. They are loud, determined, unafraid and -- politically speaking -- have great big teeth.

But will the results of that determination be ultimately good or bad for all women?

Unfortunately, good and bad, are hotly subjective when it comes to issues like choice, gay marriage and single parenthood.

Organizers studiously stayed away from such division. Reporting on last weekend's Washington D.C. Tea Party event for Politico, James Hohmann and Kenneth P. Vogel [noted](#) a determined lack of attention to social issues -- particularly those embraced by the Christian right.

They quote one Maine organizer for the Tea Party Patriots: "... there are a lot of people in this country who don't want religion in their politics."

Politics, certainly in this regard, is about getting elected. Whether the Tea Party women want religion in their government may be another question entirely.

The question becomes more interesting the deeper you dig into the statistics. A CBS News/*New York Times* [poll](#) created a snapshot of the Tea Party movement. Almost three-in-four said they were conservative and almost 40 percent said they were very conservative. Almost 40 percent call themselves evangelical.

Aggregate statistics don't neatly translate to individual intent. But it's fair to assume there aren't many coming out of this base who will champion issues like gay marriage, choice, and single parent families. Gay marriage and choice are clearly high on Sarah Palin's list of American evils. Single parent families get a pass for obvious reasons. But as Colleen Campbell quotes her speeches in a recent St. Louis Post-Dispatch editorial -- single mothers are "strong enough and smart enough" ... to "handle an unplanned pregnancy", while continuing to pursue education and a career. In other words: when the going gets tough, the tough keep the baby.

So my question to the women of the Tea Party is this. If you take back America from the forces of big government, big spending and big taxes, do you plan to share it with the teenage girl who is unprepared to raise a child, with the gay couple who want the simple right to marry, and with families who may not fit your own definitions?