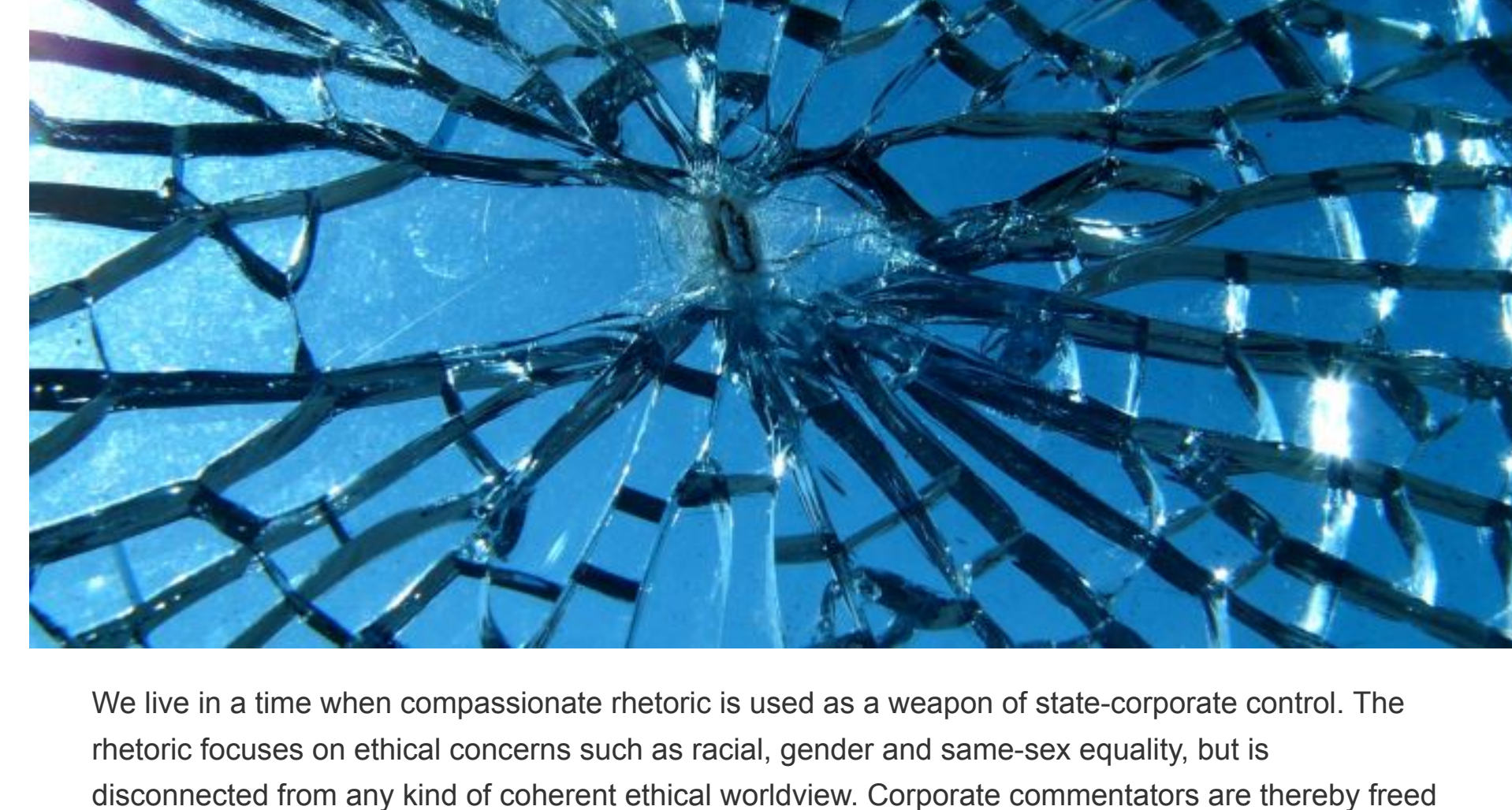


Hillary Clinton - Of Glass Ceilings And Shattered Countries

IN [ALERTS 2015](#) - [POST 16 APRIL 2015](#) - [LAST UPDATED ON 16 APRIL 2015](#) - [BY EDITOR](#)



We live in a time when compassionate rhetoric is used as a weapon of state-corporate control. The rhetoric focuses on ethical concerns such as racial, gender and same-sex equality, but is disconnected from any kind of coherent ethical worldview. Corporate commentators are thereby freed to laud these moral principles, even as they ignore high crimes of state-corporate power.

Thus, it was deemed 'historic', even 'epoch-making', by our corporate culture that Barack Obama was elected the first black president of the United States. And it certainly was a triumph for racial equality. But the moral significance was hailed by a media commentariat that proceeded to gaze with blank indifference at the ethical trailblazer's bombing of seven countries, his deep involvement in four ongoing, full-scale wars, his devastation of Libya, and his abject failure to address the apocalyptic threat of climate change.

Alongside these horrors, Obama's involvement in the Honduran coup, his diplomatic and military support for Egypt's blood-soaked military junta, and his \$90bn in arms sales sent (in the last four years) to a Saudi Arabian tyranny wreaking havoc in Syria and Yemen, are mere footnotes.

None of this matters: for our corporate media, Obama remains, above all, the inspirational first black president.

Similarly, in evaluating Obama's possible successor, the Guardian's editorial 'view on Hillary Clinton' focuses on the problem that she is 'hammering the glass ceiling (again)' of gender inequality:

'With four years as her nation's chief diplomat on the world stage under her belt, Mrs Clinton's personal gravitas is even harder to quibble with than it might have been in 2008.'

So, for the Guardian editors, Clinton has more 'personal gravitas' now - she actually has more dignity, should be taken more seriously. A remarkable response, as we will see. The Guardian continues:

'On foreign policy, her spell as secretary of state leaves her with a somewhat clearer record - she is associated with a rather more interventionist approach than Mr Obama. Her admirers would describe her as a happy mix of the smart and the muscular: doubters will recall her vote for the ruinous invasion of Iraq in 2003, and prefer the Obama-esque oath to first do no harm.'

The cognitive dissonance could hardly be more glaring: Obama's colour and Clinton's gender are key ethical concerns, and yet Obama's responsibility for mass killing is not only *not* a concern, it is not even recognised. Instead, he continues to be presented as a benevolent non-interventionist who has consistently chosen to 'do no harm'.

'Grandmother-In-Chief'

In a Guardian piece titled, 'Clinton returns to smash glass ceiling, with gender at forefront of campaign', US environment correspondent Suzanne Goldenberg writes:

'The finest moment in Hillary Clinton's political life - so far - arrived on a hot June day in 2008, when she finally took ownership of her place in history as the woman who came so painfully close to shattering that "highest, hardest glass ceiling".'

Goldenberg notes that Clinton 'seems to have adopted a new persona: grandmother-in-chief'. She quotes Clinton:

'Becoming a grandmother has made me think deeply about the responsibility we all share as stewards of the world we inherit and will one day pass on. Rather than make me want to slow down, it has spurred me to speed up.'

If this sounds like vacuous PR blather, it is for a reason. On the BBC website, Anthony Zurcher notes that Clinton's 2008 presidential bid was criticised because it 'showed little personality' and lacked 'a unifying vision'. In other words, Clinton did not stand for anything. So what does Clinton care about in 2015?

'That remains to be seen. There have been hints that she will embrace the economic populist wealth-gap message most notably touted by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. She could also emphasise women's rights, both in the US and internationally - a subject that has been close to her heart for her entire career.'

As Obama created an ethical veneer out of his colour, so Clinton can use her gender. Zurcher reports:

'Early indicators are she will attempt to soften her image by emphasising her new role as a grandmother.'

In a rousing conclusion to her Guardian article, Goldenberg writes:

'Now it's time for Clinton to pick up where she left off. Seven years on, many of the issues previously sidelined as women's concerns - minimum wage, equal pay, paid sick leave - have risen to the political mainstream, and Clinton shows every intention of trying to make them her own.'

Her sign-off:

'In every presidential election since 1980, women have turned out to vote in greater numbers than men. There will be many million more cracks to make before shattering that glass ceiling but Clinton is on her way.'

This was much closer to endorsement than impartial analysis, an impression Goldenberg reinforced by retweeting a message of support sent to Clinton by female Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian Sehar Kamran:

'Good Luck Hillary'

The tweet contained a thumbs-up sign for good measure. We tweeted and emailed Goldenberg:

'How is this retweet compatible with the idea that Guardian journalists are neutral, objective and independent? Should you really be openly rooting for the politicians on whom you are reporting?' (Email to Goldenberg, April 14, 2015)

Goldenberg replied on Twitter:

'oh, please. We all know RT = interesting NOT endorsement'

Readers can decide for themselves if it was interesting that someone tweeted 'Good Luck Hillary' to Clinton.

In similar vein, Guardian columnist Deborah Orr tweeted:

'Go Hills! Imagine. A woman Guardian editor AND a woman US president.'

Indeed! Imagine having a newspaper editor like Rebekah Brooks AND a prime minister like Margaret Thatcher.

In the Guardian, in a piece titled, 'Why Hillary Clinton would make the perfect US president', Orr writes:

'She'll be less tainted by the scandals and mistakes of previous administrations than any woman ever has been.'

But anyway, 'the symbolic power of her appointment (as a female president) transcends all else'.

Which perhaps explains why both Goldenberg and Orr fail to mention Libya, the country Clinton played a decisive role in wrecking while US Secretary of State (2009-2013). We asked Goldenberg:

'How can you discuss Hillary Clinton's campaign without even mentioning Libya, the country she destroyed?'

Goldenberg replied:

'It's a piece abt gender & framing of @HillaryClinton candidacy, not foreign policy'

We responded:

'But you say "Clinton made several mistakes in the years.. leading up to Sunday's launch". Why not include the destruction of Libya?'

This was tongue-in-cheek, Libya, of course, was not a 'mistake'; it was a major crime - all the more reason to mention it. We received no reply.

We also emailed Orr, asking why she had not mentioned Clinton's role in the Libya catastrophe. Orr clarified:

*Hi David,
Because that's not what the article was about.
Best wishes
Deborah Orr (Email, April 14, 2015)*

We responded:

*Thanks for replying, Deborah. But the second sentence of the opening paragraph reads:
'She'll be less tainted by the scandals and mistakes of previous administrations than any woman ever has been.'
And you write:
'No doubt many people consider it wrong to believe that Clinton should be president 'just because she's a woman'. No doubt many feminists are troubled by the way that Clinton is following in footsteps trodden first by her husband.'
So clearly you are writing about these issues. Clinton has already followed in the warmongering footsteps of her husband, which you could have mentioned. It could hardly be more important or relevant.
Best wishes
David*

Orr replied again:

*Your first quote
The sentences [sic] serves two purposes, one rhetorical, to express that no women has been President, the other practical, to note that she is indeed tainted by scandals and mistakes. It is not the purpose of the sentence to explore those things in detail.
Your second quote
There's a presumption in those sentences that people already know quite a bit about HC's record, and don't need to be told again. You may need to be told again. But I actually doubt that either you, or many other readers, do.*

We replied:

*The destruction of Libya is not only not 'detail', it is arguably the defining fact, and crime, of Clinton's life. If an official enemy were responsible and under discussion, the idea that one could simply pass over, or take as read, their destruction of an entire country would be unthinkable.
Best
David*

Orr responded one last time:

*Noted.
Thanks.*

Libya – 'Hillary's War'

In March 2011, Clinton said:

'Gaddafi has lost the legitimacy to lead, so we believe he must go. We're working with the international community to try to achieve that outcome.' (Quoted, Maximilian Forte, 'Stouchny Towards Sirte – NATO's War on Libya and Africa', Baraka Books, digital version, 2012, p.325)

Writing in the Sunday Times, James Rubin comments:

'Former defence secretary Bob Gates has written that it was secretary Clinton's "considerable clout" that tipped the balance in favour of action.' (Rubin, 'Why Hillary Clinton would make a better president than Obama', Sunday Times, April 12, 2015)

In the Telegraph, Mary Riddell notes:

'More hawkish than Mr Obama or the dovellike vice president, Joe Biden, she backed the invasion of Afghanistan, while US action in Libya has been described as "Hillary's War".'

The results: about 1.8 million Libyans - nearly a third of the country's population - have fled to Tunisia with 1,700 armed gangs fighting over a country in which chaos reigns.

In her memoir, 'Hard Choices', Clinton revealed how she had also played a key role in supporting the coup in Honduras:

'In the subsequent days [after the coup] I spoke with my counterparts around the hemisphere, including Secretary [Patricia] Espinosa in Mexico. We strategized on a plan to restore order in Honduras and ensure that free and fair elections could be held quickly and legitimately, which would render the question of [overthrown Honduran president] Zelaya moot.'

Political analyst Mark Weisbrot commented:

'The question of Zelaya was anything but moot. Latin America leaders, the United Nations General Assembly and other international bodies vehemently demanded his immediate return to office.'

In 2008, Clinton said:

'I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran [if it attacks Israel] in the next 10 years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them.'

Clinton also commented of Egypt's then dictator, Mubarak:

'I really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family.'

In 2006, Clinton co-sponsored a (failed) bill that would have criminalised the burning of the American flag. Clinton described it as 'an opportunity to protect our flag'.

'Hillary's Moment'

In the BBC website article mentioned above, Zurcher writes: 'If this is Hillary's moment, she's going to have to earn it.'

It is a line but far from innocuous comment. Referring to Clinton by her first name indicates that 'Hillary' is one of 'the good guys', unlike surname-only 'bad guys' like Putin, Chavez, Gaddafi and Assad. Try imagining a BBC news piece commenting: 'If this is Bashar's moment, he's going to have to earn it.'

In 2013, BBC journalist Kim Ghattas authored a book titled, 'The Secretary – A Journey With Hillary Clinton from Beirut to The Heart of American Power'. Clinton, Ghattas explained, is 'a rock star diplomat who finally let her hair down'.

As US Secretary of State, 'Hillary' let her hair down in October 2011, after it emerged that Libyan leader Gaddafi (Muammar to his friends) had been beaten, sodomised with a knife and murdered. Moments after receiving the news, Clinton laughed, commenting: 'We came, we saw, he died.' As Maximilian Forte observed:

'Ghouliah, chilling, and perverse was this utterly remorseless display of how bloodthirsty US power can be.' (Forte, op.cit., pp.359-360)

Zurcher notes that Clinton 'faces an ongoing congressional investigation into her response to the attacks on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya'. This is Zurcher's only reference to Libya. Like the rest of the media, the failure to protect the US consulate is the only Libyan scandal worth mentioning. Thus, the Independent refers to Clinton's 'potential weaknesses, including controversies over her handling, as Secretary of State, of the 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, her use of a private email server while at the State Department and donations by foreign governments to the Bill Clinton foundation'.

In all the coverage of Clinton's presidential bid recorded in the Lexis newspaper database, we have found not one inclusion of the destruction of Libya among her 'controversies'.

It has been estimated that Clinton will raise between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion in the primary and general election campaigns, twice the amount Barack Obama and Mitt Romney each spent in 2012. The World Socialist Web Site notes the significance:

'To raise these vast sums, all potential candidates must thus pass through a screening process that involves a few thousand billionaires and near-billionaires... The financial oligarchy selects the possible candidates, a process now referred to as the "invisible primary"... Those selected are invariably right-wing, reliable defenders of corporate America, usually themselves millionaires or multimillionaires.'

Are we really to accept that gender equality counts more than the naked fraudulence of this 'democratic' process, more than the bringing of death and destruction to entire countries? But this is exactly the message of the corporate 'free press', which works so hard to ensure that ethical discussion remains superficial, rootless, and powerless to challenge the status quo.

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Suggested Action

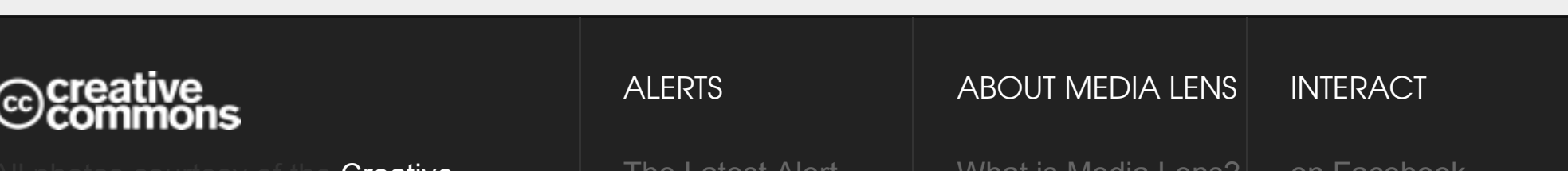
The goal of Media Lens is to promote rationality, compassion and respect for others. If you do write to journalists, we strongly urge you to maintain a polite, non-aggressive and non-abusive tone.

Write to Suzanne Goldenberg
Email: suzanne.goldenberg@theguardian.com

Write to Deborah Orr
Email: deborah.orr@theguardian.com

Copy your emails to Media Lens
Email: editor@medialens.org

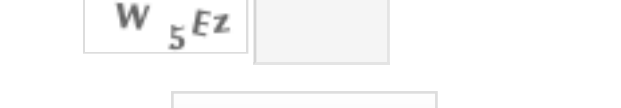
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