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## OUT OF ORDER

### She Says ‘Woman on Woman Crimes’ Blown Out of Proportion, Not Representative

BY KATHLEEN J. WU

**ONE OF THE RECURRING** motifs in gender politics is that “women are just as hard on other women as men are, maybe even harder.”

I won’t deny that there is some truth to the notion that, in some cases, women can be less than supportive of other women. We’ve all known women who don’t like working for other women. And studies on unconscious bias show that women frequently show the same kinds of biases against women as men do.

But, particularly as I have gotten older, I have found that the people who have been the most supportive of me, both personally and professionally, have been women. I frequently find myself pitching female executives and general counsel for business, and have

experienced nothing but positivity from them.

I’m tempted to chalk my good experiences up to maturity. Now that we’re in our 50s, I and my peers better appreciate the challenges of being a woman in a still male-dominated field, so we’re more likely to nurture and appreciate a sisterhood that we may have considered quaint and outdated when we were in our 20s.

But it’s not just my peers who are supportive of the women around us. I see the same thing among young women lawyers. They are often the quickest to step up to mentor younger lawyers and help them adjust to the unwritten rules of the law firm world.

In other words, the cattiness that’s often attributed to women isn’t, in my experience, nearly as



**Kathleen Wu**

prominent as the media would have us believe. Instead, I have experienced a genuine sense of camaraderie among the women I work and socialize with.

That’s not to say all is peachy in Woman World. The “woman question” has taken on a heightened level of importance in this year’s presidential race, both in the Democratic primary battle between Bernie Sanders

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and Hillary Clinton, as well as in the upcoming general election showdown between (presumably) Clinton and Donald Trump.

There was an uproar earlier this year when feminist icon Gloria Steinem and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright chided the young women who were supporting Sanders, with Albright reminding them of her famous maxim, that “there’s a special place in hell for women who don’t help each other.”

In response, Steinem and Albright were skewered by Sanders supporters who reminded them that they are under no obligation to support a candidate simply because she’s a woman.

That little dustup, however, obscured the larger truth: that women are turning out in droves to support Clinton. With the exception of a slice of younger women voters (who seem to be turned off by Clinton’s pragmatism), Clinton has generally maintained a fairly sizable lead among women in the primaries.

And the gap could be even bigger in the general election, with Clinton showing a 19-point average lead over Trump. The fact-checking website Politifact reported that, if those polls are accurate, the 2016 election has the makings of “gender gap of historic proportions.”

Perhaps just as important as their support at the polls, however, is the extent to which women are supporting Clinton financially. According to the New York Times, nearly 60 percent of Clinton’s reported contributions, totaling \$70 million, have come from women—the most of any presidential candidate by far. And about half of her “bundlers”—the fund-raisers who solicit checks from friends and business associates—are women, compared with about a third of President Obama’s 2012 bundlers.

That female camaraderie really paid off in April when Trump accused Clinton of playing “the woman’s card”: within three days, her campaign brought in \$2.4 million through

email requests and the sale of merch like “Deal me in” T-shirts.

So, yes, there are times when women aren’t supportive of other women. There is always sporadic conflict among members of any community, whether it’s women, Episcopalians or tree surgeons. Something about “conflict among women,” though, seems to spark the interest of the commentariat, who then turn what would otherwise be a fairly mundane “dispute” into a “catfight.”

Those of us who have been in the trenches long enough know not to be distracted by efforts to blow those disputes out of proportion. Women get to disagree with each other. We get to vote for whomever we want, and we’re free to disagree with each other about that.

But when the books are balanced, I feel safe in saying that women go to bat for each other far more often than they do the opposite. And that’s as it should be.