



## Alabama Law Scholarly Commons

---

Working Papers

Faculty Scholarship

---

5-13-2011

### Race, Sex, and the Division of Labor: A Comment on Joan Williams's Reshaping the Work-Family Debate

Richard Delgado

*University of Alabama - School of Law*, rdelgado@law.ua.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.law.ua.edu/fac\\_working\\_papers](https://scholarship.law.ua.edu/fac_working_papers)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Richard Delgado, *Race, Sex, and the Division of Labor: A Comment on Joan Williams's Reshaping the Work-Family Debate*, (2011).

Available at: [https://scholarship.law.ua.edu/fac\\_working\\_papers/209](https://scholarship.law.ua.edu/fac_working_papers/209)

This Working Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at Alabama Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Working Papers by an authorized administrator of Alabama Law Scholarly Commons.



SEATTLE  
UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF LAW

Race, Sex, and the Division of Labor:  
A Comment on Joan Williams's *Reshaping the  
Work-Family Debate*

Richard Delgado  
*University Professor*

---

Seattle University School of Law Legal Paper Series # 11–16

Published in Seattle University Law Review, Vol. 34 (2011)

---

**This paper can be downloaded without charge from  
the Social Science Research Network Electronic Paper Collection**

Standing for **excellence**. Reaching for **justice**.

## Race, Sex, and the Division of Labor: A Comment on Joan Williams's *Reshaping the Work-Family Debate*

Richard Delgado<sup>†</sup>

### I. INTRODUCTION

Often, knowing the origin of a rule or practice is helpful in understanding its current operation and what one must do if one wishes to change it. Consider, for example, the sexual division of labor that is the main subject of Professor Williams's book.<sup>1</sup> Professor Williams describes in chilling detail how workplace practices, some of them having the force of law, disadvantage women, particularly those with children or elderly relatives.<sup>2</sup> Whether caregivers or not, women perform work below their ability level, encounter obstacles that do not afflict men, and perform a disproportionate share of housework and caregiving.<sup>3</sup> Even professional-class women experience glass ceilings and inadequate accommodations for motherhood.<sup>4</sup>

Where did these practices come from, and why are they so entrenched in the United States? European workers enjoy a shorter workweek, longer vacations, and more favorable family leave policies than their American counterparts.<sup>5</sup> Healthcare and disability policies are more

---

<sup>†</sup> University Professor of Law, Seattle University. J.D., U.C. Berkeley (1974).

1. JOAN C. WILLIAMS, *RESHAPING THE WORK-FAMILY DEBATE: WHY MEN AND CLASS MATTER* 1 (2010). "[T]his book is about reframing debates about work and family." *Id.* at 1. "Because masculine norms are a prime mover of the social power dynamics within which both men and women negotiate their daily lives, feminists need to attend to masculinity." *Id.* at 2. "That gender system, inherited from the nineteenth century, divides daily life neatly into the mutually exclusive realms of public life and domestic life [and] imputes specific, and different, biological and psychological characteristics to men and women. Women are deemed too good for the nasty and brutish world of commerce . . ." *Id.* at 4.

2. *See, e.g., id.* at 42–76 (Chapter 2, "One Sick Child Away from Being Fired"); *id.* at 77–109 (Chapter 3, "Masculine Norms at Work").

3. *See, e.g., id.* at 42–76 (describing workplace practices that place heavy responsibilities on caretakers); *id.* at 89–92 (describing bullying and machismo at work); *id.* at 93–99 (analyzing double binds and inequitable standards that burden women workers).

4. *See id.* at 155 (defining the term "professional-managerial class"); *id.* at 164–66 (describing fear of falling); *id.* at 166–75 (describing stressful lives and trying to do it all).

5. *See id.* at 2, 6–8, 33, 35–40, 126; *see also* Katrin Bennhold, *Flexible Workweek Alters the Rhythm of Dutch Life*, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 30, 2010, at A13.

generous there as well, and European husbands perform a higher percentage of the housework and child care than do similarly situated men in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

What accounts for these role differentiations, and why are they so resistant to change? Professor Williams, who, to her credit, aims to reform them, devotes relatively little attention to their origins, saying only that they seem bound up with capitalism and appeared with the advent of the factory system.<sup>7</sup>

## II. RACE AND SEX

And what of that other source of social stratification, race? In our society, for example, Mexican Americans pick fruit and tend crops.<sup>8</sup> Blacks work in the service sector.<sup>9</sup> Asians tend computers.<sup>10</sup> And so on for each of the different groups. While this is not true of every member of those groups, America's workplaces are as sharply stratified by race as they are by sex.

Professor Williams explains that she will not be concerned about race in the division of labor;<sup>11</sup> it is a large problem that requires separate treatment of its own.<sup>12</sup> It is indeed a large problem; however, one cannot

---

6. See WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 32, 35–38.

7. See *id.* at 4 (“[t]hat gender system, inherited from the nineteenth century. . . .”); *id.* at 6–7 (attributing unfair sex roles and stereotypes to the country’s devotion to small government and “capitalism gone amok”); *id.* at 8 (“Any inquiry into work-family conflict in the United States needs to investigate why we lack the kinds of family supports that exist elsewhere. The answer is that the dominance of the business elite has made unthinkable the kinds of supports that Europeans have nurtured.”); *id.* at 77 (“[S]eparate spheres arose in the late eighteenth century.”); *id.* at 89 (“[M]asculinity first became associated with breadwinner status in the nineteenth century.”).

8. See, e.g., Richard Delgado, *Rodrigo’s Portent: California and the Coming Neocolonial Order*, 87 WASH. U. L. REV. 1293 app. at 1339–44 (2010) [hereinafter Delgado, *Portent*] (illustrating racial composition of various sectors of California’s workforce); see also RICHARD DELGADO, JUAN PEREA & JEAN STEFANCIC, *LATINOS AND THE LAW* 634–96 (2008) (Part Seven: “The Workplace (Including the Fields)”).

9. Delgado, *Portent*, *supra* note 8, app. at 1339–40.

10. *Id.*

11. E.g., WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 9 (“Without a doubt, listening to workers of color is equally important. Yet political scientists tell us that white workers are the swing demographic of ‘Reagan Democrats’ who have shifted Republican since 1970. For that reason, blacks are not the focus of this discussion. . . . A study of the ways white and black workers are alike and differ is important and fascinating—but not our topic here.”). For further discussion of Professor Williams’s treatment of race and class, see Robert S. Chang, *Joan Williams, Coalitions, and Getting Beyond the Wages of Whiteness and the Wages of Maleness*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 825, 826–28 (2011); and Jean Stefancic, *Talk the Talk, but Walk the Walk: A Comment on Joan Williams’s Reshaping the Work-Family Debate*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 815, 822–23 (2011).

12. WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 9 (explaining that race falls outside her range of consideration). She does, however, urge separate, “anti-essentialist” consideration of the special problems of women workers of color, without developing this point in much detail. See, e.g., *id.* at 144–48.

adequately account for the role of sex in the workplace without also considering that of race.

#### A. Early Social Roles

Men and women performed different roles beginning in early history. In hunter-gatherer societies, men were the hunters, while women skinned the animals, foraged, and prepared the food.<sup>13</sup> The Bible mentions specialized roles for men and women,<sup>14</sup> a practice that continued largely unchanged through the Middle Ages and Reformation.<sup>15</sup>

But role differentiations became even more deeply entrenched during the period of European colonialism.<sup>16</sup> Any account of present-day workplace stratification needs to proceed aware of this colonial period and how it created and reinforced social roles.

During the colonial period, most of the settling force consisted, at first, of men.<sup>17</sup> Conditions were arduous, and the natives required domination, then ruling.<sup>18</sup> Diseases, tropical heat, and wild animals posed constant dangers.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, during the early stages of conquest and settlement, the colonial forces consisted almost entirely of men.

The women stayed behind, tending the home fires in London or Marseilles and waiting for the men to return or notify them that it was safe to join them in the newly conquered regions.<sup>20</sup> Until then, the women would remain chaste and virtuous. With ladylike, easily controlled libidos, they were expected to keep their minds on the finer things of life while waiting for the signal to join the men. In fact, many of the women did not remain true to their wayfaring boyfriends, but sought new romantic outlets of their own.<sup>21</sup>

For their part, the men spent their days putting down rebellious natives and imposing a new administrative order. At night, the men would

---

13. See, e.g., *Hunter-Gatherer*, NEW WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA (Apr. 3, 2008, 9:29 PM), <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hunter-gatherer> (describing hunter-gatherer societies).

14. E.g., *Proverbs* 31:10–31 (describing woman's role in relation to her husband).

15. See generally SHULAMITH SHAHAR, *THE FOURTH ESTATE: A HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE AGES* (1983) (describing women's lives during this period).

16. By colonialism I mean the period from the late fifteenth to the twentieth century, when English, French, Belgian, Spanish, and Portuguese forces were colonizing and ruling much of Asia, Africa, and the New World. See generally EDWARD SAID, *ORIENTALISM* (1978).

17. See, e.g., Richard Delgado, *Rodrigo's Homily: Storytelling, Elite Self-Interest, and Legal Change*, 87 OR. L. REV. 1259, 1288 (2008) [hereinafter Delgado, *Homily*]. See generally HAUNTED BY EMPIRE: GEOGRAPHIES OF INTIMACY IN NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY (Ann Stoler ed., 2006); ANN LAURA STOLER, *RACE AND THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE: FOUCAULT'S HISTORY OF SEXUALITY AND THE COLONIAL ORDER OF THINGS* (1995) (describing sexuality during this period).

18. Delgado, *Homily*, *supra* note 17, at 1288.

19. *Id.*

20. *Id.*

21. *Id.*

enjoy the company of native concubines.<sup>22</sup> The medical science of the time held that male sexual abstinence could lead to insanity.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the men were under a kind of duty to find sexual outlets, which they did in the form of native concubines. During the day, these women worked as servants in the colonial master's household, doing his cleaning, cooking, and sewing. At night they slept in his bed.<sup>24</sup> The native woman emerged then, in the literature of the day, as a willing sexual servant, an empty vessel waiting to be filled, potentially impure and a source of disease.<sup>25</sup>

What of native men? These brown, black, or Asian men were the feared competitors. Seeing their women lying down with the colonial overlords could easily infuriate them, provoking a violent response.<sup>26</sup> The dark man, then, represented disorder, threat, and rebellion.

Colonialism thus gave rise to a two-by-two matrix in which race and sex both played a part. It provided separate, distinct roles for white men, white women, black men, and black women. These roles lasted, with some minor alterations, into the industrial era when Professor Williams believes they began.<sup>27</sup> But, as we have seen, they were in full force well before that. Moreover, the sexual roles on which she focuses grew together with roles that were expressly racial.

### B. Social Roles in Early America

In the United States, sex and race roles followed a similar path. The Pocahontas myth, for example, depicted Indian women as awaiting the virile arrival of the white colonials,<sup>28</sup> while later, in the Southwest, Mexican women played similar roles during the period surrounding Anglo conquest and occupation of the region.<sup>29</sup>

In the South, these roles received new reinforcement when plantation society developed fine houses, with the slaves working the field and

---

22. See DURBA GHOSH, *SEX AND THE FAMILY IN COLONIAL INDIA: THE MAKING OF EMPIRE* 69–205 (2006). See generally Hanneke Ming, *Barracks–Concubinage in the Indies, 1887–1920*, 35 *INDONESIA* 65 (1983).

23. See 6 HAVELOCK ELLIS, *STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX* 178–216 (1911) (Chapter 6, “The Problem of Sexual Abstinence”). For a discussion of how modern scientific claims of essential difference between boys’ and girls’ brains influence education policy, see Katharine B. Silbaugh, *Deliverable Male*, 34 *SEATTLE U. L. REV.* 733, 743–45 (2011).

24. GHOSH, *supra* note 22, at 208–11. See generally Ming, *supra* note 22.

25. See generally PHILIPPA LEVINE, *PROSTITUTION, RACE, AND POLITICS: POLICING VENEREAL DISEASE IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE* (2003).

26. *Id.* at 311–13. See generally JOCK McCULLOCH, *BLACK PERIL, WHITE VIRTUE: SEXUAL CRIME IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1902–1935* (2000).

27. See *supra* note 7 and accompanying text.

28. See, e.g., JUAN PEREA ET AL., *RACE AND RACES: CASES AND MATERIALS FOR A DIVERSE AMERICA* 934–37, 1039, 1074–76 (2d ed. 2007) (describing Pocahontas in reality and in myth).

29. *Id.* at 304 (noting that Anglo settlers would often take Mexican or Latina wives out of convenience or to gain access to one half of their community property under local law).

sleeping in rude shacks at a distance from the grand homes of the owner and his family.<sup>30</sup> The master's female children led lives of privilege, with piano lessons, instruction in French or Italian, and foreign travel. They learned to make polite conversation in anticipation of the well-born young men who would one day seek their hands in marriage.<sup>31</sup>

Yet their lives were sharply circumscribed. Young girls of plantation society could not climb trees or go for long rambles, especially ones that might take them near where the slaves worked and lived.<sup>32</sup> That might expose them to the sight of shirtless men, with muscles bulging. They might hear crude language or see men sweating or urinating. They could not gallop a horse in those areas, much less go for a swim in the nearby river. They could not see, close up, how the cycle of planting and harvesting occurred, could not begin to learn agriculture or the economics of farming. With their options thus limited, women could explore only a few pursuits—literature, music, teaching, or parlor conversation.<sup>33</sup>

White women, then, lived constrained lives precisely because dark men led ones of brutal enslavement. Southern aristocracy created the image of the delicate, refined woman, dressed in finery, and spending her days in a world of manners, music, and refinement. And the reason that it did so was that it was necessary to protect young women from the sights and sounds of slavery, especially the male kind.

### III. CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAILURE TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF HISTORIC PATTERNS

What does it matter if an account, like Joan Williams's, neglects to trace contemporary workplace practices to their origins? First, a reader can easily fail to understand how deeply entrenched these practices are, as well as how they interact in producing the division of labor we see in today's workplace. Second, one can focus one's remedial efforts on the wrong thing. One can, for example, believe that the problem will yield to increasing efforts to educate women on their oppressed status.<sup>34</sup> One can look to see where the opposition to fairer workplace rules is strongest,

---

30. See Richard Delgado, *Linking Arms: Recent Books on Interracial Coalition as an Avenue of Social Reform*, 88 CORNELL L. REV. 855, 878 (2003).

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.*

33. *Id.*

34. See WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 3 ("The basic picture is one of women discovering that they 'really are' different from men, that women's priorities are different, and that the lure of children pulls them away from work and into the home sweet home—or really car sweet car, as they drive their children from one enrichment activity to the next. This 'opt out' storyline is inaccurate in many ways.").

namely among working class men, and designate this class the principal target for persuasion and reform efforts.<sup>35</sup>

#### A. *The Problem of Social Class*

Professor Williams's otherwise admirable book exhibits both shortcomings. For example, she devotes two substantial chapters to social class, in an effort to unearth reasons why blue-collar people do not support female equity in the workplace as strongly as her own professional-class friends do.<sup>36</sup> A major objective of her book is to solve this mystery and find ways upper-class liberals can make inroads with working-class people.<sup>37</sup> At times, she expresses this objective in terms of the predicament of the Obama Administration, which has not generated much support among the working class either.<sup>38</sup> And she finds the reason for both failures in the inability of upper-class professionals to communicate with working-class people without insulting them.<sup>39</sup> The upper class talk down to working-class people and use fancy language.<sup>40</sup> They offer them the wrong kind of alcoholic beverage at get-out-the-vote parties.<sup>41</sup> They expect them to resonate with high-flown language about equity and universal rights.

---

35. *See id.* at 6 (noting that “reducing work-family conflict also requires changing the way we think about class. . . . At an electoral level, the kinds of family supports available in Europe are unthinkable in the United States, in part because of an American politics fueled by class conflicts between the professional-managerial class and the white working class.”); *id.* at 9–10 (noting that her focus will be “on the white working class,” which typically votes Republican, exhibits a class-based masculine attitude, and feels misunderstood and scorned by elite groups of wine-sipping professionals).

36. *Id.* at 151–86 (Chapter 5, “The Class Culture Gap”); *id.* at 187–214 (Chapter 6, “Culture Wars as Class Conflict”).

37. *E.g., id.* at 9–10 (noting that progressives have exhibited disrespect for working-class whites and that this “is part of a gaping cultural gap between the white working class and the professional-managerial class from which the reform-minded elite typically is drawn”); *id.* at 151–52, 211; *see also* Laura T. Kessler, *Feminism for Everyone*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 679, 692 (2011) (noting that Williams advocates pragmatism and compromise—“feminism in drag”—to persuade working-class men and women to sign on to her program of workplace reform and that she assigns much of their failure, to date, to cultural misunderstandings and failure to communicate).

38. *See, e.g., WILLIAMS, supra* note 1, at 10–11 (“But even Barack Obama, with his remarkable leadership skills, will be able to accomplish comparatively little unless he can build a coalition to support a progressive agenda. . . . Progressives can help by reshaping their relationship to the white working class.”); *id.* at 151–52, 187 (noting Obama’s off-putting gaffe over the vegetable arugula); *id.* at 190–93, 206–07 (same, over guns and hunting).

39. *Id.* at 206–07 (describing Obama’s problems); *id.* at 151–54, 194, 203–13 (describing culture wars and use of symbols that alienate the working class); *id.* at 213 (highlighting the need to stop “insulting white workers”).

40. *See id.* at 151–54, 194, 203–13.

41. *See id.* at 171–75, 186–201 (noting the variety of affronts, some unintentional, that professional-class people commit when trying to recruit among the working class).



My suspicion is that the reasons why working-class people have not jumped on either Obama's or Professor Williams's bandwagon have little to do with style points. Rather, working-class people have interests that are genuinely adverse to those of upper-class people.<sup>42</sup> In short, it is not a big misunderstanding or a failure to communicate. Working-class whites (I speak of whites only because Professor Williams has excluded race from consideration) are mainly interested in job creation.<sup>43</sup> Upper-class whites, by contrast, want better quality of life on the job.<sup>44</sup> Working-class whites want stronger unions.<sup>45</sup> Many upper-class whites are indifferent to unionism and the union movement.<sup>46</sup> Working-class whites want lower taxes.<sup>47</sup> Upper-class whites can afford higher taxes and, in many cases, favor them because they will allow society to be more egalitarian, which pleases the upper-class person and eases her social conscience.<sup>48</sup> Working-class whites are interested in security.<sup>49</sup> Their upper-class brethren are peaceniks who dislike the police and wish they were

---

42. The classic work on this point remains KARL MARX, *CAPITAL* (1867). But is class a dated concept, limited, perhaps, to its nineteenth-century origins in early socialist thought? Not at all. See, e.g., A.O. Scott, *Hollywood's Class Warfare: Films are Starting to Reflect the Economy's Impact on Some Battered Americans*, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 26, 2010, at AR1 (noting how popular movies are increasingly focusing on class conflict and struggle). But see Lisa R. Pruitt, *The Geography of the Class Culture Wars*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 767 (2011) (noting that rural-urban differences account for much of the class divide).

43. Consider, for example, practically any headline or news story describing the Tea Party movement and its agenda (We Need Jobs!); see also WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 59 (noting the importance to working-class men of being the breadwinner in the family).

44. See generally NANCY LEVIT & DOUGLAS O. LINDNER, *THE HAPPY LAWYER: MAKING A GOOD LIFE IN THE LAW* (2010).

45. On the union movement, see, e.g., NICK SALVATORE, *EUGENE V. DEBS: CITIZEN AND SOCIALIST (WORKING CLASS IN AMERICAN HISTORY)* (1984); see also WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 7, 43-47, 49, 60-63, 71 (noting the role of unions in the lives of some working-class people).

46. See, e.g., Stanley Aronowitz, *Should Academic Unions Get Involved in University Governance?*, LIBERAL EDUC., Fall 2006, at 22, available at [http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-fa06/le-fa06\\_feature3.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-fa06/le-fa06_feature3.cfm).

47. See *supra* text accompanying note 43 (No More Taxes!); see also WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 40.

48. See, e.g., Joshua Miller, *Warren Buffet: Read My Lips, Raise My Taxes*, ABCNEWS.COM: THIS WEEK WITH CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR (Nov. 21, 2010), <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/warren-buffett-read-lips-raise-taxes/story?id=12199889>.

49. See, e.g., *supra* text accompanying note 43 (No More Liberal Judges! Throw the Book at Criminals!); see also WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 180-81; *id.* at 4, 83-85 (describing working-class men's concern over appearing manly).

fewer in number and less visible.<sup>50</sup> They also dislike military spending and foreign wars.<sup>51</sup>

These generalizations all have exceptions, of course, but my point is that the working and the upper classes are diverse classes. In fact, that is, practically, why we consider them separate classes: They have different interests. Otherwise, we would designate them a single class with a broad income range.<sup>52</sup>

### B. *Le Différend*

Social scientist Jean-Francois Lyotard described the effort to paper over differences such as those with which we have been concerned as giving rise to *le différend*.<sup>53</sup> *Le différend* is a condition, similar to Emile Durkeim's *anomie*<sup>54</sup> that arises when a group does not see itself in the coercive language of another, superior group.<sup>55</sup> It cannot address its complaints in the language of redress that the other group will recognize.<sup>56</sup> Professor Williams, in laying the blame for Obama's unpopularity on the working class, creates, unwittingly perhaps, exactly such a situation. She urges that working-class people see the world through the prism

---

50. Consider, for example, the Anglo-American peace movement, with its heavy preponderance of college students and professors; intellectuals such as Henry Thoreau, Norman Cousins, and Bertrand Russell; political leaders such as Eugene McCarthy; and high-toned religions such as the Quakers and Unitarians; see also Naomi Klein, *The War on Dissent*, GLOBE & MAIL (Can.), Nov. 25, 2003, at A21, available at <http://www.commondreams.org/views03/1125-08.htm>.

51. *Id.*

52. If it is not plain how groups can have conflicting interests that are not reducible to mere problems in communication, consider two further examples. A smooth-talking shop foreman addresses a meeting of workers discontent with low salaries and poor working conditions in a factory. "We're all on the same side," he says. "Management, like you, wants a happy and productive workplace. Let's all work together toward that end." Of course, that is, at best, a partial truth. Management usually wants as much of the profits from the workers' labor and as little trouble as possible. The workers, for their part, want as much of the fruits of their labor as possible, ideally one-hundred percent. Or, imagine the faculty of a university that is discontent and pondering forming a union. Their employer has been hiring too many part-time adjuncts, impairing the quality of instruction, and eliminating departments, such as philosophy, that lack any immediate payoff. The administration responds that a union is unwise and unseemly: "We are all professionals here, and professionals don't unionize. Let us, instead, work together." The point in each case is that the parties have different interests that are not easily papered over. This point is echoed in other contributions to this Colloquy. See, e.g., Gowri Ramachandran, *Confronting Difference and Finding Common Ground*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 725, 725 (2011) ("I'm skeptical that we really share enough common ground to create policies all these groups can get behind.").

53. See JEAN-FRANCOIS LYOTARD, *THE DIFFEREND: PHRASES IN DISPUTE* (Georges van Den Abbeele trans., 1988) (1983).

54. See EMILE DURKHEIM, *THE DIVISION OF LABOUR IN SOCIETY* (1892) (discussing the alienation of the working class).

55. See LYOTARD, *supra* note 53; George Martinez, *Philosophical Considerations and the Use of Narrative in the Law*, 30 RUTGERS L.J. 683, 684 (2003) (making a similar point).

56. See, e.g., Martinez, *supra* note 55.

of a white-wine-sipping suburban liberal—a tough sell. And she wonders why the same group does not enthusiastically back workplace reforms that will inure mainly to the benefit of university-educated women seeking to have it all.

Women of all classes do need more and better social benefits, including workplace relief when they are pregnant or engaged in child-care activities at home. And the United States does need a president who will forthrightly back universal, single-payer healthcare, the end of senseless wars, a reduction of the military budget, and better schools. We will not get them, however, by targeting the working class for their failure to embrace a feminist program of workplace reforms or the Obama Administration for its failure to communicate in terms that will move working-class people. That requires changes on both sides. Otherwise conversation fails, and we find ourselves ensnared in *le différend*.

#### IV. WHY REFORM MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF BOTH RACE AND SEX

Moreover, if sexual oppression and the racial variety are historically linked,<sup>57</sup> reformers need to proceed aware of that connection. For example, blue-collar men do not like men of color forming close, especially romantic, relationships with white women, while upper-class people are delighted (or say they are) when this happens among members of their class.<sup>58</sup> Working-class people, as Professor Williams notes, are often not particularly proud of their work and find meaning in family, church, and recreational activities, such as bowling.<sup>59</sup> Professional-class people identify strongly with their work,<sup>60</sup> are atheists or agnostics, and engage in recreational activities that are educational in nature, such as going to concerts or travelling in foreign countries.<sup>61</sup> But as we have seen, some of these patterns are historically rooted and make sense culturally and historically for the groups who practice them.

Much about American society is deeply in need of reform; our culture is littered with unfair practices that burden men, women, and mem-

---

57. See *supra* notes 17–33 and accompanying text.

58. On attitudes toward interracial intimacy, see, e.g., RACHEL MORAN, *INTERRACIAL INTIMACY: THE REGULATION OF RACE AND ROMANCE* (1981); see also WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 152, 196–98 (noting how racial attitudes explain some of the alienation of white working-class voters from the Democratic Party). On how masculinities theory helps explain some of the behaviors of men, particularly working-class men, toward women workers, wives, mothers, housework, and similar matters, see Ann C. McGinley, *Work, Caregiving, and Masculinities*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 703 (2011).

59. See WILLIAMS, *supra* note 1, at 186 (describing a worker who exploded when asked about his job; it turned out he made toilets).

60. *Id.* at 32–33, 159.

61. *Id.* at 175.

bers of practically every race.<sup>62</sup> But we will not change these practices until we know where they come from and why different groups find them normal or tolerable. The major point I would like to convey to Professor Williams and her readers is that all of us will have to learn to talk and write about social change without placing the entire onus on those who lead lives and have interests different from ours.

---

62. See, e.g., JUAN PEREA ET AL., *supra* note 28 (detailing many such examples). On the role of media stories such as the opt-out mother cheerfully returning to the hearth, see Nancy Levit, *Reshaping the Narrative Debate*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 751, 761–64 (2011); see also Beth A. Burkstrand-Reid, *“Trophy Husbands” and “Opt-Out” Moms*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 663, 666–69 (2011) (discussing how stories of male trophy husbands likewise grease the skids toward corporate domination of the workforce).