

Women and Literacy

by Tonya Wallace

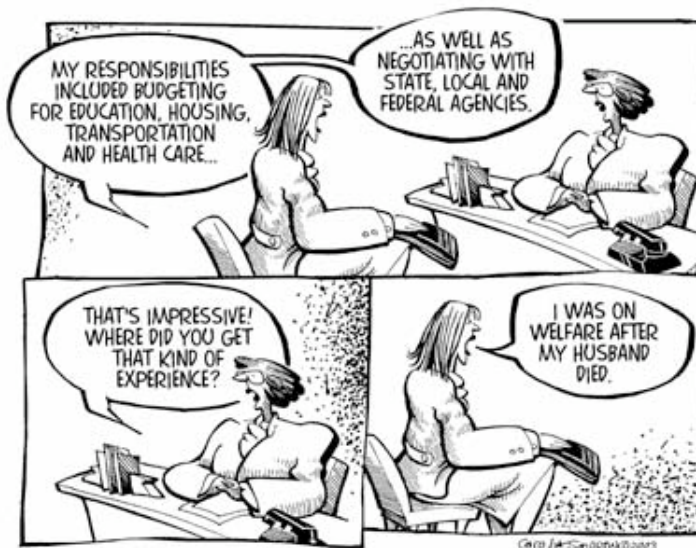
Women face an abundance of obstacles relating to the pursuit of higher education. The silently imposed pressures of finding a mate and starting a family make it hard for women to prioritize education. Too afraid of the infamous “biological clock,” ticking away, many female students do not choose a career path. Women who have taken time out from pursuing education to start families then find it all the more burdensome to complete their education. Family responsibilities can feel overwhelming. Also, some women get negative feedback from their spouses, children, and other family members about going to school. A woman might feel guilty about giving attention to her studies, and that will limit her drive and ambition.

If women do decide to have a career, they are often pushed into stereotypically female jobs like nursing and teaching. As time progresses, some women are able to step outside the career “box,” but as a whole, women are still underrepresented in many professions. Being a divorced, single parent with three children, I too experienced the tumultuous journey of pursuing an education. Assuming the role as “head of household” was exhausting. The additional pressures associated with attending school were often overwhelming.

Taking the course “Experiencing and Interpreting Women’s Lives,” made possible by the American Friends Service Committee, has helped many of us gain valuable insights about the role of women in society. The course has helped us see how women’s decision-making process is subjected to societal pressures. It has helped me think about my own decisions and ask myself if I am following my own needs and desires or those imposed by society.

In my opinion, courses focusing on women’s issues should be available to all first-year and re-entry college students.

Tanya Wallace is incarcerated at Western Wayne Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Michigan.



Carol Simpson's work can be found on the Internet at:
http://www.zmag.org/cartoons/by_artist.cfm?artist=7