



Women's Rights -- Pet Rocks and Happylinks



I realized the other day, during one of the more trying moments, that we've been helping Afghans rebuild their lives and country for over eight years. Progress is painfully slow, particularly in impacting rights for women. In the interests of maintaining peace and in furtherance of our country's exit strategy, there is evidence to suggest women's rights have begun to take a "back seat to other priorities".

There is a substantial risk of past advancements being bargained away. Women, are, after all, not included in settlement discussions between the Afghan government and the Taliban. It's one thing for the Afghan government to make concessions impacting women's rights. It's quite another for us to do the same.

The following quote, is found in a Washington Post article written by Rajiv Chandrasekaran;

"Gender issues are going to have to take a back seat to other priorities," said a senior official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, to discuss internal policy deliberations. "There's no way we can be successful if we maintain every special interest and pet project. All those pet rocks in our rucksack were taking us down." ([Link](#))

Gender issues are "pet rocks in our rucksuk that were taking us down"! "Were, as in past tense? A policy decision has been made to unload gender issues from the rucksuk? "Gender issues" weigh heavily on Afghan women and girls every day of their lives. Trust In Education is not going to deprioritize women's rights ever, nor should our government.

I'm well aware of the cultural imperialism and national interest arguments that lead many to conclude it's not our business and we shouldn't get involved in advancing women's rights. But, it is our money and we can spend it, however we want. No one is forcing anyone to take our aid. If they are not ready for gender equality, we simply take our aid elsewhere and return when they are. One thing I've learned over the past eight years is "money talks". Someone is selling our money and values short.



You tell her she's no longer a priority, if in fact she ever was.

The "pet rock" quotation evoked a "Mad as Hell" moment. But for the torrential rains outside I might have rushed out of the house screaming. Fortunately, I was rescued from all that anger when I opened a link sent from a friend, Susan Chamberlain. After you watch it, you'll know why I'm passing it on.

Periodically I receive links that are extraordinary and lighten the moment. We all do. What if there were a place in cyberspace where people could send in extraordinary links that a panel of judges (currently consisting of one) would review and forward on to members? There is such a place, starting today. If you want to send or receive happylinks send an email and/or happylink to happylinksclub@gmail.com. We'll create the mailing list. Don't worry. You'll be able to opt out whenever you want and it won't be shared with anyone.

The judge is looking for links that serve as offsets to the disturbing and vituperative news we're bombarded with on a daily basis. At present there are no established criteria for what will be distributed to the club. Happylinks are difficult to define, "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced . . . but I know it when I see it .." (definition of happylinks provided by Justice Potter Stewart, in *Jacobellis v*

Ohio (1964).

For starters here are two happylinks:

Sent by Susan Chamberlain:

A Flash Mob Dance Video was organized by Kim MacGregor. Kim created this as a tribute to her best friend Erika Heller who died of colon cancer last year. Each and every telephone conversation they ever had, Erika would end by telling Kim "You're an amazing woman"! Well, Kim wanted to do something special to honor her friend and this is the result. Filmed at the Toronto Eaton Center. ([Link](#))

Sent by cuzzin Ralph Comstock: Human Planet ([Link](#))

Link In -- You'll be glad you did.

Budd

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