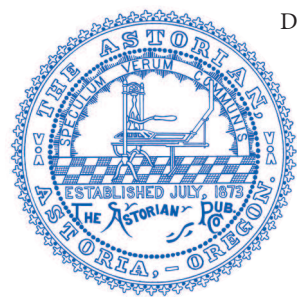


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OUR VIEW

Report on women should serve as a call to action

In a state that makes efforts that go a long way to helping others in need, it has a long way to go in helping raise the status and equality for women who live within its borders.

That's the urgent wakeup call that the "Count Her In" report delivers in what is the first comprehensive look at the status of Oregon women and girls in nearly two decades. The 120-page report comes from the new Women's Foundation of Oregon and was released to state officials this past Wednesday in Salem, ironically a day before American Business Women's Day.

The findings in the study are both stark and grim. The last comprehensive report on the status of Oregon women and girls came out in 1998 and relied on census data from 1990. Much was different then, and much has changed.

The statistics

The material for the "Count Her In" report, which one legislator described as "really top-notch work," was gathered from surveys, interviews and federal and state reports. It reflects the harsh daily circumstances facing Oregon women in nearly every walk of life:

- Women in Oregon have the nation's highest rates of reported depression and heavy alcohol use.
- Federal surveys found that nearly half the women and girls in Oregon have suffered domestic or sexual violence.
- Census numbers show women across the state earn less than men, and the wage gap is even wider for women of color.
- Oregon is one of the least affordable states in the nation for working mothers to care for children.

Clatsop County

In Clatsop County, the numbers in some categories are even more startling:

- 23 percent of women in the county have a bachelor's degree as compared to a state average of 31 percent.
- 54 percent of Clatsop County women are in the workforce, while the statewide average is 58 percent.
- Women in Clatsop County earn \$0.76 for every dollar men earn, while the statewide average for women is \$0.79.

Although harsh, the report isn't all negative; there are a few categories that are far more positive.

For instance, more Oregon women are registered voters and vote more than Oregon men; Oregon has one of the highest rates in the nation of women serving in elected state office position; and Oregon women donate time and money to charities at greater rates than Oregon men. Those statistics hold true in Clatsop County, as well.

Clearly though, the report illustrates serious problems Oregon women face every day.

Emily Evans, director of the Women's Foundation in Oregon, put out a call to action that policymakers and all Oregonians should heed, saying "... there is something hopeful about finally knowing the full measure of the problem. Then we can move past the speculation of whether it is a problem and move toward creating solutions together."

State Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, is already on board.

"Good policy will be produced from such great foundational efforts," he said.

Other lawmakers and leaders throughout the private sector need to get on board as well. If Oregon wants to live up to its reputation for progressive values, the "Count Her In" report presents the challenge to uphold those ideals.



The best news you don't know about

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF
New York Times News Service

The world is a mess, with billions of people locked in inescapable cycles of war, famine and poverty, with more children than ever perishing from hunger, disease and violence.

That's about the only thing Americans agree on; we're polarized about all else. But several polls have found that about 9 out of 10 Americans believe that global poverty has worsened or stayed the same over the last 20 years.

Fortunately, the one point Americans agree on is dead wrong. As world leaders gather for the U.N. General Assembly last week, all the evidence suggests that we are at an inflection point for the ages. The number of people living in extreme poverty (\$1.90 per person per day) has tumbled by half in two decades, and the number of small children dying has dropped by a similar proportion — that's 6 million lives a year saved by vaccines, breast-feeding promotion, pneumonia medicine and diarrhea treatments!

Historians may conclude that the most important thing going on in the world in the early 21st century was a stunning decline in human suffering.

The numbers

OK, you're thinking that I've finally cracked up after spending too much time in desperate places. So a few data points:

— As recently as 1981, when I was finishing college, 44 percent of the world's population lived in extreme poverty, according to the World Bank. Now the share is believed to be less than 10 percent and falling. "This is the best story in the world today," says Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank.

— For the entire history of the human species until the 1960s, a majority of adults were illiterate.

Now 85 percent of adults worldwide are literate and the share is rising.

— Although inequality has risen in America, the global trend is more encouraging: Internationally, inequality is on the decline because of gains by the poor in places like China and India.

The U.N. aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, and experts believe it is possible to get quite close. In short, on our watch, we have a decent chance of virtually wiping out ills that have plagued humanity for thousands of generations, from illiteracy to the most devastating kind of hand-to-mouth poverty.

Yet the public thinks the opposite, that poverty is getting worse. A poll to be released Thursday by Motivation, a Dutch firm, finds that only 1 percent of Americans surveyed realized that global extreme poverty had fallen by half over 20 years.

I wonder if those of us in journalism and the humanitarian worlds don't err by focusing so much on human misery that we leave the public with the misperception that everything is always getting worse.

I've covered massacres in South Sudan, concentration camps in Myanmar and widespread stunting in India, but it's also important to acknowledge the backdrop of global progress. Otherwise, the public may perceive poverty as hopeless and see no point in carrying on the fight — at just the point when we're making the most rapid gains ever recorded.

Developing world

When I first made the acquaintance of the developing world, as a backpacking law student in the 1980s — sometimes riding on tops of trains or buses and writing arti-

cles to pay my expenses — the most gut-wrenching aspect of poverty I encountered was ubiquitous blind beggars, robbed of dignity and any chance to be productive.

This is much less common today, partly because humanitarian aid — despite real shortcomings — has made a profound difference in health. The heroic work of former President Jimmy Carter and pharmaceutical donations from Merck have made river blindness less common. Vitamin A capsules costing 2 cents a dose have reduced blindness as well. Antibiotics have helped curb blinding trachoma. And a simple \$25 surgery developed by a Nepali ophthalmologist, Dr. Sanduk Ruit, lets people suffering from cataracts see again.

The scenes of blind beggars on every street corner will soon be gone forever.

Cynics scoff that if more children's lives are saved, they will just grow up to have more babies and cause new famines and cycles of poverty. Not so! In fact, when parents are assured that their children will survive, they choose to have fewer of them. As girls are educated and contraception becomes available, birthrates tumble — just as they did in the West. Indian women now average just 2.4 births, Indonesian women 2.5, and Mexican women just 2.2.

So in a moment we can return to urgent needs worldwide, from war to climate change to refugees. But first, let's pause for a nanosecond of silence to acknowledge the greatest gains in human well-being in the history of our species — not to inspire complacency, but rather to spur our efforts to accelerate what may be the most important trend in the world today.

The lying game at tonight's presidential debate

By PAUL KRUGMAN
New York Times News Service

Here's what we can be fairly sure will happen in today's presidential debate: Donald Trump will lie repeatedly and grotesquely, on a variety of subjects. Hillary Clinton might say a couple of untrue things. Or she might not.

Here's what we don't know: Will the moderators step in when Trump delivers one of his well-known, often reiterated falsehoods? If he claims, yet again, to have opposed the Iraq War from the beginning — which he didn't — will he be called on it? If he claims to have renounced birtherism years ago, will the moderators note that he was still at it just a few months ago? If he says one more time that America is the world's most highly taxed country — which it isn't — will anyone other than Clinton say that it

isn't? And will media coverage after the debate convey the asymmetry of what went down?

You might ask how I can be sure that one candidate will be so much more dishonest than the other. The answer is that we have long track records for both Trump and Clinton; thanks to nonpartisan fact-checking operations like PolitiFact, we can even quantify the difference.

PolitiFact has examined 258 Trump statements and 255 Clinton statements and classified them on a scale ranging from "True" to "Pants on Fire." One might quibble with some of the judgments, but they're overwhelmingly in the ballpark. And they show two candidates living in different moral universes when it comes to truth-telling. Trump had 48 Pants on Fire ratings, Clinton just six; the GOP nominee had 89 False ratings, the Democrat 27.

Reporting

Unless one candidate has a nervous breakdown or a religious

conversion in recent days, the debate will follow similar lines. So how should it be reported?

Let's take it as a given that one can't report at length on every questionable statement a candidate makes — time, space and the attention of readers and viewers are all limited. What I suggest is that reporters and news organizations treat time and attention span as a sort of capital budget that must be allocated across coverage.

What businesses do when they must allocate capital is to establish a "hurdle rate," a minimum rate of return a project must offer if it is to be undertaken. In terms of reporting falsehoods, this would amount to devoting on-air time or column inches to statements whose dishonesty rises above a certain level of outrageousness — say, outright falsity with no redeeming grain of truth. In terms of PolitiFact's ratings, this might correspond to statements that are False or Pants on Fire.

And if the debate looks anything

like the campaign so far, we know what that will mean: a news analysis that devotes five times as much space to Trump's lies as to Clinton's.

If your reaction is, "Oh, they can't do that — it would look like partisan bias," you have just demonstrated the huge problem with news coverage during this election. For I am not calling on the media to take a side; I'm just calling on it to report what is actually happening, without regard for party. In fact, any reporting that doesn't accurately reflect the huge honesty gap between the candidates amounts to misleading readers, giving them a distorted picture that favors the biggest liar.

Pressures

Yet there are intense pressures on the media to engage in that distortion. Point out a Trump lie and you will get some pretty amazing mail — and if we set aside the attacks on your race or ethnic group, accusations that you are a traitor, etc., most of it will declare that you are being

a bad journalist because you don't criticize both candidates equally.

One too-common response to such attacks involves abdication of responsibility for fact-checking, and replacing it with theater criticism: Never mind whether what the candidate said is true or false, how did it play? How did he or she "come across"? What were the "optics"?

But theater criticism is the job of theater critics; news reporting should tell the public what really happened, not be devoted to speculation about how other people might react to it.

Now, what will I say if Trump lies less than I predict and Clinton more? That's easy: Tell it like it is. But don't grade on a curve. If Trump lies only three times as much as Clinton, the main story should still be that he lied a lot more than she did, not that he wasn't quite as bad as expected.

Again, I'm not calling on the news media to take sides; journalists should simply do their job, which is to report the facts. It may not be easy — but doing the right thing rarely is.