

April 6, 2009

IF WOMEN RULED THE WORLD, HOW WOULD I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

I heard that former Clinton White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers was coming to Atlanta to keynote a conference with an eye-glazing title: "Possible Woman Conference: Power, Promise and Possibilities," to take place April 21 at the Georgia World Congress Center.

The proposed subject of her talk intrigued me: "Why Women Should Rule the World." Dumb me. I thought women already did.

For most of my adult life I have taken directives from the Woman Who Shares My Name, my daughter and my daughter-in-law. If that was not intimidating enough, I now have a granddaughter-in-law who has joined the junta.

I have heard from readers suggesting that I run for governor and straighten out that crowd under the Gold Dome. One person even wrote that I should "take over state government." That is very flattering, but the truth is that if I am not in charge of my own house, how can I be in charge of government? ("Your Eminence, You-Know-Who just called and said to eat your broccoli and turn down the sound on the television. You always play the TV so loud, people in the next county can hear it.") Who wants a leader who needs to be told things like that?

In a telephone call to Dee Dee Myers at her home base in Washington, I told her she was a little late on that "ruling the world" stuff at the Yarbrough household. She laughed and said she really is not advocating an overthrow of us guys. She just wants us to share the territory a little more.

"Although," she quips, "after what you men did to the economy, maybe we should take over." Ouch!

Myers, who was the first woman — and the youngest person — to hold the job of White House press secretary, believes that women bring unique strengths to the workplace.

Unlike men — who over the eons developed a kill-or-be-killed mentality in which the guy with the biggest club and fastest reflexes usually won — women, Myers says, developed a totally different set of skills: reading nonverbal cues, carefully assessing their environment and seeking peaceful ways of resolving issues. Not only did their lives depend on their success, but so did the lives of their offspring.

"These are skill sets," she says, "that serve women well today."

Myers says women are making progress in reaching their potential, but "we still have far to go." She points to medicine and science as two fields where women are currently excelling, based on those things she says women do best: listening, analyzing and empathizing. Another advantage, she says, is that women tend to look at problems differently than men and seek new ideas, rather than embrace the old way of doing things.

Myers believes one of the issues that women need to confront is not the attitude of their male counterparts but those of other women.

"Frankly," she asserts, "women tend to be too judgmental of each other." Myers says some women in the workforce look down on those who choose to stay home as being stereotypes of another era. Many stay-at-home women think those who are focused on climbing the ladder of success minimize the importance of family. It does not have to be an either-or situation, she says. Women should be able to do both.

Myers is a good example. She is a wife and the mother of two, who gives her daughter's soccer practice the same energy and effort that she does women's issues. Besides, she says, raising children requires many of the same skills needed in the workplace. Having worked with some very infantile people in my time, I would agree.

I'm glad I called her, and I'm glad I found out she doesn't want women to take over the world but to be appreciated for the variety of talents they bring to the workplace. However, after talking to Dee Dee Myers, I would be happy to have her in charge. She is sharper than a carving knife and would certainly do a better job of running things than that nutcase in Iran or the fat toad in North Korea. Maybe I could even convince her to ban broccoli.