

Williams not a victim of gender bias

Her defenders do a disservice to women by defending a woman who behaved badly



Cathy Young

The U.S. Open tennis tournament has become the latest culture war battlefield. During the women's final, Serena Williams was assessed a game penalty for insulting the umpire, which contributed to her loss to 20-year-old Naomi Osaka. A furious Williams claimed that she was being punished due to a double standard that penalizes women while letting men get away with bad behavior.

A number of feminist and left-wing commentators, not to mention a flock of outraged people in the social media, have backed up her claim of sexism. But a look at the facts shows that Williams was almost certainly not a victim of bias. If anyone is doing women a disservice, it's her defenders, who are sending the message that a woman who behaves badly can find sympathy by playing the gender card.

Some accounts of the dispute

between Williams and umpire Carlos Ramos have presented a highly sanitized picture of Williams' outburst. Thus, Washington Post sports columnist Sally Jenkins, who read sexist motives into Ramos' decision to discipline Williams ("He wasn't going to let a woman talk to him that way"), quoted Williams only as saying, "You stole a point from me. You're a thief." But that comment was part of a much longer rant. Williams, who was enraged when Ramos cited her for receiving illicit signals from her coach and then for breaking her racket in frustration, also called Ramos a "liar" and repeatedly demanded an apology.

As proof that Ramos has "put up with worse from a man," Jenkins pointed out that at the 2017 French open, he gave no extra penalty to Spanish player Rafael Nadal for saying that Ramos would never referee one of his matches again. But Williams told Ramos the same thing — "You will never be on a court with me as long as you live" — and compounded it with verbal abuse.



Serena Williams argues with the chair umpire during a match against Naomi Osaka at Saturday's women's finals of the U.S. Open.

Other examples of double standard cite single remarks by male players as equivalent to Williams' escalating conduct. On Twitter, where discussion is rarely bound by facts, Williams defenders asserted that tennis' famous bad boy John McEnroe never paid a price for his legendary tantrums. In fact, McEnroe racked up numerous penalties and was once thrown out of the Australian Open.

People also saw sexism in the

fact that the media described Williams as having a "meltdown" when men who express anger under similar circumstances are supposedly described as "passionate" or "intense." Yet a Google search will yield plenty of news stories in which the word "meltdown" is applied to temperamental male players. (Just two weeks ago, a USA Today headline referred to "8 bizarre Nick Kyrgios meltdowns.")

It's bad enough when Twitter "experts" make claims out of thin air. But Williams' spurious and self-serving accusations of sexism were also backed by the Women's Tennis Association and by women's tennis legend Billie Jean King.

Yet commentators who have analyzed actual facts and statistics conclude that it's extremely difficult to tell whether there is gender bias in penalties for violations. To some extent, umpiring is subjective, especially on things like inappropriate coaching. There is probably a need for more consistent enforcement across the board.

Ramos, who has a reputation of being extremely strict with everyone, may have been partly at fault in the confrontation. But that does not excuse the unsportsmanlike conduct by Williams, who has a history of ugly verbal abuse toward tournament officials (mostly women). People who believe that men in our culture are favored by a "boys will be boys" mentality seem to be promoting their own brand of sexism: "Girls will be girls."

Cathy Young is a contributing editor to Reason magazine.



President Donald Trump speaks Friday during a fundraiser in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

remarks about those who disagree with him. But the economy is doing well, unemployment is low, and wages are slowly rising.

Those who hate Trump have shown utter contempt for reasoned discussion of the major issues that confront our nation.

Is the left, or liberal voters, so upset by Hillary Clinton's

loss that it cannot, or will not, recover from it, and be the loyal opposition?

Trump did not polarize this nation nearly as much as the years of former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush. I, like many moderate voters, want Trump to tone down his rhetoric and be more magnanimous toward those who op-

pose him, even when they are furious with him.

We are a divided nation but that does not mean we cannot have our views considered, and work toward solutions.

It seems more like each side is saying, "My way or the highway." I grieve for our nation.

Nicholas Dallis,
Smithtown

In 1974, President Richard Nixon had Watergate tapes, reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's Washington Post headlines of Nixon exposure, and "Deep Throat" was the pseudonym given to the secret source who provided information that led to the president's resignation, pending imminent impeachment.

Today, President Trump has Michael Cohen's allegations, Omarosa Manigault's tapes, Woodward's "Fear" book and even a "deep throat," an anonymous senior White House offi-

cial who wrote an op-ed exposing efforts to undermine Trump.

As history repeats itself, the next chapter would be impeachment and possible resignation of another American president. Alas, what is old is new again

Susan Marie Davniero,
Lindenhurst

On celibacy and church scandal

I am writing in response to a letter in which the writer stated, "It seems obvious that the church's requirement of priestly celibacy unintentionally fosters, to a significant degree, the molestation of children" ["Anger over role of church leaders," Aug. 26].

The fact that priests are celibate does not "make" them sexually attracted or sexually stimulated by prepubescent or pubescent boys and/or girls, and act on those feelings. Pedophilic Disorder is a psychiatric disorder

described in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition). In the same publication, pedophilia is described as a sexual orientation.

I personally liked Rabbi Gellman's comment on this issue in his column on the same date: He related a comment made by a cardinal in a city that has not been affected by the scandal. When asked how he handled accusations of abuse against priests in his diocese, he answered, "When an accusation comes in, I call the police."

Lori LaVelle-Jardin,
Hauppauge

Editor's note: The writer is a pediatric primary care nurse practitioner, board certified) with expertise in child sexual abuse.

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