



# WHO DOES THE MEDIA MOST WANT TO SILENCE?

## HEATHER HIGGINS

Who's the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court? My guess is that most Americans would answer: Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She's so famous now that she is often referred to just by her initials—RBG.

Elevated to the high court by President Bill Clinton in 1993, the left-leaning Justice Ginsburg was the subject of not one, but two movies in 2018 alone. But she isn't the first female Supreme Court justice. She's the second. The first doesn't have a movie named after her. That's because Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed by a Republican president, Ronald Reagan.

We hear a lot about “the year of the woman,” “the women's march,” and “the war against women.” But if the major media—the New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, CBS and others—were more interested in accuracy than advocacy, it would be that they are promoting “the year of *leftist* woman” or “the *leftist* women's march.”

The major media like to pretend that all women think alike and that conservative women are just the exception that proves the rule. But according to a 2018 Pew Research study, about a third of women are Democrats; a little less than a third are Republican; and a little more than a third are independents.

So if there are all these conservative women around, how does the media make it seem like they barely exist? They use three strategies.

The first is Omission: If you don't see something, you don't have to deal with it.

Open up a glossy magazine. Every liberal woman is glamorized. Stylishly dressed, beautifully photographed, their personal stories are almost always an inspirational version of Joan of Arc: they have overcome overwhelming obstacles to make the world a more compassionate and tolerant place. Glamour magazine recognized eleven Democrat women among their 2018 Women of the Year. No Republican made the cut. First Lady Michelle Obama was on the cover of Vogue three times. First Lady and former fashion model Melania Trump? So far, not once.

Every now and again, the major media will do a story about a female conservative to “balance things out.” But, let's be honest, it's not balance—it's tokenism.

The second strategy the media uses to diminish conservative women is Mocking: Making fun of a woman's appearance discounts what she says. You would think the major media would resist this kind of objectification. But they don't. Not if the target is a conservative woman.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, and Kellyanne Conway, the first woman to run a winning presidential campaign, are routinely belittled for their hair, their eye makeup, or their weight. Their significant accomplishments, in contrast, are rarely acknowledged. Why? Because the media doesn't like their boss. And it treats women who work for him as traitors to their sex.

The third strategy the media uses to demean conservative women is Labeling: Using stereotypes precludes there being a valid reason for conservative women to hold the positions they do.

The major media simply can't accept that conservatives have serious and important reasons for their beliefs. So they have to come up with answers to explain this seeming anomaly to themselves: these women must be racist or self-hating or just weak-minded.

Here's how Barbra Streisand put it to the Daily Mail in England: "A lot of women vote the way their husbands vote; they don't believe enough in their own thoughts."

Labeling, like the strategies of mocking or omission, is just another way to display contempt and demonize conservative women. Its purpose is to persuade you to not treat those being labeled with respect, to ignore their ideas, and to even avoid associating with them.

Not surprisingly, the vilification that results discourages a lot of conservative-leaning women from running for political office. Or even from speaking up. Who needs that grief?

It takes a strong person to swim against the media tide. But here's the thing about swimming against the tide: it makes you stronger. Maybe that's why Nikki Haley can stand up in the UN and tell the truth. Or why Candace Owens can question the devotion to progressive policies that have so hurt blacks. Or Ayaan Hirsi Ali can take on the cause of *truly* oppressed women: those living in radical Islamist societies. We need these voices—and more like them.

That's why it's so important to encourage a more respectful, inclusive debate. We should want everyone at the table—both sides of the political spectrum—listening with civility. That way we can be better informed and make better decisions.

So if you hold conservative views, you have a particularly important role to play. You need to speak out—to your friends, your family, and your co-workers. Let them hear your thinking. And then let them make up their own minds.

The media may pretend you don't exist; they may even mock or label you. They want to intimidate you into silence. That's not fair, and that's not right.

Don't let them.

I'm Heather Higgins, chairman of Independent Women's Forum, for Prager University.