



The Group Behind Project 2025 Plans to Restore the “American Family” By Coercing Women into Marriage

The Heritage Foundation, the group behind the extreme and deeply sexist [Project 2025 agenda](#), has a new [168-page pronatalist report](#) it claims will help “restore the American family” (p. 7).

Instead of putting forward solutions to the problems that American families actually struggle with, such as the high cost of child care, a lack of national paid leave, and the skyrocketing costs of groceries and health insurance, the report focuses on [straightforwardly bizarre policies](#) — including marriage bootcamps and medals — and restricting women’s independence.

Like Project 2025, this new backwards report offers a policy blueprint for conservative lawmakers. And since more than [50% of the original Project 2025’s agenda](#) already has been adopted and enacted by the Trump administration, it’s important to know what they’re up to in Round Two.

We’re here to break down what this report really says — and how it implicitly and explicitly [proposes limits on women’s freedom](#) at every turn.

THE MARRIAGE TRAP

A core element of the Heritage Foundation’s plan to increase birth and marriage rates is by pressuring young people, especially [young white women](#), to marry earlier, ideally in their early twenties. The authors claim that “couples who marry earlier ... are more fertile and tend to have more children” (p. 12). It bemoans the “wide access to

WHAT THEY SAY

“More marriage and earlier marriage means more children” (p. 23).

WHAT THEY MEAN

We should pressure and trap young women into marriage, for better or worse.

contraception” (p. 13) help young women choose if and when to get married and have children.

But [data shows](#) that those who marry young are actually more likely to divorce. So the Heritage Foundation pairs pressure for early marriage with endorsement of policies that would make it significantly harder for women to leave marriages—like eliminating no-fault divorce (p. 47).

No-fault divorce is a [critical \(and surprisingly recent\) policy](#) that allows people to more easily end a marriage, which helps women escape relationships that are financially, emotionally, or sexually abusive. Divorce is already an [expensive and difficult process](#), and studies suggest that no-fault divorces have led to a [decline](#) in domestic violence and suicide in women.

Everyone should be free to decide when it’s time to leave a relationship, including a marriage. When divorce is functionally unavailable, like the Heritage Foundation wants it to be, women disproportionately experience the harm that comes from being trapped in a dangerous marriage.

WHAT THEY SAY

“The welfare system has made marriage economically irrational for many low-income couples” (p. 7).

WHAT THEY MEAN

Punish single moms—especially poor women and women of color.

PUNISH SINGLE MOMS

The report pretty explicitly recommends punishing single moms, and specifically poor single moms. It suggests that our current (underfunded) basic needs system has too many “marriage penalties” (p. 7) that discourage single mothers from marriage — a claim that is essentially a remixed version of the racist “[welfare queen](#)” dog whistle.

That attitude toward public benefits goes hand in hand with this administration’s efforts to slash basic needs programs that [disproportionately help women](#) and dismantle [decades-old anti-discrimination protections](#) that ensure women and people of color have fair access to financial systems.

The Heritage Foundation’s solution to make marriage less “economically irrational” (p. 57) is to make it harder for single moms to get access to support. That includes imposing stricter work reporting requirements for single mothers seeking federal assistance, even though we know that work requirements [make it harder for people](#) to get the help that they need.

Single mothers are also more likely to be [poor women and women of color](#), which means that these proposals could push more women and children into poverty.

Rather than [raise wages, improve job quality, and support other policies](#) to help all types of families become more financially secure, the Heritage Foundation wants to make life harder and more expensive for single mothers to financially pressure (and then trap) them into marriage.

FEMINISM IS THE ENEMY

The report paints “feminists” as public enemy number one, going so far as to suggest that

WHAT THEY SAY

“Today’s adults may favor autonomy and personal development over raising children” (p. 24).

WHAT THEY MEAN

No birth control, no abortion, no careers, no education. Women should be focused on getting married and making babies.

feminism destroyed the American family (p. 52).

As discussed above, the Heritage Foundation authors believe that the path to more babies runs through making women marry younger. They state, “if women view marriage and children as disrupting their careers or straining their finances, they may forgo or delay marriage” (p. 73). Rather than presenting education and careers as opportunities for

growth and fulfilment, the report sees these paths to economic independence as obstacles to marriage and baby-making.

The report also blames access to reproductive health care, like contraception and abortion, as causes of delayed marriage and lower birth rates. But the [truth is that access to birth control](#) has reduced female poverty and the gender wage gap, and increased women’s educational attainment.

What’s more, when women are forced to carry unintended pregnancies to term, they often experience [significant financial impacts](#), as well as disruptions to their education and career. Without an education or a career, women will face more pressure to enter into, and then stay trapped in, a marriage just to get by — forcing the exact version of the American family that the Heritage Foundation wants.

Even though helping women balance family and professional responsibilities could actually encourage more women to have children, the authors don’t provide meaningful solutions for those who choose to have kids while pursuing an education or a career, such as universal child care, national paid leave, and higher wages.

Instead, the report proposes cutting federal funding for key child care programs (p. 123), expanding *unpaid* leave (p. 106), and undermining unions’ power to negotiate for fair wages and benefits (p. 75) — measures that make it *harder* for people to raise children.

A NARROW DEFINITION OF THE FAMILY

The report repeatedly states that children need a “man and a woman” to thrive. This rigid definition of an “acceptable family” deliberately erases LGBTQIA+ families, single-parent families, and multigenerational households — not because evidence shows that they harm or fail children, but because they do not fit into Project 2025’s rigid gender roles.

Instead of shaming and marginalizing different family structures, we should help ensure that *all* families have the tools and support that they need to thrive, make the right decision for their bodies and families, and feel safe in their homes and communities.

WHAT THEY SAY

“A family headed by a child’s married mother and father is, on average, the best context for bearing and raising that child — by a large measure” (p. 12).

WHAT THEY MEAN

There is only one acceptable type of family structure, and any other family construction is inferior.