One of the issues that received much discussion after the elections last winter was the fact that an overwhelming number of women voted for Trump despite his misogynistic commentaries and vulgarity. Some analyses espouse that Trump's women voters are victims of sexist and misogynistic views ingrained in the American culture. They, according to the analyses, perceive sexual harassment or misogynistic remarks as an unfortunate behavior that men do and women can tolerate or ignore. While that explanation is truthful it does not highlight some deeper dimensions of the phenomenon. Obviously, Trump's misogynistic remarks were downplayed by his women voters beyond the description "unfortunate." Why were these remarks downplayed? It seems that in the current media programming in the U.S such remarks are normalized and even exalted.

Since the late 1990s or early 2000s there has been an exponential rise in the number of reality TV shows. There are many types of reality shows on TV but I am referring particularly to the shows that are mainly about women. These shows are predominantly about women's lives. They range from the dating shows, make-over shows, to competitions over one man for love, or just filming mundane activities of women's
daily lives. There is a degree of diversity of race, class, and topics covered in these shows but they all have something in common: they cover lives of women who are presenting themselves as independent and strong women or who are trying to be so. The type of strength, narratives, and persona of these women represent the product of second-wave feminism or neoliberal feminism. They are individuated, independent, act strong, innovative, and try to be rich/richer. In other words, they try to be on the top professionally; they are "leaning-In." The ultimate goal for each of these women is herself and her happiness translated in wealth and self-care which includes taking care of her beauty and the relationships that serve her concept of happiness.

As has been argued by many critics that neoliberal feminism has replaced collective justice for self-help and solidarity for self-reliance. It has also abandoned previous critique of economism and has rather embraced money as a means to power and independence. Neoliberal feminism dropped collective causes and abandoned the transformation of the social structure which produces women's subordination. It ignored valuing woman for her worth as a human and promoted the importance of her net-worth. The current image of woman on reality TV shows who embraces independence espoused by previous generations of feminists focuses disproportionately on economic independence and realizing her individuality compared to other feminist ideals thereby depicting a mutilated form of a feminist image. She represents a type of "empowered" woman who contributes to sexism and misogyny.

For instance, if we look at reality shows which claim to document women's real lives generally, like the Real Housewives or Hollywood Exes or other similar shows, we can read through the lines that these women challenge traditional social authority in economic and social sense. The majority of them act independent; they are “outspoken” and “daring” or try to be so. The majority of them provide for their own needs and
rely on themselves to achieve their economic and professional ambitions. However, a critical look at the values they convey reveals that they, actually, submit to patriarchal authority. That is clear in the way they scrutinize and evaluate each other's relationships and personal matters. For example, it is very common in these shows for women to criticize and shame one another for her their relationships with men. It is not uncommon for them to use information about a woman's past or current relationships with men to “dishonor” her or prove how “immoral” or “loose” she is. For instance, they frequently use phrases such as “keep your legs closed” or “skeleton in the closet” to allude to sexual relationships and scandalize another woman's behavior and slander her morality. They also used information about one of them having sexually transmitted disease to scandalize her morality. The scrutiny and scandalizing of one another's behaviors and relationships with men represents misogynistic views that subordinates women to a morality dominated by misogynistic males' understanding of what is moral and what is not.

Moreover, some of these shows, like the dating shows, promote the image of a submissive, “morally composed” female. In their competition for love over one man in some of these shows, the woman who presents more docile characteristics wins. Also, there are entire shows, for example Millionaire Matchmaker and Tough Love dedicated to advise women on acting docile, composed, and helpless to be picked by a man and succeed in love. Although these shows pretend to depict an image of emancipated woman by emphasizing the fact that she participates in “choosing” love or/and speaks comfortably about sex, they are actually submitted to traditional views and Victorian sensibility. The concept of “emancipation” is conveyed as having the “courage” and “liberty” to speak about sex but it is actually used to “tarnish” another woman in the form of gossip and/or vulgarism. For example, it is frequently shown that if one of the participants in the show knew information about another participant's past relationship with
men, she uses it to undermine her efforts to be accepted by the man of the show. Usually, such acts are highly accented by the producers of the show to intensify the “drama” in the show to draw more viewers.

On the opposite side, the woman who presents more aggressive, “scandalous” behavior, and vulgarism, although does not win the love, is more desirable by producers because she increases the ratings of the show. She usually become famous and secures further deals. For example, the dating shows like *Flav of Love* and similar shows that followed it where a man chooses a lover from many competing women, have produced multiple “stars” of those women who participated in these shows and presented vulgarism or/and acted in aggressive “scandalous” way and some of them even have had their own love shows. They have become “celebrities” and accumulated wealth through media coverage, modeling, and investment deals. Hence, this type of shows promote two types of females; the submissive manipulative who often wins love and the aggressive manipulative who often receive more ratings and thereby more money. Both serve sexism and misogyny.

**The Focus on Physical Beauty**

Additionally, the enormous focus on physical beauty and appearance in these shows is a form of sexism carried out by women themselves. It is common in these shows for women to criticize another woman for the way she looks. They often allude to one another's lack of “glamour” to attack her socially and indicate her “low status.” The overwhelming focus on appearance is a common thread in reality TV from the *Real Housewives'* shows to love shows. They explicitly link their success to their beauty and the appearance. For instance, there are entire reality shows, like *Make-over* shows, dedicated to urge women to enhance women's beauty through surgery and other material means to succeed and achieve happiness. Even more, they link mental and psychological and/or spiritual well-being to physical beauty. Those who do
not meet the standards of beauty and “glamour” are treated as a failure or pariah who needs to be saved or otherwise shamed.

Furthermore, the neoliberal feminism, as configured on reality TV shows, has created a woman who is an economic agent and at the same time an economic subject. She must achieve "success" through wealth accumulation and also through high consumption; to continue to be “successful” and powerful she needs to maintain particular class image a fact that needs more wealth and high consumption. That is why the focus of women in these reality shows is overwhelmingly on their possessions (in addition to beauty) even when they are professionally successful and have excellent work ethics. Highlighting this success is not usually the focus of these shows unless it is linked to the other elements: possessions and beauty.

Thus, these reality shows promote the notion of a “successful” woman who is “flawlessly beautiful,” wealthy, and embodies a Victorian sense of morality.

The combination of being economically and socially independent and at the same time embodying patriarchal morality in reality TV shows is a product of neoliberal feminism that did not sustain the critique about women's subordination by misogynistic males' code of ethics yet at the same time cheered up for succeeding professionally and economically. These women despite their economic power submit to traditional authority and embody its morality. Interestingly, they are unrestrained by traditional authority but they embody it. It is a result of the failure to transform the social structure that subordinates women at its core and to revolutionize the essence of morality that governs the society and subordinates women including economically empowered ones. Hence, neoliberal feminism, as shown in reality TV, has produced an economically empowered yet morally subordinated feminist.

The absence of transformation of social structure and
revolutionization of morality explains the discrepancy in "empowered" women's relationships and the crisis of behavior presented by women on TV. They model and enact this neoliberal feminism in a dramatic way. The self-interest, self-care, aggression, woman degradation, scandalizing and shaming of each other's personal matters while being wealthy, glamorous, and successful in her ambitions is an embodiment of the neoliberal structure of feminism. It is all about self "actualization" and everyone around is a potential means or victim for her quest for power translated in economic terms.

The previous critique of economism and the fight for recognition instead of distribution has been misplaced or misunderstood. In these shows, to be recognized has translated into vulgar, loud, aggressive behavior without valuable substance. To be smart, translates into manipulation, gossip and cunning-ness. Also, the most effective, and common, way to compete and undermine another woman in these shows is to scandalize her sexually. They even sometimes, attack each other physically like, for example, in Basketball Wives show. Interestingly, these behaviors are coded in feminist terms such as strong, outspoken, daring, self-reliant, and smart. The previous domestic violence, emotional and verbal abuse, control through scrutiny of personal matters, and moral subjugation practiced by men against women is now carried out by women against women in feminist vehicle on TV. Ironically, women's empowerment has become misogynistic and female emancipation has become submissive.

This type of feminism is an interesting yet alarming phenomenon. It is interesting because of the discrepancy of being empowered and subordinated at the same moment. What makes it alarming is the fact that previous generations of feminists fought sexism and misogyny practiced by males on females; it was clear and obvious fight. But the fact that this sexism is embodied and embraced by women themselves and the misogyny is practiced by women on women makes it slip
through as bad behavior, drama, or stunts and in TV terminology. It masks the misogynistic male-dominated morality behind it; it is a twisted form of sexism and misogyny.

**Empowered Females**

Even more alarming is the exaltation of this image of misogynistic "empowered" females through a particular well-paved process to stardom. The requirements of neoliberal corporate media producers are stunts, drama, aggression and vulgarity in order for the show to score high ratings and make what they call “good TV.” This requires women who participate in these shows to be as aggressive, vulgar, and manipulative as they can. So they engage in scrutiny, shaming and scandalizing, degrading and sometimes physically attacking each other. The women in these shows who succeed in presenting the highest amount of such misogyny practiced by women on other women are more desirable by producers of these shows and receive more money and more coverage by other media outlets and a promising career in modeling and lucrative investment deals. These women then hold charity events, speak about public issues and even feminist causes. They become admired and idolized.

It is a phase that goes beyond the objectification and commodification of women's bodies to commodification of women's lives and relationships marketed through misogyny, sexism and vulgarism. It is also a phase beyond the debate about women's confinement to domestic life to achieve herself in public life; the domestic itself has become public but in neoliberal media market terms. The neoliberal corporate media have maintained that confinement and turned it into an investment potential. To realize this commercial potential to the fullest, corporate media utilize and intensify vulgarity, misogyny and sexism carried out by women themselves. Vulgarity, misogyny and sexism have become the condoned marketing tools to attract larger audiences.
This way, misogyny and sexism are not only normalized on TV in the U.S but exalted to a high regard; they have become a promising path to "success" and stardom. That is why, I believe, it was not just comfort with misogyny and women degradation that urged women who voted for Trump to ignore his remarks. Rather, misogyny itself has been purged from its negative fought-against connotation. It has become instrumental tool of spectacle to "success" and stardom. If people watch this type of "stunt" on TV on a daily basis, why should they be alarmed by it when presented in politics?