

cake beneath a giant *Transformers* poster. Her sacrifice of a salary tightened the Makinos' upper-middle-class budget, but the subversion of her personal drive pays them back in ways Kelly believes are priceless; she is now able to be there for her kids no matter what, cooking healthy meals, taking them hiking and to museums, helping patiently with homework, and devoting herself to teaching the life lessons—on littering, on manners, on good habits—that she believes every child should know. She introduces me as “Miss Lisa,” and that’s what the kids call me all day long.

Alvin benefits no less from his wife’s domestic reign. Kelly keeps a list of his clothing sizes in her iPhone and, devoted to his cuteness, surprises him regularly with new items, like the dark-washed jeans he was wearing on the day I visited. She tracks down his favorite recipes online, recently discovering one for pineapple fried rice that he remembered from his childhood in Hawaii. A couple of times a month, Kelly suggests that they go to bed early and she soothes his work-stiffened muscles with a therapeutic massage. “I love him so much, I just want to spoil him,” she says.

Kelly calls herself “a flaming liberal” and a feminist, too. “I want my daughter to be able to do anything she wants,” she says. “But I also want to say, ‘Have a career that you can walk away from at the drop of a hat.’” And she is not alone. Far from the Bible Belt’s conservative territories, in blue-state cities and suburbs, young, educated, married mothers find themselves not uninterested in the metaconversation about “having it all” but untouched by it. They are too busy mining their grandmothers’ old-fashioned lives for values they can appropriate like heirlooms, then wear proudly as their own.

Feminism has fizzled, its promise only half-fulfilled. This is the revelation of the moment, hashed and rehashed on blogs and talk shows, a cause of grief for some, fury for others. American women are better educated than they’ve ever been, better educated now than men, but they get distracted during their prime earning years by the urge to procreate. As they mature, they earn less than men and are granted fewer responsibilities at work. Fifty years after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, women represent only a tiny fraction of corporate and government leaders, and they still earn only 77 cents on the male dollar.

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