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Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family

"Revolutionary. Anne-Marie Slaughter has written the instruction manual for our next cultural transformation." —ATUL GAWANDE, author of *Being Mortal*

Unfinished Business

□ Women
□ Men
□ Work
□ Family

Anne-Marie
Slaughter

Read by Karen White | Introduction and Coda Read by the Author
An Unabridged Production



Synopsis

A powerful, persuasive, thought-provoking vision for how to finish the long struggle for equality between men and women, work and family. When Anne-Marie Slaughter accepted her dream job as the first female director of policy planning at the US State Department in 2009, she was confident she could juggle the demands of her position in Washington, DC, with the responsibilities of her family life in suburban New Jersey. Her husband and two young sons encouraged her to pursue the job; she had a tremendously supportive boss, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; and she had been moving up on a high-profile career track since law school. But then life intervened. Parenting needs caused her to make a decision to leave the State Department and return to an academic career that gave her more time for her family. The reactions to her choice to leave Washington because of her kids led her to question the feminist narrative she grew up with. Her subsequent article for The Atlantic, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All", created a firestorm, sparked intense national debate, and became one of the most-read pieces in the magazine's history. Since that time Anne-Marie Slaughter has pushed forward, breaking free of her longstanding assumptions about work, life, and family. Though many solutions have been proposed for how women can continue to break the glass ceiling or rise above the "motherhood penalty", women at the top and the bottom of the income scale are further and further apart. Now, in her refreshing and forthright voice, Anne-Marie Slaughter returns with her vision for what true equality between men and women really means and how we can get there. She uncovers the missing piece of the puzzle, presenting a new focus that can reunite the women's movement and provide a common banner under which both men and women can advance and thrive.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 40 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: September 29, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B014E8JDDI

Best Sellers Rank: #88 in Books > Business & Money > Women & Business #115 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Marriage & Family #180 in Books > Business & Money >

Customer Reviews

First off, this book is coming from someone who is very career oriented. High performance and high income appear to be quite important to Slaughter. That said, I think she has done a good job of stepping out of her own perspective to take a wider view, and her insights are valid across our culture, not just for the "career woman." Slaughter looks at how caring for others is undervalued in our society and how everyone would benefit (career women, working women, stay-at-home mothers, men, and children) if this was corrected. She looks at many ways in which this can be achieved. She looks at other cultures which do place a higher value on care. She looks at how business, government, and individuals can help place more value on care. By care, Slaughter is referring to more than child care. She also looks at elder care and the many types of charitable giving. She looks at how increasing the value of care is part of expanding the benefits of the feminist movement. There is more to feminism than women doing what men have traditionally done. She looks at the benefits of not only changing our expectations of women, but our expectations of men. Including what men do in the home. She looks at how men typically parent differently, and why women should accept this as a valid parenting method. Part of the book, which may be pointless to those of us who are dedicated career women, looks at how "the majority of Americans are mired in a 1950s mindset when it comes to assumptions about when and how we work, what an ideal worker looks like, and when to expect that ideal worker to peak in his career. Men who came up through the old system and succeeded in it simply find it very hard to believe that their businesses could flourish any other way.

"Unfinished Business" by Anne-Marie Slaughter regrettably joins a long list of feminist writings where a good premise has been drowned out by the author's insufferably elitist perspective. To be fair, Ms. Slaughter is an exceptional woman who has achieved great things as an educator, analyst and public servant. Unfortunately, Ms. Slaughter's reticence to speak truth to power dilutes her book's message; making for a listless and uninspiring journey for reader who have the fortitude to muddle through its 200+ pages. It's not that Ms. Slaughter doesn't have a story to tell. Ms. Slaughter left a prestigious government assignment to care for her family during a time of personal struggle. The experience led to a high-profile magazine article "Why Women Still Can't Have it All" which in turn led to this book. Reading about the author's struggles is without a doubt the best part of the book. Let me be clear: I have nothing but respect for the author

and her courage to do what she felt was best for her family. Regrettably, Ms. Slaughter's personal revelations become grist for 11 chapters on a subject that working class people have always known: namely, that balancing work and family life isn't so easy to do. Something usually has to give. It's not all bad. Ms. Slaughter recognizes that men's nurturing potentials need to be respected and supported in a society where women continue to make substantive gains in the professional world. The author is correct when she says that language matters, the crisis in education is rooted in issues of inequality, and that more women in positions of power can help. This much is (more or less) true and it's nice to hear a person of Ms. Slaughter's stature lend her voice to these assorted critical issues. The problem is that Ms.

The book, *Unfinished Business*, is the expansion of an article written by Anne-Marie Slaughter in *The Atlantic* magazine - "Why Women Still Can't Have It All." It is no wonder so many people clamored to read it since its title is almost as socially provocative as the 2000 article in *The Sciences* journal - "Why Men Rape." Post publication, there was some negative feedback from working mothers - outliers to the article's privileged career microcosm - complaining that Slaughter was "perpetuating a plutocrat feminism" (p. xxi). The outliers were correct. Slaughter's book discusses the insidious bias & challenges encountered by working caregivers (e.g., Moms/Dads) & she challenges everyone to rethink workplace policies & social orientation to working caregivers, examine caregiving & career expectations in relationships, & reevaluate national attitudes toward the value attributed to caregiving. While these issues have plagued working caregivers for too long, they are hardly new. Including them in a book adds to the squeaky wheel phenomenon however, which may foster the remedying oil of new legislation. This book was a slow, arduous read - the author's ad nauseam self-aggrandizing distracted from the meat of the matter. Slaughter affirms her inflated concept of self when summing up the outliers' accusations toward her as "having high-class problems of powerful women like myself." One of these high-class problems cited in the book was relegating hairdresser appointments & errand shopping to weekends while working for the government in D.C. - a trend most working caregivers take in stride as inevitable.

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