

## **Market Yourself Into Marriage**

**Is a new best-seller for marriage-minded women filling in a role that the Jewish community has abdicated?**

by Amy Klein, Managing Editor

Why are you single?"

The woman who recently hurled this accusation at me, I suppose, intended it as a compliment: how could someone as \_\_\_\_\_ as me not have a husband? We were both attending a baby shower for a mutual friend, and I hadn't seen this woman since our mutual friend's wedding; now she planted herself in front of me and spit out a question many of my friends probably want to know the answer to, but are too classy to ask:

"So, why are you single?" she said again.

I suppose I could have come up with a number of snappy comebacks ("Why are you married?"), but instead I smiled politely, as if I agreed with her assessment that since that I am of no obvious defects (club foot, third eye, running sores) I, too, am mystified (!) that I possess no husband or serious boyfriend. So in the name of maturity (and because I'm not quite sure the answer isn't "because I want to be single"), I simply shrugged and replied, "I just haven't met the right guy."

If only I had read Rachel Greenwald's new best-seller, "Find a Husband After 35 Using What I Learned at Harvard Business School," I could have told this woman what Greenwald writes in the opening of her 311-page book: "Why are you still single? It doesn't matter."

"I think that women can get stuck on trying to analyze why," Greenwald told me by telephone from her home in Denver. "I encounter this a lot — women who love to sit about and talk about it. They go to therapists, talk to friends — but procrastinating and stalling is [their] problem," said Greenwald, who will be speaking in Los Angeles on Oct. 21. "I think they get into a rut."

Why you are single doesn't matter. What matters, Greenwald writes, is what you are going to do about it.

A Harvard MBA who worked as a marketing executive at Evian and Carolee Jewelry, Greenwald, 39, proposes that what women do is devote the next 12-18 months of their lives to her "Simple 15-Step Action Program" and market themselves down the

aisle.

Her figures shout epidemic: There are 28 million single women over the age of 35 in this country, compared to 18 million men of the same age. The disparity grows when you figure that men can date younger women; and when you add the ugly facts that for women over 35 the biological clock is nearing its final hour, "Finding a Husband" can even send a pre-35-year-old reader like myself into taking Greenwald's "Program" seriously.

American Jews tend to marry later than the general population, according to the recently released National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS 2000-1). The largest gap between Jews and non-Jews marrying is in the 25-34 age range, followed by the 35-44 age range. Meanwhile, when it comes to fertility, nearly twice as many Jewish women between the ages of 30-34 are childless (54 percent), as compared to their non-Jewish counterparts (28 percent). And while the gap narrows at the 35-39 age range (16 percent), it never really closes, even at the 40-44 age range (7 percent). What all this means is that whatever the "unmarried/fertility epidemic" is for American women, it's even more so for their Jewish subsection.

Perhaps these latest NJPS figures will force the Jewish community to consider the state of marriage and fertility a crisis, just as it did with assimilation in its 1990 study, when dozens of organizations directed funding to combat the assimilation over the last 10 years. If not, unmarried Jewish women will have to rely on secular matchmaking tactics like "The Program."

"You, the reader, are 'The Product,' and 'The Program' is a strategic plan to help you market yourself to find a future husband," Greenwald writes. The Program requires you to package, brand and advertise yourself, as well as conduct market research, employ event planning and perform quarterly reviews to your dating life, just as any successful company would create, plan and launch a new product — from toilet paper to cars — into the marketplace.

We've come a long way, baby. Having fought for decades against the objectification of women, The Program urges us to reobjectify. See Step No. 3: Packaging: "Packaging may be the most underappreciated marketing tactic. Surprisingly, packaging can be more important than the product itself.... Given all the competitive products [i.e., other women] on the shelves, your package must stand out and be appealing enough to prompt a first-time purchase.... I wish I could tell you that your inner self is what really counts — and later in a relationship it is what counts most — but the truth is that how you look makes all the difference in getting noticed in the beginning."

Like everything else in our capitalist society — religion, politics, education — finding a husband comes down to good marketing.

"Finding a Husband," No. 7 on The New York Times Best-Seller List, with press from People to "The Today Show" and a movie development deal from Paramount, speaks to the current national debate between feminism and its backlash: On the one hand we have Laura Kipnes' thoroughly modern "Against Love," a treatise arguing against monogamy and for adultery. On the other hand, there is Sylvia Ann Hewlett's "Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children" on the epidemic of

childlessness due to women's devotion to their careers.

Exemplifying the tensions between feminists past and present, last Sunday's New York Times Style section featured "Out of Step and Having a Baby," an essay by Molly Jong-Fast, daughter of feminist Erica Jong ("Fear of Flying") who wrote that she was bucking the trend of all her 35-45-year old friends, and having a baby quell horror at age 24.

As the '90s-defining show "Sex and the City" comes to a close with a "happy" ending likely for most of the characters, no one has successfully answered the question of whether women can have it all or what they must choose between.

To her credit, Greenwald, a happily married (to a fellow Jew) mother of three, does not bother with the question of what feminism has wrought. She neither blames women for their careers or hang-ups or lives or whatever has kept them single for so long, nor does she see marriage as the panacea for all women.

"This book is not trying to suggest that women need a husband at any means, but it's addressing a subpopulation who have already decided they want a husband," she said.

So what does one have to do to snag a husband? Basically, The Program suggests enlisting everyone you know — and she means everyone, from your hairdresser to your grandmother's neighbor — to help you find "someone wonderful" (the main criteria in searching for a man; The Program requires you to "cast a wider net" and rethink "requirements" such as type, age, height, location, occupation and religion). Not only do you have to advertise this with forthright requests such as a "Flag Day/Halloween/Secretary Day letter:

"Dear Sandy: Are you still enjoying your new job? It sounds wonderful! I have a special favor to ask you. This year, I would like to find someone special to spend my life with. Do you know any single men you could introduce me to? I would truly appreciate your help...."

But with less direct gambits for promoting your "personal brand," those three main positive and distinct adjectives about yourself that set you apart as a quality, marriageable woman. You should tell a co-worker, "When I lived in Argentina..." thus letting the co-worker know that your brand is "international woman."

Like many bestsellers such as "The Celestine Prophecy," or "Dr. Atkins New Diet Revolution," "Finding a Husband" is not meant to be a literary work; yet with its detailed charts and do and don't lists, it certainly succeeds in helping women expand their social network, thus increasing their odds of meeting "someone wonderful" (not to mention of meeting "someone horrible" as well).

Greenwald recycles some old advice (don't make the first move) but with a modern twist (unless you can make it seem like it's not the first move or only once in any given relationship) and even tailors it to the modern age (she says that if you only take one thing from the book, it's that you should join an online dating service). She can be exasperating (men love feminine women with long hair and nice — but not too nice — nails) and crafty like her predecessor, "The Rules" (discuss sports figures,

sign up for a woodworking class where all the men are and flirt with them during the break). Her Program certainly seems tiring — imagine being "on" for a year, accepting all dates and projecting an "upbeat" attitude all the time. Yet whatever you think of The Program, don't call it desperate.

"I never use the word desperate. I call it proactive," Greenwald said.

But do Jewish women really need to be more "proactive?" Greenwald said she noticed from her research that

"Jewish women are a lot more likely to embrace this program because it's proactive and assertive,"

"A lot more Jewish women have chutzpah," she said, and I believe it. But to paraphrase "Sex's" Carrie: "Sometimes I wonder ... is Jewish chutzpah a good thing?"

Case in point: A male friend of mine who was dating a non-Jewish woman said that what he found most attractive was that "she doesn't have that emotional and physical aggressiveness that many Jewish women possess."

Indeed, if you looked around your egalitarian synagogue this High Holiday season, you might have seen those intermarriage statistics in the form of the blonde bombshell or the "Asian Shiksa" phenomenon. I don't mean to imply that WASPS and Asian women are docile, but perhaps they might be a bit less, ahem, "proactive" than Jewish women — myself included.

Of course we Jewish women are not solely at fault for our unmarried status — despite what Jewish mothers say, Jewish men are not all princes — but I don't know that a no-holds-barred, take-no-prisoner, leave-no-stone-unturned campaign to get a Jewish husband is the right path to take.

The real question is, why should we have to? Why should we resort to such emergency measures when we belong to a community that is supposed to take care of the "convert, widow, the orphan?" (Exodus 21:1-24:18). Unlike pure capitalism, which reveres individualism, Judaism sanctifies matrimony, as it says in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for man to be alone."

Indeed, if the Jewish community is so family oriented, and if belonging to it means that you are taken care of by the larger family and you are never really alone, shouldn't the one to be more proactive in this singles epidemic be the community? I'm not only talking about the usual suspects such as synagogues and organizations, but the building blocks of the community itself: the family unit, the couple and the individual who comes up to you at a baby shower and asks, "So, why are you single?"

It is here that Greenwald's interests and those of the Jewish community might diverge.

Julie, a 47-year-old Jewish Wall Street exec who hired Greenwald as a marriage consultant, had searched all her life for a male counterpart: a smart, successful

Jewish investment banker. One day she went to return a broken cell phone at RadioShack and, one year later, married the non-Jewish manager.

So when Greenwald advises you to commit to The Program above everything, does that mean above your religion as well?

Greenwald paused thoughtfully on the phone before she answered.

"If finding a Jewish husband is very important to you, then I certainly hope you can achieve that — so that's Plan A, and you should give it your best shot," she said. Giving it your best shot means exploring all possibilities — including dating outside your city and state and preferred professions and age ranges.

"This is something that Jewish women don't often think about," she said.

But, if all that fails, and every shadchan and yenta in the community can't find a suitable boy for you, "you move to Plan B," she said, noting that it's not all black and white: some men, like the RadioShack manager, may convert (although in a different chapter she writes, "The only way you can 'change' a man is if he's in diapers."); some may decide to raise the children Jewish, and for other intermarried couples, "there are people who fall in love and religion will always be an issue," she said. "I think that God would sometimes choose happiness for you than staying in your religion."

While "Finding a Husband After 35 Using What I Learned At Harvard Business School" may serve as a wake-up call to single Jewish women — and men, who are welcome to do The Program — it should ring a loud-and-clear clarion call to the Jewish community at large.

Because "The Program" may deliver us results we do not want: fewer unmarrieds, more intermarriage. Perhaps it is time to seriously focus on our own "Programs" and "market" our own Jewish singles, divorcées and widows. Some organizations do, for sure, but not enough have, not in our segregated society of "families" and "singles."

For if you listen to the message of this book, and you note the shrinking fertility rates in the Jewish community (NJPS puts it at 1.9 — below the necessary replacement rate of 2.1 percent), you can hear the cry of the growing unmarried Jewish population. And if you listen real close — in their cry, you will hear your own.

Rachel Greenwald will be speaking and signing books on Oct. 21, at 7:30 p.m. at Borders Books and Music, 1360 Westwood Blvd. For more information call (310) 475-3444.