Media Matters, Media Matters for America at 1:00 PM on November 18, 2009.

Photos: Palin, Newsweek and Sexism

There are a lot of legitimate reasons to criticize Sarah Palin, her new book, and her policies, but you don't have to stoop to sexism to do it. Newsweek's November 23 issue, however, does just that by publishing on its cover a photo of Palin in short running shorts and a fitted top, leaning against the American flag. Making matters worse is the equally offensive headline Newsweek editors chose to run alongside the photo -- "How Do You Solve a Problem like Sarah?" -- presumably a reference to the Sound of Music song, "Maria," in which nuns fret about "how" to "solve a problem like Maria," a "girl" who "climbs trees" and whose "dress has a tear."
Now, this photograph may have been completely appropriate for the cover of the magazine for which the picture was apparently intended, *Runners World*. But *Newsweek* is supposed to be a serious newsmagazine, and the magazine is certainly not reporting on Palin's exercise habits.

Like her or not, Palin is a former governor and vice presidential candidate. She deserves the same respect every single one of her male counterparts receives when they are featured on the cover of the magazine. I must have missed the cover of Vice President Joe Biden in short shorts or of Mitt Romney in a bathing suit.

*Newsweek*’s sexist treatment of Palin doesn’t get any better inside its pages. The mag ran this photo to lead off its "Features” section, which focused on Palin:
Then, for no apparent reason, illustrating Christopher Hitchens' piece on "Palin's base appeal," Newsweek ran a picture of this disgusting Sarah Palin-as-a-slutty-schoolgirl doll:

![Sarah Palin-as-a-slutty-schoolgirl doll](http://www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/144044/photos%3A_palin%2C...)

What kind of message is the magazine trying to send here?

This is just the latest in a pattern of the media's sexist coverage of female politicians. With regard to Palin, Media Matters documented the sexist treatment...
both Palin and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton received throughout the 2008 campaign. For instance, after McCain announced Palin as his VP, sexist commentary on cable news soon followed.

Some "raise[d] the issue of how much time will she have to dedicate to her newborn child?" Others promoted the sexist notion that Biden will have to soften his tone and manner in a debate against Palin, since she is a woman. And despite repeatedly accusing liberals of engaging in sexist attacks on Palin, conservative males were no better.

In addition to drooling over the "panty line" he convinced himself he saw, radio host Chris Baker claimed Palin "shoulda had a little cleavage going" during the vice presidential debate in order to "[d]istract [Sen.] Joe Biden a little bit" and advised Palin: "[S]how your stuff, you know what I'm saying? Use all your assets." Discussing the "ugly skanks" in the Democratic Party who are jealous of Palin's "good look[s]," radio host Lee Rodgers offered: "I mean, my God -- you know, guys sitting around, talking, perhaps in a bar someplace -- they have a way of scoring them. ... I know, it's sexist. It's sexist. It's unfair, and all of that, but they will look over a female who comes in and just make an announcement: How many drinks it would take before you'd jump her bones, you know." According to Rodgers, that's what liberal women are "PO'd about. Sarah Palin's good-looking and they hate that."

*Newsweek* offers some interesting analysis of Palin and her appeal in its November 23 issue. Unfortunately, its sexist treatment of Palin's physical appearance distracts from any legitimate arguments the magazine and its contributors wish to make.

--Julie Millican