PRESS RELEASE

Contact: The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism
schusterinstitute@brandeis.edu

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Conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh yesterday attacked another woman, this time an award-winning reporter and best-selling author, Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism Senior Fellow Tracie McMillan. His attack on McMillan came after he scoffed at the idea of a ‘war on women,’ and in the midst of an ongoing national controversy Limbaugh created last week after calling Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke a “slut” and “prostitute” for her remarks to members of Congress about contraception coverage. Over the weekend, he issued what he called a sincere and heartfelt apology to Fluke.

McMillan’s New York Times bestseller, “The American Way of Eating: Undercover at Walmart, Applebee’s, Farm Fields and the Dinner Table,” is the product of 18 months of living and working with low-income food industry employees—and her quest to answer the questions: Why is it so difficult for many Americans to eat well? What would it take for all Americans to do so?

“What is it with all of these young single white women, overeducated—doesn't mean intelligent,” Limbaugh asked yesterday, according to the show’s official transcript. Limbaugh’s comments about Fluke last week have prompted numerous advertisers and at least one hosting station to withdraw support from his show, according to news reports.

“The American Way of Eating” has already drawn numerous accolades from reviews in the Wall Street Journal (“excellent and… moving first-person narrative”); the Los Angeles Times (“vital”); and the New York Times (“provocative… a voice the food world needs”), and support from esteemed journalists including Eric Schlosser, William Finnegan, and Ted Conover.
“My work is about examining how we make sure that American families can afford to eat nutritious food,” said McMillan. “I understand that Mr. Limbaugh may disagree with me, but it is unfortunate that he would dismiss my work by focusing on my status as a single, white, college-educated female. This is a very real and growing economic issue affecting working class families—many of whom may in fact be some of his listeners.”

McMillan, as Limbaugh points out, has won numerous awards for her reporting, and received support from the prestigious Fund for Investigative Journalism for her work on “The American Way of Eating.” Based on her extensive research, she offers carefully crafted policy solutions to what some consider an emerging economic and health crisis in America: the inability of the working poor to feed themselves and their families well.

“As a longtime investigative reporter, I am concerned about Mr. Limbaugh’s off-the-cuff dismissal of a serious, bright, and talented woman’s work,” said Florence Graves, founding director of the Schuster Institute. “Of course he has a right to take issue with the content, but I am disturbed that he tried to discredit Tracie’s work because of her gender. What could that possibly have to do with the quality of her work? I wish he would explain that.”

“Food is one of the only base human needs where the American government lets the private market dictate its delivery to our communities,” Limbaugh quoted from the favorable New York Times review of McMillan’s book. “You know, we have social justice. We have food justice. We already have food insecurity out there. Food insecurity is when people who run out of food stamps get hungry,” he continues. “Who is the authorette?” he asked, a term he used twice. “It doesn't matter.” In a second discussion of McMillan’s work, Limbaugh referred to McMillan as “this babe.”

“I didn’t expect to hear anything this blatantly sexist; this is the first time anyone has openly used the fact that I am female to discredit my work,” said McMillan, who is 35 years old and worked her way through New York University to earn a bachelor’s degree. “It’s just a distraction, anyway,” she added. “The real question is how to get Americans fresh, high-quality food at affordable prices—not whether I’m overeducated. If Mr. Limbaugh wants to have a real adult conversation about issues in my work, I’d love to have one, including on his show.”