

***Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto.* London, UK: Verso. 96 pages. ISBN 9781788734424. Paperback, 7.99 GBP. Cinzia Arruza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. 2019.**

A friend once shared her encounters with a White, male academic who told her that “Capitalism does not see colour”—or gender, for that matter. Capitalism, as a system, does not discriminate; in fact, it promotes the empowerment of women, especially women from the Global South. However, as Arruza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser compellingly posit in this *Manifesto*, capitalism is the root cause of gender, racial, and class oppression in this contemporary world. Thus, ending gender violence would require feminists to shift their attention to the 99%, the marginalized majority, while also recognizing the intersections of class, race, legal status, gender, sexuality, and disability, in producing systemic oppression. It becomes necessary then to not only reform, but to overthrow the capitalist system in order to achieve equality, justice, and individual freedom.

Key to the ideas proposed by *Feminism for the 99%* is to build transnational solidarity of women through focusing on issues that affect the lives of the 99%: unaffordable housing, poverty, legal and social justice, racism, xenophobia, and even climate change. Engaging with these issues is critical because “capitalism necessarily generates an imperialist world geography” (p. 51) that sustains gender oppression of the 99%. Since (neo)liberal feminism has largely focused on the advancement of the 1%—women who are already privileged, *Feminism for the 99%* seeks to dispel the approach of the former as their complicity with capitalism only perpetuates patriarchy. By juxtaposing the examples of “lean-in” feminists through the figure of Sheryl Sandberg with the radical militant feminists in Spain, the authors illustrate the bankruptcy of liberal feminism as it often produces and reinforces the separation between the Global North and South, which further renders women in the latter in a more precarious state.

As such, *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* outlines the key criticisms (of neoliberal feminism and capitalism) and puts forth its demands in order to achieve justice for the 99%. In order to do that, the book is divided into two sections: the first section lays out the 11 Theses for the Manifesto; the second section delves into the positionality of the authors, the historical contexts and circumstances that paved the way for *Feminism for the 99%*, and important concepts—particularly capitalism and social reproduction, employed by the movement. Capitalism (re)appropriates new institutional structures to produce gender oppression through the subordination of social reproduction to women. Sexism, as the authors argue, is “hardwired into [the] very structure” of capitalism (p. 21) as it relegates women to “the position of subordination” (p.22), such as a (non)waged worker in the domestic sphere. This is an important perspective since (neo)liberal or corporate feminists often premise the emancipation of women on labor or waged work. However, as the authors convincingly argue, for the 99%, labor is a capitalist mode of oppression since “nearly all of [them] are still required to work ‘the second shift’ ... turning the bulk of women’s waged work [as] *un-liberating*” (p.75).

Another key idea that the book underlines is the ways in which the normalization of (homo)sexuality allows capitalism to flourish since it “encourages individualism, domesticity and commodity consumption” (p. 35). More than that, capitalism turn this into a tool of discrimination as it allows the pinkwashing of certain communities and societies. Through the examples of the Israeli government’s attempts to promote itself as a modern and gay-friendly state (as a front to fend off critiques against Israeli occupation of Palestine), and European liberals’ efforts to utilize homophobia to “legitimate hostility towards Muslims” (p.38), the authors illustrate how capital, hiding behind LGBTQ+’s movements, only serves to perpetuate racism, and legal and social injustice. This is an important perspective as it traces the roots of sexual discrimination to capital(ism), while also seeking to liberate sexuality from the clutches of capitalism.

As a result, it becomes even more important that “a feminism that is truly anti-racist and anti-imperialist must also be anti-capitalist” (p.43). Throughout the book, the authors convincingly outline the intersections of gender, class, race, sexuality—amongst others, in oppressing women.

While (neo)liberal feminists have rejected, e.g., class and race as part of the feminist movement, the *Manifesto* emphasizes the need to recognize how these intersections produce the material realities of the 99%. An example used to illustrate this point would be the experiences of Black women in the United States who endure(d) racial, class, and gender discrimination. In addition, looking at these intersections also allow us to redefine the notion of the “working-class,” or class in general, as it avoids the universalization of the white woman’s, or the suburban middle-class experience. This is important as it allows us to recognize the diverging experiences of women—the 99%—across the world.

The book offers a refreshing perspective in our understanding and rethinking of feminism. Rather than retreating to the simple explanations of gender oppression through the lens of culture and religion, it forces us to interrogate the system that produces these structural oppressions. Moreover, the book’s value lies in its capacity to recognize the value of intersectionality in the fight for gender equality. It equips feminists with the language to understand contemporary crises and articulate the ways in which capitalism has/had inflicted gender violence upon women. In addition, the book also succeeds in helping us to rethink the concept of emancipation. For example, while development programmes, rooted in neoliberal ideals, are often purported to empower women, the authors suggest that programmes such as microcredit lending serve to turn these women into dependents. Thus, as (gender) oppression is structural, it becomes even more important to not only reform, but also overthrow the entire system.

While the book has been useful in helping us to rethink the conception of feminism, it could have clearly expounded the definitions of concepts that are key to the *Manifesto* earlier. It makes one wonder why the authors chose to leave the discussion of the core concepts to the later part of the book. A suggestion for readers new to *Feminism for the 99%* would be to start with the second section, as they might benefit from further elaboration of the history and context of the movement in order to better appreciate and understand the Theses.

Nonetheless, for those exploring *Feminism for the 99%*, this is a good introductory book to understand key criticisms and demands of this

movement. It offers a very compelling and consistent argument for why there is a need to overthrow the system since capitalism is at the root of (gender) oppression and how to go about doing so. The intersections of class, race, and gender—amongst many others, allow us to recognize the material realities that define the experiences of the 99%—and not just the 1% with access to resources and privileges. This allows one to overcome the “familiar, stale oppositions between ‘identity politics’ and ‘class politics’” (p. 57) as one aspires to reach out to the 99%.

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