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_Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto_ foregrounds recent, global calls to liberate hegemonic feminist thinking and praxis from the shackles of formalist equality in order to authentically support the anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and ecofeminist. Written by three organisers of the International Women’s Strike, the manifesto responds to the moment of change generated by large-scale worldwide challenges to the political elite by advocating for the departure from individualist, neoliberal feminism.

The manifesto addresses the damage engineered by neoliberals in their transformation of feminism as a once distinct discipline commended for challenging capitalism from the perspective of gender and into “capitalism’s handmaiden” (Fraser, 2013). To this end, the authors appeal to us to reorient feminism from its present path which privileges the “meritocratic advancement of the few” to a fresh route unifying the collective as a revolutionary force against hierarchical structures (61). Their overarching objective: to construct the ultimate “majoritarian feminism”, or a “Feminism for the 99%” as coined by Fraser by overthrowing capitalism in its most destructive form – neoliberalism (61 and 6).

The manifesto represents a refreshing alternative to the unflattering celebration of the ‘She-E-O’ pedalled by the mainstream on the mistaken belief that “more female leadership will lead to fairer treatment for all women” (Sandberg, 2015: 172). The authors undermine the dominant rhetoric that gender parity will be secured by increasing the representation of women within the highest ranks of society. Conversely, they reveal the neoliberal feminist quest to appoint more women CEOs as being antithetical to the aim of securing universal
equality. In reality, the authors reveal the neoliberal feminist ideology as the root source
driving the fantasy of a comprehensive equality for the many by privileging the interests of a
few. Simultaneously, the authors identify neoliberal feminist strategies as fostering and
legitimizing systemic inequity within the workplace and beyond.

Consequently, the manifesto exposes neoliberal feminism as a pernicious strain of
‘feminism’ disguised by the mainstream under the thinly veiled narrative of “female
empowerment”. The manifesto highlights that the “female empowerment” emblem is used
discursively by the neoliberal feminist agenda to emphasize the role of the individual in
managing their lives. Simultaneously, this emblem validates the state’s laissez-faire approach
towards the plethora of oppressions faced by communities within society. The manifesto
develops recent scholarship by charging the neoliberal feminist agenda with denying the
structural nature of gender injustice (Rottenberg, 2018: 55). To resist these neoliberal
approaches, which misappropriate key feminist tenets to further capitalist, hierarchical
systems, the authors endeavour to “build another feminism: a feminism with a different
definition of what counts as a feminist issue, a different class orientation, and a different
ethos—one that is radical and transformative” (5).

Increasingly, scholars problematize the convergence between feminism and
neoliberalism. They emphasize the hybrid’s manipulation of liberal feminist concepts as a
means of generating an enterprising, successful, and seemingly progressive subject
(Rottenberg, 2018). Similarly, the authors confront many of the shortcomings of these
corporate-capitalist feminist approaches and show how they privilege meritocracy under the
veneer of universal equality and freedom. Whilst these ideologies purport to “empower” and
“diversify” “talented” women within the workplace, the manifesto holds that in supporting
these strategies, the mainstream are merely “cloaking regressive policies in an aura of
emancipation” (12). This is because the few women who are granted exclusive access to the
highest ranks are already members of a comparable class, race, sexual orientation, religion, and or ability. While the select few are permitted the opportunity to “excel” at the top, the majority are left at the bottom to “clean up the shards” from the glass ceiling (13).

In exposing the widespread and continuing damage caused by neoliberal feminists in their counterfeit ‘feminist’ approaches, the authors compel us to “kick-back” on Lean in agendas and to cultivate their “Other” all-encompassing, authentic feminism together (13). To this end, this book makes a compelling case not only for the radical, but for the “necessary and feasible” transformation of feminism. Rather than limiting our aspirations to the underwhelming calls of neoliberal feminists like Sheryl Sandberg to strive solely for the “equal” representation of women and men within the public and private spheres, the book invites the collective to cease their subscription to the pretence of neoliberal feminism and to pick a side:

“Will we continue to pursue “equal opportunity domination” while the planet burns? Or will we reimagine gender justice in an anticapitalist form—one that leads beyond the present crisis to a new society?” (4).

The authors beseech us to follow their strategy for the latter. In doing so, the book boldly advocates for the collective to progress beyond the quest of seeking representation within the highest-ranks by abolishing hierarchy in its entirety. This is so that we can centralize the substantive and authentic equality of a holistic society, rather than prioritising the interests of the 1%. Arguably, until recently this anti-capitalist stance would be dismissed as Far-left at best. However, it is now positioned as a trendsetter; featuring in Vogue’s “Most Anticipated Books of 2019” (Vogue, 2019). Clearly, this book features as a timely response
to the growing mainstream appetite for anti-capitalist strategies to combat gender injustice
and societal crisis of the neoliberal epoch.

The authors divide their manifesto into 11 central calls to action namely to: reinvent
the strike (Thesis 1); abandon liberal feminism (Thesis 2); adopt anti-capitalist feminism
(Thesis 3); put capitalism to immediate end (Thesis 4); value social reproduction above
production for profit (Thesis 5); tackle all of the gender-based violence perpetuated by
capitalism (Thesis 6); liberate sexuality from regulation (Thesis 7); embrace an all-
embracing anti-racist, anti-imperialist feminism by rejecting capitalism (Thesis 8);
reverse the destruction of the environment achieved by capitalism (Thesis 9); engrain
feminist internationalism (Thesis 10); form a radical collective alliance in a ‘common anti-
capitalist insurgency’. (Thesis 11)

In utilising Marx and Engels’ ground breaking *Communist Manifesto* as a theoretical
foundation for the manifesto, the authors demonstrate how feminism can be feasibly
remoulded to respond to the modern forms of “exploitation, domination, and alienation”
arising from the continuation of capitalist regimes (59). They recognize that our
contemporary globalized landscape is greatly divergent from the Europe centred by Marx and
Engels within their manifesto in 1848. Similarly, they are forthcoming that the various
intersectional issues presently facing society extend far beyond the imaginations of this
predecessor. In recognising the various forms of oppression generated by the perpetuation of
capitalist regimes through a Marxist-feminist lens, the authors emphasise the need to respond
to this conjuncture of social, ecological, and political crisis through a “feminist rescue
operation and course correction” (63). In doing so, they reinforce ground-breaking
scholarship by Rowbotham, Seagal, and Wainwright, who centralized their lived experiences
as feminists to collectivize the divided Left following Margaret Thatcher’s period in office
(Rowbotham et al, 2013).
Advancing the work of Marx and Engels to support the demolition of neoliberal feminism and capitalism in an increasingly globalized world, the manifesto scrutinises the relationship between neoliberal feminism and race. The authors illustrate the active and subtler roles played by feminists in perpetuating racialized violence under the guise of utilitarianism and empowerment. The manifesto develops Crenshaw’s existing intersectional analyses by demonstrating the homogenization of a range of lived-experiences of gender injustice under a false universal (Crenshaw, 1989: 144). The manifesto connects the fusion of these lived-experiences to the broader neoliberal feminist effort to abstract gender, race and class and to deny the structural and intersectional nature of these issues. Fundamentally, they reinforce the reciprocal relationship between race and gender, but also the interdependence between race, imperialism and capitalism. As the authors present, the functioning of racism, imperialism, and misogyny is contingent on capitalism. Thus, authors condemn the patchy feminist record on race and proclaim that the authentic emancipation of women is impossible within a racist, imperialist society. Therefore, the manifesto pledges to break ties with neoliberal feminist approaches to cease promoting lived-experiences of injustice on falsely unified terms and to engage genuinely with diverse experiences of oppression.

As part of their collective displacement of neoliberal feminist agenda, the authors call also upon the collective to reject conventional carceral responses within the context of gender-based violence (GBV). Although the authors share their sympathy about the motivations driving the quest for retribution, they declare this an inadequate pathway to address the structural nature of GBV. Strikingly, the authors seamlessly weave together the cyclical relationship between the capitalist-carceral nation and the promotion of GBV. They call on the collective to challenge: “the mistaken assumption that the laws, police, and courts maintain sufficient autonomy from the capitalist power structure to counter its deep-seated tendency to generate gender violence” (29).
In powerfully illustrating the inseparable relationship between the carceral state and capitalism, the authors undermine the almost axiomatic truth that legal responses to GBV are well-intentioned and necessary. While the manifesto builds on existing abolitionist ground cultivated by the likes of Davis, Ritchie, and Wilson-Gilmore, the authors convey the law as orchestrating a war against the most vulnerable members of society, rather than reprimanding culpable “white-collar” individuals because of their societal privilege (Davis, 2003). Skilfully, the authors compel even the most astute feminist readers to reflect on their feminist credentials, particularly if they find themselves guilty of self-ascribing the label “feminist” whilst simultaneously endorsing the use of imprisonment for GBV.

Although the manifesto provides a proficient patchwork of the fundamental cultural, and political issues affecting our global societies, it would have been gratifying to see the manifesto provide a more comprehensive response to the multi-dimensional impact of regulatory capitalist regimes upon LGBTQI+ people. While the manifesto is committed to liberating society from the state regulation of sexuality (Thesis 7) this section falls short of its valiant effort to address a plethora of the complex issues experienced by LGBTQI+ people within one short section. This results in the fusion of many distinct issues arising from the capitalist regulation of sexuality and gender identity. Given the strongly intersectional identity of the Women’s Strike movement and the increasingly hostile environment for transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people socio-economically, politically and culturally, it would have been preferable for the authors to have centred these specific concerns within a separate thesis targeting the state regulation of gender identity. Particularly in these current times of conflict between feminism and queer theory, it would have been valuable for the authors to reinforce the historical feminist commitment to opposing neoliberal strategies of reducing conceptions of gender and sexuality to homogenous and stable constructs (Kapur, 2013: 342).
Nevertheless, Feminism for the 99% is a visionary, relatable and all-encompassing resource valuable both to the collective committed to achieving a feminist informed anti-capitalist society and to those who are yet to be haunted by the spectre (Engels and Marx, 1998). Although the manifesto largely centres on inspiring communities who are yet to harvest the fruits of a non-capitalist society, the text also offers a long-term vision to support those already inhabiting a non-capitalist society. The book joins an increasingly mainstream anti-capitalist body of literature by Rottenberg (2018) and it stands in stark contrast to the best-selling ‘feminist manifestos’ by Sandberg (2015) and Slaughter (2015). The manifesto builds upon calls by Rowbotham to challenge advanced capitalist systems “around their specific experiences as women in the course of revolutionary struggle against capitalism” (77).

Unlike existing critiques of feminist neoliberalism, the manifesto offers a hybrid theoretical-pragmatic approach facilitating the collective transformation of the deepening global political, social, and ecological crisis. It rebuts dominant neoliberal feminist literature professing the importance of increasing the representation of women within the highest ranks of society. Simultaneously, it responds to the inadequacy of existing feminist praxis e.g. GBV which predominantly rely upon an engagement with the carceral state, despite the perpetuation of inequality by agents of the criminal justice system. Its all-inclusive theses transcend the narrow parameters of existing corporate feminist forces, scaling their wide-ranging attack upon the need to sever ties with capitalist-colonial forces to the value of social reproduction. Perhaps most importantly, the presentation of a broad ranging and intersecting subject matter in a rich, vivid manner ensures that the manifesto is accessible.

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List of References


