# \*\*\*AFF – Fem IR/Gender

## At: Cap K

### Perm

#### Socialism and feminism are interconnected and there is still progress to be made on the basis of equality

Simone **Morgen 14** [For a Feminist Socialism - Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) (dsausa.org)](https://www.dsausa.org/democratic-left/for_a_feminist_socialism/)Simone Morgenis an officer of Democratic Socialists of Central Ohio, a branch of Democratic Socialists of America. She is a long-time volunteer and activist with Jobs with Justice and numerous other groups, including more recently [USUncut](https://www.keywiki.org/index.php?title=USUncut&action=edit&redlink=1) and immigrant support groupsIn 2012, she was Constituent Liaison at the State of Ohio - AG office.

Why, indeed? Isn’t Rosa Luxemburg a socialist icon? Don’t socialism’s core values of equal treatment of all persons, without prejudice or disparate treatment, address feminist concerns?

Formally, yes – but a cursory examination of the ways in which issues are addressed even within socialist circles brings this into question. Even in these more favorable environs, the need for an explicitly feminist view remains. After all, patriarchy as a sex/gender system of organizing society existed long before the capitalist mode of production revolutionized society and colored its directives. **How would feminism change our common vision?** Most obviously, feminist socialism recognizes that work and economics are different for men and women and takes that into account. Too often, socialists overlook the fact that women’s earnings trail men’s for many reasons. These include 1) their greater representation in low-wage jobs; 2) greater numbers in government jobs, which have been getting cut due to the recession and attacks on public sector workers; and 3) lifetime lower earnings, due to a pay differential that has hardly moved in the past 10 years. Outside the formal economy, women also do the vast majority of un-waged work, whether in the home or the informal economy. A feminist socialist vision recognizes the immense unpaid labor that sustains the capitalist economy and the need to address it when developing an alternative, so that the burden of holding up family and community doesn’t fall disproportionately on women yet again. **Why is this critical fact so often overlooked by socialists who lack a feminist analysis?**

First**,**because identifying specific disadvantaged groups based on color, country of origin, ethnicity, etc. involves defining those groupings by their characteristics and often by location and/or proximity. Women, by contrast, are a worldwide group that encompasses any or all characteristics, and are always present – that is, they are visible and not visible. This results from their daily interaction with men as wives, mothers, employees, etc., in both public and private life, rather than as a discrete racial or ethnic group that specific people may not encounter on a regular basis. Women are thus not recognized as a class, either economically or politically.

Second**,**many socialists think in terms of economics but not culture, whereas feminists understand that in a patriarchal society, assumptions regarding women’s inferiority to men become so deeply embedded that they are an unconscious part of our dominant worldview, introduced in childhood and enforced throughout life. The economic and cultural limitations under which women live their lives are often simply not noticed by men and are frequently policed by both men and women (often subconsciously, sometimes not).

One instance that may illustrate this is the incredibly misogynous jokes directed at Hillary Rodham Clinton in the 2008 presidential election. Racist comments were rightly denounced, but sexist ones didn’t evoke the same reaction. While Clinton and New York mayoral candidate Christine Quinn are neoliberal capitalist women, their treatment demonstrates that women have still not achieved the (admittedly insufficient) first stage of making people uncomfortable with openly misogynous remarks, in the same way that people often make sure to hide or disguise racial prejudice. **What does this mean for the struggle for democratic socialism?** Much as we simply cannot understand class without understanding race, so no understanding is complete without an analysis of how patriarchy intersects with capitalism. Under the continuing brutal economic assaults of exploitative capitalism, many economically disadvantaged men need to have a “lesser” that can enhance their feelings of worth in an economy and society that provides limited pathways for their success. Long-established cultural norms and the needs of the capitalist class combine to reinforce this devalued position and set expectations for woman’s role as helpmate and supporter rather than as an equal economic actor. Socialists undercut our own movement by not speaking to the needs of women, who are, after all, more thanhalf the world.

But an adequate socialist feminist analysis would move beyond simply identifying the varying levels of gender disadvantage to a more rigorous identification of how society is constructed. As feminists, we would pay attention to the underlying and unexamined expectations that shape gender-related questions such as who does caregiving, how we organize family and private life, what kind of work confers respect on the worker, etc. We would subject economic, historical and social patterns to socialist analysis and measure them against socialist ideals. Finally, we would analyze how gender intersects with other categories of identity such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and citizenship.

The struggle to integrate women’s experience thoroughly into socialist theory and practice and to de-emphasize male experience as *the* paradigm will not be achieved immediately.  We cannot erase thousands of years of deeply absorbed assumptions and widely distributed cultural attitudes in a few generations. We have little awareness of how ingrained and unconscious these barriers are except for when that still, small voice occasionally says in a woman’s ear “that’s not fair!”  But socialists cannot allow half of the population to be an afterthought. While DSAers discuss reproductive justice in the context of the recent surge in punitive activity, that and other feminist issues tend to trail low wages, immigration, the continuing recession, etc., as a focus of discussion, and the feminist take on each of these issues is not fully explored. This must change.

#### The future of labor is women and that entails that women are treated equally throughout the workplace, history shows us the journey that was made for moder women to be in the workforce at all

[Eileen **Boris**](https://newlaborforum.cuny.edu/author/eileen-boris/)and [Annelise **Orleck**](https://newlaborforum.cuny.edu/author/annelise-orleck/)[**11 FEMINISM AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT: A Century of Collaboration and Conflict (cuny.edu)**](https://newlaborforum.cuny.edu/2011/01/03/feminism-and-the-labor-movement-a-century-of-collaboration-and-conflict/) Eileen Boris: Hull Professor, Graduate Director, Specialization: Labor Studies, Gender, Race, Class, Women's History, Social Politics, Areas of study: gender, race, and class, feminist theory, labor studies, social politics, women, work, and welfare, women's and gender history [Eileen Boris | Department of Feminist Studies - UC Santa Barbara (ucsb.edu)](https://www.femst.ucsb.edu/people/eileen-boris).Annelise Orleck: U.S. history since 1877 /U.S. political history /U.S. women /women and American radicalism /race, ethnicity and immigration /Jewish immigration, gay and lesbian studies [Annelise Orleck | Faculty Directory (dartmouth.edu)](https://faculty-directory.dartmouth.edu/annelise-orleck).

A century after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, women have become nearly half of the unionized labor force. They work in the growing service and public employment sectors as nurses, home attendants, teachers, and clerks. Previously labeled women’s issues—maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, and work-family balance—have become union issues. Women hold leadership positions in the AFL-CIO and Change to Win. With the disappearance of manufacturing and the growth of service labor, women of color—both immigrant- and U.S.- born—have become the driving force in the labor movement for safe jobs, living wages, and dignity at work, leading women-dominated unions and worker associations. It is not an overstatement to say that the future of the labor movement appears up to the women. 1.It hasn’t always been this way. For at least a century, labor feminists have fought for the interests of wage-earning women and workingclass housewives, both within the feminist and the labor movements. Still, the priorities of the women’s movement for sex-based rights and those of the labor movement for class solidarity often diverged during the twentieth century. Working-class feminists struggled against middle-class feminists who focused primarily on achieving equality with male professionals and executives. They also battled men who sought to exclude women from unionized jobs and who denied organized women workers a full share of power in the labor movement.

Highlighting key moments when feminists and unionists came together over the last century, this essay offers a usable past drawn from the fraught—but often productive—relationship between feminism and labor. An examination of the contact between organized women’s groups and organized labor, women’s organizations within the labor movement, and feminist labor organizing shows that when feminists and unions worked together, both benefited. Labor gained when it understood women’s issues as crucial for the advancement of the working class. The women’s movement was at its strongest when its membership and agenda crossed class lines. Recognition of this history may help to revitalize feminism as much as organized labor.

Labor Feminism Before the 1960s: The Women’s Trade Union League

The years surrounding 1911’s Triangle Shirtwaist Fire saw significant and broad-based collaboration between labor activists and middle- to upper-class feminists in the United States. That period began with the creation of the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL) in 1903. The League, as it was known by its members, drew together educated women reformers (mostly white, Protestant, and native-born) and young women workers (many of them immigrant Jews, Italians, and Irish) to improve factory wages, working conditions, and hours. The WTUL embodied both an unusual degree of collaboration between feminists and the labor movement, and the many tensions that arose from longstanding attempts to build lasting and productive relationships. 2.This cross-class women’s network deepened with the uprisings of young women garment workers that began in New York in 1909 and then spread over the next few years into other Eastern and Midwestern cities. Middle-class and affluent supporters of woman suffrage—including League activists, college students, and even wealthy socialites—saw these strikes as an opportunity to win working women to the cause. Forming what the press dubbed “mink brigades,” affluent supporters marched alongside young immigrant women on picket lines in a largely successful attempt to reduce high rates of police brutality. After they bailed arrested strikers out of jail, they spoke (alongside the released strikers) for woman suffrage on the steps of jails and courthouses. Affluent feminists brought working women into existing suffrage organizations, as well as offering financial support for the establishment of working-class suffrage groups. Working women understood, as Polish Jewish cap maker Rose Schneiderman explained in 1907, that they “must . . . secure political power to shape their own labor conditions.” 3.Women factory and manufacturing workers knew they needed the political and financial support of these more affluent “allies.” Nonetheless, imbalances in social power and financial resources generated much conflict in the first two decades of the century, when working-class members felt bullied, condescended to, or generally misunderstood. While many working-class women embraced socialism and anarchism, their better-off allies mostly shied away from revolutionary politics, preferring to reform the existing system. The refusal of working women to eschew more radical approaches moved affluent women to withdraw financial support from independent working women’s groups, prompting angry responses. “It is up to the working people to save themselves,” Schneiderman tongue-lashed a theater full of affluent New Yorkers after the Triangle Fire.4. In the aftermath of the fire, women labor activists and reformers redoubled efforts to win the vote, and industrial feminists (the self-name of labor feminists of that day) like Schneiderman began to focus as much on passing laws to regulate wages and labor conditions as they did on union organizing. Frances Perkins (the future U.S. Secretary of Labor under Franklin Roosevelt) of the National Consumers League and Pauline Newman (a former Triangle employee and WTUL activist) were appointed as investigators for the New York State Factory Investigating Commission (FIC), positions they used to educate powerful politicians about the conditions under which working women labored. Over the next three years, the New York FIC, and sister organizations in the other industrial states, pushed through a dramatically expanded regulatory structure for factory labor—including laws that empowered state commissioners of labor, banned the labor of children under the age of fourteen, and required inspection of elevators and fireproof devices. 5.During World War I, this collaboration between middle-class feminists, women labor activists, and Democratic Party politicians resulted in the founding of a Women in Industry Service to monitor conditions of women working on defense contracts. After the war, President Wilson established a permanent Women’s Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor to investigate women’s working conditions. Its creation marked the ascension of “industrial” and “social” feminists to federal government positions of authority, a significant move toward remaking the state as a force sympathetic to at least some of the goals of the labor movement. 6.By the 1920s, when the WTUL came to be run by labor union women—such as Schneiderman and Newman—it was genuinely a cross-class, multi-ethnic organization. Still, once U.S. women won the right to vote, relations between the self-described feminists of the National Women’s Party (NWP) and women in the labor movement frayed. In the early 1920s, NWP leaders began lobbying for an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution, which declared it unconstitutional to discriminate on the basis of sex. The labor movement rejected the ERA out of fear that it would negate hard-won legislation protecting women workers. Ignoring industrial feminists’ pleas to adopt a more piecemeal approach to gender equality, the NWP introduced the ERA into every session of Congress from 1921 into the early 1970s, driving a deep and lasting wedge between the labor movement and feminist activists.

Labor opponents of the ERA gained the upper hand with the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. He was, along with his wife Eleanor, a key ally of the New York WTUL. With the appointment of League leaders like Perkins and Schneiderman to key government positions, FDR signaled support for the goals of the labor-feminist alliance. Perkins oversaw the extension of wage-and-hour and safety protections for all workers, regardless of gender, through the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938. These laws marked a turning point for union men who had long been ambivalent toward the idea of legislating labor conditions. No longer were strategies for improving the lives of workers so starkly divided by sex.

Still, race continued to divide the working class. The new legislation intentionally denied coverage to agricultural and domestic workers—the fields in which most women of color were employed. Many within the labor-feminist coalition pushed to expand federal laws, including the Social Security Act of 1935, to extend coverage to these occupations. They also expanded the reach of the labor movement, by supporting organizing drives among service workers, many of whom were women of color. In reaching out to black and immigrant organizers like Maida Springer Kemp, Dolly Robinson, and Charlotte Adelman, the mid-1930s WTUL brought laundry workers, waitresses, and hotel maids—who had been largely ignored by white male unionists—into the labor movement. This same period saw the mass organizing of Caribbean immigrants and Puerto Ricans in the East, and Mexican-Americans in the West. These populations had long been ignored by the male-led unions.

With the coming of World War II, largescale employment of women in defense plants moved feminist labor issues into the center of public discussion. Early in the war years, manufacturers attempted to label any new jobs in defense production as “female” work, enabling them to pay women workers less than the prevailing union wage. Labor leaders’ longstanding attempts to keep the best-paid jobs for white male union members had to be rethought, given the labor shortages resulting from the wartime draft. Reluctantly at first, more enthusiastically later, some unions—most notably the United Electrical Workers (UE)— began to resist sex-based pay differentials. Even leaders with little concern for women’s salaries worried that, if they allowed manufacturers to pay women less during the war, when men came home afterwards, it would be difficult to bring wages back up. Other unions retained sex-based pay differentials in their contracts, but in 1942 the National War Labor Board—responding to years of lobbying by labor-feminist groups like the WTUL—established a policy of equal pay for men and women performing the same jobs. The 1963 Equal Pay Act, the first time the federal government put its power behind equal pay for equal work, was the fruit of continuing labor-feminist agitation on this issue.

With wage-earning mothers constituting 36 percent of the labor force by the war’s end, work and family balance inevitably became an urgent labor issue. Joint efforts between feminists and male unionists mitigated the “double day” with publicly supported child care, flexible hours, and more convenient shopping options. Industrial unions recognized womanpower through special women’s committees; the United Automobile Workers (UAW) committee carried forward the labor-feminist agenda into the early postwar years, in collaboration with the U.S. Women’s Bureau. 7.Labor Feminism Since 1960

The 1960s and 1970s saw an explosion of interactions between feminists and trade unionists, and an energetic feminism within the labor movement. As women’s liberation activists discovered the working class—with help from World War II-era trade unionists and leftists—feminist caucuses sprung up within existing unions. At its first convention in 1974, thirty-five thousand women gathered together not “to swap recipes,” as Myra Wolfgang of HERE taunted George Meany and the rest of labor’s male leadership, but to organize the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Along with explicitly feminist groups like the Union Women’s Alliance to Gain Equality (Union WAGE) and 9to5, CLUW declared women’s issues to be union issues. 8.In honoring WTUL stalwart Pauline Newman at its founding meeting, CLUW recognized generational continuities among labor feminists. Its stated priorities explicitly echoed those of the WTUL: strengthening the role of women in unions; organizing unorganized women; achieving pay equity; and increasing the involvement of women in the political and legislative process. But CLUW added goals that reflected changing times—promoting affirmative action for women in the workplace, addressing the concerns of aging women workers, and tackling substance abuse. In 1980, CLUW president Joyce Miller became the first woman on the AFL-CIO’s executive board—a modest and long-overdue recognition of the significance of women in the labor movement.

Trade union feminists helped launch a revitalized women’s movement that sparked new demands for women’s rights at home, on the job, and within unions. Clericals, flight attendants, and domestic workers contested the dominant assumption within the AFL-CIO that women workers were unorganizable. **Collective action** hit pink-collar occupations. This trend was exemplified by the formation of Stewardesses for Women’s Rights, the Willmar Bank Employees’ Association strike in 1977, and the highly creative and flexible campaign to organize Harvard’s clerical and technical workers. Independent women’s associations, like Chicago’s Women Employed, were far more likely to initiate such efforts than were traditional labor unions. At a time when most unions still concentrated on manufacturing, feminists argued for both the economic value of women’s unpaid labor in the home and the worth of women’s work in service industries. They anticipated the strategies needed to organize the future economy. 9.At the same time, trade union women shaped the new feminism in two ways. First, they complicated the meaning of equality by bringing to the feminist agenda issues like child care and flextime that women needed to balance wage-earning with family life. By the 1970s, labor feminists went beyond an anti-discrimination program to insist that women’s rights at work included pregnancy leave and other labor standards, and that these issues mattered to the labor movement even if they did not apply to men. The World War II efforts of the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (IUE) laid the basis for feminist organizing in the 1970s that culminated in the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978. In 1982, twenty thousand Chinese-immigrant garment workers forced union-sponsored day care onto the agenda of the labor movement by leaving their babies on the desk of previously unresponsive garment union president Jay Mazur. 10.Second, they had an institutional impact. Not only would longtime union activists, like Stella Nowicki from Chicago’s stockyards, become involved with women’s liberation— they also helped birth its most national manifestation. In 1966, Caroline Davis and Dorothy Haener from the UAW’s Women’s Department became key founders of the National Organization for Women (NOW), providing office space and clerical services to that fledging organization. NOW’s co-founder and most famous leader, Betty Friedan, had learned to organize in the UE. 11.UAW women were in the forefront of shifting labor’s stand toward the ERA. Like other women in male-dominated or mixedsex industries—and unlike allies in the U.S. Women’s Bureau—they viewed women’s labor laws not as protective devices but as tools of both management and hostile male workers who sought to limit women’s opportunities and pay. They applauded the striking down of sex-based labor restrictions under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, achieved through the cooperation of labor and feminist legislators. 12.In the years that followed, many local groups bridged the gaps between trade unionism and the women’s movement. 13.In California’s Bay Area, two activists rooted in the old left—Jean Maddox of the militant Local 29 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union and Ann Draper of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union— established Union WAGE in 1971. They aimed to counter NOW’s neglect of working women and support organizing through rank-and-file movements and independent associations. The larger women’s movement, in turn, influenced WAGE, which fought for reproductive rights, struggled against sexual harassment and racism, and condemned discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, age, and disability.14

Citywide clerical associations, along with workplace-based women’s caucuses, more typically represented the collective action inspired by feminist and other radical insurgencies against the AFL-CIO.15 In the early 1970s, 9to5 expanded from a consciousness-raising group among Harvard clerical workers to become (first) an organization of Boston clerical workers, then part of the National Association of Working Women. In 1975, it created a companion union—Local 9to5—that was affiliated with the SEIU. Under the banner “Raises not Roses,” clerical women petitioned, picketed, sued, and engaged in creative street actions. In the 1990s, founder Karen Nussbaum brought a feminist perspective to her tenure as director of the U.S. Women’s Bureau and, in 1996, as the head of the AFL-CIO’s new Working Women’s Department.16

Feminists also established caucuses within established unions. Among the most effective, the District 31 (based in Northwest Indiana’s Calumet Region) Women’s Caucus of the United Steelworkers mobilized “burly” men to march for the ERA in Illinois, a major industrial state resisting ratification. It joined with a multiracial coalition of Chicago-area women’s groups to fight against job discrimination and violence against women and for abortion rights. It also defended women’s jobs during layoffs.17

In the early 1970s, black feminist leaders Shirley Chisholm and Eleanor Holmes Norton sought to jointly mobilize the civil rights, labor, and women’s movements to improve the conditions of domestic service. While the AFL-CIO still could not imagine organizing such workers, its members joined a cross-class and multiracial mix of feminists in supporting the 1974 expansion of the Fair Labor Standards Act to cover domestic workers. With the support of the National Committee on Household Employment, a black feminist organization initially founded by labor feminists, domestic workers themselves mobilized as the Household Technicians of America (HTA) in 1972. Given the stigma associated with domestic service, local groups across the nation sought not only traditional bread-and-butter improvements but also respect for their work and humanity through written contracts, public recognition ceremonies, and training and education programs.18

Las Vegas became a surprising base for labor feminism when a multiracial workforce of hotel maids turned the city’s Hotel and Culinary Workers Union Local 226 into the largest private union local in the United States in the 1990s. Beginning in the 1940s, AfricanAmerican women assumed leadership roles. In the 1950s, under pioneering business agent Sara Hughes, black women who labored as “back of the house” workers in the city’s hotels and casinos became organized. But, twenty years later, African-American workers contested the union’s collaboration with hotel management to segregate them into the lowest wage positions in the hotel workforce. A series of protests and court challenges yielded a federal consent decree forcing the union and Las Vegas hotels to train and place women and workers of color into higher-paid jobs. In the late 1980s, the union’s multiracial membership ratified some of the best contracts in the nation for service workers. This period of success for unionized women of color culminated in 1990 when Hattie Canty—a black migrant mother of ten—became president of the Culinary Union.19

Toward the Future

The relationship between the women’s movement and organized labor has shifted over the last twenty-five years. The AFL-CIO has incorporated major concerns of wage-earning women into its formal agenda, calling for: equal pay, work and family balance, and prevention of violence against women in the workplace. Middle-class feminists played a role in pushing unions to recognize these concerns, but too often they ignored how class structures the outcome of gender inequality, as in questions of remuneration, time flexibility, and the double day. While feminists of all classes easily embraced equal pay, middleclass people are less active in seeking redress for underpaid caregivers. Jamaican immigrant Evelyn Coke—the Long Island home care worker whose exclusion from the minimum wage law the SEIU litigated—garnered meager feminist support for her plight. On the other hand, feminists gave crucial support to new formations—like Domestic Workers United in New York City and other ethnically-based associations—that seek dignity and recognition as well as better working conditions. These efforts culminated in September 2010 when New York became the first state to adopt a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights.20

Most significantly, women have become the new face of labor, composing the majority of union recruits. As manufacturing declined and the service economy exploded, immigrant women in low-wage jobs brought a new vitality and militancy to unionization. The numbers of jobs in teaching, nursing, and clerical work that employed more women than men continued to grow right up to the beginnings of the current recession, increasing women’s percentage of the unionized workforce. In service industries, women now make up half of all unionists. Their numbers have begun to close the overall membership gap.21

While unions once saw women as unorganizable, today they count on them. Examples range across the labor force, but concentrate in the health care sector. Most of the seventy-four thousand Los Angeles home aides who voted to join the SEIU in 1999 were women. The 150,000-strong National Nurses United, formed in 2009 from three nurses groups, became the nation’s largest union of medical professionals.22 Though the numbers of women in leadership positions are nowhere near parity, Mary Kay Henry replaced Andy Stern as the head of the SEIU in 2010. Linda Chavez-Thompson served as executive vice-president of the AFL-CIO for over a decade, and then was replaced by another AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) leader, Arlene Holt Baker. And, in 2009, Liz Shuler of the IUE became the first woman elected as the federation’s secretary-treasurer.

Women of color—many of them immigrants—have spearheaded fights against today’s sweatshops in the fields and in homes, and have organized workers in food processing and garment production. They have revived hotel worker militancy, as evidenced by HERE’s ongoing Hotel Workers Rising initiative and Boston chambermaids’ protest against the Hyatt chain.23 Joined by middle-class feminist allies—some of whom were from the same ethnic group (as with Asian Immigrant Women Advocates)—they are addressing workplace conditions and occupational safety issues that represent today’s equivalent to the hazards of a century ago, including carpel tunnel injuries and industrial fires. In the 1990s, Mexicana farm workers of Líderes Campesinas investigated the impact of pesticides on pregnancy and highlighted sexual harassment as well as the continued low wages paid for work in California’s fields.24 Worker centers—like the Garment Worker Center in Los Angeles and many others—are linking feminism, immigrant rights, and worker justice on a daily basis in working-class communities.25

A century ago, the Triangle Fire horrified New York City and the nation as a whole, forcing the labor movement, feminists, and political reformers to more systematically address the murderous conditions facing American workers. Over the years, feminists and trade unionists came together in numerous ways, engaging in vibrant coalitions that enabled them to transcend their differences. Today’s labor movement has become, in large measure, a women’s movement. Whether it will stay that way remains to be seen. Is the feminization of the labor movement yet another indicator of its decline? Or is it a harbinger of labor’s renewal? One hundred years after Triangle that question remains unresolved. One thing is certain: the future strength of the labor movement depends on its women, and the future of feminism will continue to be shaped by labor.

# \*\*\*AFF – at: Fem IR

## PDB – socialism aff

#### Radical feminism and socialism both agree women are oppressed by capitalist society. The ultimate goal for feminism is to embrace socialism.

**Aschoff 18- (**Nicole, PhD in sociology, senior editor for Verso Book, *Feminism Againist Capitalism,* Publisher: JACOBIN)

So while itis certainly necessary to recognize how gendered contemporary society remains, it is also necessary to be clear-eyed about how to overcome these divides and, equally important,to recognize the limitations of a feminism that **doesn’t challenge capitalism.**

**Capital feeds on existing norms of sexism, compounding the exploitative nature of wage work.** When women’s ambitions and desires are silenced or undervalued,they are easier to take advantage of. Sexism is part of the company toolkit, enabling firms to pay women less— particularly women of color— and otherwise discriminate against them.

But even if we root out sexism,the inherent contradictions of capitalism will persist. It is important and necessary that women step into positions of power, but this won’t change the fundamental divide between workers and owners— between women at the top and women at the bottom.

It won’t change the fact that most women find themselves in precarious, low-wage jobs that present a far greater barrier to advancement and a comfortable life than sexism in the economic or political sphere. It won’t change the power of the profit motive and the compulsion of companies to give workers as little as economic, social, and cultural norms will allow.

 Of course, society is not reducible to the wage relation, and gender divides are real and persistent. Taking class seriously means anchoring the oppression of women within the material conditions in which they live and work while recognizing the role of sexism in shaping both women’s work life and their home life.

The feminist movement— both its “social-welfare” incarnation and its radical contemporary— has made significant gains. The challenge now is twofold:to defend these hard-won victories and make it possible for all women to actually enjoy them, and to push forward with new, concrete demands that address the complex relationship between sexism and profit-making.

There is no simple answer to how to accomplish these twin goals. In the past, women have made the biggest gains by fighting for both women’s rights and workers’ rights simultaneously— linking the fight against sexism to the fight against capital.

As Eileen Boris and Anelise Orleck argue, during the 1970s and ’80s, “trade union feminists helped launch a revitalized women’s movementthat sparked new demands for women’s rights at home, on the job, and within unions.” Airline stewardesses, garment workers, clericals, and domestic workers challenged the male-dominated trade union movement(a woman didn’t sit on the AFL-CIO executive board until 1980) and in the process forged a new, more expansive feminism.

Trade union women created a new field of possibility by demanding not only higher wages and equal opportunity but also child care, flexible work schedules, pregnancy leave, and other gains usually overlooked or undervalued by their union brothers.

This is the direction that both socialists and feminists should be orienting themselves— toward struggles and demands that challenge both the drives of capital and the ingrained norms of sexism that are so deeply rooted under capitalism.

 Struggles and demands that achieve this are concrete and are currently being fought for. For example,the struggle for single-payer healthcare— which would provide healthcare as a right to every person from cradle to grave regardless of their ability to pay— is a demand that undermines both sexism and the power of capital to control and repress worker agency. There are many other concrete short-term demands that blend the goals of feminism and socialism as well, including free higher education, free child care, and a universal basic income combined with a robust social safety net.

 These reforms would lay the groundwork for more radical goals that would go far in rooting out sexism, exploitation, and the commodification of social life. For example, projects to increase collective, democratic control over institutions central to our home, school, and work lives— schools, banks, workplaces, city governments, and state and local agencies—would give all women and men more power, autonomy, and the possibility for a better life.

This anticapitalist strategy is one that contains the possibility for the radical change that women need.

**Ultimately the goals of a radical feminism and socialism are the same— justice and equality for all people, not simply equal opportunity for women or equal participation by women in an unjust system.**