

## Feminists, embrace laissez-faire capitalism

By: T. Emmett Ryan – May 20, 2013

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Since the birth of feminism, it seems its ideology has been engaged in a more-than-happy marriage with radically left, anti-capitalist ideology and has enjoyed being bedfellows with the state. The repetitive cries of feminists who call for women to fight patriarchy while they join the struggle to escape the position of male dependency becomes void, at best, once you examine their means to their ends. The only system in which women can be truly counted as equals in society is laissez-faire capitalism.

Feminism has a deeply rooted history with socialism, Marxism and left anarchism. The penumbras of these schools of thought permeated feminist ideology and rhetoric greatly during the 1960s, just as they do today. For example, the group Radical Women, founded in 1967 by hardline communist Gloria Martin and the Freedom Socialist Party founder Clara Fraser, claimed that the plight of the female gender can be attributed to “the capitalist form of production and distribution of products, characterized by intrinsic class, race, sex, ethnic and caste oppression.” No statement can be further from the truth. Legislation such as the Paycheck Fairness Act calls for close to or equal pay between men and women, and although this may intuitively seem to help the progress of women, the effects of such legislative acts actually disempower women in the workforce.

This legislation’s initial premise, assuming that the state can determine the cost of labor and expropriate private property to benefit a special interest group (in this case the special interest group being women), has proven harmful time and time again. Any good confiscated by the state from group A to benefit group B is harmful because any action that may have been taken by group A is now thwarted in favor of group B via market distortions.

To further this point empirically rather than philosophically, if an employer is sexist and denies women work, his discrimination can now avoid the difference between the lower female competitive wage because a woman’s ability to offer a competitive wage is now nonexistent due to wage laws. In the absence of such legislation, a worker can offer to work at a lower rate of pay and force a racist or sexist employer to hire her despite the employer’s bigotry. And in the case that an employer still hires a man instead of a woman, despite her offering of a competitive wage, that employer now bears a cost due to his discriminatory hiring process — weakening that business’ competitive edge. A clean and free market would thwart discriminatory hiring on its own.

Capitalism and free markets are not only capable of fighting gender bias in the U.S., but have also brought women greater economic justice worldwide. Take Saudi Arabia for example.

Women in many parts of Saudi Arabia are banned from showing themselves in public without covering their whole bodies, with the exception of their eyes, hands and feet. Women are also prohibited from driving cars and doing business outside of the home. This discrimination is an attempt to exclude women from economic activity. Two-thirds of Internet users in Saudi Arabia are women, running businesses from home and becoming less dependent on their husbands, according to a book published in 2003 by the Cato Institute. Thus, women in Saudi Arabia have found economic liberation via the free market and technological advancement.

Many feminists in the U.S. stand firmly behind President Barack Obama as a champion of women's rights but are running afoul in doing so because Obama repeatedly kills women in drone strikes in countries where women are already downtrodden.

Capitalism has raised the standards of living unilaterally, and that, of course, includes women. If feminists are serious about fighting for equality for women, they should abandon state dependency and embrace laissez-faire capitalism.

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