

Reclaim

A FEMINISTS FOR LIBERTY 'ZINE



JUNE 2023

VOL. 1, ISSUE 1

Dear readers,



You have in your hands the first copy of the first Feminists for Liberty zine. We are so excited to launch this project as a showcase for libertarian-feminist oriented news, opinions, and culture. At a time when both conservatives and leftists are becoming progressively illiberal, the libertarian movement is having an identity crisis, and mainstream feminism is dominated by reverence for state solutions, classically liberal feminist voices and ideas are both underrepresented and a vital antidote. We hope that now and in the years to come, this zine can serve as a repository for the sort of feminism that's sorely lacking in mainstream publications and politics yet so common in the hearts and minds of ordinary Americans, who tend to support sex and gender equality under the law and want the government largely to leave them, their families, and their communities alone.

That's what we want, too. And that's why you'll find the pages of this zine filled with defenses of everything from school choice to sexual autonomy, capitalism to free speech, reproductive rights to religious freedom and, of course, consent in all things.

XOXO,

Kat + Liz

Kat Murti & Elizabeth Nolan Brown,
Co-Founders of Feminists for Liberty

"I AM A BELIEVER IN INDIVIDUALISM AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS; IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND FREE ENTERPRISE; IN CIVIL LIBERTIES AND MINIMAL GOVERNMENT. AND I AM A FEMINIST. DOES THAT SURPRISE ANYONE?"

- Joan Kennedy Taylor, "Reclaiming the Mainstream: Individualist Feminism Rediscovered"



CULTURE



Reclaiming the Mainstream: Individualist Feminism Rediscovered

By: Joan Kennedy Taylor | 1992
Reviewed by: Cathy Reisenwitz

It's been 31 years since the libertarian feminist GOAT Joan Kennedy Taylor published *Reclaiming the Mainstream: Individualist Feminism Rediscovered*. And it is my deep displeasure to report that the mainstream has not, in fact, been reclaimed for libertarian feminism nor—as Taylor prefers to put it throughout the book—individualist feminism.

This book is, among other things, the book version of the protest sign that says “I can’t believe I still have to protest this shit.” But instead of “protest,” it’s fight about this shit. It’s amazing, truly, how many fights—from abortion to worker protections to the nuclear family—2023 feminists are still waging amongst ourselves and the wider culture.

Another thing *Reclaiming the Mainstream* demonstrates is that there is not, nor has there ever been, one feminism. Taylor does an amazing job briskly summarizing her clearly very deep research on the history of the various and warring feminisms from the days before the word was in common parlance until the time of her writing.

As Walter Olson—a senior fellow at the Cato Institute's Center for Constitutional Studies and a friend of the late Taylor's—adeptly pointed out during a recent Feminists For Liberty panel, Taylor writes with a stunning fairness. She could

REVIEWS

easily have written a polemic on why everyone should adopt an individualist feminism. And indeed that may have raised her profile, as people love polemics.

"There is not, nor has there ever been, one feminism."

But instead she wrote an evenhanded, inclusive, short history of feminism which simply demonstrates through copious examples the ways individualist feminists made their mark on the debates of the day.

In so doing, she demonstrates to 2023 feminists how to apply the principles of individualism to the debates we are still having, and the debates yet to come.



Imperfect Victims: Criminalized Survivors and the Promise of Abolition Feminism

By: Leigh Goodmark | January 2023

Reviewed by: Liz Nolan Brown

If you aren't in the mood to get fired up, steer clear of Leigh Goodmark's new book, *Imperfect Victims*. Goodmark takes a deep look at how the U.S. criminal justice system mistreats victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes more prominent against women.

This might mean using material witness warrants and contempt charges to compel testimony against abusers ("in some cases, victims are held in the same prisons as those arrested for crimes against them," notes Goodmark).

It might mean charging teenagers as sex traffickers for doing the bidding of a violent pimp, or handing out harsh sentences to mothers who fail to prevent a partner's abuse of their kids.

From felony murder statutes (which "enable prosecutors to extend culpability for murders to the abused partners of the people who actually commit those murders") to no-drop prosecution policies ("committing prosecutors to pursuing any case of intimate partner violence where sufficient evidence existed"), Goodmark details the myriad tools prosecutors use to criminalize survivors of abuse, exploitation, and mistreatment. A lot of these policies were pushed *by feminists* as a means to help women. They have backfired spectacularly.

Goodmark's ultimate solution: abolition feminism, which "imagines a world where the solution to social problems, including violence, is not police, punishment, and prison" and moves "away from a mindset that equates punishment with justice." Abolitionism calls for abolishing prisons as well as "the tools the state uses to exercise punitive control (police, electronic surveillance, probation, parole) and those

that substitute for prisons (child welfare systems, mental health facilities, civil commitment)."

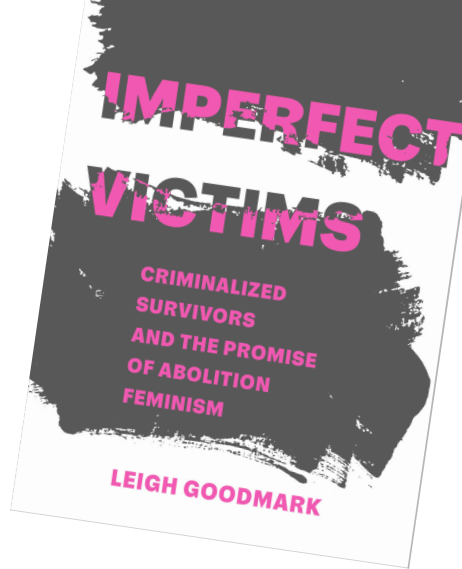
But Goodmark also offers more incremental and less radical ideas for criminal justice reform and for helping criminalized victims. Whether or not you agree fully with the ideas of abolition feminism, *Imperfect Victims* is essential reading for anyone interested in how our current system fails female survivors of violence and exploitation and what steps we can take to remedy this.

Momfluenced: Inside the Maddening, Picture-Perfect World of Mommy Influencer Culture

By: Sara Petersen | April 2023

Reviewed by: Liz Nolan Brown

Momfluenced, by Sara Petersen, takes a critical look at motherhood influencer culture on Instagram. While the author admits she's an avid consumer of "momfluencer" culture—and has even bought some things (overpriced wooden toys and tastefully beige cable knit sweaters, most likely) because of them—she's also skeptical of the underlying messages that it sells and painfully aware of how these carefully curated depictions can make mothers in the real world feel like failures.



This dichotomy within Petersen—fascination and repulsion, identification and condemnation—makes a rich background for exploring the good and the bad sides of all these people performing and often commodifying motherhood online.

The book is marred at times by shallow social-justice theorizing and rote nods to progressive orthodoxies. But overall, it presents an interesting and nuanced picture of momfluencers and their audiences, as well as the dynamics of modern motherhood and online identity that bring the two together.

My one major complaint is Petersen's tendency to fault many momfluencers for not being political enough (or at least not political in the right ways). Not only could we all use more breaks from politics, but this criticism seems at odds with Petersen's larger points about the unrealistic and often conflicting demands that society places on mothers and motherhood. Faulting the book's subjects—many of whom are thriving entrepreneurs in addition to the parents of young children—for not being sufficiently involved in political activism seems like setting yet one more match to this inferno of impossible-to-meet expectations.

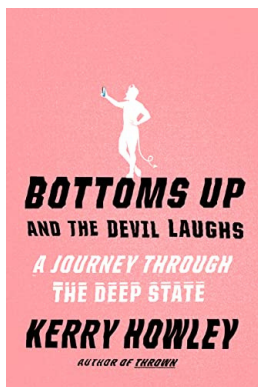


15 New(ish) Songs From Female Musicians & Femme-Fronted Bands That We Can't Get Out Of Our Heads

- Soccer Mommy — Shalom
- Labour — Paris Paloma
- Pride — Joy Oladokun
- 'Round Midnight — Samara Joy
- Nothing's Free — Angel Olson
- Glorietta — Tennis
- Finger In Your Eye — YACHT
- Shake — Santigold
- The One — M.I.A.
- Babe — Shana Cleveland
- Did You Know That There's a Tunnel Under Ocean Boulevard? — Lana Del Rey
- Flowers — Miley Cyrus
- Home Inside — Norah Jones & Valerie June
- Where Do I Go From Here? — Caroline Rose

On Our Bookshelves

NEW & NOTEWORTHY BOOKS WE
CAN'T WAIT TO READ



Bottoms Up and the Devil Laughs: A Journey Through the Deep State by Kerry Howley

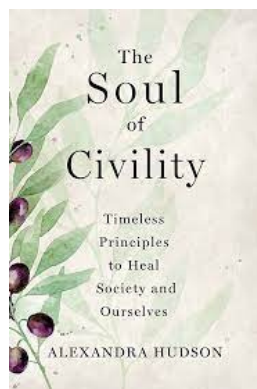
"A soap opera set in the deep state," Howley's latest tells the story of Reality Winner—"a lone young woman who stuffs a state secret under her skirt and trusts the wrong people to help"—and how the permanency of digital data haunts us all.

Madame Restell: The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Old New York's Most Fabulous, Fearless, and Infamous Abortinist by Jennifer Wright

Wright is the queen of breezy but brilliant biographies of forgotten women. Her latest looks at Restell—immigrant and self-taught surgeon, celebrity and self-made millionaire—whose "boarding house" provided medical care, birth control, and abortions to women in the Gilded Age.

The Soul of Civility: Timeless Principles to Heal Society and Ourselves by Alexandra Hudson

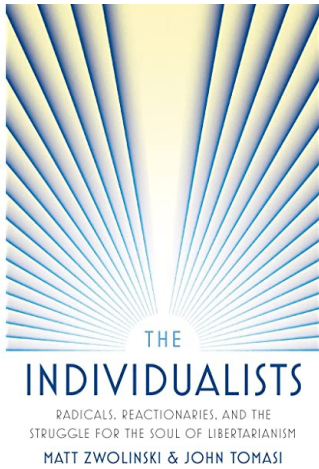
Hudson—the daughter of advice columnist the "Manners Lady"—draws on her own experiences and the wisdom of famous thinkers and activists throughout history to offer advice on living tolerantly while still "rigorously protest[ing] wrongs," committing to open debate "rather than silencing disagreements," and focusing "on what we can control: ourselves."



Flowers of Fire: The Inside Story of South Korea's Feminist Movement and What It Means for Women's Rights Worldwide by Hawon Jung

Asian women—especially those from nations like heavily patriarchal South Korea—continue to be stereotyped as quiet, submissive, "docile." Drawing upon her journalistic experience as a former Seoul correspondent for the AFP, Jung shares the stories of the Korean feminists who are turning those notions on their head and impacting the fight for feminism worldwide.

On Our Bookshelves



The Individualists: Radicals, Reactionaries, and the Struggle for the Soul of Libertarianism by Matt Zwolinski and John Tomasi

A history of libertarianism that acknowledges libertarian's emergence from "progressive causes, from women's rights and the fight against slavery"? Yes, please.

The Foundling: A Novel by Ann Leary

Set in the 1920s, this book introduces us to a woman working as a secretary at a state home "for feebleminded women of childbearing age" as her awe at the asylum's female leader turns to skepticism about the work being done there. Author Jodi Picoult calls the book "a stunning reminder that not much time has passed since everyone claimed to know what was best for a woman."

Hags: The Demonization of Middle-Aged Women by Victoria Smith

Smith's book is a protest against the devaluing of middle-aged and older women—by society at large and sometimes by young women and young feminists, too.

Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do about It by Richard V. Reeves

Reeves' book is billed as "a positive vision for masculinity in a more equal world." It aims to look at why some men are struggling in modern society—and what to do about it—without resorting to conservative tropes about the perils of gender equality.



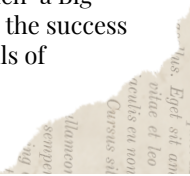
Naked Feminism: Breaking the Cult of Female Modesty by Victoria Bateman

Economist and activist Victoria Bateman explores the roots of modern day puritanism around women's bodies and makes a case for women's bodily freedom in all its forms.



The School for Good Mothers: A Novel by Jessamine Chan

The School for Good Mothers is set in a dystopian U.S. in which "a Big Brother-like institution" run by the government "measures the success or failure of a mother's devotion" and takes aim at "the perils of 'perfect' upper-middle class parenting."



that's what she said:

discussion-worthy quotes from feminists for liberty's
february 2023 panel on abortion rights in the u.s.

"I actually think of abortion rights kind of in the same vein as drug policy—not just because I agree that it's a moral choice that someone can make or not make, but also because nowadays, with the technology that we've developed since *Roe v. Wade*, we now have the capacity to terminate pregnancy in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy with a series of pills. And so, as that has now come into the landscape, we're gonna be seeing a lot more of the horrible stuff we've seen with the drug war applied to abortion rights, because we're talking about pills. They can be literally just transferred across state lines from legal states to illegal states the same way that weed is right now. And what we can see is governments coming in and creating a huge privacy and civil liberties issue there, especially because when a woman utilizes abortion pills, the result is basically indistinguishable from having a miscarriage.

And so, in states in which abortion is illegal all the way through, we're gonna see these problems with women who are having miscarriages and being accused of having abortions, or having abortions and that being this kind of gray area in terms of the legal consequences...And if we look at countries around the world that have illegal abortion, we see women imprisoned for miscarriages, for making decisions that weren't considered ideal for sustaining a pregnancy. And that affects women, that affects doctors, that affects people who have nothing to do with that situation, but are then denied medical care that they need." - **Avens O'Brien**

"How you feel about abortion is probably going to be dependent for most people on whether they think an abortion is an act involving one human being, or two human beings. Is it just a woman and, you know, a ball of cells or something like that? Or is there another human, you know, in the womb that's part of that equation? And that is a question—when does life begin? what is personhood? what is a human being?—that I don't think that libertarianism itself has anything to contribute to help us answer that question. We have to look to science, we have to look to philosophy. We have to look to many other places in order to come to a sort of answer for ourselves about that...Once we've done that, then I think you can obviously bring in libertarian philosophy about what is the proper role of the state and society to try to determine where you go from there, and should there be laws, should there not be laws, you know, would a law do more harm than good? Those are all questions that we can debate." — **Stephanie Slade**



**Watch the
conversation
on YouTube**

www.youtube.com/feministsforliberty

"What is going on in a pregnancy, it's definitely a *potential* human being. We know it because we are all a result of a pregnancy. So, it's definitely a potential human being. But when we put these two parts of the equation in the same situation—does the potential human being have the same rights that a full, completed human being already has? This is the main question to me. And this fully completed human being must put herself at risk, because we know pregnancy is a risk for the woman." — **Izabela Patriota**

"Libertarianism is thus a theory that can be developed in both politically conservative and politically progressive ways. And while all of us are tempted, at one point or another, to argue that only one of those interpretations constitutes the Real Libertarianism, I think this is a mistake, and largely a waste of time. The interesting question is not which version of libertarianism is the Real one. The interesting questions are about which version of libertarianism is best supported by philosophical argument and empirical evidence. And which points the way toward the kind of society for which we have the greatest reason to hope." — **Matt Zwolinski**, *The Bleeding Heart Libertarian* Substack ("Libertarianism: Left, Right, or Neutral?"), April 28

"A government with the power to dictate what you cannot do to your own body is a government with the power to dictate what you must do to your own body."
— **Bekah Congdon**, Twitter, May 5

"The same accusations of having been brainwashed, or unable to understand our victimhood, are leveled at sex workers and women who cover themselves for religious reasons" — **Jessica Stoya**, *Reason* ("The Naked Feminist"), May 16

"The #MeToo era was, among other things, a peak moment for what I have called photogenic feminism: a feminism focused on the plight of the young, gorgeous, and ceaselessly hassled. While any women's rights movement needs to concern itself with assaults in the lingerie-modeling audition room, a movement solely interested in stories that just happen to titillate broader audiences can feel limited at best—and at worst, counterproductive. What about all the unsexy issues affecting women: motherhood, menopause, mid-life crises?" — **Phoebe Maltz Bovy**, *Unherd* ("Hag Feminism is the Future"), February 20

"No group of people has a monopoly on virtue. Outrage should not make laws. Pass it on." — **Ileana Almog**, Twitter, April 21

"I'm a libertarian feminist. The way that I look at this is that gender equality is tied not just to social and cultural liberty, but to economic liberty as well. The long history of women's liberation is, in many ways, the story of women's greater access to markets, greater access to capital, and therefore greater political, cultural, and social choice for women as individuals. When I'm thinking about equality, I'm really thinking about, does everyone have a chance to compete and are they treated equally when they do." — **Kat Murti** in a conversation with *The Unpopulist's* Aaron Ross Powell, May 4 ([listen to the whole thing at theunpopulist.net/p/feminism-fights-for-liberty-and-equality](https://theunpopulist.net/p/feminism-fights-for-liberty-and-equality))

"Once limited to A-listers (who didn't want to lose their figures) and gay men with means (who lacked the proper equipment), gestational surrogacy is becoming a mainstream, increasingly normal way of making an American family. In 1999, there were 727 embryo transfers to gestational surrogates in the United States (not all resulted in a live birth). In 2013, that figure was 3,432. In 2019: 9,195." — **Suzy Weiss**, *The Free Press* ("Motherloading: Inside the Surrogacy Boom"), April 11

"Mothers understand what women face when we bear a child. That's why most mothers, like me, are pro-choice." — **Jenny Hontz** in *The Free Press*, ("Having a Baby Made Me Even More Pro-Choice"), April 20

On stats showing that women are more likely to read fiction and novels than men are, more likely to be debut novelists, and that "feminine" themes often dominate in fiction: "I am far from calling men to come and wrestle the publishing industry from women—it's nice to have us dominate the odd thing for once, and it's brilliant how liberated women's writing has become—but I do think that when it comes to new fiction, the mainstream risks feeling a little homogeneous. Last year for the *New Statesman*, Thomas-Corr wrote: 'If I receive yet another proof of a novel that claims to explore 'women's anger' or 'women's pain' I might actually inflict pain on someone.' I have yet to reach quite such fury, but I am a little tired of reading about hot mess women trying to make sense of their dysfunctional middle-class families. And, while the grim reality of motherhood was a literary taboo for so long, I've now read so many memoirs and novels about lives oppressed and wasted by motherhood that the prospect utterly terrifies me. In an interview with the *Telegraph*, Eleanor Catton revealed her frustrations with today's novel, and the rise of autofiction. 'It seemed to me that even novelists who were writing about the present were stopping at a point of apathetic self-awareness, rather than engaging with the issues,' she said [...] It made me think of a piece I read recently by a female writer who called for more 'epic' in women's writing, calling for themes of 'revolution' and 'war.' Of course, plenty of these novels exist (and actually two of my favourite novels, *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi and *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie, are across these themes, while my sister is teaching civil war play *Ruined*, by Lynn Nottage, to her students), but perhaps we don't hear about them enough." — **Eleanor Halls**, *PassTheAUX* Substack ("Fiction's Gender Divide"), April 28

"Free markets have enabled women to obtain economic choice and control, empowering us to work, own property, and reach social freedom." — **Reem Ibrahim**, Twitter, March 8

"While the effects of the demolition of Backpage were awful for sex workers, I think the most devastating effects are those which will proceed from the terrible precedents the persecution set. By wantonly destroying an internet business which had not only broken no laws, but which had also prevailed time and again against predatory lawsuits based in a rather bizarre legal theory of vicarious liability, the government has demonstrated that it cannot and will not be constrained by Section 230, the First Amendment, or even the venerable principle of presumption of innocence." — **Maggie McNeill**, *Reason* ("5 Years After the Backpage Shutdown"), April 7

Sally Bascom "was born on December 25, 1903... She was the oldest of six children and spent her youth taking care of the younger ones. When I once asked her what was the most important historical event in her lifetime, this woman who had lived through the Depression and both world wars answered without hesitation: "the washing machine." It had freed her and her mother from constant laundry. She could finally have some leisure time, which she spent listening to the radio and driving in cars with boys." — **Heather Cox Richardson**, *Letters From an American* Substack ("May 13, 2023")

"'Are you a doomer or do you just need to talk to someone?' is a real question. I thought I was a doomer when I was in my early 20s and that using facts and logic I could prove that everything was terrible but it turns out I was very depressed and also extremely bisexual and just needed to come out and talk to a therapist." — **Jane Coaston**, Twitter, May 19

"The FDA might soon give access to a type of birth control pill that has been available only by prescription since 1973; in fact, today, an FDA panel voted unanimously to make birth control pills available OTC. But here's a catch: women will only have access to one brand of one kind of birth control pill, a progestin-only pill sometimes called the 'mini-pill.' While better than the status quo, the FDA shouldn't restrict women's OTC options to safer progestin-only pills, not to mention one progestin-only product... The time has come for the FDA to make all birth control pills—not just one "mini-pill"—over the counter." — **Josh Bloom** and **Jeffrey A. Singer**, *Reason* ("FDA Might Approve Over-the-Counter Sales of One Birth Control Pill. Now It's Time To Approve All the Rest"), May 10

"The post-Dobbs laws and their interpretations altered the standard of care across [pregnancy] scenarios in ways that contributed to delays, worsened health outcomes, and increased the cost and logistic complexity of care. In several cases, patients experienced preventable complications, such as severe infection or having the placenta grow deep into the uterine wall and surrounding structures, because clinicians reported their 'hands were tied,' making it impossible for them to provide treatment sooner." — "Care Post-Roe: Documenting Cases of Poor-Quality Care Since the Dobbs Decision," May 15

"Liberalism is not about empowering the few vs. the many; it's about empowering the individual vs. the collective. Classical liberals think people, whatever their station, should get to make as many decisions as possible for themselves. Instead of a government—whether elite-dominated or mass-dominated—imposing its vision of the common good on us, we should all have the freedom to decide what a good life looks like and how best to pursue it." — **Stephanie Slade**, *Reason*, ("Liberalism Isn't Rule by Elites"), June 7

"The best part of parenting is getting to be a kid again for them...The hardest part of parenting is that you have to be an adult for them...But being a mom got me through the hardest time in my life because they needed me, no matter how scared and sad I was. My husband died, and I had a toddler and a newborn. For me, there has never been anything so simple and profound as getting out of bed every morning because my kids needed me to make them breakfast." — **Mary Katharine Ham**, *The Washington Post* ("13 Parents Share the Best Reasons to Have Children"), May 10

"In every place on earth where it's illegal to buy or sell alcohol, cannabis, or sex, you will find people buying and selling alcohol, cannabis, and sex. You'll also find more violence and exploitation. The idea that legalizing sex work leads to more sex trafficking doesn't really make sense. Legalizing alcohol didn't boost demand for black-market hooch. Legal cannabis hasn't boosted demand for black-market cannabis. Legalizing sex work doesn't boost demand for the black-market sex trade."

— **Cathy Reisenwitz**, *Sex and the State* Substack ("How legalizing sex work impacts sex trafficking"), April 13

SEX WORK, FEMINISM, AND THE CREATION OF THE CARCERAL STATE

By: Kaytlin Bailey

Sex workers have both epitomized and defied the historic restrictions on women's entrepreneurial spirit. For much of our history, prostitution was one of the few paths available to entrepreneurial women who weren't born into wealth. And today, prostitution funds more students, artists, and entrepreneurs than all of the available grants combined. But prostitution has become a symbol of exploitation and the ongoing criminalization of prostitution has derailed the lives of countless women.

During the expansive Guided Age, brothel owners were some of the wealthiest women in the west, many of whom invested in school systems and public health projects. New Orleans was explicitly settled by French prostitutes, and sex workers have always been a critical part of every port town, new settlement, and city in the United States. Brothel owners, many of them unmarried women, were some of the largest land owners, public figures, and advocates for women's rights decades before women won the right to vote.

Women such as Ah Toy in San Francisco, LuLu White in New Orleans, Lou Graham in San Francisco, and the Everleigh Sisters in Chicago were able to build fortunes and businesses that provided a path for other women to leave abusive homes and forge independent lives before married women had property rights. Despite these crucial contributions from sex workers, efforts to contain and control the oldest profession have limited women's ability to fully participate in public life, and divided feminists for over a century.

The first federal anti-prostitution law in the United States is also the first anti-immigration law, the Page Act of 1875, which explicitly banned Asian women from immigrating to the U.S. for "immoral purposes." This law predates the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), but was part of the same vitriolically racist and xenophobic panic of the age.

The U.S. criminalized prostitution during the Progressive Era, swept up in the same moralizing exuberance that led to the criminalization of alcohol, abortion, and pornography. These laws were sold to the American people as a way of protecting vulnerable women from exploitation, but they did no such thing.



The first federal law to apply to citizens, the Mann Act of 1910, also known as the White-Slave Traffic Act, made it a crime to transport women across state lines for "immoral purposes." Much like the anti-trafficking laws of today, the Mann Act did not deter prostitution, nor did it result in the mass rescue of sex slaves. Instead, the law was overwhelmingly applied to prosecute consensual interracial relationships, extramarital affairs, and inconvenienced many chorus girls on the way to their next gig. The Mann Act made it more likely that women traveling alone would face questions and possibly be detained.

Concerns about venereal disease, coupled with the moral panic about women's increased mobility and participation in public life, culminated in what became known as the American Plan, which made both prostitution and "promiscuity" anywhere within five miles of a military base a criminal offense.

These laws were enacted in 1917 during America's involvement in WWI and remained on the books into the 1970s. Thousands of women were sent to locked hospitals and penitentiaries because a police officer thought they might be a "loose woman." This history is important because it reveals the actual purpose of prostitution laws: to curtail women's ability to accumulate property and fully participate in public life.

Sex workers have been pushing back against these laws for over a hundred years. On January 25, 1917, over three hundred sex workers in San Francisco marched on Reverend Paul Smith's sermon and begged him to call off his crusade against their livelihood. Smith built a career on hyperbolic attacks on white slavery and claimed that by closing the brothels he could "save" women from a life of sin.

The impacted women pointed out, rather politely, that shutting down the places where they lived and worked would not in fact help. They instead suggested that if the Reverend wanted to see fewer women doing desperate things for money, then society should consider raising wages for women in other sectors. Those sex workers lost that fight and the brothels of San Francisco were closed on February 14, 1917 in the name of protecting women.

A similar pattern repeated itself across the country until the sex industry was pushed out of the predominantly women-owned-and-operated brothels and into the street. Because of the criminalized nature of their jobs, sex workers had to rely on men to procure customers. This is when cab drivers, concierges, and a figure who would come to be known as a "pimp" got involved—to try to protect sex workers from being arrested. The police remain sex worker's primary predators, literally hunting them with taxpayer dollars in the name of patriarchal protection.

Before the first anti-prostitution laws, and decades before women won the right to vote, Victoria Woodhull ran for president. She was the first woman to address Congress on the issue of suffrage and the first woman to open up her own brokerage firm on Wall Street—and she was shunned by her feminist contemporaries because she was considered to be a sex worker.

Feminism as a movement has derailed itself many times by conflating adult consensual prostitution with violence against women. From Susan B. Anthony in the 1870s, to Gloria Steinem in the 1970s, and up to today, feminist thinkers have lost sight of the fact that laws that police prostitution inherently police where women go, whom they associate with, what they're wearing, and how they express themselves. This reality remains true even when policies try to explicitly target male customers.

End Demand laws make it illegal to buy or facilitate the sale of sexual services. Based on the same assumptions underlying the Mann Act, "end demand" assumes all prostitution is inherently exploitative, and seeks to

definitions

Sex Work — Sex work is a broad term that includes anyone exchanging erotic labor for money, housing, or something of value. This includes criminalized workers (such as full services sex workers who see clients in person) and those whose work is legal, such as strip club performers, porn performers, phone sex operators, and online content creators.

Lawmakers often conflate adult consensual sex work with "sex trafficking." Laws passed with the stated purpose of eliminating sex trafficking often seek to further criminalize or erase sex work from public space, including the internet, without actually eliminating any forms of trafficked labor or sexual exploitation. These laws have made sex work more dangerous and have not helped victims of sex trafficking.

Trafficking — Trafficking is when someone uses force, fraud, or coercion to exploit another person. According to the U.S. Labor Department, the overwhelming majority of people who are trafficked in this country work in agriculture, mines, food service, or domestic labor. Yet, the majority of resources earmarked for trafficking are used to arrest adult consensual sex workers.

eradicate the trade altogether by targeting demand. Often framed as a strategy to promote gender equality and combat trafficking through eradicating sex work, in practice these laws make sex work more dangerous. The End Demand approach relies more on ideology than sound evidence and is more focused on punishing men who pay for sexual services than on protecting sex workers' safety and rights. **Everywhere these policies have been implemented, violence against sex workers goes up.**

Sex work is fundamentally a sales job. Criminalizing clients reduces the negotiating power of providers. With End Demand policies in place, sex workers are unable to distinguish between reasonably cautious people who do not want to send in the necessary screening information for fear of being arrested themselves, and predators who pose as nervous clients. This results in a dynamic where sex workers are pressured to take more risks themselves, and to do more for less to appease criminalized clients.

End Demand laws make it illegal to rent to sex worker or sex workers to work together for safety, or to provide support services such as security, scheduling, or even housework services. These laws disproportionately expose sex workers, not clients, to discrimination from landlords, and undermine sex workers' ability to secure housing, own property, and access banking, loans, and other financial services. In places where these laws have been implemented, sex workers report being refused access to hotels and denied entry to other businesses. End Demand laws increase the likelihood that sex workers will lose custody of their children, be evicted from their homes, have their property seized, and—if they are an immigrant—face deportation.

There is no evidence to suggest that these laws reduce demand for sexual services, or decrease trafficking. In fact, End Demand legislation makes it harder to identify victims of trafficking, deterring both clients and sex workers who are well-positioned to report exploitation from doing so. This approach directs resources away from trafficking victims in other labor sectors like agriculture, mines, food service, or domestic labor, to focus on surveilling sex workers and punishing both clients and providers of sexual services. Despite their stated intentions, efforts to eradicate prostitution have not led to more robust services for vulnerable women seeking medical or social services.

Efforts to regulate sex work are often grounded in efforts to contain and control sex workers. Licensed brothels, mandatory STI testing, registries, and red light districts

all corral sex workers onto stigmatized lists where they become more vulnerable to discrimination and abuse.

For example, Nevada is the only state in the United States with legal, regulated prostitution—but it has the highest arrest rate per capita for prostitution-related offenses. In order to work legally in Nevada, you must first be hired by one of the few legally licensed brothels. These brothels are predominantly owned by politically connected men who have the social and financial capital to procure a license. There are no legal brothels in Las Vegas or Reno, where the highest demand is, so it is impossible to work legally in the cities where it would be the most profitable.

"There is no evidence to suggest that these laws reduce demand for sexual services, or decrease trafficking"

Once you have been hired to work in a brothel, you must submit to a mandatory STI test, then register with the local Sheriff as a legally licensed prostitute. If you are not eligible to work in the U.S., or if you have been convicted of a crime (including prostitution), then you will not be issued a license. This license is subpoenaable for the rest of your life, and comes up often in child custody cases. As a legally licensed prostitute, you are not allowed to leave the brothel to go out to dinner or go to a movie theater without supervision, because the towns these brothels operate in do not want sex workers "infecting" their communities.

This creates a dynamic that reduces the negotiating power of sex workers within the brothel, as they have to follow a dizzying array of state and county laws as well



as other house rules, and makes them vulnerable to abuse outside of the brothel as a “known prostitute.”

Sex workers are reluctant to put themselves on stigmatized lists. The overwhelming majority of sex work in Nevada happens outside of these legally licensed brothels, which are incentivized to push law enforcement to crack down on their criminalized competition. Legalization and regulatory efforts create new laws to regulate prostitution. But these regulatory efforts do not help workers. Instead, they create a monopoly that only benefits brothel owners.

Libertarian women are familiar with the innumerable laws enforced in the name of protecting adult women from their own choices. Bad policies impact access to banking, financial services, lines of credit, and housing. Involuntary commitments, forced lobotomies, sterilizations, and imprisonment have all been justified in the name of paternalistic care for the bodies and child-like minds of women.

“89% of the federal anti-trafficking budget meant to combat violence and exploitation across all labor sectors has been diverted to arrest consensual adults engaged in consensual sex work.”

The relentless ongoing campaign to limit access to birth control, abortion, and medically accurate information about contraception, consent, and harm reduction has created a crisis for women. Powerful people on both the left and the right are united in their efforts to limit access to erotic services, from porn to prostitution, claiming that the oldest profession is an inherently degrading and exploitative form of labor. But these laws do not provide any protection; they are a form of coercive control.

4 MODELS FOR POLICING PROSTITUTION:

Criminalization — Under criminalization, both buying and selling sexual services is illegal. In practice, the overwhelming majority of people arrested are sex workers. Once arrested, sex workers and their clients are often publicly shamed, making it harder for people to find secure housing, stable jobs, or to keep custody of their children.

Regulation — Often referred to as **Legalization**, this model creates restrictive regulations that seek to contain and control sex workers in legally licensed brothels. These laws give a monopoly to legally licensed brothels, enriching brothel owners but disempowering workers. Regulation creates a two tiered system where the overwhelming majority of sex workers who are working outside of the brothels are still criminalized and therefore have no legal protections. This is the model you see in Nevada, which has the only “legal” prostitution in the U.S., but the highest arrest rate per capita for prostitution-related offenses.

End Demand — Also known as the **Nordic Model** and the **Entrapment Model**, End Demand laws seek to eradicate sex work by criminalizing clients and third party subcontractors. These laws have been implemented in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Northern Ireland, and Canada. Data consistently shows that these policies do not actually reduce demand. Everywhere these laws have been implemented, violence against sex workers has increased. End Demand laws decrease the negotiating power of sex workers and make it impossible to distinguish clients from predators. These laws harm sex workers by criminalizing their livelihoods. We know that financial precarity makes everyone more vulnerable to violence.

Decriminalization — This model removes criminal penalties for adult consensual sex work. Decriminalizing sex work does not remove criminal penalties for rape, trafficking, assault, kidnapping, or any other crime. Decriminalization is when no one is arrested, fired, evicted, or loses custody of their children *just* for engaging in sex work. Decriminalization is the only policy that supports the human rights of sex workers, which is why it is the policy endorsed by Amnesty International, the World Health Organization, American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Watch, and the Freedom Network.

protection; they are a form of coercive control.

Authoritarians on both the right and left have turned sex work into a symbol of exploitation, a scapegoat, and an excuse to funnel more resources into surveilling adults' private sexual choices. But, by turning prostitution into a symbol, we blind ourselves to the realities of both sex work and of labor exploitation in other sectors, creating the conditions that perpetuate and compound the harms of criminalization and exploitation both in and out of the sex trade. Eighty-nine percent of the federal anti-trafficking budget meant to combat violence and exploitation across all labor sectors has been diverted to arrest consensual adults engaged in consensual sex work.

The detrimental impact of criminalizing prostitution cannot be overstated. This is an issue that impacts millions of people—tens of thousands of people are arrested for prostitution-related offenses in the U.S. every year. Millions more people engage in erotic services and are not arrested—but, because of their criminalized and stigmatized status, cannot report crimes committed against them and cannot push back against abusive partners, landlords, or employers. People are expelled from universities, fired from jobs, and lose custody of their children for engaging in work that is older than money. Women will never be free in a country that continues to police the private sexual choices of its citizens.

Amnesty International, The World Health Organization, Human Rights Watch, and UNAIDS all agree that the decriminalization of sex work is the

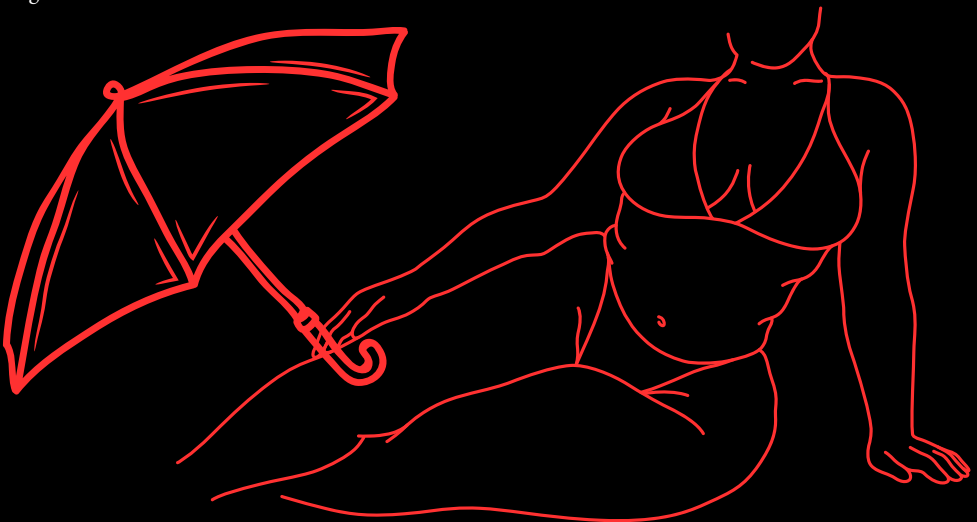
"Women will never be free in a country that continues to police the private sexual choices of its citizens."

only policy that reduces violence. This issue is at a tipping point with active campaigns to decriminalize in 11 states, including DC. Just last year, New York, California, and the city of Seattle, Washington stopped arresting people for "loitering for the purposes of prostitution." Americans in other parts of the nation are ready to follow suit: according to Public Policy Polling, 44 percent of voters want to end the criminalization of the oldest profession.

Sex workers are already members of our communities. They are our neighbors, friends, and family members. By decriminalizing sex work, we can create a future where no one is arrested, evicted, or loses custody of their children just for engaging in consensual sexual activities with other adults. Sex workers have so much to contribute to conversations about negotiated consent, privacy, internet safety, human intimacy, addiction, and mental health.

Listen to sex workers: stop the arrests.

— **Kaytlin Bailey** is the Founder & Executive Director of [Old Pros](#), host of [The Oldest Profession Podcast](#), and the writer/performer of the one woman show [Whore's Eye View](#).



HELPING WORKING PARENTS ACHIEVE A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE

By: Addyson Garner

The rise of hybrid work environments in the last three years has brought so many amazing opportunities for parents: increased flexibility in scheduling, more options when choosing where to live, and access to alternative education options like remote learning and homeschooling. With this newfound flexibility comes a newfound set of challenges for parents, especially those who find themselves working full-time jobs while also being the primary caregiver. After all, if your work is accessible anywhere, you should be too—right?

How can parents keep up? And how can management support parents through these changes while supporting a healthy work-life balance? The key, as is often the case, is clear communication.

I'm a working mom. I'm the head of events for a medium-sized think tank in Washington, D.C., and I'm happy to say that its office culture is a dream for a working parent. My employer offers me the ability to work from home as often as I'd like, along with flexible hours, unlimited vacation, and every other Friday off. With all that slack, some HR reps might wonder how anything gets done—but it does.



That's because both employees and managers are clear about expectations and boundaries. It's such a simple, yet effective, way to maintain a healthy employee-manager relationship.

A good manager will allow you to set boundaries around your time and your needs.

Author Brene Brown put it well in a 2018 post on her website:

"Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind. I first heard this saying two decades ago in a 12-step meeting...and didn't even think about it again until I saw the data about how most of us avoid clarity because we tell ourselves that we're being kind, when what we're actually doing is being unkind and unfair."

"Feeding people half-truths or bullshit to make them feel better (which is almost always about making ourselves feel more comfortable) is unkind."

"Not getting clear with a colleague about your expectations because it feels too hard, yet holding them accountable or blaming them for not delivering is unkind."

"Talking about people rather than to them is unkind."

For a working parent, it's important to be clear about your needs as an employee and as a parent. Your manager can't read your mind, and won't know that a 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. work day fits better with your infant's nap schedule or the school bus than a 9-to-5 schedule does—unless you tell them! If you're clear about your needs, they might still say no. But they might also say yes—which won't even be a possibility if you're not clear in the first place.

Another great way to maintain some sanity while balancing family and work is to share the "mental load" of parenting with a partner, if you have one. That

means acting as a team to accomplish what needs to get done in the household, from scheduling doctor's appointments and paying bills to picking up groceries and cleaning toilets.

Domestic labor is still labor, and in an equitable relationship both partners take an active role in keeping the house running. This doesn't mean that the work will always be split exactly 50/50, but it does mean that the balance feels fair for both partners and the workload doesn't fall primarily onto one person. Trusting your partner with their share of the mental load can keep you at your most productive at work instead of worrying about what isn't getting done at home. For more on sharing the mental load, check out *Fair Play* by Eve Rodsky, a system for how to divide up household tasks fairly, based on your needs.

"Domestic labor is still labor, and in an equitable relationship both partners take an active role in keeping the house running."

(On a related note, self-care and mindfulness are also important tools for preventing burnout. I'd always encourage therapy, as well as talking to your doctor about managing your mental health just like your physical health. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to quality mental health care, but there are budget-friendly resources available. For example, I've recently discovered Movement Genius—a website started by actress Alyson Stoner—as a helpful stress and anxiety resource.)

Lastly, please make sure to make full use of the benefits and resources offered by your employer, if you're fortunate enough to work somewhere with those kinds of services. For example, some employers offer free counseling, childcare reimbursement, and flexible scheduling.

Check in with your manager or HR—those opportunities are meant for your use.

The same principle goes for managers who want to support working parents and promote employees' work-life balance: Clear is kind.

Your employee doesn't know where you're most flexible or willing to accommodate their schedule until you tell them. Trust and flexibility are key in a hybrid work environment, and your willingness to support your staff will make or break their experience at your organization. Glassdoor reviews don't usually talk about how great staff retreats or birthday gifts are—they reflect the flexibility, empathy, and support of direct management. When you trust your staff to get their jobs done, your staff feel empowered to do so. Allowing parents to flex their hours lets us know that you understand the work will get done. Scheduling emails exists for this reason!

On the other side of that coin, managers mustn't confuse accommodation for infantilization. You shouldn't deny opportunities to an employee who is a parent just because you think they'd be inconvenienced. Even if your intent is to be considerate, you might end up denying your employee a challenge or opportunity that they would excel in. Passing up a parent for a work trip or role because you assume that they wouldn't (or couldn't) arrange childcare or travel can make your employee feel like they're missing out because of their family situation. Try letting them know the opportunity is there and you're willing to support them either way.

A good manager knows the value of advocating for resources for their staff. Your employees can't self-care themselves out of a severely lacking vacation policy or poor insurance coverage. To keep good team members around, make sure they're taken care of. Managers and



organizations with libertarian principles can especially appreciate this idea. Instead of relying on government mandates to set the baseline for a fair and enjoyable workplace, we can create that environment voluntarily!

Actively encourage staff to use vacation time and utilize flexible work options (my employer actually requires me to take two weeks off every August!). Otherwise, they may worry that they'll be secretly penalized for taking advantage of these options.

Lastly, let's touch on equality: Time and time again, I see articles, workshops, and seminars about "how to balance family and your career"—but they're invariably aimed at women. There just isn't a comparable support system out there for men. It's been well-documented that even in households where both parents are employed full-time, women are still consistently doing a majority of childcare and household chores.

Telling women that they hold some special responsibility to balance work and home life (while their husbands don't) isn't empowering to anyone—it just upholds the same outdated stereotypes and increases burnout within families. If this sounds unusual, look into "deprogramming" the part of your brain that may be holding onto traditional ideas about gender roles, especially the idea that women are the primary caretaker by default. Dads are just as important as moms, and they should have just as much flexibility in the workplace to care for their

"Managers mustn't confuse accommodation for infantilization. You shouldn't deny opportunities to an employee who is a parent just because you think they'd be inconvenienced."

children! Managers shouldn't presume that only women need flexible work arrangements to care for their families.

It looks like remote work is here to stay for many people and that's probably a good thing. There's no silver bullet that will magically give you a perfect work-life balance—this stuff is complicated!—but it goes a long way when both employers and employees are clear about expectations and managers open-minded about work hours and arrangements.

— *Addyson Garner is a think tank event coordinator & mother living in the Washington, D.C. area*



5 THINGS I DISCOVERED WHILE TRAVELING THE WORLD AS A LIBERTARIAN FEMINIST

By: Maria Alejandra Londoño

*For a couple of years now, I've been traveling the world as a digital nomad and solo female traveler: 4 continents, 15 countries, and 29 different cities; countless hours spent in terminals on layovers, surrounded by various languages; and endless words and hand gestures exchanged with locals. The one thing in common? **The fight for women's rights continues everywhere.***

It is shocking to see how many similar struggles women face around the world. They may come with different flavors in different contexts, but in the end, the root issue is the same: Women in every corner of the globe crave more freedom.

Here are the 5 things I've discovered, so far, while traveling the world as a libertarian feminist...

#1 THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL CONTEXT

The concept of libertarian feminism and women's rights can look very different in different cultures and societies. It is important to consider cultural context and local history when discussing and advocating for women's rights—even though the core struggles are often the same.

I was born in Bogotá, Colombia, and spent most of my teenage years living in a small town near the capital city. Traditionally, Latin American societies have been patriarchal and hierarchical, with women expected to conform to strict gender roles and prioritize family and domestic responsibilities.

My mom, a free-spirited feminist, raised my brother and me on her own. Our home has always been a freedom-friendly space, so I was lucky not to have to conform to the outdated social norms that many others did.



My family was very progressive, teaching me about freedom and financial independence from a young age, and forming the roots of my lifelong love for liberty.

Later on in my life, I started hosting women's circles to bring emotional and mental support to my community in Colombia. This experience showed me that, even though we all came from the same country (and even city!), we faced completely different realities. And, yet, we could still support each other, even if that just meant listening and offering a safe space for women to express themselves and ask for help if they needed it.

Women's circles are a great example of a powerful tool for better understanding the unique cultural context and environment of every individual. And, these spaces can lead to something even more powerful in the fight for women's rights.

#2 THE POWER OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

Grassroots activism refers to actions taken by individuals or community-based organizations to address social or political issues at the local level. It can be a powerful force for change in advancing women's rights because the shift comes from the individuals on a local level—not from a top-down authority or from central planning. (Feminists for Liberty, with its amazing support network for feminist activists, is a great example of grassroots activism.)

As a libertarian, I understand the importance of empowering individuals to seek the life they desire, creating powerful connections that can benefit women's freedom everywhere.

Over the years, I have met and learned from many women's rights activists around the world who are working at the community level to make a positive difference in their societies. Many of these activists got their start through women's circles or groups, much like I did (so, if you're looking to help women in your community and become a women's rights activist, this is a great way to start!)

One particular experience that positively impacted me was meeting an amazing fellow activist at a Liberty International World Conference in Mongolia. She was from India and a Muslim. I was shocked by how she was able to be equally devoted to her faith and spiritual practices, as well as the causes she championed in her country. She showed me the power of grassroots activism and taught me that, though every community is unique, the ways in which we can grow can be very similar.

Sharing time with her helped me better comprehend the ways my activism could support hers—sometimes that support could be as simple as reposting her story on my social media channels and vice versa. We also exchanged valuable knowledge for growing our respective audiences, such as best practices for how to grow our communities with online events.

Something that stuck with me over the years is the importance of finding local organizations or chapters through which to volunteer. On the road, platforms like Workaway, Trusted House Sitters, and local Facebook Groups have proven great resources for finding local opportunities to make change.

#3 SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS ARE A SHAPESHIFTER

Women are often pressured to conform to traditional gender roles, which can limit their opportunities and make it difficult for them to reach their full potential. This can include expectations around caregiving, domestic work, and dress codes. And, sadly, they seem to exist everywhere: throughout my travels, I have seen the societal expectations I witnessed in my home country manifest themselves in various forms in different countries around the world.

These societal expectations are sometimes so subtle that they can be almost imperceptible. They go beyond financial or educational barriers and seem to be engraved in the minds of both women and men. Traveling has forced me to challenge my assumptions and beliefs as well as to deconstruct why I do the things I do.

One tangible way this has manifested for me is with my clothing choices. While on the road, I began to notice what I was wearing compared to what my male friends were wearing. I felt a constant pressure to always look “pretty”—even if I was uncomfortable or if my outfit wasn't practical for my travels

I gathered the courage to start putting my comfort first—and yet those around me continued to try to enforce societal norms about “acceptable” female appearance. For example, one time, when I was working as a logistics assistant at an international event, one of the collaborators (a European woman) explicitly gave me directions on how to dress more appropriately. Meanwhile, my male counterpart who was wearing something similar (a t-shirt and sneakers) was given no such instructions.

At gatherings with friends from various different cultures, regardless of the country I was in, I started to realize that my female friends were frequently the ones taking care of everyone else and cleaning up after their partners. Often, handling a child was up to the women only. This was frequently justified with the idea that “men are just not good at these tasks.”



Other societal expectations I've encountered have to do with tourism: For example, certain men prefer to travel to certain areas because the women there are stereotyped as more "docile," a behavior I've come to refer to as exploitation tourism.

Women's freedom is built every day through our actions and those of the people around us. It is far too easy to unquestioningly and unknowingly reinforce certain ideas and attitudes that hold women back. Exposure to different cultures and experiences can help push back on traditional gender roles and attitudes and inspire both local and nonlocal women to pursue greater equality and opportunities.

I challenge you to take notice of why you act a certain way, why you choose to dress a certain way, what roles you assume in mixed sex settings, etc. Do your choices come from a genuine feeling of care and love, personal fulfillment and desire—or do they come from certain expectations that have been thrust upon you because of your gender?

#4 WOMEN LACK SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

During my travels, I have seen firsthand how underrepresented women are in many countries' governments and in politics overall. This lack of representation can make it difficult for women's voices to be heard and for their needs to be met.

No matter the country, no matter the language, every time I meet with fellow female activists, they always point out that there are not enough women in politics. Some of the key factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in politics include gender stereotypes and attitudes, lack of institutional support, and overall political culture. All of these come from the same root cause: a crisis in leadership. Leaders in political institutions are not making enough efforts to create spaces where women can be heard and taken into consideration.

I've witnessed this same issue in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Many of the laws around the world are made by men, including many of the laws that negatively impact

women's liberty specifically, affecting entire generations and countries.

#5 REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ARE SHAKY AT BEST

This is the saddest lesson I've learned on my travels. Women's ability to control our own bodies and make decisions about our reproductive health is fundamental to our autonomy and equality. And, yet, women's access to safe and legal abortion, birth control, and maternal healthcare are under constant threat in many countries around the world.

I am horrified by the number of women around the world who still cannot access birth control over the counter; the hundreds of thousands die during labor each year; and the countless number of women who have had traumatic medical experiences related to their sex or gender—if they even have access to a gynecologist or similar medical professional at all. As a solo female traveler this hits differently: you always know that your safety might not be guaranteed, even on the smallest things.

I was in the U.S. when the Supreme Court decided to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, ending the Constitutional right to abortion that had been upheld for decades. It was a gloomy day to see the country that is supposed to be the beacon of freedom for the world fail women on such an important issue. That was the day I became aware that our rights as women are never to be taken for granted and that the fight goes beyond our home countries.



Overall, traveling the world as a libertarian feminist has given me a deeper understanding of the complexities of women's rights and the various ways in which these concerns intersect with different issues, whether political or cultural. It has also reinforced the importance of considering cultural context and the role of government and grassroots activism in advancing freedom for everyone, no matter their gender.

Women represent a little over 50 percent of the total population on this planet. Yet, there's a long way for societies around the world to go in order for us to feel safe, secure, and represented.

Libertarian men, what are you doing to support the women in your life? How are you ensuring that liberty is truly accessible for women, as well as for men?

To my fellow libertarian women, keep fighting and keep up hope: the more we raise our voices, the more battles we win. **And each battle won for women's rights anywhere will help women reap its benefits everywhere.**

— *Maria Alejandra Londoño is a business consultant for worldwide retreats and online events.*

(dead) women you should know about

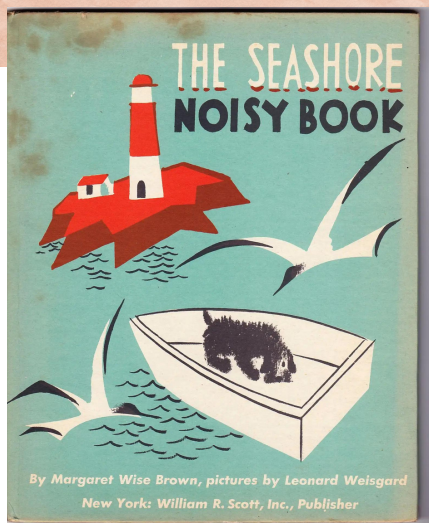
celebrating iconoclasts past

margaret wise brown

Children want "a few gorgeous big grownup words to bite on." — Margaret Wise Brown

If you've got small children, you've probably encountered Margaret Wise Brown's work. She's the author of kids' classics like *Goodnight Moon* and *The Runaway Bunny*. And countless parents have likely imagined her as a sweet, staid librarian or grandma type, possibly like *Goodnight Moon's* "quiet old lady whispering hush." In reality, Brown—who died young, at age 42, of a blood clot—was anything but the rule-following, conservative sort not to make waves. A *New Yorker* profile from last year called her "a seductive iconoclast with...a compulsion for ignoring the rules."

While publishing a prolific body of children's literature throughout the late 1930s, the '40s, and the early '50s, Brown traveled extensively, was engaged to two men but never married, had a decade-long love affair with an



older woman (the actress and poet Blanche Oelrichs, who wrote under the name Michael Strange), and was a regular at the famed Algonquin (a haunt frequented by fashionable writers, actors, and critics). Working at the W.R. Scott publishing house, she helped commission a children's book by Gertrude Stein.

When she started writing her own children's books,

Brown made "it her mission to create stories that... allowed girls to see themselves as equal to boys," according to Brown biographer Amy Gary.

It wasn't just Brown's personal life that was radical; Brown's books bucked the established convention of converting traditional fables and folktales into morality tales for young people, focusing instead on "stories that better reflected the preoccupations of young children," noted Holmes in the *New Yorker*. "Brown incorporated influences from avant-garde literature, concentrating as much on the sound of words as on the words themselves. And she often commissioned illustrations from modernist painters who understood the allure of bold color."

Learn more about Brown's life and work in Gary's 2017 biography *In the Great Green Room: The Brilliant and Bold Life of Margaret Wise Brown*. A fictitious version of Brown also figures prominently in the 2021 novel *The Upstairs House*, by Julia Fine.

ellen willis

"A moral defense of freedom is necessarily at the heart of feminism." — Ellen Willis

We first learned about Ellen Willis from a mention in libertarian feminist icon Joan Kennedy Taylor's *Reclaiming the Mainstream*. A journalist, activist, and cultural critic, Willis started her career covering music for *The New Yorker* in 1968 and went on to author several books of essays and to teach journalism at New York University.

Willis described herself as a democratic socialist, but she fought for many issues near and dear to libertarians. She was a vocal critic of the war on drugs, and an advocate for abortion rights. She spoke out against authoritarianism on the right and the left, and advocated for freedom in many forms.

For instance, she opposed the second wave feminists

of the '70s and '80s who were fighting to censor pornography, and defended porn not just on free-speech grounds but on the basis that banning it would be bad for both men and women. In 1981, she published an essay — "Lust Horizons: Is the Women's Movement Pro-Sex?" — that would popularize the term "pro-sex feminism" — but she was also critical of a "male defined and dominated" sexual liberation that focused mainly on getting women to have more casual sex.

"It is important for feminists to defend people's (including men's) freedom to engage in consensual sexual activity, including acts we may find distasteful," wrote Willis in "Toward a Feminist Sexual Revolution," calling it "a losing proposition for feminists to compete with the right in trying to soothe women's fears of sexual anarchy."

"We must of course acknowledge those fears and the legitimate reasons for them, but our interest as feminists is to demonstrate that a law-and-order approach to sex can only result in a drastic curtailment of our freedom. In the long run, we can win only if women (and men) want freedom (and love) more than they fear its consequences."

Willis' writing was rife with nuance and introspection—somehow both bold and humble, radical and common sense, empathetic to men while critical of patriarchal values, and often ahead of its time.

As far back as 1982, she was arguing for a better understanding of race, racial privilege, and intersectionality within feminist communities.

"Lately such discussions, mostly initiated by black women, are happening more often. They raise the heartening possibility of connecting, and in the process revitalizing, the unhappily divergent discourses of feminism and black liberation," Willis wrote in *The Village Voice* "This could be the first step toward creating a new feminist radicalism, whose interracial, interclass bonds go deeper than lowest-common-denominator coalition politics."

You can still find some of Willis' writing online, in the *Village Voice* archives and elsewhere, and many of her essay books, including some of her rock criticism, are still in print. You can also find many of her essays collected in the 2014 book *The Essential Ellen Willis*.

from: women & economics: a study of the economic relation between men and women as a factor in social evolution

by: charlotte perkins gilman — 1898

From the time our children are born, we use every means known to accentuate sex-distinction* in both boy and girl; and the reason that the boy is not so hopelessly marked by it as the girl is that he has the whole field of human expression open to him besides. In our steady insistence on proclaiming sex-distinction we have grown to consider most human attributes as masculine attributes, for the simple reason that they were allowed to men and forbidden to women.

A clear and definite understanding of the difference between race-attributes** and sex-attributes should be established. Life consists of action. The action of a living thing is along two main lines,—self-preservation and race-preservation. The processes that keep the individual alive, from the involuntary action of his internal organs to the voluntary action of his external organs,—every act, from breathing to hunting his food, which contributes to the maintenance of the individual life,—these are the processes of self-preservation. Whatever activities tend to keep the race alive, to reproduce the individual, from the involuntary action of the internal organs to the voluntary action of the external organs; every act from the development of germ-cells to the taking care of children, which contributes to the maintenance of the racial life,—these are the processes of race-preservation. In race-preservation, male and female have distinctive organs, distinctive functions, distinctive lines of action. In self-preservation, male and female have the same organs, the same functions, the same lines of action. In the human species our processes of race preservation have reached a certain degree of elaboration; but our processes of self-preservation have gone farther, much farther.

All the varied activities of economic production and distribution, all our arts and industries, crafts and trades, all our growth in science, discovery, government, religion, - these are along the line of self-preservation: these are, or should be, common to both sexes. To teach, to rule, to make, to decorate, to distribute,—these are not sex-functions: they are race-

functions. Yet so inordinate is the sex-distinction of the human race that the whole field of human progress has been considered a masculine prerogative. What could more absolutely prove the excessive sex-distinction of the human race? That this difference should surge over all its natural boundaries and blazon itself across every act of life, so that every step of the human creature is marked "male" or "female," - surely, this is enough to show our over-sexed condition. Little by little, very slowly, and with most unjust and cruel opposition, at cost of all life holds most dear, it is being very gradually established by many martyrdoms that human work is woman's as well as man's. Harriet Martineau must conceal her writing under her sewing when callers came, because "to sew" was a feminine verb, and "to write" a masculine one. Mary Somerville must struggle to hide her work from even relatives, because mathematics was a "masculine" pursuit. Sex has been made to dominate the whole human world, - all the main avenues of life marked "male," and the female left to be female, and nothing else. But while with the male the things he fondly imagined to be "masculine" were merely human, and very good for him, with the female the few things marked "feminine" were feminine, indeed; and her ceaseless reiteration of one short song, however sweet, has given it a conspicuous monotony. In garments whose main purpose is unmistakably to

** By sex-distinction, Gilman refers to the ways in which men and women of the time embraced highly gendered appearances, attitudes, social and economic spheres, hobbies, etc. Terms like "oversexed" are used to refer to things being overly gendered, not in abundance of sensuality. In general, sex here refers to biological maleness or femaleness and not to sexual intercourse or other elements of overt sexuality.*

***Throughout the book, Gilman uses terms like "race" and "racial" to refer to things that are human as opposed to an attribute of some other species or exclusively the domain of either human males or females, not to refer to race as we use the term more frequently today*

sex as to be grievously deprived of its natural activities; with a manner and behavior wholly attuned to sex-advantage, and frequently most disadvantageous to any human gain; with a field of action most rigidly confined to sex-relations; with her overcharged sensibility, her prominent modesty, her "eternal femininity," - the female of genus homo is undeniably oversexed.

This excessive distinction shows itself again in a marked precocity of development. Our little children, our very babies, show signs of it when the young of other creatures are serenely asexual in general appearance and habit. We eagerly note this precocity. We are proud of it. We carefully encourage it by precept and example, taking pains to develop the sex-instinct in little children, and think no harm. One of the first things we force upon the child's dawning consciousness is the fact that he is a boy or that she is a girl, and that, therefore, each must regard everything from a different point of view. They must be dressed differently, not on account of their personal needs, which are exactly similar at this period, but so that neither they, nor any one beholding them, may for a moment forget the distinction of sex.

Our peculiar inversion of the usual habit of species, in which the male carries ornament and the female is dark and plain, is not so much a proof of excess indeed, as a proof of the peculiar reversal of our position in the matter of sex-selection. With the other species the males compete in ornament, and the females select. With us the females compete in ornament, and the males select. If this theory of sex-ornament is disregarded, and we prefer rather to see in masculine decoration merely a form of exuberant sex-energy, expending itself in non-productive excess, then, indeed, the fact that with us the females manifest such a display of gorgeous adornment is another sign of excessive sex-distinction. In either case the forcing upon girl children of an elaborate ornamentation which interferes with their physical activity and unconscious freedom, and fosters a premature sex-consciousness, is as clear and menacing a proof of our condition as could be mentioned. That the girl-child should be so dressed as to require a difference in care and behavior, resting wholly on the fact that she is a girl, - a fact not otherwise present to her thought at that age, - is a precocious insistence upon sex-distinction, most unwholesome in its results. Boys and girls are expected, also, to behave differently to each other, and to people in general, - a behavior to be briefly described in two words. To the boy we say, "Do"; to the girl, "Don't."

The little boy must "take care" of the little girl, even if she is larger than he is. "Why?" he asks. Because he is a boy. Because of sex. Surely, if she is the stronger, she ought to take care of him, especially as the protective instinct is purely feminine in a normal race. It is not long before the boy learns his lesson. He is a boy, going to be a man; and that means all. "I thank the Lord that I was not born a woman," runs the Hebrew prayer. She is a girl, "only a girl," "nothing but a girl," and going to be a woman, - only a woman. Boys are encouraged from the beginning to show the feelings supposed to be proper to their sex. When our infant son bangs about, roars, and smashes things, we say proudly that he is "a regular boy!" When our infant daughter coquettes with visitors, or wails in maternal agony because her brother has broken her doll, whose sawdust remains she nurses with piteous care, we say proudly that "she is a perfect little mother already!" What business has a little girl with the instincts of maternity? No more than the little boy should have instincts of paternity. They are sex-instincts, and should not appear till the period of adolescence. The most normal girl is the "tom-boy," - whose numbers increase among us in these wiser days, - a healthy young creature, who is human through and through, not feminine till it is time to be. The most normal boy has calmness and gentleness as well as vigor and courage. He is a human creature as well as a male creature, and not aggressively masculine till it is time to be. Childhood is not the period for these marked manifestations of sex. That we exhibit them, that we admire and encourage them, shows our over-sexed condition.



Charlotte Perkins Gilman was an American writer and feminist active in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Gilman is best known for the short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," but she was the author of many works—including books of poetry and essays—as well as a writer and editor for literary magazines. The above selection comes from her 1898 work "Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution," which many consider to be her greatest book. It's a treatise on the role of women in the home and in society that argues for women's economic independence. A main theme of the book is that women being wholly financially dependent on men distorts marital and familial relationships, stunts women's moral and intellectual development, and stalls social progress for women and men more broadly.

Modern readers, especially readers of the classical liberal variety, will find much to agree with in "Women and Economics"...and surely some to disagree with and marvel over, as well. It's a fascinating portrait of this era of feminist thinking and activism, with many passages that still resonate and ring true today, as well as some that seem laughable now (such as insistence that taking more meals outside the home would ensure that people eat more nutritiously). The book is very much a product of its time, embracing both the burgeoning movement for women's rights and a progressive-era insistence that all sorts of social problems could be solved by simply applying scientific thinking to them.

Gilman's work and activism overall is marked by both admirable and forward-thinking facets as well as some truly awful components, including racial prejudice and advocacy for eugenics. She also combined a belief in individual rights with what might be described as more collectivist beliefs. We include this passage not as an endorsement of Gilman's entire worldview, by any means, but because it's a notable and interesting example of Victorian-era feminist thought from an eloquent, famous, and flawed female writer.

FEMINISTS FOR LIBERTY NEWS

We wrapped up our first Book Club at the end of April and our second club in June.

For the first, we read Joan Kennedy Taylor's *Reclaiming the Mainstream* (see Cathy Reisenwitz's review in the Culture section of this 'zine)—a classic libertarian feminist text. For our second club we read Louise Perry's *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution*—a not-so-libertarian text that provoked a lot of lively discussion during meetings. We're taking the summer off but we'll be back with our final 2023 book club in October. We haven't decided yet what to read and are asking book club members to vote. To join the club and vote on our next selection, go to

<https://bookclubs.com/feminists-for-liberty-book-club/join/>

FEMINISTS FOR LIBERTY MEDIA

In February, we hosted a panel about libertarians and abortion, featuring Stephanie Slade, Kat Murti, Avens O'Brien, Marianne March, and Izabela Patriota. "Probably the most reasonable conversation I've heard on this topic," said one YouTube commenter! Watch at tinyurl.com/F4L-Abortion

In April, we hosted a panel about Joan Kennedy Taylor, libertarian versus collectivist feminism, and how the feminist battles of earlier eras still resonate today. We were joined by Walter Olson and Cathy Reisenwitz. Watch at tinyurl.com/JKT-panel

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The Final Word...

"Each time feminism came on the scene, it was the message of individualism that captured the imagination of women... [yet, while] the appeal of non-coercive, non-governmental feminism has always reached a wider audience than collectivism has, it is often collectivism that gets media attention. And various feminist theorists (and attackers of feminism) have been happy to say that such collectivists speak for the only true feminism." — Joan Kennedy Taylor, *Reclaiming the Mainstream: Individualist Feminism Reconsidered* (1992)