



The

Poverty

of

Sex



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foundation. This system thrives on the exploitation of female labor, both visible and invisible, sanctioned and coerced, through which capitalism perpetuates itself. The false promises of progress under patriarchal frameworks obscure the reality that women's suffering is not incidental but rather a necessary condition for the survival of global economic and imperialist systems. Any movement that does not critically interrogate the intersections of race, sex, and class or that fails to confront the entrenched structures of male supremacy risks reinforcing the very inequalities it claims to challenge. The poverty of sex— manifested through systemic violence, economic dispossession, and sexual commodification—is an engineered function of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy. Therefore, true liberation for women, particularly those who occupy the lowest rungs of society, can only emerge when we reject the myths of progress and center the voices and realities of those whose labor has been erased, whose bodies have been commodified, and whose liberation has been postponed for the benefit of systems of domination. **The struggle for genuine equality must embrace a radical feminism that sees the eradication of male supremacy as inseparable from the dismantling of capitalist and imperialist structures.** Until we begin there, any so-called liberation will remain a hollow ideal.

For example, the Berlin Conference allowed European powers to continuously steal resources from Africa by dividing up the continent for Western use of land, leading to the extraction of natural African resources employed by illegal enslaved labor of African people, particularly African women. This theft of African resources for European fulfillment, satiation, and expression not only directly harms African people by extracting and obtaining resources through slave labor but also encourages men of imperialized nations to reassert control through tightening patriarchal control over the nation's women, further exacerbating ongoing sexual violence against African women through practices of rape, femicide, and female genital mutilation (ENDFGM, 2020; ZELA, 2022). For example, 48 women every hour are raped in the DRC, which amounts to 1100 women a day (American Journal of Public Health, 2011). Resource extraction does not justify the abuses of women but contextualizes these massive amounts of violence against women: enslaved mine workers weaponize rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence to scare women from leaving the home instead of sharing in the public productive labor force (Warnaars, 2023; Atim et al., 2020). The abuse of women also operates with state impunity, as these crimes against women are rarely investigated, and abusers are seldom prosecuted (Atim et al., 2020).

The structures that bind women—especially those in the Global South—are not merely the byproducts of an unequal system but its very

The female proletarian has been erased, and with it, any care for liberating her. Thus, predominating analyses of Marxism focus on the male, similar to the international human rights system, which centers on the male regarding basic needs and human rights. In doing this, the natural order of the human rights system, as well as any male-centric liberatory methodologies, are doomed to fail because with male-exclusivity comes a reification of patriarchy and male supremacy—insufficiently providing solutions for all proletarians, which is particularly detrimental to the female-class.

Although women are more likely to have attained a tertiary level of education globally, unlike men, women do not receive the higher wages often associated with higher education. This statistic rises when it comes to women in the West—given that the West has a surplus of resources due to its exploitation of the Global South, education for women is heightened within a privileged state where women are not as repressed. Regardless of the exacerbated challenges faced by women in the Global South, we still lead in intellectual growth. Despite this, we also lead in poverty, ranging from 388–446 million women and girls living in poverty compared to 372–427 million men and boys. These numbers are split between two regions: sub-Saharan Africa (63%) and Central and Southern Asia (21%); however, “in all regions of the world, female poverty rates are higher than male poverty rates in at least one poverty threshold,” (United Nations, 2022).

Interestingly enough, once women began to lead in educational attainment, [white] males declined, and education has been branded as “useless” and “unnecessary” despite it reigning for years as the projected and desired future. This is not unique to education: women are also pushed out of wage-providing fields, which not only limits our ability to access higher wages but also forces women into a perpetual cycle of working low-wage jobs that are deemed “unimportant” for the fiscal benefit of the male. Before data science and coding became male-dominated, women were at the forefront and responsible for important tasks such as producing calculations. When women dominated the field, it was not considered a serious career. However, once it was realized how data science could foster the future of technology, women were pushed out and replaced by men trained to do the tasks women were already being exploited for (Becky Little, 2021). This erasure of women in academia and within the realm of scientific fields slowly began to force women into the liberal arts, a field deemed unimportant and, thus, a field underpaid for women.

A “woman’s work” has always been labeled as work done out of love; therein, the labor a woman does for her family or occupation is expected, not appreciated nor taken into account of a country’s GDP—as if the work women do is not important to the reproduction of a nation’s economy. It is estimated that unpaid labor accounts for 10–30% of GDP, continuing to grow due to exacerbations of climate change and global inequity (UN Women, 2017).

violence, rapes and assaults, and civilian casualties of primarily women and children. In addition, women [and children] bear the brunt of mental exhaustion and illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, due to the care work and emotional labor that women are burdened with before and during conflict (Bendavid et al., 2022).

Just as international organizations rely on the exploitation and vulnerability of women, various industries—including technology, beautification, and agriculture—also contribute to the rise in female poverty and sexual and domestic violence. Technological industries such as SpaceX, electric vehicle manufacturers, and AI development rely on slave labor to extract tech-based materials from the Global South, forcing women and children to risk their lives in mines every day just to survive. The beautification industry, including makeup and fast fashion, sources its products from forced labor, particularly that of women and girls in the Global South. Meanwhile, agricultural and fast food industries rely on female laborers to work the fields to produce agricultural goods while operating on land stolen through the displacement of Indigenous populations, destroying families and healthy social relations. These industries, built on the backs of the most vulnerable women, not only sustain economic subjugation but also deepen the conditions that fuel the enslavement of womankind to men and capitalism worldwide.

Dynamics and Lockheed Martin respectively. They represent the small percentage of women in weapons manufacturing, serving the larger military-industrial complex that plunders the Global South. Liberal feminism is empowering bourgeois women in militarism at the expense of proletarian women affected by the circulation and imperialization of arms. We have abandoned a race-sex-class analysis within the realm of female poverty; therefore, we forget that the women owning some of the largest weapons manufacturers are causing the circulation of the mass arms embargo, landing these weapons in female-populated, poverty-stricken areas—particularly within the Global South—perpetuating ongoing femicide and female rates of poverty.

In 2023, globally, four out of ten deaths during armed conflict were women, while the rates of sexual violence rose by 50%; this number has doubled from 2022 (UN Women, 2023). Armed conflicts predominantly impact female people in the Global South living in poverty. The circulation of arms across the globe cannot only be attributed to weapon manufacturers but also to large imperialist organizations such as NATO. NATO requires that any country joining its international alliance contribute +2% of its global GDP to national security (militia) annually (NATO, 2024). Therein, every year, a country's militia gains 2% of said country's GDP, leading to increased conflicts in impoverished regions. This increase contributes to ongoing armed conflict, leading to an increase in domestic

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Females globally perform over 76% of unpaid care work, collectively making up about 16 billion hours of work done every single day (Aina Salleh, TEDx, 2022). Regardless of the patriarchal framework of a society—for example, how the West considers itself advanced in terms of sex equality compared to Global South countries that they frame as backward—women and men still rarely split unpaid domestic labor. Policies that provide women with longer maternity leave compared to paternity use the same sexist framework of expecting women to spend more time child-rearing than fathers, thus forcing mothers to suppress her life to spend more time with the children while the male gets to provide for the family through waged work. This gap is most prevalent in Ghana and India, where women's time spent on unpaid labor is upwards of ten times that of men (ActionAid, 2013; UNRISD, 2008).

Enslavement of the female still exists, both sexually and in the family. Single women with

no children are not only happier but are fiscally advantaged compared to women who are forced into patriarchal financial dependence as mothers of a family unit. In addition to being confined to the home as housewives, women also find themselves bound to and economically dependent on men in prostitution. Globally, over 42 million people are involved in the prostitution industry—96% being women. Sexual exploitation, labeled by liberals as the “oldest form of female labor” (this is untrue and sexist; the first-ever female work is anthropologically agriculture and hunting), will always function as a form of slavery. The socially liberal consensus is that one’s next meal or housing should not rely on being owned by any individual or institution, so it is frustrating how social liberals can see just how progressive it is to be against the use of prison labor but do not hold this moral position for sexual labor.

The ontological pretense of poverty has been weaponized against the racialized class. Regarding single women in America, white women’s median wealth is ~\$15,000, while Black women earn \$200 and Latina women \$100 (ProsperityNow, 2018). These numbers can be attributed to racialization within state policies and social relations—such as the history of chattel slavery, redlining, sterilization of black women, racial and sexual discrimination within jobs, the US state bombing of affluent Black neighborhoods—alongside the part most often left out: white women’s exclusion of non-white women. The white women, too, are at fault, and it is exhausting

hearing non-feminist women and feminists alike attribute white women’s racial prejudice to simple ignorance, furthering the infantilization of the white female. Thus, *They Were Her Property* by Stephanie Jones-Rogers becomes an intra-female contention of whether those white women (who both advocated for and did enslave Black people) were wrong for desiring to be equal to their male counterparts or if they were wrong for perpetuating slavery, murder, rape, and treatment of Black people as subhuman period.

Thus, white women’s pursuit of power—under the guise of feminism—within white supremacy sustains the poverty of sex. First World women, on top of being net beneficiaries of Third World labor exploitation, own all that they do at the expense of proletarian women toiling to produce the food, garments, and luxuries of the imperial core; they also own the means of plundering the homes of these very women to protect and serve First World imperialism. For example, Phebe Novakovic and Marillyn Hewson are the two white female owners of General

