

ISSUE 85 FALL 2013

News Update

Libertarian feminism is beginning to grow. It's not just Sharon Presley or previously, Joan Kennedy Taylor, speaking anymore. At this year's International Students for Liberty, there were two panels on women and feminism. For the highlights of one of them, see report by Kelly Barber below. Sharon spoke at last year's Libertopia (October 2012 in San Diego) on the subject "Walking the Walk: Doing Libertarianism Not Just Talking about It" [see last year's ALF News for the highlights] and was on a panel discussing private alternative services in a nonstate society, along with David Friedman and Doug Casey.

We have a new newsletter editor: Pamela Stubbart. Pamela tells us about a new libertarian women's society on page 3.

Work continues on the libertarian feminist anthology edited by Sharon and by Ross Kenyon. It's about 80% done. We're very excited about it and hope to be able to make it available early next year.

Closing the Libertarian Gender Gap: Reaching Out to Women on Your Campus: A report by Kelly Barber

The 6th annual International Students For Liberty Conference this past weekend represented more libertarian women than ever before, with an impressive number of female attendees, two panels focused on women, and the Sunday keynote address given by Senegalese entrepreneur Magatte Wade. The highlight of my weekend was being on the Women For Liberty panel called, "Closing the Libertarian Gender Gap: Reaching Out to Women on Your Campus" moderated by former MTV VJ and contributor to Reason, Kennedy. On the panel with me were Students For Liberty Campus Coordinators Elise Thompson, from Michigan State University, and Kara LaRose, from York College of Pennsylvania.

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Sane Old Sexism, New Packaging: a Review of Christina Hoff Sommers's *Freedom Feminism*

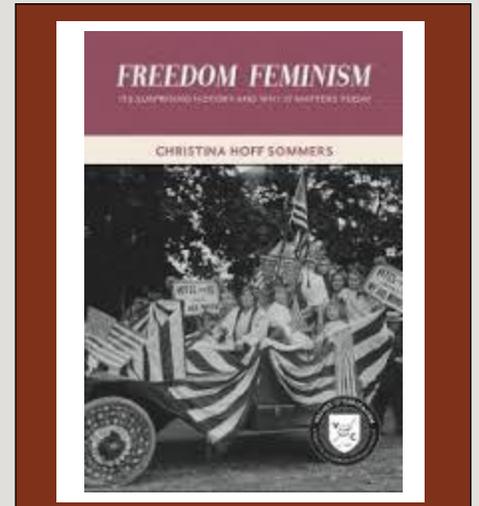
BY CATHY REISENWITZ

Women's and LGBT rights are super hot right now. Whether Prop 8 and DOMA or Leaning In and Not Being Able to Have It All, the mainstream media is all over that shit. And trust that right now you can find a LGBT and women's rights group on nearly every college campus in America.

In this climate of tolerance and equality, conservatives are finally beginning to sense that they're on the wrong side of history once again. The vast majority of young people support gay marriage. And while they may or may not call themselves feminists, women now make up the majority of college enrollees.

And so, seeing as they can't co-opt LGBT rights (it's harder to attempt to redefine rights for a group you openly discriminate against), we find conservatives attempting to co-opt feminist language for their own purposes.

Enter Christina Hoff Sommers, resident scholar at conservative think tank AEI and author of the [just] published *Freedom Feminism—Its Surprising History and Why It Matters Today*.



To promote the book, AEI has released a video of Sommers introducing "freedom feminism":

She alternately calls the idea "maternal feminism" or "conservative feminism" and contrasts it with "egalitarian feminism."

The idea seems obvious: modern feminism is unpopular, but important, so she wants to see it reformed. The problem is that in her efforts to reform feminism into something palatable to conservatives and, according to her, the majority of women, she creates a straw man out of feminists, denies the problems feminism exists to solve and reinforces the very myths that have thus far inhibited true gender equality. In trying to fit feminism into a conservative, family-friendly mold, she effectively breaks its legs.

The Straw (Wo)Man

While Sommers may have written a book about modern feminism, after reading her in the *Spectator*, I'm not sure she really understands it

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History

ALF was founded by Tonie Nathan in 1973. The national group was created in 1975 in New York City. Nathan was the first woman in history to receive an electoral vote as the Libertarian Party VP candidate in 1972.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of ALF is to

- encourage women to become economically self-sufficient and psychologically independent
- publicize and promote realistic attitudes toward female competence, achievement, and potential
- oppose the abridgement of individual rights by any government on account of sex
- work toward changing sexist attitudes and behavior exhibited by individuals
- provide a libertarian alternative to those aspects of the women's movement that tend to discourage independence and individuality.

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In *Freedom Feminism* she accuses “contemporary feminism” of having a “fixation on intimate anatomy” (I guess vaginas are as scary to conservative women as they are to conservative men) and a “poisonous antipathy to men.”

Fixations on our vaginas aside, the idea that modern feminists hate men is a tired smear tactic. I'm not sure when Sommers last picked up an issue of *BUST* or read *Jezebel*, but there's precious little man-hating to be found, and absolutely no need for it. Modern feminists know that you don't need to (and shouldn't try) to put down men to elevate women.

Deny and Dis(Miss)

She then denies the problems feminism exists to solve, waving away feminist concerns: “Contemporary feminism routinely depicts American society as a dangerous patriarchy where women are under siege.” One in four American women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Police allow rape kits to expire, untested, by the thousands every year. In Steubenville, Ohio a high school athletic coach actively covered up a high school girl's rape to protect his players and now the hacker who exposed it (after police refused to investigate) faces more jail time than the rapists. These aren't isolated incidents.

What percentage of American women would have to be raped before Sommers felt comfortable describing American society as dangerous to women?

In the *New York Times*, Sommers similarly dismisses any indication that there's any problem with, or outside cause for, the choices women make which contribute to the gender wage gap:

“Women's personal choices are... fraught with inequities,” says the AAUW: women are “pigeonholed” into “pink-collar” jobs in health and education. But American women today are as independent-minded and self-determining as any in history. It is .condescending to suggest that they have been manipulated when they choose home and family over high-octane careers—or to pursue degrees in education rather than engineering.”

I see what you did there. And it's clever. But no, it's not condescending

to say that culture matters and that it influences individual choices, even those of the most independent-minded and self-determining women.

As “Thoughts on Liberty” pointed out in “Why Are Women Choosing Low-Paying College Majors?”:

“Scientist and SciAm blogger Kate Clancy has documented the accounts from female STEM grad students about the hostile (and often lecherous) behavior they've encountered from male teachers and colleagues. And evidence suggests that academic scientists (male and female) are biased against female applicants in their hiring practices.”

Even in my own life, I noticed when I was married to a man that no one ever asked him about cleaning or decorating our house, or about laundry or meal preparation. All these were assumed by others to be my purview, despite the fact that I worked more hours outside the home than he did. These cultural expectations must have an influence on the fact that even when women work outside the home, they still find themselves performing a “second shift” of domestic duties.

To look at all that and declare happily: “Women in this country have their freedom; they have achieved parity with men in most of the ways that count” as Sommers does, sounds a lot like, “Feminists need to stop whining. We've come a long way, let's just be thankful for what we've got.” There's nothing aspirational about that message. It sounds like Sommers is more interested in silencing women than inspiring them.

So after straw-manning and then dismissing “modern” or “egalitarian” feminism, Sommers introduces “maternal” feminism. The meaning of maternal feminism can be summarized by a quote from Sommers as a “recognition that the sexes are equal but different.”

The (Re)Making of a Myth

What equal but different means in practice is that Sommers wants to see women stay true to their femininity by embracing the distinct roles in which they are biologically programmed to excel: at home, in charity and oddly,

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The Libertaria Society: A New Libertarian Women's Group

BY PAMELA STUBBART

I'm pleased to report that there's a new kid on the women-in-libertarianism block, and it's the Libertaria Society. Founded less than one year ago, by Ms. Christy Horpedahl and Ms. Rachel Davison, the Libertaria Society's purpose is to honor and support those pursuing liberty, with a special focus on the historical and contemporary contributions of women to the movement.

The first-ever Libertaria Society Symposium was held in early June in Chicago, Illinois. About 10 women, from recent college graduates through middle-aged and beyond, were in attendance for the weekend (including ALF's own Sharon Presley!). Some of us had met before "in real life," some of us had met only online, and some of us had never previously met at all. The sessions were participant-driven and discussion-based, covering topics including (but not limited to) education, the Hunger Games, anarchism vs. minarchism, and Isabel Paterson.

General sentiment of the participants seemed to be that the Libertaria Society symposium provided a much-needed opportunity for discussion on topics, and discussion of a character, that would be unlikely to occur in other libertarian (or feminist) forums. Although at first we weren't recording sessions just because it was the inaugural meeting taking place on a shoestring budget, it became clear after the fact that we might not have had the conversations that we did if we had known that they would be strewn across Facebook the morning after for all the trolls to see.

The point isn't that women need to squirrel themselves away to engage in logic-free flights of pseudo-intellectual fancy from time to time. The point is that some environments are conducive to level-headed discussion of particular topics, and some aren't.

You don't have to call it "privilege," per se, but certain people tend to dominate certain intellectual spaces, to the detriment of dialogue on the whole, over time. We, the members of the Libertaria Society, weren't just singing kumbaya in a circle and patting each other on the back. Reasonable disagreements emerged, and so did reasonable points of view that we'll take back to our other intellectual communities—at work, and at school, and online.

I have seen some kind of idle complaints that liberty movement organizations have over-proliferated and begun to duplicate efforts needlessly. Though I don't doubt that that can happen, it does not seem to be the case with the Libertaria Society. In particular, you must consider—is an organization or activity taking away from other organizations and activities, or is it drawing more participants into the arena? It doesn't seem to me that the Libertaria Society in particular is playing a zero-sum game vis-a-vis ALF, or Students for Liberty, or anyone else. Rather, the Symposium was a supplementary activity to all the other various things each of us does in connection with libertarianism and/or feminism.

I'm really excited to see what the Libertaria Society has to offer its members and the world as it continues to grow and take shape in the months and years to come. You can learn more by visiting the Libertaria Society online at www.Libertaria-society.org or by getting in touch with its founders, Christy and Rachel, via libertiasociety@gmail.com



Pamela J. Stubbart is a freelance philosopher, educator, entrepreneur, and K-12 Education Programs Officer at the Institute for Humane Studies.

She is the new editor of the ALF News.

"Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only on the common utility."

Olympe de Gouges, "The Rights of Woman."

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(perhaps because this is her purview?) working in politics. A press release for her book describes the "maternal school" of feminism as "family-centered and argu[ing] that educated, responsible women can be a force of good beyond the family through enlightened social policies and charitable work." Elsewhere she speaks lovingly of "a special women's sphere," separate from the remunerative work of men.

She claims to speak for the "silent majority of American women, who really don't want to be liberated from their womanhood." Sommers wants to liberate women from the idea that they need liberating.

But if the idea that women have and want separate "roles" or "spheres" from men sounds familiar, that's because it is. It's long been the contention of those who would see women excluded from certain spheres that women don't really want the opportunity anyway. They're not very well suited to it after all.

Sommers reveals her true intentions when she decries "egalitarian" feminism. She's not looking for equality, but to help women feel good about staying in their traditional roles by calling their choice to do so feminism. Sommers, along with many conservatives, are incredibly threatened by the prospect of a generation of truly liberated women. They see their version of the "traditional family" as being under attack by women who choose more and more to delay marriage and, among the most educated, delay childbirth to pursue further education and lucrative careers.

The one area of agreement I have with Sommers is that too much of modern feminism is bogged down with collectivist tendencies. This is where individualist feminism comes in. Individualist feminism recognizes impediments to equality such as sexism and the systematic perpetration and toleration of violence against women. But instead of waving them away, like maternal feminism, or recommending coercive, freedom-limiting "solutions" (always chock full of unintended consequences) like

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The Knowledge Problem of Privilege

BY NATHAN GOODMAN

In his classic essay, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," F.A. Hayek explains the concept of distributed knowledge. Every individual has unique knowledge shaped by their experiences and preferences, knowledge that may not be accessible to others, no matter how well educated they may be. Hayek writes:

"Today it is almost heresy to suggest that scientific knowledge is not the sum of all knowledge. But a little reflection will show that there is beyond question a body of very important but unorganized knowledge which cannot possibly be called scientific in the sense of knowledge of general rules: the knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place. It is with respect to this that practically every individual has some advantage over all others because he possesses unique information of which beneficial use might be made, but of which use can be made only if the decisions depending on it are left to him or are made with his active cooperation."

Hayek then discusses examples of this knowledge as it applies in an economic context. Producers, consumers, and other individuals cooperating in a market all possess unique knowledge that only they can use, knowledge that is utterly inaccessible to any bureaucratic central planner.

But Hayek's point about distributed knowledge applies to more than just economic issues. It also applies to social issues. Take issues of gender. Women experience misogyny in their day to day lives. Many individual women know things about sexual harassment, casual sexism, and a wide range of other gender issues that I will never know, because I am not a woman, and I do not experience them. Recognizing that this distributed knowledge exists has consequences. It means that I should not dismiss women's experiences of sexism or presume I know more about sexism than they. It means that within the

realm of feminist activism, I should not always have as important a decision making role as the women who actually experience the oppression caused by patriarchy. In other words, acknowledging distributed knowledge leads me to "check my privilege."

Or, we could look at another example: disability. The disability rights movement has for years organized under the slogan "Nothing About Us Without Us" and opposed many groups that try to make decisions related to disability without ever consulting anyone who has a disability. For example, Autism Speaks, one of the largest autism related non-profits, has never had an autistic person on its board. In spite of their name, they do not speak for autistic people, but rather over us. They have put out fear-mongering propaganda about autism that many autistic people, me included, find highly offensive. They promote programs and "cures" that autistic people find utterly unhelpful and counterproductive. They should examine how autistic people may possess knowledge of autism that they lack. In other words, they should acknowledge distributed knowledge and check their privilege.

That said, because Autism Speaks is not a governmental organization and does not have a monopoly, autistic people can, and do, start our own organizations. So the Autistic Self Advocacy Network can provide services that autistic people actually need, and allow those with autism to speak for ourselves. If the Autistic Self Advocacy Network ever fails to serve the needs of some autistic people, these people are free to start their own groups. This is one example of how voluntary association allows distributed knowledge to be used effectively even if bigots refuse to practice epistemic humility. Autism Speaks should still check their ignorance and privilege, but their ignorance poses less of a threat as long as they are not a government or a monopoly.

Just as with economics, these social problems of epistemological hubris become bigger when government gets involved. By definition, politicians do not have the knowledge of everyone

their policies will impact. But often, when marginalized groups are impacted, politicians become extra prone to ignore those from an affected population. For example, Congress has held hearings on whether to undermine the privacy rights of "mentally ill" Americans but not allowed anyone with psychiatric disabilities to testify, not deeming them sufficiently "competent." Another example is that those incarcerated in our prison system are barred from voting in elections. The government exacerbates its natural tendency towards lacking sufficient knowledge by disenfranchising members of marginalized groups it seeks to control. Politicians need to consider, as Hayek said, "how little they really know about what they imagine they can design." They need to consider the experiences and knowledge of those their policies might hurt. They need to check their privilege.

Ultimately, the call for people to check their privilege is not an attempt to silence. Rather, it is an attempt to get people to recognize the limits of their knowledge. Libertarians should have the humility to check our privilege, to listen to oppressed people who discuss their experiences, and to respect oppressed peoples' rights to direct their own struggles for liberation.



Nathan Goodman is an activist for sexual autonomy free from social and governmental coercion. He was a principal organizer for Salt Lake City's first ever SlutWalk, a march and rally dedicated to fighting rape culture, sexual assault, and victim blaming. He writes a blog at dissentingleftist.blogspot.com

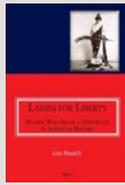
Nathan's commentary is one that libertarians should take seriously. Many libertarian often fail to see any perspective other than their own. There is a smugness among some that ill behooves supposed individualists. One that libertarian feminists see a lot is the inability to understand that feminism is not just "man-hating feminazis." Libertarians who rail against what they imagine to be feminism lack information. These individuals lack the humility that Nathan speaks of. — SP



Book Reviews: Books worth reading

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MORE FORGOTTEN WOMEN IN AMERICAN HISTORY;



**Ladies for Liberty:
Women Who Made a
Difference in American
History 2nd Edition**
by John Blundell

Reviewed by Sharon Presley

Last year I reviewed the first edition of *Ladies for Liberty*. Due to popular demand! Blundell revised his book and added even more women who deserve to be recognized in American history but are frequently not. These women are Anne Hutchinson, Clara Barton, Alice Paul, Rosa Parks, and Mildred Loving. Yes, you have all heard of at least Barton and Parks and perhaps Anne Hutchinson but how much do you really know about them? Most of you probably don't recognize Loving but you should. Maybe Alice Paul too.

The details of these women's lives are awe-inspiring. Hutchinson's courage to say that women had a right to direct access to God and to speak their minds in public was several centuries ahead of her time and she was willing to pay the price for such "heresy." What Clara Barton went through to found the American Red Cross is stunning in its achievement, especially for a woman of the 19th century. She did it nearly single-handedly, often financing it with her own money, and became what in actuality was the first American woman diplomat in order to achieve it.

You may have heard of Alice Paul but did you know got the idea for her dramatic tactics (including refusing to eat while imprisoned) from the British suffragists? She was a brilliant organizer. What Blundell leaves out, however, is that she was also the author of the original Equal Rights Amendment.

Obviously you have all heard of Rosa Parks but do you know her back story? She was not a simple working woman who just happened to start the famous bus strike that changed the face of civil rights in the South. In fact

she was a member of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations. She was fairly well-educated but could only get menial jobs in the South of that time. It all came together in that famous incident.

Probably many of you do not know who Mildred Loving was. She was the woman responsible for the end of miscegenation laws in America. Mildred was black and her husband was white. They weren't activists; they just wanted to live with their children in rural Virginia where they grew up. But the State of Virginia wouldn't let them. Their marriage in Washington DC was not recognized there. This is an inspiring story of how an "ordinary" person did something quite extraordinary. The case finally made it to the Supreme Court, which struck down miscegenation laws unanimously on June 12, 1967; one of the SC's finest moments.

If you haven't yet read *Ladies for Liberty*, please do so. You won't be sorry you read it. Even if you bought last year's edition, it's worth buying the revised one for these new stories of inspiring and courageous women.

OTHER RECENT BOOKS OF INTEREST

By Sharon Presley

Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman by Paul Avrich and Karen Avrich.

If American anarchist history is your cup of mocha latte, read this book. Fabulous. The late Paul Avrich was the preeminent scholar of American anarchism; his daughter finished the book with meticulous care. I loved it.

Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead by Sheryl Sandberg

Some feminists have attacked this book. Forget them. Forget the reviews like that. It is an excellent book based on social psychology research and very accurate. I liked it much more than I expected to. We will review it formally in the next *ALF News*.

While we did discuss some of the unique challenges facing libertarian women in college, we focused primarily on the opportunities now available to students in closing the gender gap. The overall message we tried to express was that if libertarian campus organizations make more of an effort to be welcoming to all types of people besides the typical WASPs, they will gain valuable members with all sorts of unique backgrounds and interests, including more women. In order to encourage diversity of membership, we recommended that liberty-oriented clubs take an interdisciplinary approach by including many different topics besides economics such as philosophy, history, art, social issues, psychology, and so on. In order for introverts and extroverts of all walks of life to feel at home, we advised students to hold more egalitarian meetings in which each week, different members are given the opportunity to lead discussion. Elise and I attested from our own experience that such a structure prevented meetings from devolving into shouting matches dominated by two or three members.

Visibility was another key component we voiced as critical in attracting more women to our student organizations. Kara highlighted the dearth of women occupying leadership positions in politics and other highly visible fields of work and how this keeps women from speaking up and reaching out. To combat this issue, we discussed the need for libertarian women to showcase their talents to demonstrate to other women that there are many successful and intelligent females in the highest tiers of the burgeoning libertarian movement. That point is especially salient when one considers the work of psychologist Roy Baumeister, who has argued that men's higher risk preferences help explain why men are more likely than women to adopt radical ideologies. His work suggests that the gender gap is a vicious cycle that can only be solved by actually bringing in more women, thereby lowering the social costs associated with being a libertarian. While our panel discussed the important work that remains to be done, the impressive presence of women at the 2013 ISFLC gives me lots of hope for the future and suggests that perhaps Andrea Castillo of the Mercatus Center was correct when she hypothesized that we have already passed the tipping point of female entry into the movement. Let us continue to ride the momentum. For more information on the panel, check out the *Forbes* article written by Maura Pennington.



May we remind those of you who are on Facebook of several pages of interest? Women Resisters to Authority, Suzanne LaFollette, and Susan Brownell Anthony were all created by Sharon Presley and worth "liking." And of course, the ALF FB page has many resources and lively discussions. Since this pdf doesn't allow clickable links, we refer you to the FB page for those kind of posts.

Want a Voltairne de Cleyre t-shirt? That and VDC mugs are available at zazzle.com. Emma Goldman too. Realmob.com has one with this VDC quote: "I die, as I have lived, a free spirit, an Anarchist, owing no allegiance to rulers, heavenly or earthly." Voltairne de Cleyre." Hardcore! And of course lots of VDC material and links to more material at voltairne.org

Good libertarian feminist blogs to watch: "Thoughts on Liberty" (Gina Luttrell), "Sex and the State." (Cathy Reisenwitz), "The Individualist Feminist" (Sandra Sanchez). Also check out www.libertarian.labyrinth.blog spot.com. "The Black and Red Feminism zine has been reborn as La Frondeuse [The Troublemaker, or The Anti-Authoritarian]." says the creator, Shawn Wilbur.

Sommers continued from p. 2
collectivist feminism, it proposes and examines cooperative, market-oriented solutions.

As Sandra Sanchez, who runs *The Individualist Feminist*, recently explained for "Thoughts on Liberty" in "Calling Out Sexism Does Not Mean I Want Government Interference"

Many people want to dismiss the fact that women and men act differently in the marketplace and want to attribute it merely to choice. Studies show that women are less likely to negotiate for a higher salary and are less aggressive. We can maybe look at the socialization of boys and girls and how that affects their perceived interests in the job market, or how they go about pursuing their careers.

Another example is female sexuality and rape culture. It seems as if some people easily dismiss rape culture and myths about female sexuality because, for some reason, they believe that calling out sexism is a statist view. But there's nothing wrong with pointing out rape apologists, rape myths, and just overall rape culture. Especially when it can create a

MUTUAL AID

Many libertarians gripe about what's wrong with government but they rarely provide alternatives. One historical private alternative were the mutual aid societies. Read about them as well as new versions of mutual aid in Issue #11 of *Free Voices* magazine edited by Sharon. See www.freevoices magazine.com for the paper version at \$5.95. For an electronic version (pdf) for \$2.50, send a message to Sharon at presley@alf.org.

Also see *After the Welfare State* edited by Tom Palmer available in book form at Amazon or in a free download at Students for Liberty. This gives an excellent overview of past mutual aid and private welfare organizations as well as critiques of how government attempts have failed.

"I never expect men to give us liberty. No, women, we are not worth it until we take it."
—VDC

dialogue and education to eradicate such culture.

Ultimately, it's fine for Sommers, and the women she claims to represent, to choose to stay within their "special women's spheres." In fact I laud her for respecting those choices where some feminists would decry them as "not feminist."

But to ignore the hurdles faced by women who wish to escape those spheres while simultaneously reinforcing the very myths about gender differences that that have been used to trap women in those spheres isn't feminism, no matter what modifier you put in front of it.

What underpins individualism is the ability of each of us to enter into and compete in an open marketplace. Ironically, by telling women what their spheres are and encouraging them to remain within them, conservatives enforce a very collectivist mentality. While "maternal" feminism seeks to maintain a certain proscribed sphere for women, what I love about individualist feminism is that it seeks to liberate those who would be free from the limits of predetermined roles. Indi

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vidualist feminism seeks to break-down the barriers preventing women from entering into the marketplace so each woman can find her own place in society, whether it be in the home, in the boardroom or in the Oval Office.

Sommers is threatened by the prospect of women competing as individuals in the marketplace, and would rather see them operate in gendered isolation. I want to see every woman given every opportunity to succeed in whatever way constitutes success to her. As much as she may think it benefits conservatism to try to jump on the feminism bandwagon by re-branding it with antiquated, myth-based ideology, ultimately this will fail.

This new generation of women, who are earning more degrees and succeeding more in the workplace than ever before, will not be told to stay in their "sphere." They will fight all gender-based barriers to entry so they can Lean In and compete in the market as individuals. And they will see their true allies in individualist feminists. It's just the market at work, and it's a beautiful thing to behold.

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Cathy Reisenwitz is a writer, political commentator and Associate at Young Voices. She is Editor-in-Chief of Sex and the State and has

been published in *Reason* magazine, the *Washington Examiner*, the *Daily Caller*.

"The tendency of modern welfare-legislation is to make a complete sacrifice of individual rights not to the rights but to the hypothetical interests of others; and for every individual who happens to benefit by the sacrifice, there is another who suffers by it."—Suzanne LaFollette