

Feminist Warns of Conservative Appropriation

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Readers have probably heard of cultural appropriation. It is an arbitrary term used by some (mainly leftists) to criticize people for supposedly "stealing" different aspects of others' cultures and incorporating said aspects into celebrations, costumes, and normal everyday stuff such as opening up a burrito shop. It is unclear when cultural appropriation started in history.



As I sit here debating if I should continue my addiction to Starbucks and go purchase my Venti iced coffee from around the block, I am fraught with worry that the Seattle-based chain somehow culturally appropriated this delicious brew from Ethiopia, but I digress.

Well, here is a similar but new term for you - "conservative appropriation" and it is a little more specific than its aforementioned counterpart.

According to the New York Times' Jessica Valenti, conservative women cannot use the term "feminist" because their beliefs do not match up with hers nor in her mind help women. In today's edition of NYT, Valenti says:

"Now, we have a different task: protecting the movement against conservative appropriation. We've come too far to allow the right to water down a well-defined movement for its own cynical gains. Because if feminism means applauding 'anything a woman does' — even hurting other women — then it means nothing."

Valenti basically says that feminists wrongly led others to believe in a version of feminism that was separate from the truth. It does not simply mean equal treatment under the law or in the work place. Instead it means believing in ideals that ascertain only to the left. Because, according to Valenti, those ideals are what truly help women.

But, in an effort to reach out to women who were afraid of the feminist label, the early leaders of the movement did not exactly explain that. The author writes:

"The reason (Republicans) able to claim feminism at all is a bit more complicated, because feminists themselves — myself included — helped to enable it. Before Walmart sold "feminist" T-shirts and celebrities embraced the cause, we worked to make feminism more accessible."

"We wanted to reach the young women who said they "weren't really feminists" but who believed they should make the same amount of money as men or be able to attend a campus party without fear of being assaulted. The hope was to make the term less scary to those who believed in feminist values but avoided the feminist label."

"In our eagerness to make feminism more friendly to the mainstream, we didn't fully consider what it would mean if any woman could claim the label."

Yes, the idea to tell a generation that feminism simply believes in equality for women and men, but it actually means that not all women could describe themselves as a feminist is something that certainly should have taken more consideration.

Still, that was essentially the definition for many years; equality under the law and in business. Women who identified as feminist in the beginning forced significant gains that made positions of power more accessible and attainable for all people, regardless of gender. But now that women are being appointed by Republicans, Valenti is upset that conservatives are using the term "feminist" to question why Democrats do not support other women in the Trump administration and elsewhere. Valenti explains that:

"Women like Gina Haspel and Suzanne Scott have certainly benefited from the movement; without feminism, they very likely wouldn't have the jobs they have now. But taking advantage of feminist wins does not make someone a feminist. This is doubly true if you're working toward limiting women's rights, as the Trump administration does.

You cannot be a feminist and support an immigration policy of taking children away from undocumented immigrant mothers. You cannot be a feminist and go along with the White House's newly announced domestic gag rule, a mandate that would withhold funding from any health care center that helps patients find abortion services.

Amassing professional power at the expense of other women isn't feminism — it's self-interest."

But surely these women, the first CIA Director and first female CEO of Fox News, are breaking some glass ceilings? Valenti adds:

"While groundbreaking in the literal sense, there is nothing feminist about a woman who oversaw a site where detainees were tortured, someone who refuses to say whether she believes torture is immoral. In the same way, there is nothing "empowering" about Ms. Scott, a media executive who reportedly enforced a "miniskirt rule" for female on-air talent, and who was cited in two lawsuits for contributing to a toxic work environment and retaliating against a sexual harassment victim. (Ms. Scott has denied these reports and the lawsuits were settled.)

Feminism isn't about blind support for any woman who rises to power. The real political duplicity here is Republicans' continued efforts to co-opt feminist language while actively curtailing women's rights."

The article asserts that Republicans and like-minded thinkers are promoting women such as Haspel and Scott in order to "rehab their image" under President Trump.

"Conservatives appropriating feminist rhetoric despite their abysmal record on women's rights is, in part, a product of the president's notorious sexism. Now more than ever, conservatives need to paint themselves as woman-friendly to rehab their image with female voters."

This claim undermines Haspel's and Scott's credentials by saying that they were promoted to be used as a tool of the patriarchy; specifically, the Trump branded patriarchy. But if that is true, it would have to apply to all the women appointed to positions of power during President Trump's first year in office. Here is a partial list of said women, compiled by Jen Kern:

"His list of female appointees is long: Nikki Haley, Ambassador to the United Nations (not only a woman but also child of Indian American Sikh immigrants); Elaine Chao, Secretary of Transportation; Kirstjen Nielsen, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security; Dr. Heather Wilson, Secretary of the Air Force; Sarah Sanders, White House Press Secretary; Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to the President; Linda McMahon, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration; Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education; Jovita Carranza, U.S. Treasurer (also a minority and first-generation Mexican American immigrant); Neomi Rao, Regulation Czar (also a minority and daughter of parents from India); Seema Verma, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (also a minority); Heather Brand, Associate Attorney General; Kelly Sadler, Director of Surrogate & Coalitions Outreach; Mercedes Schlapp, Senior Communications Advisor (also a minority whose father was once a political prisoner of Fidel Castro); Ivanka Trump, Advisor to the President; Hope Hicks, Communications Director; Jessica Ditto, Deputy Director of Communications; and Dina Powell, Deputy National Security Adviser who according to White House sources will remain in her position through the end of January and will likely be replaced by another woman after Powell completes her first year in office."

Now in a certain sense, Valenti is correct. Women should not be supported just because they are a woman. That is a rather conservative belief. Women should be considered for jobs based on their qualifications and previous results. But, Valenti goes further, describing liberal thinkers as the only people who want to help women. Thus, only true liberals can be feminist. Which begs the question, if feminism now means that you have to support abortion, support illegal immigration, and vote purely Democratic, why would a conservative woman want to use the label?

There are many American women who do not believe in any of that stuff. In fact, they believe that the polar opposite is needed to help women. One of the sharpest young political minds today made that point last year. Allie Beth Stuckey, then with The Blaze, refused to apply the feminist label to herself because she understood it meant something completely different than "equality under the law."

From Stuckey: "... Not only am I apparently not allowed to be a part of modern feminism, I also don't want to be. I don't want to be a part of the movement that tells me I have to meet certain political prerequisites to be included. I don't want to share a label with women who tell me that I can't fight for women's equality and want to protect unborn children. I don't want to be categorized with women who shame other women for their vote. I want to care about women and humanity as a whole without an ideology that in many ways a diametrically opposed to my values. I want them to be empowered and have opportunity to be whoever they want to be, but I don't want them to think that they have to be a liberal to get there. So, until that's possible, I won't call myself a feminist. I can be outspoken, career driven, and ambitious. And I can without forsaking my principles and buying into the lie that feminism is the only means by which we can help ourselves and help other women. And if you're like me you shouldn't either."

Now with CRTV, Stuckey's monologue remains a phenomenal answer to Valenti's op-ed today. If feminism now means supporting purely left-wing causes, go ahead and keep the term. Stuckey's full explanation can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/-lK-SdaQL3A>

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