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INTRODUCTION

For the Many: A Review Dossier

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Abstract

This introduction to the review dossier on Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality*, introduces the major themes of the work in light of Cobble's earlier interventions in gendering labor history and focus on laborite activist women here called "full rights feminists". It asks the contributors to expand on and decenter the transnational and global influence of Cobble's feminists and their views on capitalism and democracy in light of their own research. Among questions considered are: what do we gain from attention to the ideas and activism of low-income and immigrant women in our various histories? How do questions of race/white privilege, citizenship, empire, colonialism, and imperialism complicate understandings of equality and democracy? What is revealed by considering class in women's history?

"What's in a name?" asked the US historian of women Nancy F. Cott in 1989. "Words and categories are the tools we use to survey and map the terrain of women's past activism; they are our beacons, which can blind as well as illuminate", she noted.[1] Cott found that the then popular historiographical term, "social feminism", had become too capacious. Historians deployed it to label reforms advocated by women's organizations, both laborite and pro-business, and to refer to a range of initiatives that would enhance justice and lessen inequality but sometimes control the urban masses or uplift racial and ethnic "others". Instead, she would restrict the word "feminism" to those fighting for women's rights and self-determination.

Since the 1980s, Dorothy Sue Cobble has offered alternative definitions. She breathed new life into the old concept of social feminism by reframing such women as labor feminists.[2] She then extended the label of "social justice feminists", initially coined to speak of a US–German pre-WWI network, to activists after

[1]Nancy F. Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History", *Journal of American History*, 76:3 (December 1989), pp. 809–829, quote at 811. See her still skeptical review of *For the Many*, "A Work in Progress", *The New York Review of Books*, 23 September 2021. Available at: https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2021/09/23/feminism-work-in-progress/; last accessed 26 November 2021.

[2]Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).

suffrage.[3] Now, with *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (hereafter *For the Many*), she calls her protagonists "full rights feminists", upholders of the US version of social democracy that had its most robust success with the New Deal – the US version of the welfare state that nonetheless reinforced the family wage and racial exclusions. Along with their counterparts in Europe and, to a lesser extent, Asia and Latin America, they "were never fully at home in either the male-led labor movement or the elite-led women's movement", Cobble contends, finding the former "gender conservative" and blind to "sex-specific forms of class exploitation" and the latter limited by focusing on sex inequalities to the exclusion of class and race harms (p. 62).[4]

Cobble stands as one of the innovators in the field of Labor History, first engendering our understanding of unionism through work on waitresses and occupational unionism.[5] She moved from analyzing women in unions to "the sex of class".[6] Simultaneously, she brought class into the study of feminism through analysis of working-class women across race and ethnicity and the organizations and leaders who advocated for them. With *For the Many*, she goes transnational with a comparative study of women whose own internationalism forged a social democratic vision of justice. In addressing questions of transnational connections and the international movement of people, thought, and praxis, Cobble joins the biographical trend in the writing of political history. She reminds us of the role of friendships and the personal in forging politics across class, race, and location, and how such relationships could facilitate or deter political initiatives. We learn of bonds forged through common purposes and the intimate relationships that further tied women to each other. She does not speculate how same-sex partnerships may have shaped programs for mothers and children, though such women were at the forefront of social change then – as many queer women and women of color in the US are now.

"Full-rights feminism" stood in opposition to legal equality feminism, just as the network associated with the National Women's Trade Union League of America (WTUL) – the group at the center of her narrative – came to fight against Alice Paul's National Woman's Party (NWP). In 1923, Paul and her coterie formulated the Equal Rights Amendment. As Cobble explains, while the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) promised abstract equality, the league wanted "actual equality of liberty, status, and opportunity between men and women" (p. 123). For the WTUL and its allies, such as the National Consumers League and the Industrial Department of the Young Women's Christian Association, equality required recognizing disadvantage from the sexual division of labor: women worldwide were

[3]Kathryn Kish Sklar, Susan Strasser, and Anja Schuler (eds), *Social Justice Feminists in the United States and Germany: A Dialogue in Documents, 1985–1933* (Ithaca, NY, 1998); Dorothy Sue Cobble, Linda Gordon, and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (New York, 2014), pp. 1–67.

[4]The page numbers cited in this and the following articles refer directly to the relevant pages in Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality.*

[5]Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL, 1991).

[6]Dorothy Sue Cobble (ed.), *Women and Unions: Forging a Partnership* (Ithaca, NY, 1993); *idem* (ed.), *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Ithaca, NY, 2007).

responsible for reproductive labor, the work that sustains daily life, and generational replenishment, whether paid or unpaid. By the 1930s, antagonism between US women spread from the national to the international when the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) became terrains of struggle over equal rights, equal treatment, and women-only labor standards. The conflict between US women traveled to pan-American conferences and persisted with the organization of the United Nations (UN). Cobble observes that class, more than gender, divided feminists when it came to women-specific measures; social democratic, socialist, and laborite women "sought a way of accommodating sex differences and lifting living standards for all" (p. 199).

For the Many places this US feud within a bigger story. It contains an expansive cast of characters, some well-known and others known only through specialized studies. From the US, there are immigrant unionists, such as Rose Schneiderman, and their elite allies like Margaret Dreier Robins of the WTUL; Black club women educators, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, and Black unionists like Maida Springer and Dollie Lowther Robinson; labor reformers such as Women's Bureau directors Frieda Miller and Esther Peterson; New Dealers like Frances Perkins; lawyers like Dorothy Kenyon and Pauli Murray, and social scientists such as Mary Van Kleeck and Mildred Fairchild (who became an ILO official). Interactions with their international counterparts widen the circle of women who influenced each other and sought economic and social justice. These include Britain's Margaret Bondfield, Japan's Taka Tanaka, Sweden's Kerstin Hesselgren and Sigrid Ekendahl, German refugee Toni Sender, and India's Ela Bhatt. There are ILO officials Marguerite Thibert from France and Ana Figuerosa from Chile; leaders from the anti-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and the UN, including its Commission on the Status of Women. The full-rights feminists clashed with Latin American feminists cultivated by the NWP. They faced competition abroad from the Women's International Democratic Federation, an organization of anti-fascist and anti-imperialist women often aligned with the Soviet Union. Cobble's protagonists were often anti-communist but not "Cold Warriors".

Divided into five sections, *For the Many* weaves together national and international stories, breaking through the false division of domestic policy from global encounters. Cobble begins with the early years of the WTUL and its generative role in the first International Conference of Working Women in Fall 1919, held to coincide with the ILO's first International Labour Conference. The book continues with the fragmentations of the interwar years. Cobble questions the standard interpretation, which associates America with separate women's organizations and Europe with class-based, mixed-sex ones. Women in both places struggled against class and gender inequalities. "In the end, an 'America' vs. 'Europe' story is blind to the common aims and dilemmas of labor women […] in the 1920s", she argues. "It is a parochial tale that impoverishes our histories and denies cross-border solidarities" (p. 98). It also leaves out attempted connections with women in Asia and Latin America. The full-rights feminists shined with the New Deal, when some of their labor and welfare agenda passed. They further pushed for a "women's 'New Deal for the World'" (p. 189) that would enhance social security, healthcare, and women's job opportunities as well as labor protections. They would have considerable

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impact on the post-WWII global labor standards regime, despite the challenges of the Cold War, winning equal remuneration and non-discrimination measures at the ILO and strengthening its maternity convention. While the equal pay instrument was to recognize the value of women's skills, the inclusion of sex in the non-discrimination one was an afterthought made possible by women delegates and staff. They were not always successful, as highlighted by the failure to extend labor standards to domestic workers and to stop the outsourcing of manufacturing to the home and from the Global North to the Global South.

The last section extends the story to the present. Cobble traces the ways that this network pushed for major initiatives in the 1960s, including the Equal Pay Act and the President's Commission on the Status of Women. She calls the 1960s "pivotal" insofar as the decade witnessed the emergence of a new feminism, along with other social movements, which broke with the full-rights past in more radical calls for shifts in gender relations. These movements would extend the earlier internationalist human-rights vision in new directions. Cobble admits that "Peterson's reluctance to challenge the sexual division of labor in the home and her embrace of part-time market work for women would soon seem backward and even antifeminist" (p. 364). Meanwhile, civil rights in the US and anti-colonial national liberation abroad, especially in Africa, brought questions of racial equality and development to the forefront. "New feminist internationalisms" (p. 381), forged in a series of UN conferences over the next decades, highlighted the question of violence in the home and between nations, under the slogan, "women's rights are human rights". Cobble updates adjustments at the ILO, ICFTU, and the UN, venues in which the new feminism from below and South–South movements pushed for a transformed international governance in the face of US hegemony and neoliberal roadblocks.

Full-rights feminists strove for the reorganization of "family responsibilities" and working time, which now appear as prefigurative, with Peterson transformed from an upholder of the sexual division of labor into an intersectional feminist. Indeed, the feminist carework network of the 2000s has updated their agenda, seen in proposals for paid family and medical leave, universal pre-school, child care funding and allowances, and resources for home and community-based services for the elderly and people with disabilities. Though intersectional feminist activists, like Ai-jen Poo and others associated with the National Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across the Generations, serve as major defenders of worker rights, taking up the mantle of full-rights feminists, they did not come directly out of organized labor. Only in the 2000s have trade unions begun to aid informal and legally excluded workers, responding to the push of such activists, who emerged from ethnic associations and feminist formations – a parallel (and contrast) with the WTUL worth exploring more fully.[7] Ever the optimist, Cobble concludes with lessons learned that include the necessity of global engagement and democracy to counter capitalism and

[7]Eileen Boris, "Toward A New New Deal … And the Women Will Lead", in Stacie Taranto and Leandra Zarnow (eds), *Suffrage at 100: Women in American Politics since 1920* (Baltimore, MD, 2020), pp. 414–433; Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21st Century* (Berkeley, CA, 2018).

the necessity of collective solutions. She ends with the plea: "Each of us is an Other. There is no place to hide, no utopia to be found. We only have each other" (p. 425).

For the Many is thus more than a culmination of Cobble's recent thought; it is one of those protean books that raises big questions for the larger field of global labor history, no less than feminist history. It insists that we cannot silo the quest for economic justice from the fight for democracy, an insight for our time as much as a key to recovering a prior generation of activists. It is good to think with and through. Hence, we gathered a group of feminist historians who focus on different regions and topics to do just that for this review dossier. We wanted to expand on and decenter the transnational and global influence of Cobble's feminists and their views on capitalism and democracy. Did these ideas function as an example for feminists in other parts of the world? How did US feminists actively strive to internationalize and advocate their ideas? To what extent did they learn from activist women elsewhere? What competing ideas and policies were available internationally, including, but not limited to, socialist and communist initiatives and decolonial nationalisms?

We asked dossier interlocutors to consider the following questions in crafting their pieces: What is at stake in the terms used by historians to capture the politics and visions of protagonists, such as progressives, labor feminists, legal equality feminists, liberals, social democrats, left feminists, or Cobble's new label, "full rights feminists"? How does the study of full-rights feminists illuminate questions of economic and political democracy? How does excavating a social democratic tradition in the United States shift understandings of US politics and social democracy, uprooting histories of the left and of feminism, as well as labor and socialist internationalism? Beyond recovery, what do we gain from attention to the ideas and activism of low-income and immigrant women in our various histories? How do questions of race/white privilege, citizenship, empire, colonialism, and imperialism complicate understandings of equality and democracy?

Additionally, what is revealed by the book's focus on class in women's history and the divisions among women over the nature of capitalism and democracy? In Cobble's story, debates among progressive women were as fraught as those between conservative and progressive forces. Women's movements divided as readily over means as the ends of policies and programs. How social movements resolve the perennial and vexing questions of separatism versus integration; movement politics versus party politics; revolution versus reform; grassroots versus top-down; authoritarianism versus representative democracy; political violence as a tactic – these concerns seem newly relevant to women's history as well as to political and global history. How have female-led movements differed from male-led ones historically, and what does that suggest about a world in which politics and social movements are feminizing? What does it mean in terms of our historical analysis as well as current predicament to rethink the struggle for human rights, as Cobble argues, as one that encompassed social and economic rights – a division that official US policy strove to maintain in its ideological battles against state socialism?

While calling *For the Many* "magnificent", "magisterial", and "sweeping", roundtable writers suggest other avenues of inquiry. Jocelyn Olcott, a Latin Americanist and feminist theorist of care, highlights the transnational conversation on the labors of social reproduction; she would build upon Cobble's foundation through considering

national efforts elsewhere, like Cuba, and preserving the work of current grassroots activists. Taking off from Cobble's concept, South Asianist Samita Sen reconsiders feminism in India, emphasizing a broader internationalism and the presence of socialist and communist women. Europeanist Celia Donert asks about debates within Europe among socialist, Catholic unionist, and social democratic women and within regional forums in the East as well as the West. African Americanist Yevette Richards underscores the efforts of Black women against the imperialism, ethnocentrism, and racism that others in Cobble's laborite circle could fail to recognize or overcome. Magaly Rodríguez García, a historian of the League of Nations and also of commercialized sex, asks for an even wider net of inclusion, one that would embrace trans sex workers and radical whores, whose subaltern voices were rarely heard by full-rights feminists. In response, Dorothy Sue Cobble emphasizes that "the world made American feminism" and reiterates that the sex discrimination concerns of the privileged narrows the feminist promise of social justice for the many. She has the last word in this dossier, but not in the writing of transnational and global history. As a model feminist study, *For the Many* encourages excavating the past to forge a new democratic future.

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COMMENT

Full-Rights Feminists and a History of the Care Crisis

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Abstract

In 2018, the International Labour Organization published a study about the critical role of paid and unpaid care work for the health of society, the economy, and the planet and about the ways that care work is sustained through the super-exploitation of women, particularly migrant women and racially and ethnically marginalized women. Dorothy Sue Cobble's sweeping, carefully researched, and beautifully written study of full-rights feminists gives us a much-needed history of how the ILO came to attend to questions of care work and social reproduction and how hard-fought this recognition has been.

In 2018, the International Labour Organization published a doorstopper of a study – complete with graphs and charts and a lengthy bibliography – about the critical role of paid and unpaid care work for the health of society, the economy, and the planet, and about the ways that care work is sustained through the super-exploitation of women, particularly migrant women and racially and ethnically marginalized women.[1] Dorothy Sue Cobble's sweeping, carefully researched, and beautifully written study of full-rights feminists gives us a much-needed history of how the ILO came to attend to questions of care work and social reproduction and how hard-fought this recognition has been. Cobble's prosopographical approach allows her to follow a tenacious collection of activists and advocates – from Japan's Tanaka Taka at the 1919 International Labor Convention (ILC) debates over nightwork to Ai-Jen Poo and pressing for domestic workers' rights at the 2011 ILC, drawing lessons from her successful campaign in New York.

In between, we follow a cast of what Cobble dubs "full rights feminists", who have fought doggedly for over a century now for the recognition of a complete package of social, political, economic, and civil rights. Nodding to the inevitable shortcomings of

[1]Laura Addati *et al.*, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, International Labour Office (Geneva, 2018). For a history of the ILO's attention to care labor, see Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker: Precarious Labor and the Fight for Global Standards, 1919–2019* (New York, 2019).

such labels, she explains that they "shared a desire for a more egalitarian, democratic world, and they fashioned institutions, laws, and social policies in the United States and abroad to realize those aspirations" (p. 2). That is to say, these women recognized that access to more narrowly defined rights to education, credit, or a political voice were worth little when they were not combined with the recognition of their indispensable role in caretaking and social reproduction. These are not the burn-it-down feminists of radical separatism, nor the ambivalent feminists of revolutionary movements. The full-rights feminists shared a faith in power of institutions to define and uphold these rights and an abiding belief that women's participation in the waged labor force demanded a thoroughgoing reconsideration of what constituted fundamental labor rights.

It would be impossible to capture here the breadth and depth of this book's contribution to our understanding of this long struggle to imbricate civil and political rights with social and economic rights. Cobble takes readers on a captivating exploration of the ways that specific contexts shaped debates about protectionism (e.g. regarding issues such as maternity and nightwork) versus equal opportunity. This deeply historical approach allows Cobble to avoid falling into anachronistic characterizations of these actors' demands as wrong-headed or insufficiently feminist, instead allowing readers to see how interventions articulated with the prevailing terms of policy debates. Along the way, she includes nuggets that help readers understand that these efforts took place within a larger tangle of political struggles that not only defined the stakes of these debates but also described the range of possibilities. Cobble reminds us, for example, that Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins fought to keep the Immigration and Naturalization Service in the Department of Labor rather than the Justice Department because immigration was a humanitarian rather than criminal concern (p. 171). She gestures to the fact that some of the most effective advocates – women such as Frieda Miller and Pauli Murray – eschewed contemporary gender conventions. (Miller lived openly with her partner Pauline Newman, and Murray identified as what might now be termed transgender or nonbinary.) These apparent asides remind readers that conversations about what constituted a female subject or a national interest were embedded in all manner of decisions about what these concepts meant for people's everyday lives.

For the sake of this review dossier, I want to focus on two contributions that I found particularly valuable: Cobble's attention to paid and unpaid labors of social reproduction (the care work central to the 2018 ILO report above), and her demonstration of the deeply transnational nature of these conversations. Neither of these contributions is entirely novel – Cobble joins robust bodies of literature in both cases – but the weaving of them together and consistently through this sustained study of the struggle for labor rights sets in relief how critical both these elements were (and remain) to this ongoing policy debate. By giving these two considerations a central place in her narrative, Cobble transforms the ways we understand the dynamics at play throughout this history

It is, of course, rather depressing to be reminded that the issues at stake in current debates about "human infrastructure" in the United States have been in play for over a century now, and the needle has barely budged. At the 1919 ILC, labor women lobbied unsuccessfully for an "expansive vision" that included "state benefits for mothers

as a social right and put women in charge of decisions about their bodies. All work, including reproductive labor, they argued, deserved society's respect and financial support" (p. 71). Progressive reformer Mary van Kleeck pressed for a Women's Charter grounded in a political economy of abundance rather than scarcity (p. 215). New Dealer Frieda Miller waged a decades-long effort to insist that "women's *full* citizenship – civil, industrial, and social – required rethinking how household labor was organized" (p. 242). US labor advocate Esther Peterson anticipated what would become fundamental principles of feminist care ethics: deep interrelationality and interdependence. Highlighting the importance of "mutual assistance" over market principles in her 1961 address to the ILO assembly, she stressed, "The old 'giver' concept of technical assistance is gone. We all are receivers and we all have much to learn from others" (p. 358). By the mid-1960s, labor feminists at the ILO had successfully characterized the uneven distribution of family responsibilities as a form of sex discrimination and passed a resolution regarding the sexual division of labor within the home (p. 363).

For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality (hereafter *For the Many*) joins an exciting historiographical revival of transnational women's history with a particular attention to deepening our understanding of the ways that feminist ideas traveled – often carried by women who only ambivalently identified as feminist, if at all.[2] In particular, there is growing attention to the critical role that women in socialist countries played in building networks that included women from the Global South.[3] Tellingly, the full-rights feminists who pointed to the need to recognize and value the labors of social reproduction often drew on their experiences outside the United States, which offered new perspectives on the range of possibilities for how to organize and support these efforts. Feminists from Alice Paul to Pauli Murray insisted on the importance of seeing their campaigns as part of an international struggle, although they adopted sharply divergent approaches to improving women's status (pp. 146, 219, 386). As Cobble notes, the 1938 Lima Declaration of Women's Rights "reflected the long-standing commitment of Latin American feminists to the blending of women's civil and political rights with their social rights as mothers" (p. 216). By the mid-1950s, the Chilean activist and educator Ana Figueroa had risen to the leadership ranks of the ILO and advocated for including women's family responsibilities among the agency's concerns (p. 325). Esther Peterson and Frieda Miller learned from their observations abroad about publicly funded "home aide" programs that provided in-home services to alleviate

[2]Recent contributions include Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia, PA, 2018); Katherine M. Marino, *Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement*, Gender and American Culture series (Chapel Hill, NC, 2019); Joanne Meyerowitz, *A War on Global Poverty: The Lost Promise of Redistribution and the Rise of Microcredit* (Princeton, NJ, 2021); Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History* (New York, 2017); Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca, NY, 2013).

[3]See, for example, Michelle Chase, "'Hands Off Korea!': Women's Internationalist Solidarity and Peace Activism in Early Cold War Cuba", *Journal of Women's History*, 32:3 (2020); Francisca de Haan, "The Global Left-Feminist 1960s: From Copenhagen to Moscow and New York", in *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties* (New York, 2018); Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War* (Durham, NC, 2018).

domestic labor burdens (pp. 290, 345).[4] Peterson's 1963 report *American Women* – published, Cobble notes, the same year as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and selling sixty-four thousand copies its first year – drew particularly on her experience living in Sweden and Belgium to make a case for a package of policies that remains out of reach in the United States: paid maternity leave; universal childcare; social security benefits for homemakers; and the "security of basic income" (p. 344). Through the leadership of women such as Miller and Peterson, President Kennedy's Presidential Commission on the Status of Women called for "massive investment in childcare and early childhood education", pointing to Latin America and Scandinavia as "models to emulate" (p. 347).

Cobble reveals US women's persistent frustration at policymakers' unwillingness to adopt some of the most promising approaches to alleviating women's social-reproduction labor burdens. The United States government's refusal to ratify most ILO conventions left US women at the mercy of employers to provide maternity support – a system that made even less sense than employer-based health insurance (p. 313).[5] For Frieda Miller, the more she traveled throughout the world as part of her work for the ILO, the more keenly aware she became of US parochialism (p. 353). In the end, market solutions prevailed over social-welfare solutions in the United States, and US labor activists focused on improving conditions for paid domestic employees. "For Frieda Miller", Cobble writes, "equality for women was impossible without valuing household labor, paid and unpaid" (p. 309). Miller collaborated with the prominent civil rights activist Dorothy Height to build what would grow into a grassroots movement for domestic workers' rights (pp. 352–353). In 1974, US Congresswomen Shirley Chisolm and Patsy Takemoto Mink succeeded in extending the Fair Labor Standards Act to domestic workers. If policymakers refused to look to Latin America and Scandinavia as "models to emulate", activists and legislators at least hoped to achieve more humane conditions for paid careworkers, who were overwhelmingly women of color.

Cobble stops short of offering a clear answer to the question that has animated the field of care studies in the United States: why, in a country whose political rhetoric is dripping with the discourse of family values and which produced some of the world's most dynamic, militant feminist activism generation after generation, has policy-making continued to ignore the time, effort, and expertise of social reproduction? Why, with women such as Frances Perkins and Frieda Miller on the watch, was all this labor excluded from the principal economic metric of Gross Domestic Product and repeatedly omitted form the System of National Accounts? Cobble amply demonstrates that there were plenty of informed, capable advocates who were not shy about pointing out the looming catastrophe that, by the 1990s, would be called

[4]Such approaches would not have been entirely novel to the likes of Miller and Peterson. As Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein demonstrate: "For most of the nation's history, the household served as the locus of care." The New Deal fostered the Visiting Housekeeping Program, and Ellen Winston, who would serve as President Kennedy's Commissioner of Welfare, drew on her experience implementing the Homemaker Service in North Carolina. Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York, 2012), pp. 20, 75–76, as well as Chapters 1–3 for home aides.

[5]On US failure to ratify international conventions, particularly as pertaining to women's rights, see Lisa Baldez, *Defying Convention: US Resistance to the UN Treaty on Women's Rights* (Cambridge, 2014).

a "crisis of care".[6] A century before a global pandemic demonstrated how deep the crisis could become, full-rights feminists were sounding the alarm at the ILO. Cobble has laid a sturdy foundation upon which other researchers might build, and she has offered a thoroughgoing study of ways that policymakers and activists elsewhere have addressed this issue. Such studies might take a deeper dive into the effects of Cuba's 1975 Family Code, which mandated equal responsibility for child-rearing and domestic labor as well as equal opportunities for education and employment or the efforts by Soviet-bloc countries and members of the Women's International Democratic Federation to promote state-sponsored childcare.[7]

Biography and prosopography have become mainstays of women's history in the United States, not least because there are now several wonderful archives that particularly collect in this area and that catalog collections as personal papers. These sources have allowed historians to move considerably beyond the great-men and institutional histories that track more easily in official archives. They do, however, have the methodological pitfall of amplifying the voices of those who are already audible in extant histories. Most of the women who appear in Cobble's account are among the boldface names of women's history – not only figures such as Frieda Miller and Dorothy Height, but also Devaki Jain and Ela Bhatt, Gloria Steinem and Ai-jen Poo. These are women who still merit more attention than they currently receive in most US history textbooks, but they have memoirs and Wikipedia entries and are visible in the historical record. Researchers looking to build upon Cobble's considerable contribution may want to search for or even create (e.g. with oral histories, interviews, and surveys) sources that offer some perspectives of the women these full-rights feminists set out to support.

For the Many does not offer a tidy, progressive narrative of feminist solidarity, but rather a rich exploration of the ongoing debates among deeply committed feminists about how best to advocate so that all women might achieve the fullest expression of their rights. Drawing on an enormous archive of personal accounts and correspondence, news reports, and published materials from around the world and in various languages, Cobble allows readers to follow actors into the room as they argue over principles, strategies, and tactics. While Swedes such as Sigrid Ekendahl promoted equality-centered policies that would encourage men to perform more care labor and require employers to pay equal wages, for example, her dear friend Esther Peterson advocated better part-time positions and a recognition that women would likely always bear the greater burden of social reproduction. Cobble also follows these actors out of the room as political struggles and the immense demands on their time and energies strained friendships and family ties. As ambitious and comprehensive as it is, *For the Many* points researchers to many stories left to be told; it will no doubt remain a touchstone for the history of feminism and labor for years to come.

[6]Julia T. Wood, *Who cares?: Women, Care, and Culture* (Carbondale, CO, 1994). See also Lourdes Benería, "The Crisis of Care, International Migration, and Public Policy", *Feminist Economics*, 14:3 (2008); Nancy Fraser, "Capitalism's Crisis of Care", *Dissent*, 63:4 (2016).

[7]Ana María Álvarez-Tabío Albo, "General Overview of Cuban Family Law Legislation", *Florida Journal of International Law*, 29:1 (2017); Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*.

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COMMENT

Transatlantic Socialist Feminisms in the Cold War World

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Abstract

This review essay engages with Dorothy Sue Cobble's *For The Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* from the perspective of European histories of socialist feminism during the Cold War. The essay suggests three themes that might lead to further discussion. These concern first of all the role of left-Catholic as well as Social Democratic women within the networks that Cobble describes in *For the Many*; second, the influence of nationalist or other exclusionary discourses on debates about the rights of immigrant workers, and third, the role of social democratic actors in shaping debates about working women's rights in other international organizations - particularly regional organizations such as the EEC/EU. The essay concludes that *For the Many* is a major contribution to our understanding of transatlantic socialist feminisms in the Cold War world.

In 1946, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO) took the unlikely step of appointing a woman – German–Jewish émigré and former socialist member of the German Reichstag Toni Sender – as its full-time paid representative to the newly created United Nations. Born into a middle-class Orthodox Jewish family, in Frankfurt, in 1888, Sender was deeply involved in European socialist and labour politics from an early age. Unlike Clara Zetkin, however, with whom she worked in the Socialist Women's International Secretariat, Sender did not join the Communist Party of Germany. Instead, she represented the Social Democratic Party in the Reichstag from 1922 until 1933, when Hitler's rise to power forced her to escape to Czechoslovakia, before making her way to the United States. There, she drew on her experience of European socialisms as a champion of economic and social rights at the UN.

Sender's story is just one example of the numerous ways in which *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (hereafter *For the Many*) foregrounds the internationalism of socialist feminism in the US. More importantly, it reinserts social democratic and labour movement women into

international histories of feminism during the twentieth century, paying particular attention to global campaigns for equal pay, the rights of working parents (especially mothers), and domestic or care work, which, for too long, have been analysed from the perspective of Cold War struggles between communism and liberal ideals.

By tracing the individual trajectories of American "full-rights" feminists in a period that was "coterminous with the heyday of American social democracy from the 1930s to the 1970s" Dorothy Sue Cobble's magnificent new book brilliantly deconstructs many of the Cold War paradigms that shape historical scholarship on feminism in the twentieth-century world.

While Cobble's 2004 book *The Other Women's Movement* focused on United States "labour feminists", who saw the labour movement as a vehicle for eliminating sex-based disadvantages for working-class women, *For the Many* focuses, to a greater extent, on the internationalism of women labour leaders. The Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) appears in the first part of the book as the paradigm of "women's social democratic internationalism in twentieth-century America" on the basis of its leaders' dedication to "democracy and social equality" and their opposition to "Social Darwinist disdain for working people […] laissez-faire economic ideologies and America First isolationism" (p. 15). Cobble's earlier work demonstrated that the domestic influence of the WTUL had been underappreciated. *For the Many* focuses on US social democratic feminists' engagement with international organizations, such as the ILO and the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women. This perspective develops Cobble's earlier arguments about the influence of New Deal social justice feminism on US labour feminism since the 1950s, placing these debates in an international perspective, and emphasising that "to study American politics one must see its borders as porous and its history affected by global ideas, peoples, and events".

Historians of feminist movements outside the United States will thus find a great deal of interest in *For the Many*, not least due to its productive engagement with new histories of internationalism and global labour movements. A rich body of scholarship has recently emerged on internationalism and international organizations in the twentieth century, which aims to dethrone European and US policymakers and expertise and demonstrate how other actors, especially from the Global South, shaped international law and governance in an age of total war and decolonization.[1] At the same time, historians of work and workers, such as Marcel van der Linden, have argued for a more inclusive global labour history that takes account of the former socialist states and the Global South, as well as the paternalism of traditional labour movements.[2] In 1919, the International Labour Organization – a central focus of Cobble's story – conceptualized Western male industrial workers as the norm, against which "universal" labour standards should be measured, while women and colonial labourers required either special protections (addressing maternity, dangerous work, or family responsibilities) or special rules for "backward" regions that also

[1]Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga (eds), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017).

[2]Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden, 2008).

maintained colonialism.[3] Over the course of the twentieth century, however, ILO delegates from the Global South used the organization to challenge the civilizing discourse of its Western founders, while scholars, politicians, and activists also approached the ILO as a site for contesting women's rights.[4] Drawing on Elizabeth Borgwardt's formulation, Cobble suggests that American social-democratic feminists contributed to these struggles by proposing a "New Deal for the world".

However, *For the Many* is far from a diffusionist story of an "American model for the world" (p. 353). Some of its most interesting insights stem from the way in which Cobble draws on recent scholarship on international communist and anti-imperialist organizations to reinterpret – and provincialize – American feminist internationalism. International organizations such as the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) or the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) were founded as relatively diverse leftist umbrella organizations at the end of World War II but moved closer to the Soviet camp as Cold War tensions sharpened in the late 1940s. The historian Francisca de Haan has argued that the WIDF was erased from the historiography of international women's movements by Cold War paradigms, which assumed women in communist organizations supported by the Soviet Bloc could not have exercised agency.[5] Such assumptions, De Haan argues, were rooted in the assumption that mass organizations in socialist countries were simply "transmission belts" that implemented the will of the Party and offered no space for individual or collective negotiation by societal actors. These assumptions have been overturned in recent years by a wave of historiography on "state feminism" in socialist Bulgaria or the People's Republic of China, which demonstrates that female activists in the official women's organizations in these countries did use their access to political decision-making to defend women's interests within the structures of the socialist state.[6]

For the Many does not simply tack these observations onto a history of US feminism, but rather uses De Haan's insights to reinterpret the actions of women working within the US administration. A central figure in *For the Many* is Esther Peterson, director of the Women's Bureau in the US Department of Labor from 1961 and inspiration behind Kennedy's Presidential Commission on Women. Peterson was deeply influenced by her close contacts with Swedish social democracy and the

[3]Eileen Boris, "Woman's Labours and the Definition of the Worker: Legacies of 1919", in Stefano Bellucci and Holger Weiss (eds), *Internationalisation of the Labour Question: Ideological Antagonism, Workers' Movements and the ILO since 1919* (London, 2020), pp. 71–93; Susan Zimmermann, "'Special Circumstances' in Geneva: The ILO and the World of Non-Metropolitan Labour in the Interwar Years", in Jasmin van Daele *et al.* (eds), *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World during the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2010), pp. 221–250.

[4]Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann (eds), *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present* (Leiden and Geneva, 2018).

[5]Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)", *Women's History Review*, 19:4 (2010), pp. 547–573.

[6]Kristen Ghodsee, "Pressuring the Politburo: The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and State Socialist Feminism", *Slavic Review*, 73:3 (2014), pp. 538–562; Wang Zheng, *Finding Women in the State: A Socialist Feminist Revolution in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1964* (Berkeley, CA, 2017).

Brussels-based International Council of Free Trade Unions, while decisively rejecting communism as undemocratic. Cobble argues that women such as Peterson should be understood not as anti-communist "Cold Warriors" but as "social democratic New Dealers", who rejected Cold War orthodoxies and "pressed for expanded social welfare and worker power" (p. 300). In other words, Cobble notes in a pointed aside, the political agency de Haan grants to "Soviet women applies equally to women in the United States and elsewhere" (p. 520).

By casting American social democratic women as "full-rights feminists", who believed civil and political rights were entwined with social and economic rights – thus differentiating themselves from the "equal-rights feminists" associated with the National Woman's Party and campaigns for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) – Cobble reminds us that this was a struggle within or between different feminist movements. In other words, social democratic women did not simply privilege class interests over gender. At the same time, *For the Many* emphasizes international solidarity between the American women at the heart of her story and Social Democratic and labour movement women in Scandinavia and Central Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In the early Cold War, Cobble writes, "opposition to Communist regimes unified social democratic Western women in the 1950s, just as antifascism had bound together women from Allied nations earlier". At the same time, she acknowledges that "Cold War rivalries also clearly constrained women's cooperation *across* the blocs and limited their internationalist visions". As the presence of New Deal women waned at the ILO by the early 1950s, they were replaced by a younger cohort of activists working through international labour networks associated with the ICFTU. By the late 1960s, however, a younger generation of New Left feminists had emerged, who were inspired by the "anti-imperialist internationalism of their left-wing and communist foremothers […] more than the social democratic internationalism of New Dealers" (p. 382).

This history of connections between North American and European socialist feminists during the Cold War suggests that the entanglement of progressive social politics across the Atlantic did not simply end with the United States' turn away from universal public programmes of social provision after World War II.[7] Britain and Sweden "held particular allure" (p. 192) for feminist New Dealers such as Frances Perkins, and connections to European social democrats were maintained in the postwar years by figures such as Esther Peterson. African American trade unionist Maida Springer, on the other hand, immersed herself in London's Black community of émigré pan-Africanist intellectuals and activists (p. 243), such as the "socialist anti-communist" George Padmore, later describing these as life-altering moments (p. 245). Throughout her narrative, Cobble pays close attention to the ways in which racial politics determined access to social provision in both Europe and the United States. She reminds us that Toni Sender, the German–Jewish non-communist socialist, was rebuked by the AFL when she tried to include a clause on "workers' right to move" within and across national borders into an International Bill of Trade Union Rights at the UN, just a couple of years after the end of World War

[7]Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

II. National – and nationalist – priorities might have constrained the internationalist visions of Cobble's protagonists, but they did not stop them.

International organizations, a crucial space for feminists denied access to national politics since the late nineteenth century, provided a vital space for feminist internationalism – whether liberal democratic, social democratic or communist – during the Cold War. Central to this post-war international order was an emphasis on individual human rights, and *For the Many* reminds us of the importance of bringing feminist perspectives to bear on the history of human rights in the second half of the twentieth century. This was as much – indeed, often – a story of false starts and failure as it was of success, but Cobble concludes her story on a cautiously optimistic note. The final chapter turns to the end of the Cold War, noting the AFL–CIO's support for the independent Polish trade union Solidarność in the 1980s, the US Democratic Party returning to power in 1993 – "remade in the neoliberal image" (p. 399) – and US participation – headed by First Lady Hillary Clinton – at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. But in a climate of free-market libertarianism and small government, Cobble asks, "were feminists remaking an organization that no longer mattered?" (p. 405). Yet, in a late-twentieth century world of plummeting living standards and rapidly increasing inequality, Cobble argues, "the global working women's movement that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s helped renew an aging trade unionism. It also energized full-rights feminism worldwide" (p. 409). The new feminist internationalists of the twenty-first century are waging their struggles for democracy and equality both in international arenas, like the UN and ILO, and through grassroots political activism driven by a "feminism for the 99%".

Reading *For the Many* as a historian of Europe rather than the US, my questions circled around three main themes. First, some of the European socialist women who appear in the book – such as Maria Weber of the West German trade union federation (DGB) – were representatives of Christian Democratic or left-Catholic tendencies within the labour movement. I wondered to what extent Cobble's emphasis on transatlantic social democratic alliances inadvertently marginalized this important aspect of socialist debates about women's work during the early Cold War, particularly regarding protection of the family. Second, I wondered if the social democratic women at the heart of *For the Many* were always as supportive of open borders and the rights of all workers, regardless of race or origin, as Cobble suggests. To what extent did questions of national belonging, social hygiene, and even eugenics influence Swedish or German debates about social and economic rights of immigrant or "non-citizen" workers, and how were such questions reflected in the US context? Third, I was curious how Cobble sees the international social democratic actors and networks at the heart of *For the Many* influencing debates about working women's rights in other international – and especially regional – forums, such as the European Union.

In conclusion, *For the Many* is a book that should be read and discussed by scholars well beyond the field of US feminism or labour history. For historians of contemporary Europe, Cobble's book is an essential contribution to lively ongoing debates about the history of women's work and struggles for working women's rights in both the democratic welfare states of Western Europe and the socialist welfare

dictatorships in Eastern Europe.[8] In common with other recent studies of global feminism, Cobble hopes that her history of twentieth-century socialist feminist struggles will help to inform the campaigns of the twenty-first.[9] *For the Many* argues that full-rights feminism aimed to raise the standard of life for everyone by embracing "politics" as a means of reconciling difference rather than seeking to erase it. As Toni Sender wrote in her memoir, *The Autobiography of a German Rebel*, after emigrating to the US in 1939: "Political democracy is in actual danger unless accompanied by the establishment of social justice."

[8]See the Forum on "Women, Work and Value in Post-War Europe", Josie McLellan *et al.* (eds), *Contemporary European History*, 28:4 (2019); ZARAH project on women's labour activism in Eastern Europe led by Susan Zimmermann, https://zarah-ceu.org/.

[9]For example, Kristen Ghodsee, *Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism, and Other Arguments for Economic Independence* (Harmondsworth, 2018); Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History* (Harmondsworth, 2020).

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COMMENT

"Full Rights" Feminists in South Asia: Freedom, Equality, and Justice

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Abstract

Histories of feminism in the past three decades have focused on the debate between equal rights and separate spheres, but have been less attentive to the many strands of socialist feminisms, which sought to build bridges between the women's movement and other social movements for freedom, equality and justice. Dorothy Sue Cobble addresses this gap, exploring the lives and works of social democratic women activists in relation to the equal rights versus separate rights debate. Reflecting the "global turn", Cobble explores many transnational connections. Picking up on these two themes – socialist feminism and global networks – I focus on the South Asian case.

The burgeoning histories of feminism in the past three decades have focused on the debate between equal rights and separate spheres, but these have been less attentive to the many strands of socialist feminisms, which sought to build bridges between the women's movement and other social movements for freedom, equality, and justice. This gap in the accounts of women's movements in the United States has attracted scholarly criticism.[1] Dorothy Sue Cobble addresses this gap, focusing on multiple social democratic traditions within the US women's movement in the twentieth century, renaming them "full rights" feminism and exploring the lives and works of social democratic women activists in relation to the "equal rights versus separate rights" debate. She underlines the breadth of their demands, which combined civil and political rights with social and economic entitlements. Moreover, like socialist feminist movements for most of the twentieth century, her book is self-consciously internationalist. Reflecting the "global turn", Cobble explores many transnational connections. Picking up on these two themes – socialist feminism and global networks – I focus on the South Asian case.

[1]Ellen Carol DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* (New Haven, CT, 1997), pp. 274–278. Lise Vogel, "Socialist Feminism", in *Woman Questions: Essays for a Materialist Feminism* (London, 1995); Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, "Socialist Feminism: What Difference Did It Make to the History of Women's Studies?", *Feminist Studies*, 34:3 (2008), pp. 497–525.

The "collective biography" approach, which Cobble adopts in this book, has two signal advantages. First, it prompts us to explore the networks that powered movements. It enables us to link places and spaces, movements, and geographies, and to appreciate more clearly the braiding of the local, the national, and the global. The power of universals in the analyses of patriarchy and capitalism opened for women new imaginaries of the world as well as facilitating the forging of alliances and solidarities. The biographical approach also allows for connecting the personal and the political, a matter of great concern to feminist historians. From the 1970s, women's history has provoked an enormously productive turn away from conventional "politics" and women's political participation defined entirely by masculine concerns. There is now renewed interest in linking the concerns of the public and the private; exploring the politics of states, institutions, communities, and families in a connected way from a perspective of gender.

The latter has been the subject of much recent discussion in South Asian history. Pursuing a "collective biography" strategy to tell the story of communist women in colonial Bengal (India) in the 1930s and 1940s, Soma Marik speaks of a "double invisibility": the invisibility of women in history and, moreover, a dominance given to the discourse of class in the writing of histories of communist movements, which "blurred the distinctive attempts women members have made to create a gendered space for themselves".[2] An important aspect of this is the leaching out of the "personal" from histories of political movements. When women leaders write official or semi-official Party histories, they leave out patriarchy. Only in some memoirs (famously those of Manikuntala Sen and Kanak Mukherjee) do we see the imprint of a double radicalism – communist women fighting as women and in the class struggle together with men comrades.[3] One could extend the metaphor of "double invisibility". Tanika Sarkar argues that the attention to the "personal" since the 1980s has been so overwhelming that we are in danger of losing sight of the "political woman".[4] It is increasingly recognized that connecting the personal and the political – drawing attention to the many ways in which the political is also personal – adds new insights to histories of women's movements as well as their feminists' contribution to other big political questions of their time. The pioneer has been (as in many other aspects of gender in colonial South Asia) Geraldine Forbes, who first marked a significant shift in the revolutionary movement in the 1930s, noting the appearance of romantic and sexual liaisons in life-narratives as well as fiction. While women were being inducted into all major political movements – mainstream Gandhian nationalist movement; the revolutionary movements; and many shades of left, socialist, and communist groups – the condition of their entry and participation was social conformity.[5] Durba Ghose suggests that

[2]Soma Marik, "Breaking Through a Double Invisibility: The Communist Women of Bengal", *Critical Asian Studies*, 45:1 (2013), pp. 79–118, 81.

[3]Two memoirs mentioned here: Manikuntala Sen, *In Search of Freedom: An Unfinished Journey* (Calcutta, 2001) [Translated from the Bengali by Stree. Original Bengali title *Shediner Katha* [Calcutta, 1982]; Kanak Mukhopadhyay, *Mone Mone* [In Reflection] (Kolkata, n.d.).

[4]Tanika Sarkar, "Political Women: An Overview of Modern Indian Developments", in Bharati Ray (ed.) *Women of India: Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods* (New Delhi, 2005), pp. 541–563.

[5]Geraldine Forbes, "Goddesses or Rebels? The Women Revolutionaries of Bengal", *The Oracle*, 2:2 (1980), pp. 1–15.

political women sought to write themselves into history as well-behaved and desexed.[6] However, such rules were made only to be broken. The themes of love, sex, and marriage in political movements stirred controversy from time to time in real life and in fiction. There were also women, especially among the left and communists, who experimented with living and loving; we have barely scratched the surface of such histories.[7]

The significance of this discussion lies in the trajectory of gender historiography in South Asia. There was a focus on social reform in the nineteenth century. In particular, changes in marriage regimes, the introduction of institutional education, and, significantly, of women's writing, were critical to the refashioning of women in elite professional and middle classes in colonial India. These refashioned "new women" were the subjects of politics in the twentieth century; they also engaged in debates about marriage, divorce, dowry, and inheritance.[8] For newly educated women, questions of political change and social change did not always follow the conservative logic of nationalism, especially when reform in family laws, both Hindu and Muslim, caused such bitter controversy. On occasion, women activists saw deep connections between egalitarian political ideologies and their advocacy of more equitable gender relations. Their life choices followed their appreciation of these interconnections. These links between debates over social and political equality and their implications have not been fully appreciated in South Asian history. The task of effective collective biography is still before us: We need to dig locally for the histories of ill-behaved women, such as Bimal Pratibha, who evolved into a norm-breaking revolutionary.[9] Even though some communist men and women did experiment with marriage or family during the forties and fifties, Bimal Pratibha was rather exceptional. Is she unique, though? We do not really know. We have a short account of Satyavati Devi, who had a similar political trajectory, but we know even less about her personal life.[10]

There has been rapid progress is our understanding of how South Asian women connected to the international women's movement. There is keen interest in women's international activism and global networks, which have been traced in two recent

[6]Durba Ghosh, "Revolutionary Women and Nationalist Heroes in Bengal, 1930 to the 1980s", *Gender and History*, 25:2 (2013), pp. 355–375.

[7]Ania Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires: Women, Communism, and Feminism in India* (London and New York, 2019). Gender relations in left and communist parties in a later period have been explored in Mallarika Sinha Roy, *Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967–1975)* (London and New York, 2011); and Srila Roy, *Remembering Revolution: Gender, Violence, and Subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement* (New Delhi, 2012).

[8]Bhaswati Chakrabarti, "The Second Social Reform Movement: Gender and Society in Bengal, 1930s–1950s" (unpublished Ph.D., Calcutta University, 2016).

[9]I found Bimal Pratibha in the late 1980s in the IB Archives. IB Archives, DIG, CID IB 271 of 1921. Later, Manju Chattopadhyay and Sandip Bandopadhyay carefully reconstructed her life story in two essays in Bangla. Manju Chattopadhyay, "Bimal Pratibha Devi", in *Itihash Anusandhan*, 13 (1999), pp. 574–578; and Sandip Bandopadhyay, "Bidrohi Nari Bimal Pratibha Devi", Eleventh Shaheed Pritilata Waddedar Memorial Lecture, Jadavpur University, 2009 (Kolkata, 2010). I have explored her life and writing a little more in "Gender and the Politics of Class: Women in Trade Unions in Bengal", *South Asia*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 218–227. For more on her later life, see Sonali Satpathi, "Mobilizing Women: The Experience of the Left in West Bengal, 1947–1964" (Ph.D., Calcutta University, 2013), ch. 6.

[10]Swati Chaudhuri, "'My Only Wish is India's Freedom': History Sheet of Satyavati Devi", *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 5:2 (1998), pp. 243–251.

books, both drawing attention to lesser as well as better-known leaders and lobbyists. At the centre of Sumita Mukherjee's pioneering study of the suffragette movement in colonial India is the idea of political networks. She places Indian suffragists within a multiplicity of networks, including national, regional, and international. Even though the issue of the vote addresses the state, women gathered across national borders. Thus, the suffragette movement had a critical international dimension and charge, not only in the obvious context of imperialism, but also in the way the category "woman" was imagined. For our purpose here, it is perhaps significant that suffragettes in India and the United States had myriad connections. Indian women activists particularly valued US suffragettes as collaborators, since they wielded power and influence as whites but were distanced from European imperialism. Mukherjee explores the involvement of Carrie Chapman Catt and Jane Addams in some detail. The National Council of Women in India (NCWI), founded in 1925, affiliated to the International Council of Women. As part of an international network of women's organizations, NCIW and some of its members became part of perennial webs of translocal feminist solidarities.[11]

New research is busting the myth that winning the vote led women to return to home and family. We are told that the 1950s and 1960s were "dead decades" for Indian feminism, and that the autonomous women's movements in the 1970s and 1980s led to a new or second wave of feminism. The assumption is that, in the first decades of post-colonial polity, women were less involved; in fact, individual women's lives show a rich continuity of activism and public engagement across the watershed of independence and partition.[12] Annie Devenish, for instance, takes forward the study of suffrage beyond the colonial to an analysis of gendered citizenship in the newly independent Indian nation. Deploying a fine-grained "collective biography", Devenish shows how women continued to engage with social and political and issues and how gender and politics was shaped within the interstices of collective or individual agency, the political and the personal. Her story is also enriched by a discussion of Indian women's participation in discourse about citizenship and human rights in global platforms. All these currents shaped and gendered postcolonial citizenship.[13] In a study of women legislators in the Bihar and Madras legislative assemblies and the parliament, Wendy Singer shows how, in dealing with everyday issues, women legislators shaped Indian parliamentary democracy and challenged their own marginalization.[14]

In a similar genre with the themes of networks and internationalism, crossing the colonial and post-colonial divide, in *Citizens of Everywhere*, Rosalind Parr brings to the forefront the outstanding role played by a group of Indian women on the international stage in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of independence. The book

[11]Sumita Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (New Delhi, 2018).

[12]Anjali Bhardwaj Datta, Uditi Sen, and Mytheli Sreenivas, "Introduction: A Country of Her Making", *South Asia*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 218–227.

[13]Annie Devenish, *Debating Women's Citizenship in India, 1930–1960* (New Delhi, 2019).

[14]Wendy Singer, "Women in the State: Elected Women and the Challenge of Indian Politics (1957–62)", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 247–263, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2021.1890257.

reminds us how closely entangled were stories of anti-colonial nationalism and internationalism in the long twentieth century. Among the key figures, Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Amrit Kaur, and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit are the better known, but the significant contributions of Shareefah Hamid Ali and Hansa Mehta have not been given a similar prominence in existing historiography. This book uncovers not only many untold stories of Indian women's participation in international organizations and networks in different parts of the world, but it also shows the interconnections that Cobble has explored in the context of the US – the complex interrelationship of many strands of ideas and ideologies, such as imperialism, nationalism, and feminism, to be sure, but also health and human rights, suffrage, and social reform.

A more nuanced approach to women's internationalism must take into account tensions and fissures. At the first Paris Congress of Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in 1945, among the 850 delegates, there were four delegates from the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC), while Vidya Kanuga (later Munshi) came from the All-India Students' Federation. Pushing to connect their anti-imperialist struggles with the fight against fascism, Indian delegates made a significant impact.[15] These gains could not be fully realized since, with the advent of the Cold War, the WIDF became associated with the Soviet bloc. The Nehru-led government in power stymied a plan to hold the next meeting in Calcutta to focus on women of Asia and Africa. This triggered also the withdrawal of the AIWC from the WIDF. Eventually, the All-China Women's Democratic Federation and Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti (Women's Self-Defence League) (MARS) co-hosted the conference in Beijing in 1949. This congress marked two departures: it was the beginning of a dual track in South Asian women's internationalism and it facilitated a regional formation of socialist women in the south and south-eastern regions.[16] Cobble confirms what I learnt from interviewing Vidya Munshi in 1997, that these strands came together again at the UN Women's Conference at Nairobi (1985), which was a watershed in bringing together different, by then even warring, strands within the women's movement.[17] Yet, even the Nairobi moment was not without conflicts of race and regional inequalities. Malobika Chattopadhyay wrote of her experience of confronting racism and imperialism.[18] From Beijing 1949 to Beijing 1995 was a long journey. As a member of the more than 500-strong Indian contingent in 1995, representing various strata from elite

[15]Elisabeth Armstrong, "Before Bandung: The Anti-Imperialist Women's Movement in Asia and the Women's International Democratic Federation", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 41:2 (2016), pp. 305–331.

[16]Yulia Gradskova, "Women's International Democratic Federation, the 'Third World' and the Global Cold War from the Late-1950s to the Mid-1960s", *Women's History Review*, 29:2 (2020), pp. 270–288; Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)", *Women's History Review*, 19:4 (2010), pp. 547–573.

[17]Samita Sen, interview with Vidya Munshi (8 and 16 July 1997), *Journal of Women's Studies*, 2:1 (1997).

[18]Malobika Chattopadhyay, *Biswaloker Ahvane* [At the Call of the World] (Kolkata, 2011), p. 98; Jocelyn Olcott, "Cold War Conflicts and Cheap Cabaret: Sexual Politics at the 1975 United Nations International Women's Year Conference", *Gender and History*, 22:3 (2010), pp. 733–754.

leadership to grassroots activists and from various regions, I appreciated the rocky path as well as the heady energy of internationalism.

In the new millennium, new feminist histories are being written, challenging insular nationalism and highlighting women's battles for rights on multiple fronts. These accounts have been critical of universalisms that have not paid attention to difference, such as the rejection of reservations for women, and neglect of special provisions for Muslim and Dalit women. They have shown the mediating role of elite women, who have redefined the needs of poor women according to their own perceptions. Early in the history of the postcolonial nation, there was ample political space for activist middle-class women, perhaps at the cost of the claims of the poor and working women they sought to serve.[19] At the same time, there was a breadth and range of social and welfare issues, from working conditions and protective laws, to family law, food security and health, that the AIWC, for instance, pushed onto the agenda of nation-making.

A second discernible theme in this new historiography is the dual role played by socialist and communist women. On the one hand, they were active in peasant and labour radicalism, playing critical roles in revolutionary movements such as Tebhaga and Telengana; on the other, in local fronts such as MARS and the National Federation of Indian Women, they became active in famine relief, refugee rehabilitation, and child protection. The 1960s were a turning point on two counts: the division of the communist party following the Sino-Soviet split, and the decision by communists to abandon confrontational politics in favour of electoral participation and parliamentary opposition. This redefined the social democratic space in India. Eventually, communists established political presence in the two states of Kerala and West Bengal, forming government periodically in the first and with a remarkable continuous unbroken record of being in government in the latter from 1977 to 2011. What implications have these landmark developments had for the articulation of "full rights" by feminists in India?

Let me conclude with recent developments on that front. Cobble describes in some detail the global impact of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), founded by Ela Bhatt in the 1970s. This association came about by breaking away from the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association to mobilize women workers in informal occupations. It drew on a heterodox combination of Gandhian and left ideologies. The second iteration of the feminist movement in India has celebrated such ideological heterodoxies, placing it at odds with the orthodoxies of establishment left, especially communist parties. In the immediate post-colonial period, the trade union movement pressured the state into creating a formal sector, small but with legal protections that compared well with international standards. The process of formalization marginalized women, pushing more of them into work in the informal sector. In recent years, since the ascendance of neoliberalism, the formal sector

[19]Abigail McGowan, "Mothers and Godmothers of Crafts: Female Leadership and the Imagination of India as a Crafts Nation, 1947–67", *South Asia*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 282–297; Mytheli Sreenivas, "Feminism, Family Planning and National Planning", *South Asia*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 313–328; Taylor Sherman, "Not Part of the Plan? Women, State Feminism and Indian Socialism in the Nehru Years", *South Asia*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 298–313; and Uditi Sen, "Social Work, Refugees and National Belonging: Evaluating the 'Lady Social Workers' of West Bengal", *South Asia*, 44:2 (2021), pp. 344–361.

workers and their trade unions have been under attack. After decades of neglect, trade unions are now recognizing the importance of organizing the vast heterogeneous informal workers, including women. They are seeking, in some measure, to follow in the path showed by SEWA. However, there are striking contradictions: on the one hand, women already in unions, such as plantation workers, are seeking an autonomous space outside the framework of malestream trade unions, as in Munnar (Kerala) in 2015; on the other hand, there are demands for unionizing emerging from new categories of women workers, who are approaching the central federated unions for affiliation. Two such movements are up against a combination of social prejudice and ideological inflexibility in the trade union establishment, including those of the left and communist parties: the sex workers and domestic workers. While very much in step with international currents, inspired by and feeding into global currents of labour and feminist movement, the question of unionization of sex and domestic workers is generating much heat and controversy in countries of South Asia. Internationally, today, a global crisis, preceding the pandemic but deepened by it, has provoked feminists into renewed theorization on social reproduction. This is resonating with feminists across South Asia, who are poised, one hopes, to reshape social democratic politics.

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COMMENT

Black Women Activists: Embracing the Struggle for Intertwined Freedoms on Multiple Fronts

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Abstract

Dorothy Cobble's magnificent, sweeping saga of the 100 plus year struggle for "full rights feminism" introduces us to myriad activists who sought common ground in the expansion of civil, political, economic and social rights as the key for raising the standard for working women, and by extension for all of humanity. However, as Cobble notes, some full-rights activists did not measure up to the potential of this feminism. The juxtaposition of the activism of Black full-rights feminists helps expose this fault line of unexamined deep-seated racism, ethnocentrism, and stereotypical thinking that undermined the potential of full-rights feminism. Questions of economic and political democracy shaped the organizing efforts of Black full-rights feminists against disfranchisement, lynching, discrimination in housing, education and employment, and exclusion and segregation from public accommodations. In their transnational work, they supported policies and practices structured by Cold War imperatives, American racism and imperialism, and tensions between democracy and incipient autocracy in the emerging African nations. Cobble's book demonstrates the crucial ways that Black activists working together and with white allies pushed for the expansive promise of full-rights feminism, encompassing both political and economic rights and race and gender justice.

Dorothy Cobble's magnificent, sweeping saga of the 100-plus year struggle for "full-rights feminism" introduces us to myriad activists whose lives intersected through friendships, partnerships, and memberships in a host of organizations, institutions, conferences, and state, national, and international governmental and labor bodies. A breathtaking examination of many large and small organizing efforts, it tells the story of those who sought common ground in the expansion of civil, political, economic, and social rights as the key for raising the standard for working women, and, by extension, for all of humanity. For much of this period, they fought against legal rights feminists associated with Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party (NWP), whose activism for equality centered narrowly on promoting the interests of largely white professional women. NWP's one-issue goal, passage of an Equal

Rights Amendment (ERA), would overturn hard-won protective legislation designed to address working women's disadvantages in the labor force due to pregnancy, child-care responsibilities, and health concerns. However, as Cobble notes, even some full-rights activists did not measure up to the potential of this feminism. They sometimes left unexamined deep-seated racism, ethnocentrism, and stereotypical thinking, as well as ignoring the detrimental effects of US imperialism.

Black full-rights feminists, in contrast, challenged discrimination and exclusion. Questions of economic and political democracy shaped their organizing efforts against disfranchisement, lynching, discrimination in housing, education and employment, and exclusion and segregation from public accommodations. In their transnational work, they supported policies and practices structured by Cold War imperatives, American racism and imperialism, and tensions between democracy and incipient autocracy in the emerging African nations. Their intersectional approaches to fighting racism and sexism could be situational depending on political moment, organizational ties, and geographical location. Although Black activists sometimes clashed strongly with one another over priorities and strategies, they more often worked closely together for political and economic rights and race and gender justice. In the discussion that follows, I emphasize their efforts with particular attention to Maida Springer's activism, which is derived from my own research.[1]

While Springer holds a prominent role in Cobble's chronicle of full-rights feminists, Cobble also brings to light lesser-known Black labor activists, such as Irene Goins of the Chicago Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), and little-known organizations like the National Association of Wage Earners, which was headed by Mary McLeod Bethune and Nannie Burroughs. Like Springer, Goins understood Black reticence to join labor unions that had neither embraced them nor fought racism within their ranks. In 1932, Springer heard a speech by labor and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph that convinced her of the importance of interracial organizing and primed her to join the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. An earlier Randolph speech in the mid-1920s galvanized white activists to push the YWCA to stop the segregation and exclusion of Black women, with the WTUL following suit.

These organizations facilitated the emergence of the Black full-rights feminist network. Springer first met Laundry Workers Union activists Charlotte Adelmond and Dollie Lowther Robinson of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) through WTUL programs, and the three formed a strong friendship and commitment to unionism and civil rights that easily survived rivalries between the heads of the needle trades and their own differing assessments of Black male leaders. Of the white women with whom they built solid friendships, Esther Peterson and Caroline Ware stand out. Cobble charts the institutional connections Peterson developed with Springer and Robinson as she moved through appointments in the Department of Labor and work with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the ILO and the President's Commission on the Status of Women.

[1]Yevette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2000); and *idem*, *Conversations with Maida Springer: A Personal History of Labor, Race, and International Relations* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2004).

During World War II, Black women activists supported the wartime "Double V" campaign in the fight for real democracy, which would mean victory over racism at home and fascism abroad. At the behest of Randolph, Springer, Robinson, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, and Pauli Murray organized a silent parade to protest the execution of sharecropper Odell Waller – an all-white jury rejected his claim of self-defense against a white landlord in convicting him of murder. They also protested the Red Cross for segregating blood. When a white union woman challenged Adelmond to think about her refusal to give blood possibly leading to the death of her wounded brother in North Africa, she retorted, "at least I will know that he died for democracy".[2] Springer, too, refused to aid the Red Cross, choosing instead to work with the New York Chinese Blood Bank.

During the war, Springer also encountered white male immigrants reluctant to allow their young sisters or daughters to attend weekend education programs at Hudson Shore Labor School because of the possible presence of a few Black men. In meeting with some of these families, she not only disputed the Black male rapist myths behind their thinking, but shared how prejudice affected them in their countries of origin. As Cobble remarks: "Like the YWCA industrial clubs, labor schools were sites where friendships and understandings crucial to inclusive egalitarian social movements and policy happened." The burden was often on Black activists like Springer to create the room for the emergence of "understandings".

Springer decided again to make room for the growth of understanding after experiencing persistent racist treatment in the nation's capital while preparing for a high-profile government sponsored labor exchange to England, which nearly caused her to quit in anger. Bethune, then the head of the National Council of Negro Women and the highest-ranking Black in the federal government, convinced Springer that what she made of her resentment was the greater challenge. Quitting was the easy way out and would foreclose the opportunity to gain knowledge abroad, which she could put to use and share at home. Using her connections with Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune arranged for a chauffeur driven limousine to solve Springer's transportation discrimination. Blacks constantly faced such treatment, especially when traveling South. In 1940, Murray and her friend Adelene MacBean were arrested in Petersburg and charged with violation of state segregation statutes, but Virginia courts avoided a test case by dropping those charges. Four years later, Murray witnessed the same scenario of a potential test case fall apart when Virginia again dropped violation of segregation statutes in the arrest of some young Howard women students who traveled between Washington, DC, and Fairfax, Virginia for a picnic at the farm of their professor, Caroline Ware.

After relaxing at the Ware farm before her exchange trip, Springer arrived in England, where she forged a connection to the expansive pan-African network led by former communist George Padmore. Becoming involved in this network dramatically changed the direction of her activism into the arena of labor international affairs. Known as Mama Maida to many African labor leaders, Springer was often the only woman in attendance at various meetings and conferences; however, she

[2]Anna Arnold Hedgeman, *The Trumpet Sounds: A Memoir of Negro Leadership*. (New York, 1964), p. 81; Jennifer Scanlon, *Until There is Justice: The Life of Anna Arnold Hedgeman* (New York, 2016).

used her influence to push for expanded opportunities for African women by upholding the importance of addressing issues of access to vocational training, labor educational programs and childcare.

Randolph served as the conduit for supporting the priorities of African labor in the councils of the AFL–CIO, the policy formulations informed by Springer's connections. As some African governments gained independence and forced the labor movements to become part of the apparatus of government in the name of nation building and adopted neutralism, Springer began to experience some conflict in her function. As Cobble notes, Springer, along with Randolph, fought against US racism and Western colonialism while opposed to Soviet-style communism. But AFL–CIO policy under the controversial leader Jay Lovestone went further than their positions, drawing a hard line against contacts with communist countries and incorporation of labor movements into governments.

Black women activists had varying reactions to these rapid changes. While Springer and Anna Arnold Hedgeman were willing to give some leeway to Kwame Nkrumah as head of the pan-African movement, trying to hold together nations whose borders they had not drawn, Murray was alarmed at the suppression of civil liberties and viewed Ghana as sliding toward dictatorship. Outraged by the 1959 lynching of Mack Charles Parker, Murray had traveled to Ghana to teach at its law school. She also attended with Hedgeman the Conference of Women of African Descent held in Accra, where they opposed a resolution linking US racism to South Africa apartheid. While her eighteen-month African sojourn led Murray to embrace her Americanness, Springer's travels led her to embrace her Africanness. Thoroughly disillusioned with Civil Rights progress, Springer considered moving permanently to the continent until the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Still, Springer had a complex and situational approach to issues of gender discrimination and American racism. A few examples highlight her varying responses. When government officials nervously asked her how she would respond if a Guinea labor delegation visiting during the 1963 March on Washington (MOW) asked to see the South, she stated it was better to let them see for themselves rather than be left to form distorted impressions. While hosting this delegation, Springer let Edith Sampson, the first African American representative to NATO, know, through a kick under the table, that Sampson should refrain from starting a testy exchange with the head Guinean labor leader, who answered a question Sampson had posed directly for the sole woman in the delegation. After strategizing in Springer's apartment with a group of white women about the sexist exclusions happening around the march events, Murray asked Springer if she would be willing to join in a protest, if need be, against Randolph, for accepting an invitation to speak at the gender exclusionary National Press Club. Springer emphatically declined. Yet, Springer herself once gently chided a labor leader suffering under Preventative Detention, not for his complaints about the extreme shoulder and neck pain induced by hauling water but for his added comments that it was humiliating because it was woman's work. While, in 1963, she was instrumental in helping Kenyan labor set up a training school, the Institute of Tailoring and Cutting, she threatened to abandon the project should the union leadership not accord equal pay to the sole woman teacher.

Cobble's impressive tome on the activism of a prodigious assortment of feminists and movements does not claim to be exhaustive. Two women whose addition to this text would expand and solidify her argument for full-rights feminist praxis are Anna Arnold Hedgeman and Ora Lee Malone. Springer deeply admired both of these women who share with Murray, Bethune, and Fannie Lou Hamer a commitment to equality and social justice grounded in religious faith. Hedgeman, like Dorothy Height, had a leadership role in the Black YWCA and supported programs that shined a spotlight on struggles of household employees, a group excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act until 1972. (Discrimination against people with disabilities stands as a remaining challenge of FLSA reform.) Born of a middle-class midwestern family, Hedgeman struggled with prejudices she harbored against poor people. An incident in the 1920s at Mississippi's Rust College deeply affected her outlook on poverty and elitism. After she had tried to dismiss a poor elderly Black domestic worker who had approached her on a busy commencement day, the woman unraveled a knotted handkerchief of coins totaling about two dollars. As she dropped the coins, one by one, into Hedgeman's hands, she explained that she had never had a chance for an education but wanted to donate her hard-earned money to help ensure some young person did. Hedgeman felt not only deep humility, but also anger that Blacks lived under such oppressive conditions. Committing her life to changing these conditions, she worked with Randolph as executive director of the 1940s MOW movement and, later, as the only woman on the planning committee of the 1963 MOW. Hedgeman was largely responsible for organizing through the Council of Churches tens of thousands of whites to participate in the march. She also fought with the male civil rights over the lack of women on the march program. Failing to make significant inroads, she joined forces with Murray and Height and later helped form the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Murray and Hedgeman, who headed NOW's Women in Poverty Task Force, became disillusioned as NOW committed to passage of the ERA in 1967, a move they feared would sideline issues of class specifically related to Black women's poverty, invalidate women-specific labor protections, and make it more difficult to fight sex discrimination using the 14th Amendment. The reminiscences of Sonia Pressman Fuertes, who, as assistant counsel for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), coordinated sex discrimination cases with NOW, exemplify the differences between legal-equality feminists and full-rights feminists. A long-time supporter of the NWP, Fuertes admitted to being "blithely unaware of the legislative history" of the 1964 Civil Rights Act when, by happenstance, she was hired for the EEOC. Yet, in retrospect, she praised Paul for lobbying segregationist Congressman Howard W. Smith to include sex as a prohibitive category, while noting that he may not have wanted "African Americans" to get rights at the expense of "white women".[3] This formulation rendered invisible Murray's intersectional use of Jane Crow to describe the compounded discrimination Black women face.

Ora Lee Malone, the first Black international business agent for the ACWA and the leader of the St. Louis branch of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, dedicated

[3]Sonia Pressman Fuentes, *Eat First – You Don't Know What They'll Give You: The Adventures of an Immigrant Family and Their Feminist Daughter* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), pp. 126–132.

her efforts to voter education and registration. The epitome of a full-rights feminist, Malone combined activism in civil rights, women's rights, and labor rights, with the anti-apartheid struggle. She was a founding member of both the Coalition of Black Trade Unions in 1972 and the Coalition of Labor Union Women in 1974. A talented organizer, she rejected the trappings of elite organizations that were not conducive to building a grassroots leadership. In addition to fighting for wages, hours and conditions, unions, she asserted, had a larger responsibility to address social issues, like problems with transportation and childcare, which interfered with the ability of working women to maintain employment. When asked in the hospital as her health declined what message she wanted to give, she stated "keep the voting rights act alive and keep fighting for justice".[4]

Cobble's book enlarges our understanding of the huge network of feminists fighting for full-rights feminism. Her tracing of the multiple and overlapping networks of activists reveals how they worked and struggled together and passed on knowledge to prepare the next generation for leadership. With periodic conservative retrenchment, Cobble points out that progress is seldom linear. As Black women have stood in the forefront of progressive change, it is worth remembering Ella Baker's philosophy: "Learn from others, pass on what we learn, and stay in the struggle for a free and just world."[5]

[4]"Ora Lee Malone," *The Saint Louis American*, 8 November 2012. Available at: http://www.stlamerican.com/news/obituaries/ora-lee-malone/article_3c7b89de-295a-11e2-b205-001a4bcf887a.html; last accessed 12 October 2021; Keona K. Ervin, *Gateway to Equality: Black Women and the Struggle for Economic Justice in St. Louis* (Lexington, KY, 2017).

[5]*Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker*, directed by Joanne Grant (1981, NY: Icarus Films).

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COMMENT

"Each of Us is an Other"

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Abstract
Cobble's study of American social democratic feminism is a fascinating narrative of the lives of women who crossed the boundaries of class, race and nation-states to build a better world. Her chronological account of the careers and activism of these women is not only a major contribution to the history of feminism but also a significant addition to the study of social democracy worldwide.

Cobble's study of American social democratic feminism is a fascinating, sympathetic, *and* honest narrative of the lives of women who crossed the boundaries of class, race, and nation states to build a better world. Hers is not a romanticized hagiography of feminist women from all walks of life, but rather a sound analysis of their aspirations, realizations, and failures. Cobble provides impressive empirical evidence of the activism of US-born and immigrant working-class women to stress the multi-class composition of their movement. By so doing, she contradicts the popular depiction of the movement as "bourgeois feminism" (p. 34) that was out of touch with daily life. The pages are filled with details about the background of "famous and not so famous" (p. 2) women, whose interactions allowed them to develop strategies for different audiences. Within this heterogenous movement, many of them used their privileged position to reach the highest ranks of national and international governance, whereas working-class women informed their more fortunate peers of the living conditions and actual needs of female wage earners.

Cobble's chronological account of the careers and activism of these women is not only a major contribution to the history of feminism, but also a significant addition to the study of social democracy worldwide. Its century-long perspective takes the reader on a well-written geo-historical tour to better understand the beginnings and evolution of ideas, networks, and concrete actions. Yet, despite the many names and issues raised – which include important details about intimate lives – she cannot cover every aspect of this complex history. Despite the heft of the book, she left me wanting more.

Inspired by Cobble's last words ("Each of us is an Other", p. 445) and by my research on the history of subalternity and international organizations, I would like to know more about those female "others", who were relegated to the margins of

the world of work and of the feminist movement. Even though US feminists wished to end the alleged alterity that justified women's subordinate position in patriarchal societies, they originally seemed to have sided with men when it came to the analysis of what Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas call "intimate labor".[1] In this sense, the "Other" in Cobble's quote does not apply to women involved in commercial sex (and to a certain extent domestic work). In the new millennium, thankfully, that is no longer the case, but during much of the feminist movement's history, thousands, if not millions, of women figured only marginally in that story. In my view, this had to do with the social Darwinist roots and the limited definition of work among social reformers at the national and international levels.

Cobble demonstrates that the founders of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) "moved the United States from elitism and helped undermine the prevailing social Darwinist disdain for working people" (p. 15). The "working people", however, did not include all female workers. Several feminist leaders, who were wholeheartedly involved in social work during the Progressive Era, used eugenic theories and methods to fight "urban degeneration" and reform "the unfit". Influential women such as Edith Abbott, Jane Addams, and Sophonisba Breckinridge understood "social betterment" in terms of "diagnosis" and care of the "feebleminded". As Angie Kennedy argues, Addams "explicitly lauded the work of the eugenics movement and used its language in her book on prostitution and vice, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*",[2] published in 1912. For their part, Edith Abbot and her sister Grace – an eminent immigrant and child welfare advocate and an important ally of the feminist movement – were linked to the Rockefeller Foundation and the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA), both of which played a crucial role in the dissemination of eugenic ideas in prostitution debates.[3] In the early 1920s, Grace Abbott pushed the League of Nations to initiate an international investigation on trafficking for prostitution. It was "absolutely necessary", she said, "to secure the facts to refute sensational exaggerations or general denials as to the traffic".[4] The League's Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children approved the US proposal and appointed a Special Body of Experts, which included Dr. William Snow, Director of the ASHA and vice president of the American Eugenics Society – where also Grace Abbott held an honorary post. During the 1920s, the League focused solely on trafficking and legal methods to combat it, but, in the early 1930s, the organization stepped into the realm of national politics, initially to fight the regulation of prostitution, and by mid-decade commercial sex as a whole. It then built a web of international experts that circulated various ideas about the "mental deficiency" of women who sold sex. Those experts and feminist activists followed the tradition of

[1]Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Intimate Labors: Culture, Technologies, and the Politics of Care* (Stanford, CA, 2010).

[2]Angie C. Kennedy, "Eugenics, 'Degenerate Girls', and Social Workers During the Progressive Era", *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 23 (2008), pp. 22–37, 29.

[3]Molly Ladd-Taylor, "Saving Babies and Sterilizing Mothers: Eugenics and Welfare Politics in the Interwar United States", *Social Politics*, 4 (1997), pp. 137–153; Randall Hansen and Desmond King, *Eugenics, Race and the Population Scare in Twentieth Century North America* (New York, 2013).

[4]Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children [hereafter "Committee"], Second Session, Geneva, 22–27 March 1923, pp. 27, 61, League of Nations Archive [hereafter "LNA"], C.225.M.129.1923.IV.

"leftist reform eugenics",[5] which rejected racism and stressed the possibility of rescuing wayward women and girls.

I wonder how the view of prostitution among full-rights feminists evolved during the interwar period and subsequent years. Sex work does appear in Cobble's publication, but only for the end of the twentieth century onward. I also wonder what the relationship was between full-rights feminists of the first generation, and women active within the radical labour union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or "Wobblies"). The Wobblies' inclusionary policy shows that the idea of prostitution as a form of work at the time was not an anachronism. Indeed, the IWW expanded the category of labour to include sex workers.[6] In interwar Germany, too, sex workers mobilized to resist abuse and demand better working conditions; some even formed their own union, the Association of the Legal Prostitutes of Hamburg and Altona.[7] In many other places, they were not allowed to form unions, but viewed themselves as part of the working class. In Argentina, for example, women who sold sex used the print media to call for better working conditions and respect as workers. One told a reporter: "we have not become what we wanted to become, but the fact is that we are workers, the worst class of workers, but we have the right to live as decent people".[8] What did full-rights activists make of that interwar activism around sex work?

Both the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) discussed prostitution and its relation to domestic work after 1933, once Marguerite Thibert – the French socialist and feminist who led the ILO's Section on Conditions of Employment of Women and Children – was invited to participate in the League's anti-traffic committee.[9] Amidst the trauma of the economic crisis, they touched upon the issue of women's wages, working conditions, and unemployment. From the reports the League's anti-traffic committee had received from women's organizations, they concluded that a large proportion of women involved in commercial sex came from domestic service.[10] This was an issue that resurfaced in each yearly meeting but no consensus was reached. According to British delegate S.W. Harris, too much emphasis was laid on the connection between wages and prostitution[11]

[5]Alison Bashford, "Internationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Eugenics", in Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (New York, 2010), pp. 154–172, 155; Magaly Rodríguez García, "Beware of Pity: The League of Nations Treatment of Prostitution", *Monde(s)*, 19 (2021), pp. 97–117.

[6]Heather Mayer, *Beyond the Rebel Girl: Women and the Industrial Workers of the World in the Pacific Northwest, 1905–1924* (Corvallis, OR, 2018); Nicholas Thoburn, "The Hobo Anomalous: Class, Minorities and Political Invention in the Industrial Workers of the World", *Social Movement Studies,* 2 (2003), pp. 61–84.

[7]Victoria Harris, *Selling Sex in the Reich: Prostitutes in German Society, 1914–1945* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 61–64.

[8]"La vida miserable y trágica de las cabareteras revelada ante varios funcionarios oficiales", *El Gráfico,* 19 October 1937, p. 12, quoted in Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln, NE, 1991), p. 200.

[9]Françoise Thébaud, *Un traversée du siècle. Marguerite Thibert, femme engagée et fonctionnaire internationale* (Paris, 2017).

[10]Committee, Minutes of the Sixth Session, 26 April 1927, p. 16, LNA C.338.M.113.1927.IV. For discussions within the European dominated feminist lobby within the League, see Christine Machiels, *Les féminismes et la prostitution (1860–1960)* (Rennes, 2016), pp. 143–176.

[11]Committee, Minutes of the Sixth Session, 26 April 1927, p. 17.

and, in 1929, the French abolitionist Avril de Sainte-Croix informed the members of the committee that the letters she had received from British colleagues suggested that "poverty was not the only cause of prostitution, but that idleness, coquetry, greed and bad company also play a part".[12] They all agreed, however, that the issue of wages paid to young women was part of a larger economic question and that it needed to be studied in coordination with the ILO.

Thibert seemed determined to tackle the problems faced by working women but her conclusions on prostitution did not differ from the ideas of her abolitionist colleagues within and outside the League, who viewed commercial sex and trafficking as one and the same thing. Furthermore, the effects of unemployment and the economic crisis on women's lives were undermined during those discussions. They acknowledged the influence unemployment and low wages played in the movement of women to the sex sector, but stressed, above all, the "demoralization" of young people. The representative of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, Ms Lavielle, for example, argued that during an investigation only a few women had mentioned unemployment as the cause of prostitution and believed that "the replies of prostitutes were often merely pretexts".[13] In her view, many of them simply refused to work. While the Polish delegate, Mrs Grabinska, disagreed by arguing that unemployment "constituted a serious danger" for young women, the ILO representative chose the middle way. Thibert claimed that she had tried to study the subject but that an analysis based on statistics had led to no satisfactory results.

All the participants in those debates perceived prostitution as an evil, not work. They understood work as something positive which kept men and women at safe distance from an "immoral life".[14] In contrast, the ILO viewed domestic work as a profession but, until 2011, not one that deserved an international convention. In the 1930s, it believed that women who took up domestic service ought to "feel that they had a real vocation and should not be ashamed of their work".[15] But pride did not buy food and other commodities, so a countless number of women (and men) kept looking for alternatives in sectors for extra-reproductive bodily services, such as the sex industry, and, later, commercial gestational surrogacy and the selling of organs or other human assets.[16]

Discussions on commercial sex never disappeared from feminist circles but the issue gained importance as sex workers became increasingly vocal from the 1970s onward. Carol Leigh coined the term "sex work" when she noticed that a workshop

[12]Committee, Minutes of the Eighth Session, Geneva, 19–27 April 1929, p. 116, LNA C.294.M.97.1929.IV.

[13]Committee, Minutes of the Thirteenth Session, Geneva, 4 April 1934, pp. 16–27, 26–27, LNA CTFE/13th Session/PV (Revised).

[14]For an analysis of the ILO's century-long refusal to consider commercial sex as a form of work, see Eileen Boris and Magaly Rodríguez García, "(In)Decent Work: Sex and the ILO", *Journal of Women's History*, 33 (2021), pp. 194–221.

[15]Committee, Minutes of the Fifteenth Session, 22 April 1936, p. 4, LNA CTFE/15th Session/PV.5.

[16]Mahua Sarkar, "When Maternity is Paid Work: Commercial Gestational Surrogacy at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century", in Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker and Susan Zimmerman (eds), *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards, and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 340–364; Janet Golden, "From Commodity to Gift: Gender, Class, and the Meaning of Breast Milk in the Twentieth Century", *The Historian*, 59 (1996), pp. 75–87.

on prostitution at the Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media conference included the phrase "Sex Use Industry". Insulted, she proposed to talk about "Sex Work Industry" instead.[17] She became increasingly involved within organizations like COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) and became an icon of the sex workers' movement. The new terminology – along with debates on pornography, the rights of trans women, and so on – led to a rift within the feminist movement and to the so-called sex wars, which last until today.[18]

Cobble shows that late twentieth-century full-rights feminists accepted the idea of intimate labour as work, but I wonder how they reacted to the inertia of national and international elites. Did they, as Terri Nilliasca claims, put too much emphasis on access to wage labour?[19] Did they, despite their inclusion of immigrant and minority workers among their ranks and their formal pronunciations for the passage of regulations on household work, remain too passive about the myriad of abuses domestic workers faced? Why were they unable to mobilize their social democrat counterparts within the ILO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to tackle those issues sooner? And what about their position vis-à-vis radical feminists who refused and still refuse to listen to sex workers' urgent call for state protection in the United States and abroad?[20] The structure of the ILO and the international trade unions undoubtedly impacted the outcome. To be fair, Cobble does not engage in a blame game, even as she recognizes limits and failures.

Cobble clearly shows that "full rights feminists in the United States and elsewhere were not practicing a marginal politics" (p. 424). Many women, however, did, and still do, remain on the margins of feminist structures. In the epilogue, Cobble ends with six insights twentieth-century full-rights feminists might give to those of the twenty-first. Yet, those imaginary advices seem directed at women who have already found channels to express their grievances. What about others? What advice would past full-rights feminists give to contemporary cis and trans women whose legal and societal status as illegal migrants, and as unacknowledged or despised workers, puts them at the mercy of benevolent bosses, clients, family members, neighbours, activists, or scholars to save them from oblivion? Aisha, a Colombian trans sex worker active in the Americas and Europe, asked me a few years ago: "Who will mourn me if they find me dead in my workplace?"[21] Can today's full-rights feminists open their doors to women like her?

[17]Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot, "Inventing Sex Work", in Jill Nagle (ed.), *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York and London, 1997), pp. 223–231.

[18]Ann Ferguson, "Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminism", *Sign*, 10 (1984), pp. 106–112.

[19]Terri Nilliasca, "Some Women's Work: Domestic Work, Class, Race, Heteropatriarchy, and the Limits of Legal Reform", *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*, 16 (2011), pp. 377–410, 377–379.

[20]Giulia Garofalo Geymonat and P.G. Macioti, *Sex Workers Speak: Who Listens?* (London, 2016). Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/sex-workers-speak-who-listens/; last accessed 18 October 2021.

[21]Informal interview with Aisha by Magaly Rodríguez García, Antwerp, August 2017.

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COMMENT

"A Feminism For the Many": Response to the Comments

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Abstract

For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality recasts American feminism as a global story and reclaims the fight for economic justice and social democracy as a majority tradition of women's politics. This rejoinder by the author of *For the Many* is the concluding essay in a review dossier on the book. Cobble discusses the book's origins and its contributions to global history, women's history, and political history. She engages with comments and queries from dossier reviewers, a diverse group of historians of Latin America, South Asia, Africa, and Europe. Topics include, among others, the unfinished struggle to revalue care and social reproduction, the influence of India on US feminism, Black internationalism and full-rights feminism, varieties of socialism, rethinking Cold War frameworks, and feminist perspectives on eugenics, race, and sexuality.

I am grateful to Eileen Boris and the *International Review of Social History* editors for initiating a review dossier on *For the Many* and for inviting such a stellar, thoughtful, and diverse group of commentators. I appreciate the time and care each contributor took in crafting her essay and I am thrilled to be part of this exchange.

In *For the Many*, I sought to recover the long and wide stream of US women's social-democratic politics over the last century – a tradition I call "full rights feminism". This tradition, I argue, was more robust and influential than we have imagined, with full-rights feminists in the forefront of the fight to shift US political culture to the left, bolster democratic movements and institutions, and enact progressive social policy.

Full-rights feminists believed women faced disadvantages as a sex and they organized with other men and women to end those disadvantages. Yet, women's rights, they insisted, could not be separated from the other great social issues of the day. They wanted the *full* array of rights – economic, social, political, and civil – and they saw these rights as intertwined and inseparable. In their view, multiple forms of domination must be confronted if the majority of women (and men) were to flourish.

Their multi-stranded intersectional feminist politics put them at odds with "equal rights" feminists like those in the US-based National Woman's Party, who held single-mindedly to a narrow feminism centered on achieving legal equality between men and women. They clashed too with conservatives and "free market" liberals of every sort – men and women, feminists and non-feminists – over the desirability of social welfare and labor legislation, the need to constrain corporate power and foster workplace democracy, and the rights of workers, immigrants, and people of color. They rejected go-it-alone nationalism as well as interventionist policies seeking American economic and military dominance. Instead, they pressed for a global order premised on shared economic prosperity and equity among nations and peoples.

Full-rights feminists parted ways with those on the left who espoused revolutionary violence, or who, after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, conflated socialism with Soviet-style communism. They eschewed authoritarianism from the right or left. Armed struggle and one-party rule, they judged, were weapons of the arrogant and the unimaginative. Better to pursue change through other means: the ballot box, popular education, democratic participation, and non-violent direct action tactics such as strikes, boycotts, and mass protest.

For the Many grew out of my long-standing desire to globalize the story of US feminism and understand it as a movement shaped by global events, ideas, and peoples. Despite the flourishing of global and transnational history since the 1990s, synthetic accounts of twentieth-century American feminism remain nation-centered and concentrate on domestic developments. In contrast, *For the Many* emphasizes US women's transnational engagements and sees global forces and phenomena as crucial makers of American women's history and politics.

Feminism did not start in America and go elsewhere. It started everywhere and came to America. The world made American feminism. It sprang from the foreign-born and the native-born, from citizen and non-citizen, from sojourners who stayed for days or years, and from those who never set foot inside US borders. Australia's Alice Henry, Sweden's Sigrid Ekendahl, and India's Ela Bhatt left their mark on US feminism, as did Polish immigrant Rose Schneiderman, German refugee Toni Sender, and Black Panama-born internationalist Maida Springer.

In *For the Many,* as elsewhere in my writing,[1] I reject Whiggish presumptions that each generation is more enlightened than the next or that the power of women expands in tandem with their entry into paid market work. I depict feminism as continuous, contentious, and multi-directional, with advances for some often accompanied by setbacks for others. In my telling, the "second wave" of the late 1960s and 1970s is not the high point of feminist consciousness or of women's activism. Earlier struggles – such as those for worker rights, social democracy, and an end to the global color line – loom just as large.

I believe it a good thing to expand the boundaries of feminist history and rethink limiting and hierarchical notions of who qualifies as a "feminist". Restricting

[1]For example: Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ, 2004); *idem*, "The Long History of Women's Freedom Struggles", *Feminist Formations*, 22:1 (2010), pp. 86–90; and *idem*, Linda Gordon, and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (New York, 2014).

feminism to single-sex women's movements or reserving the term "feminist" for those who prioritized the struggle for sex equality, as some scholars still do, excludes the majority of those who fought for women's emancipation.[2] Some highly privileged women may experience sex discrimination as the primary or sole exploitation. But this tiny group should not define what emancipation means for all women or what feminist priorities should be. Nor should their problems and reform efforts be taken as the central threads of feminist history.

In her introduction, Eileen Boris ably traces the larger arc of *For the Many*. The book opens with the explosion of democracy movements worldwide before World War I and the dramatic story of how labor and socialist women from Asia, Europe, and the Americas launched the first international federation of women workers and shaped the ILO's first set of international labor standards in 1919. I then follow the thread of US women's full-rights politics over the next hundred years, as it winds East and West, South and North. US women partnered with and drew inspiration from labor and social democratic struggles around the world. They learned as well from anti-colonial movements, especially in South Asia and Africa.

Jocelyn Olcott's commentary eloquently conveys the core beliefs of full-rights feminists and their "long struggle to imbricate civil and political rights with social and economic rights". She foregrounds two "particularly valuable" contributions of *For the Many*: its attention to the efforts of full-rights feminists to secure just wages and respect for the "paid and unpaid labors of social reproduction", and its illumination of "the deeply transnational nature of these conversations". I am grateful to her for highlighting these principal themes in *For the Many* and for her detailed and generous review of the book.

Olcott asks a question much in need of further research and consideration: why, despite women's considerable activism, does US "policymaking continue to ignore the time, effort, and expertise of social reproduction"? Part of the answer, as many feminist scholars pinpoint, lies in the dependence of capitalism and patriarchy on the devaluation and invisibility of household and caring labor. But the US has its own distinctive mix of reasons, some of which I discuss in *For the Many*. The US capital class, the most powerful in the world, forged what Black trade union leader A. Philip Randolph called an "unholy alliance" with the forces of white supremacy and thwarted expansion of state provisions. Such reactionary forces deemed state aid to poor and non-white mothers as especially objectionable since the value of these women, in their assessment, derived from their exploited market labor not their sustenance of family or community.

Yet, as I argue in *For the Many*, by the end of the 1930s the US was neither a leader nor a laggard in social welfare provision when compared to other nations. Its outlier status is actually fairly recent. After the 1930s, as much of the world moved in one

[2]Eileen Boris alludes to this persistent scholarly tendency in the first paragraph of her introduction to the review dossier. Nancy Cott, for example, urged in 1989 that the term "feminist" should be reserved for "movements of women" that make "gender hierarchy central". Striking working-class housewives, Black women struggling against slavery, and women in nationalist revolutions lacked "feminist consciousness", she determined, and were best described using other vocabulary. See Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History", *Journal of American History*, 76:3 (1989), pp. 826–828.

direction – expanding healthcare, basic income, paid leaves, and other social guarantees – the US moved in the other. Bombs and profit took precedence over human flourishing. Understanding how the United States lost its way is a crucial question for feminists to answer; so, too, is understanding how and why movements for the rights of caregivers made progress in Latin America and elsewhere.

Olcott wants researchers to dig deep and excavate the histories of lesser-known women. I share her concern. When I began my research over a decade ago, very few of my principal figures had Wikipedia entries. That is no longer true, and it is a welcome development. But the explosion of digital information about female historical figures can, paradoxically, end up encouraging just what Olcott fears: a homogenizing of feminist global history and a recycling of the same cast of characters. Indeed, as documents from a few well-funded archives in wealthy countries dominate the web, Olcott's call to create new sources through oral history, interviews, and old-fashioned sleuthing in off-grid files remains essential. Global history as a field will need to evolve as the world becomes more treacherous to navigate and travel less an option. Perhaps the wisdom of "the global is local" is more relevant than ever.

Samita Sen's learned, informative commentary directs readers to recent work in South Asian gender history and to the rich varieties of South Asian women's full-rights feminism. I found her discussion fascinating and agree that we have "barely scratched the surface" in our work of recovery. I was also intrigued to discover parallel turns in South Asian and US feminist historiography: the "rich continuity of activism"; the rejection of the 1950s and 1960s as "dead decades"; the "braiding of the local, the national, and the global"; and a desire to capture "ideological heterodoxies".

As my research on *For the Many* progressed, US–India exchange emerged as a prominent theme. Indian thought and action exerted a remarkable pull on US feminists, with transnational female friendships a major conduit for exchange. Such relationships ranged from the intense affinities between Irish–American labor leader Leonora O'Reilly and Indian educator Parvatibai Athavale in the World War I era to the consequential midcentury collaborations of Black New Deal official Mary McLeod Bethune and Indian independence leader Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit to the enduring connections a youthful Gloria Steinem formed with Indian intellectuals and activists. In her twenties, Steinem spent two life-changing years in 1950s India. What she learned there became core to her political philosophy as she and others recast US feminism in the 1970s.

Celia Donert finds *For the Many* "brilliantly deconstructs many of the Cold War paradigms that continue to shape historical scholarship" and "reinserts social democratic and labour movement women into international histories of feminism". The book furthers efforts to "reinterpret – and provincialize – American feminist internationalism", she observes, and is "far from a diffusionist story of an 'American model for the world'". I value her positive assessment of *For the Many* and her review's precise rendering of core dimensions of the study.

As Donert urges, scholars need to move beyond a bi-polar Cold War framework that analyzes the world "from the perspective of Cold War struggles between communism and liberal ideals". Varieties of socialism flourished in all regions of the world; so did forms of authoritarianism. Socialist allies became socialist foes, too, as the world spun in unpredictable ways. Toni Sender's life offers a particularly

illuminating version of these twists and turns, as Donert notes. Sender's voluminous archive, hidden away at the Wisconsin Historical Society, awaits biographers, as does the trove of documents at Vassar College devoted to Christian socialist Margaret Bondfield, the first female British cabinet member.

I agree with Donert that women like the DGB's Maria Weber, who represented "Christian Democratic or left-Catholic tendencies within the labor movement", deserve more attention. Our histories of labor, feminism, and socialism remain unduly secular, especially given the prominence of religious belief in spurring activism and framing labor and social policy. Margaret Bondfield, Frances Perkins, Dorothy Height, Mary Van Kleeck, Charlotte Bunch, and many other full-rights feminists, I soon came to understand as I read their memoirs, letters, and speeches, could not be understood apart from their religious faith. Some considered themselves Christian socialists; others drew on Social Gospel Christianity or on the progressive teachings of Judaism, Catholicism, and other faiths. A surprising number found their way to social justice struggles via programs offered by the Young Women's Christian Association.

Did full-rights feminists support open borders and the rights of all workers, regardless of race or origin? Given the dominant racist, elitist, and nationalist ideologies of the time, debates over these issues among full-rights feminists could be heated. Significantly, however, organizations like the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) bucked American Federation of Labor orthodoxy and called for freer movement of peoples across borders, non-discriminatory government policies for migrant entry and citizenship (including migrants from Asia), and a more inclusive labor movement welcoming of all races, religions, and nationalities. The WTUL had an unusually large number of immigrant women leaders, who spoke unapologetically about the necessity of such changes. Their voices made a difference in swaying others, as did the racial justice advocacy of full-rights feminists of color.

Donert asks about the influence of "international social democratic actors and networks" on regional forums. In *For the Many*, I investigate this issue most fully in the context of Pan-American and Pan-Pacific regional organizations. European regionalism, however, is certainly a worthy subject for further investigation. Did the women's committees and caucuses in the ICFTU, the WFTU, or the ILO, for example, spur Pan-European sentiment and cross-border understanding? That appears to have been the case – although in a limited Cold War fashion – for the first ICFTU residential summer school for women. The 1953 school attracted students from twenty-four different countries, with over half from Western Europe. Some of the most intense memories of participants had to do with resolving conflicts *among* Western European delegates, with Dutch women threatening to leave over what they considered the overbearing behavior of the Germans.

In her essay, Yevette Richards masterfully traces the currents of Black full-rights feminist activism in *For the Many* while adding marvelous new details from her own extensive research. She is attentive to my efforts to capture "multiple and overlapping networks of activists" and show how Black and white women "worked and struggled together". In writing *For the Many*, it was not always clear how best to narrate the oft-separate histories of white-led and Black-led women's movements in the United States or how to convey the depth of white racism alongside the many "solid

friendships" and alliances that formed across racial lines. I appreciate her expert navigation of that history in her commentary.

Richards alerts us to Black women like Anna Arnold Hedgeman and Ora Lee Malone, who do not appear in *For the Many* but whose lives "expand and solidify" an argument for "full rights feminist praxis". Richards notes, as well, some of the Black activists whose stories I recount – from "lesser-known" labor activists like Irene Goins and Dollie Lowther Robinson to prominent figures like Dorothy Height, Mary McLeod Bethune, Pauli Murray, and Maida Springer.

Springer's life reveals aspects of feminist history that often get sidelined, and I am deeply indebted to Richards' pioneering books on Springer. It was exhilarating to track Springer's tenacious movement-building over so many decades – from her first successes organizing multiracial garment shops in the 1930s, to her decades in Africa, to her final years spurring women's leadership in rural Mississippi, South Africa, Indonesia, and Turkey. In 2002, aged ninety-two, Springer traveled to Africa for the last time to raise funds for Kenya's agricultural union, the nation's largest, and to support its fight for a child's right to education.

Magaly Rodríguez García is right: *For the Many* is not a history of sex work. Nor is it an exploration of the debates among feminists over prostitution. My contribution to the flourishing literature on sex work and sexuality at work is best accessed in earlier books and articles.[3] García's essay, however, offers an excellent entrée into these important topics, drawing on her many insightful, in-depth studies over the last decade.

García is also right that US social reformers were far from perfect and that some held beliefs we would judge pernicious today. As mentioned earlier, while some resisted prevailing racist and elitist ideologies, others did not. In particular, García faults early twentieth-century social reformers like Jane Addams, Grace Abbott, and Sophonisba Breckinridge for their use of eugenic theories and their moral condemnation of the commercial sex industry. The pseudo-science of eugenics was, indeed, widespread in the United States and in much of the world until World War II, and leading US women social scientists and reformers – as well as Black intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois, Fabian Socialists like Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Swedish social democrats like Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, and Soviet ethnographers and nation builders – used its language.[4] In addition, most American female social reformers a century ago judged sex workers as more exploited than empowered and believed the sex industry morally debased all those involved, whether men, women, or children.

The devil is in the details, however. These same turn-of-the-century women social reformers also refused many aspects of eugenic thought. They vehemently rejected scientific racism, helped found the National Association for the Advancement of

[3]For example, Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL, 1991), esp. pp. 125–131; *idem*, "More Intimate Unions", in Eileen Boris and Rhacel Parreñas (eds), *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care*, (Stanford, CA, 2010), pp. 280–295.

[4]See, among others, Diane Paul, "Eugenics and the Left", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 (Oct–Dec 1984), pp. 567–590; Mark B. Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York and Oxford, 1990); Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics and American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton, NJ, 2017).

Colored People in 1909, led opposition to the 1920s immigration laws premised on eugenic theories of Caucasian superiority, and insisted that environmental factors (not heredity) explained behavior.[5] In addition, they pushed for an end to sexual double standards and sought more rights and state benefits for poor and migrant women, including women in the sex industry. Breckinridge spearheaded a two-year campaign in the late 1920s to protect the civil rights of accused prostitutes in Chicago courtrooms. Grace Abbott, whose widely read 1917 book *The Immigrant and the Community* challenged the "racial" inferiority of migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, used her leadership of the Chicago Immigrants' Protective League and the US Children's Bureau to champion social wages for mothers and children of all races and nationalities, delivered without stigma and condescension (pp. 69, 104, 168–169).[6]

For many full-rights feminists throughout the twentieth century, no woman had real freedom or real choice until the larger structures of power and inequality were upended. That analysis applied to women in the sex trades as well as to the millions of other women who had to use their sexuality to keep a job, increase their chances of a higher tip or a living wage, or secure a just portion of the family wage.

García suggests that full-rights feminists ignored the voices of the marginalized. Yet, the activists I follow pressed repeatedly at home and abroad for extending fair labor standards to those historically excluded and paid close attention to the needs of household workers, paid and unpaid. They sought to broaden the definition of "worker" to encompass the unwaged, the marginalized, and the invisible. Instances of their actions along these lines abound in the book. At the same time, they did not conceptualize those in the commercial sex trade as sex workers – a perspective that, as García explains, did not emerge until the 1970s.

Full-rights feminism was not a club closed to the marginalized. Rather, it was (and is) a feminist *tradition* that the marginalized – including those marginalized because of sexual behavior – adopted and helped to shape. *For the Many* closes with a discussion of the Argentinean sex workers union, *Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de la Argentina*, to illustrate the rise of full-rights female-led movements among precarious and stigmatized groups since the 1970s (pp. 409–414). It is important to note too that, before the 1970s, a large number of the women I profile – Frieda Miller, Pauline Newman, Mary Dreier, Frances Kellor, Rose Schneiderman, Maud O'Farrell Swartz, Pauli Murray, and others – rejected reigning sexual orthodoxies and chose intimate relationships with other women. Recognized as a transgender pioneer today, Murray cross-dressed as a teenage boy in her youth in the 1930s

[5]In the 1930s, as detailed in *For the Many*, full-rights feminists continued the early twentieth-century challenge to eugenic thought. Among America's fiercest opponents to fascism, they led campaigns in the unions and government to discredit its virulent anti-Semitism and racism. On the environment versus heredity debate, see Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York and Oxford, 1990), pp. 60–66.

[6]Anya Jabour, *Sophonisba Breckinridge: Championing Women's Activism in Modern America* (Urbana, IL, 2019), p. 163. On Abbott, see also *The Grace Abbott Reader,* edited by John Sorensen with Judith Sealander (Lincoln, NE, 2008); and Felice Batlan, "Déjà vu and the Gendered Origins of the Practice of Immigrant Law: The Immigrants' Protective League", *Law and History Review*, 36 (2018), pp. 713–769.

and struggled throughout her life to understand her sexual desires for other women and her sense of herself as a man.

For the Many is not meant to be a comprehensive account of twentieth-century US feminism or of women's transnational activism. I am not even sure either is possible. What I hope is that it illuminates some forgotten corners of our past, challenges some outmoded and limited ways of thinking, inspires more attention to labor and social democratic traditions in the US and around the world, and opens up possibilities for other scholars.

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