

**Individual Success is Not Liberation:
A Critique of #GIRLBOSS and Neoliberal Feminisms**

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Introduction

First coined by Nasty Gal founder Sophia Amoruso in her 2014 book *#GIRLBOSS*, the term *#GIRLBOSS* has achieved widespread recognition and popularity. In the present day, it is associated with a particular brand of feminism. This *#GIRLBOSS* feminism posits that empowerment for women lies in the achievement of professional success. Rather than critically examining and attempting to dismantle oppressive and exploitative systems such as capitalism, *#GIRLBOSS* feminism focuses on helping women find ways to be successful within those systems. It is similar to neoliberal feminism, which is based on neoliberal ideas of individualism and the self as capital, and posits that gender equality will be achieved by women assimilating into masculinity in order to reach the top of the proverbial professional ladder. Both ideologies claim that success is an individual pursuit, and the only thing standing in a person's way is themselves. They also each espouse an ideal woman who is relentless in pursuit of the life she desires, and is willing to work very hard to achieve it. The main difference between the two ideologies is that while *#GIRLBOSS* feminism ignores the reproductive and domestic sphere, neoliberal feminism treats reproduction, child rearing, and housekeeping as work a woman can do to appreciate her individual value and achieve success.

Both ideologies support individual women in their individual efforts to achieve success, but neither is truly liberatory. *#GIRLBOSS* and neoliberal feminism assume that all women have

the same amount of resources and privilege, ignoring intersectionality and the multiple marginalizations that may make it harder for some women to achieve professional success than others. Rather than questioning the status quo and critically examining oppressive and exploitative societal systems, #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism accept capitalism, and focus efforts on helping women become the exploiter rather than the exploited. They glorify and romanticize working, turning everything—even leisure and family—into work that can be used to advance the self. In order to achieve true liberation, we must turn away from #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism, and toward a feminism that critically examines and attempts to dismantle oppressive and exploitative systems of power.

In this essay, I will offer a detailed critique of both #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism, arguing that they are not truly liberatory based on their glorification of work, refusal to critically examine capitalism, ignorance of intersectionality, individualism and devaluation of humanity, and devaluation of femininity. I will then discuss several alternatives to #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism that are more truly liberatory.

Although achieving individual success in a fulfilling career may feel like liberation under #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism, one is not truly free until the systems creating and perpetuating oppression have been dismantled. #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism can never be truly liberatory, because they accept without question the systems that oppress women and other marginalized groups and argue that an assimilation into masculinity is the best way to achieve equality. A truly liberatory feminism must acknowledge intersectionality and multiple marginalizations, value compassion and care, and work toward the dismantling of oppressive societal systems, especially capitalism.

Glorification of Work

One of the prominent recurring themes in *#GIRLBOSS* is the glorification and romanticization of work, even at the detriment of other aspects of one's life. Amoruso claims that her book will inspire readers to love working, telling them that by the time they're finished reading, they'll "be practically screaming, 'Where is some work!?! I want some work and I want to do it now!'" (11). She tells readers, "If you're a #GIRLBOSS, you should want to work harder than everybody else" (Amoruso, 165). Additionally, a key component of Amoruso's illustration of the #GIRLBOSS is that "she gets what she wants because she works for it" (11). The idea that one should love working, and must be willing to work very hard to get what one wants underlies both #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminist ideologies, and implies that equality and respect must be earned through work, rather than being inherently deserved.

Amoruso often romanticizes working and making work the central focus of one's life. She writes that in the early days of Nasty Gal she was "addicted to [her] business, and to watching it grow everyday" (Amoruso, 28). She claims that her lifestyle during this time was "devoid of any necessity to shower, get dressed, or look good" (Amoruso, 28). Amoruso describes spending all of her time working, to the point that she neglected basic self care tasks. Working so much dehumanizes her; she becomes "a machine" (Amoruso, 33). Amoruso also refers to herself as a "workaholic" (28). The use of this phrase implies that Amoruso is somewhat aware that her devotion to her business reached an unhealthy level, but at no point does she tell her readers that these behaviors are not ones that they should emulate. Instead, she links them to her success and advises her readers that in order to succeed, work must become the most important thing in their lives. Amoruso goes on to say that during the early days of Nasty Gal, "I completely dropped out of everything for two years. From the time I woke up until the

time I went to sleep, eBay was my entire world” (36). Work took over every aspect of her life, leaving room for nothing else. Instead of being regretful of this and acknowledging the other parts of life that she missed out on, Amoruso is proud of this fact and presents it as an integral part of her success.

In addition to making work the center of her own life, Amoruso believes that work should also be the center of the lives of her employees, even if they are not being fairly compensated or if doing so would negatively impact their health. She describes her exploitation of her employees’ labor multiple times, framing it as dedication and passion on the part of her employees. The models she used when Nasty Gal was starting out as an eBay storefront were paid “with a post-shoot trip to Burger Road” (Amoruso, 29). One model “was a mere sixteen when she began modeling for [Amoruso]...eventually graduating from high school while continuing to be paid in hamburgers and \$20 bills” (Amoruso, 42). At no point does Amoruso admit that these wages were too low. Amoruso also relays an anecdote in which one of her employees became ill to the point of vomiting in her car during her commute, yet still came to work that day and completed all of her assigned tasks. Amoruso is clearly impressed by this behavior, but does not seem to find it unnecessary or unhealthy. She tells her readers that this employee is “the kind of #GIRLBOSS I want next to me in the trenches” (Amoruso, 41). This statement implies that she believes that one aspect of being a satisfactory employee is a willingness to prioritize work over one’s physical health.

Amoruso also glorifies working through holidays. She tells the story of her warehouse manager quitting shortly before Black Friday, and herself and her other employees picking up the slack, beginning on the evening of Thanksgiving and finishing at 4:00 a.m. on Black Friday. She writes, “at 2:00 a.m., as I was counting and recounting bustiers...I was just thankful to have

employees who were willing, even enthusiastic, to step up and work hard” (Amoruso, 161).

Amoruso echoes common talking points about what it means to be a good employee. One must not only do their own job well during the workday, but also the jobs of others after hours. The word enthusiastic is especially important here. In order to be a #GIRLBOSS, it is necessary not only to allow your labor to be exploited, but also to be excited about this exploitation.

Like #GIRLBOSS feminism, neoliberal feminism, according to Catherine Rottenberg, “encourages women to labour ceaselessly on themselves in order to produce, maintain and appreciate themselves *as* human capital” (1079). In both versions of feminism, women should be working in order to maximize their individual value. Although Amoruso does not use the technical terms that Rottenberg does, the advice she gives her readers is clearly aimed at helping them appreciate their value as capital. In neoliberal and #GIRLBOSS feminism, every facet of life is an opportunity to work toward success and increase individual value.

Under neoliberal feminism, even family life and childrearing can be viewed as work and approached with the goal of advancing the self. Rottenberg explains that neoliberalism lacks a way to recognize and value reproduction and care work, and as a result, neoliberal feminism deals with this by subsuming these things into general work. Neoliberal feminism views domestic labor in the same way it views labor outside the home: as something that can be leveraged for advancement if done correctly. Although #GIRLBOSS feminism largely ignores reproduction, child rearing, and family life, Amoruso does mention it once. In the introduction to the second edition of *#GIRLBOSS*, Amoruso describes her business as a child she has birthed and raised. She writes, “They say that when you have a kid, it feels like your heart is outside of your body... That’s how I feel about Nasty Gal” (Amoruso, x). This quote echoes Rottenberg’s claim that neoliberal feminism conflates work and domestic life. Amoruso merges the spheres of

domesticity and work, making work primary in multiple aspects of her life. Referring to her business as her child also implies an intense level of devotion, effort, and commitment.

Throughout the text, Amoruso encourages her readers to cultivate a similar relationship to their work, arguing that this is the best path toward being successful and fulfilled.

Refusal to Critically Examine Capitalism

A fundamental flaw in both #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism is that they accept without question the unjust systems and institutions of society, especially capitalism.

#GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism are based on the idea that capitalism is a true meritocracy, in which anyone can succeed if they work hard enough (Roivainen). Ida Roivainen describes neoliberal feminism's version of empowerment as "the mastery of confidence that leads to capitalist success" (4). In this context, empowerment is not liberation, but rather the ability to succeed within an exploitative system. Under neoliberal and #GIRLBOSS feminism, women become empowered when they are able to become the exploiter rather than the exploited.

Amoruso's vision of the #GIRLBOSS perpetuates the capitalist need for constant growth and improvement. Amoruso writes that "as a #GIRLBOSS is ambitious by nature, I'm going to assume that once you get a job, you want to do it well and eventually move up" (Amoruso, 160). The #GIRLBOSS must always be focused on the future. There is no space for enjoying the present moment; one must always be thinking about how to top it. Amoruso does acknowledge that the current American economic system is not perfect, but she largely seems to believe that capitalism in its current form is a net positive. She explains that capitalism "is a kind of alchemy. You combine hard work, creativity, and self-determination, and things start to happen. And once you start to understand that alchemy, or even just recognize it, you can begin to see the world in

a different way” (16). She conceives of capitalism as a tool that one can use to obtain a desired outcome, rather than an oppressive system in which it is difficult for those who do not come from privileged backgrounds to succeed.

This perspective fails to acknowledge the ways in which capitalism and the oppression of women are related. Even if one attains a high level of professional success, the ability to work outside the home and participate in capitalism is not liberation. Angela Davis argues that even when women are granted access to social production and work outside the home, their oppression is reinforced rather than lessened, even as this access can offer advantages. She writes, “While work outside the home has furnished women with important advantages, most have had to accept its reaffirming and amplifying effect on their oppression” (Davis, 170). No matter how successful professional women become, they will not be able to escape oppression while treating capitalism as a legitimate system and attempting to succeed within it. For Davis, “*full* emancipation of women must ultimately also transcend the goal of her full and equal participation in a new and reorganized system of production” (149). Women’s liberation goes beyond attaining an equal opportunity to labor under capitalism, which is the final goal of #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism. Davis writes, “The concrete promise of female liberation is bound up inextricably with the overturning of the social forces fundamentally nourished by her oppression” (160). Women will be oppressed as long as capitalism exists. Therefore, #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism are inherently ineffective. They cannot liberate women, because they accept and even endorse one of the major social systems responsible for the oppression of women. Women cannot be liberated from oppression unless society is also liberated from capitalism.

Ignorance of Intersectionality

In addition to uncritically accepting capitalism, #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism tend to ignore intersectionality. These ideologies are based on white, cisgender, heterosexual, middle or upper-middle class women, and overlook other marginalizations that may stand in the way of women achieving professional success. Rottenberg discusses the ways in which neoliberal feminism is divorced from “key liberal political goals such as equality, justice, and emancipation” (1075). She adds that neoliberal feminism “effectively defangs feminism of its oppositional force by individualizing and responsabilizing women” (Rottenberg, 1080). In these ideologies, inequality is viewed as an individual issue, rather than a systemic one. This type of feminism necessarily disregards the socioeconomic and cultural systems and institutions that act on the individual and affect their life chances.

Throughout #GIRLBOSS, Amoruso makes comments that show a lack of understanding of her own positionality and privilege. She tells her readers, “if I can pull any of this off, so can you,” (Amoruso, xiii), but does not acknowledge any of the unearned advantages that might have made it possible for her to do so. Early on in the book, Amoruso implores her readers, “Don’t ever let the Man get to you” (6). Presumably meant to be a pithy feminist imperative, this statement obscures the fact that Amoruso herself is the proverbial Man, and she is teaching her readers how to become the Man, as well. Girlboss, the digital platform Amoruso created, is described as being “designed for women and girls pursuing the lives they want to lead” (Amoruso). There is a glaring omission of the systems and institutions that act on each individual, and even the interpersonal relationships that affect the trajectory of one’s life. Instead, readers are told that they have the individual power to achieve the success they desire.

Both neoliberal and #GIRLBOSS feminism champion the idea of individual success. They operate under the assumption that each individual woman is in complete control of her own success, and if she works hard enough and wants it badly enough, she will achieve her goals. The importance of being self-made comes up often in #GIRLBOSS rhetoric (Roivainen). To be a #GIRLBOSS, one must work harder than everyone else, want it more than everyone else, and never ask for help. This emphasis on being self-made ignores the systems and institutions that act upon the individual, and assumes that everyone is on an even playing field. The ideologies of #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism promote the idea that if someone is unable to achieve success it is a personal failing, rather than the result of an exclusionary system.

This perspective is necessarily un-intersectional, as it willfully ignores the multiple marginalizations and disadvantages nonwhite, noncisgender, nonheterosexual, non-wealthy women face. According to Rottenberg, multiple “well-known neoliberal feminist manifestos” (1079), such as Ivanka Trump’s *Women Who Work* and Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean In*, “are unabashedly exclusionary” (1079), as they only address women who are like them: white, cisgender, heterosexual, and wealthy. Rottenberg explains that since it is women of color, poor women, and immigrant women who often perform the domestic labor that allows professional women to succeed, “neoliberal feminism helps to (re)produce and legitimize the exploitation of these ‘other’ female subjects” (1079). The message of #GIRLBOSS feminism and neoliberal feminism is that women can defeat the patriarchy and gain equality simply by working hard and maximizing their value. There is no acknowledgement or analysis of the patriarchy as systemic, and no effort to dismantle the systems that uphold it. By encouraging women to use the domestic labor of less privileged women in the pursuit of individual success, neoliberal and #GIRLBOSS feminism perpetuate the oppression of women with multiple marginalized identities.

Like #GIRLBOSS, many books geared toward helping women succeed in the workplace claim that gender inequality in the professional sphere exists because women are inherently deficient of the qualities that make men successful. The blame and the solution for gender inequality is laid solely on the shoulders of women, with little analysis or even acknowledgement of the systems and institutions that create and perpetuate this inequality. As Patti Giuffre and Gretchen R. Webber explain, “individual women are expected to transcend structured gender inequality by making better choices instead of pressing for institutional changes” (137). They go on to state that this subgenre of self-help books “discourages collective action and solidarity among women” (Giuffre and Webber, 137). Neoliberal and #GIRLBOSS feminism have a vested interest in upholding capitalism, and therefore they guide women away from the real feminist work of collective, bottom-up liberation in favor of a focus on individual success.

Individualism and Devaluation of Humanity

#GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism focus on the individual on an interpersonal level as well as a societal one. According to Rottenberg, “The ideal female subject is not only conceived of (and incited to conceive herself) as human capital but the self is produced as well as produces itself as ‘an individual firm’ or business enterprise, where all activities and practices are understood as investments that aim to appreciate the value of the self-as-firm” (1074). Rottenberg references Ivanka Trump’s *Women Who Work*, which she claims urges women to develop interpersonal relationships “not as ends in and of themselves but instead as part of the self-as-business’s capital-enhancing process” (1078). Self-care and hobbies, activities that are generally intended to facilitate leisure and relaxation, are also transformed into work and an opportunity to increase individual value (Rottenberg). Individual women become businesses, and

everything they do, including interacting with other people, becomes an effort to increase profit and raise the bottom line.

Amoruso advocates for ignoring the humanity of employees and associates in favor of the bottom line. Her advice for getting a raise is to “skip the personal sob stories. The only factor that affects your chance of getting a raise is whether or not you’ve earned it. It doesn’t matter if your car broke down or that your landlord’s raising your rent. Those facts are not your boss’s problem. All she needs to know is that you’re kicking ass, like a #GIRLBOSS should” (Amoruso, 111). The statement that the only factor that determines whether an employee receives a raise is the quality of their work ignores the possibility of bias on the part of the boss and implies that one should not bring their humanity and life experiences to work with them. This is not necessarily an inaccurate picture of how the world works, but I argue that instead of accepting it, as Amoruso does, one should question why employers do not value the humanity of their employees, and why one’s value as a person is often reduced down to the profit they can generate.

Amoruso does emphasize several times that part of being a #GIRLBOSS is being kind and polite to those one interacts with, but the rationale behind this advice is always that it will aid personal advancement. She states that one should treat their peers and subordinates well, because their superiors will take note of this and are more inclined to hold employees who are pleasant to be around in a positive regard (Amoruso). Similar to Rottenberg’s explanation that neoliberal feminism sees interpersonal relationships not as holding inherent value but rather as opportunities for advancement, Amoruso tells her readers that they should be kind, not because others inherently deserve to be treated with kindness and respect, but because it may help them achieve their personal goals.

Kate Grosser and Lauren McCarthy argue that in addition to reducing the self to a business venture and framing interpersonal interactions as actions taken to advance this venture, neoliberal and #GIRLBOSS feminism prioritize corporate growth and individual advancement over collective liberation. They explain that efforts to achieve women's equality are often supported by the claim that the empowerment of women workers will benefit corporations (Grosser and McCarthy). The priority is the bottom line, rather than moving toward an equitable and just society. One notable example they provide is feminists urging governments to take action against domestic violence by emphasizing its negative impact on productivity and social welfare costs (Grosser and McCarthy). Although this example falls outside of the professional sphere, it clearly shows the ways in which neoliberal feminism prioritizes capitalist growth and profit over the safety and security of women. One could argue that this is simply a strategy used by feminists who are prioritizing the safety and security of women to get others to take action on this issue. But even if this is the case, the problem remains that people, organizations, and corporations in power only begin to care about issues negatively impacting marginalized groups when it begins to affect their bottom line. The humanity of others is less important than profit.

Devaluation of Femininity

As previously mentioned, much of #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminist rhetoric claims that women face gender discrimination and inequality in the workplace because they do not possess the masculine qualities necessary to achieve professional success. Both #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism encourage women to be ideal workers. The ideal worker is supposedly gender neutral, but its traits are distinctly masculine, and it is often imagined as a man (Giuffre and Webber). Many of the books that Giuffre and Webber include in their study claim that

women are at a disadvantage at work because they engage in “self-sabotage” (140) by not meeting the standards of the ideal worker and adopting the appropriate masculine traits. This language places women at fault for their experiences of discrimination and inequality in the workplace and also implies that femininity is the reason women have a more difficult time achieving success.

Many #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminist arguments hinge on the idea that women should be treated equally in the workplace because they are capable of adopting the traits and mannerisms of male workers. Giuffre and Webber claim that the books included in their study “advise women to be less like a ‘natural’ woman in order to be successful” (142). They explain that neoliberal feminism tells women “to be more like a man. Be tough, do not get your feelings hurt, dominate meetings, do not tell people about your weaknesses, and stop asking questions, instead, start giving answers” (Giuffre and Webber, 145). They conclude that although some authors also state that women have unique strengths that can be leveraged in the workplace, this advice “suggests that women are inferior” (Giuffre and Webber, 142). In this context, empowerment becomes “a disguised form of sexism” (Giuffre and Webber, 142). Davis explains that many arguments for women’s liberation and equality are based on the fact that they can be like men, rather than the fact that women are valuable in and of themselves. She writes,

In efforts to debunk the myth of the woman as an exclusively emotional being, an equally abstract position has been too often assumed. The abstract negation of ‘femininity’ is embraced; attempts are made to demonstrate that women can be as non-emotional, reality-affirming and dominating as men are alleged to be. The model, however, is usually a concealed ‘masculine’ one (Davis, 166).

Women assimilating into masculinity and gaining access to production in a capitalist economy is not equality.

The idea that women deserve equality because they are capable of assuming the traits of the ideal (male) worker is another example of #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism placing the onus on individual women to achieve success and equal treatment for themselves. The books in Giuffre and Webber's study claim that "women should change their behaviors to better align with how men behave at work because men control the 'rules' of the game" (147). This perspective assumes that the game and its rules are legitimate, and that women are the problem because they are not playing it correctly. In doing so, it reinforces the idea that women are inferior to men, and that masculine traits and behaviors are an aspirational standard that women must emulate in order to achieve equality. According to Giuffre and Webber, "The discourse in this advice bolsters men's power, blames women, and leaves structural inequality unchallenged" (152). #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism blame femininity for the oppression of women and accept without question the societal systems and institutions that actually cause it.

While traditionally feminine personality traits are devalued and discouraged by #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism, physical femininity is encouraged and even required. Writing about choosing an outfit everyday, Amoruso tells readers, "Putting in effort is exactly what you should be doing. You should get dressed for your life. I don't care if the only place you have to go is the post office: Get dressed, #GIRLBOSS, and let your freak flag fly" (Amoruso, 225). Although she later talks about not appeasing the male gaze, Amoruso's statement here perpetuates the idea that women must always put effort into their appearance in order to be taken seriously. Even if one's actual appearance is not hyper-feminine, the meticulous attention that must be paid to it is largely associated with femininity.

In order to be taken seriously, women must display masculine personality traits while maintaining an attention to their appearance that is generally not required of men. Women need to behave “more like men (but not too masculine) to demonstrate they are valuable and worthy employees” (Giuffre and Webber, 144). The #GIRLBOSS is “encouraged to show herself as an independent and ambitious ‘working girl’--even a feminist—who, at the same time, conforms to traditionally feminine conduct such as beauty routines, fitness goals, and cleaning” (Roivainen, 17). According to #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism, women must act more like men in order to be accepted and advance in the workplace, but they must also conform to societal standards of feminine beauty. Roivainen’s explicit mention of cleaning as “traditionally feminine conduct” is also worth noting. Women must learn to act like men, but they also cannot completely forsake traditional gender roles and norms. In addition to being successful professionally, they must perform domestic labor, as well, something their male counterparts are generally not expected to do. #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism seem to accept that women are required to do more labor in order to succeed, rather than questioning a system that puts certain groups at a disadvantage based on an arbitrary categorization.

Even when feminine personality traits are accepted in the workplace, it is generally not with the intention of making a space more equitable. Giuffre and Webber explain that the few authors they studied who believed that feminine traits should be embraced in professional settings “did not say that workplaces should include women in order to be egalitarian or engage in social justice; rather, they argued that more ‘natural’ feminine attributes in workers will help the bottom line” (150). Traditionally feminine personality traits are only acceptable when they provide an opportunity to increase value and profit.

Alternatives to #GIRLBOSS and Neoliberal Feminism

Once we have elucidated the fundamental flaws in #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminisms, and established that they are not an effective path toward liberation, we must turn our attentions toward other possibilities. In this section I will discuss three different but complementary visions of feminism that are focused on embracing compassion and care and critically examining capitalism and other oppressive systems.

A truly liberatory feminism must acknowledge and prioritize the inherent humanity and value of all people. Donna King offers a vision of feminism that prioritizes compassion and care, and questions “the core American imperative that says we must strive to be the best” (53). She argues that instead of focusing on winning the race to the top, feminism should create space for women to slow down and rest, which she refers to as “letting go” (King, 53). She is concerned by the societal standards that encourage constant productivity and growth, even at the cost of personal and communal well being (King). For King, capitalism is a major force behind these standards, and her brand of feminism requires critically engaging with capitalism and questioning its necessity, rather than uncritically accepting the current system as the way things are. King also argues that feminism should center compassion and care. She writes, “Activism can take many forms, and humanizing the global political economy and revitalizing a feminist commitment to a society based not on striving and ‘success’ but on compassion and care may be just what is called for at this historical moment” (King, 57). Although they may not be useful in rising to the top of exploitative systems, embracing the compassion and care King describes and centering them in activist efforts can result in a feminism that recognizes and prioritizes the inherent value of all people and works toward true collective liberation.

Truly liberatory feminism should encourage women to achieve success and obtain leadership positions not by embodying the characteristics of the ideal (male) worker, but by prioritizing and enacting the compassion and care that King describes. Tina Brown explains that women have unique ways of knowing that have historically been dismissed by those in power, and argues that women in leadership positions should make use of these ways of knowing and the knowledge borne of them, and in doing so lead with compassion and care, rather than force. She goes on to explain that “Salvation doesn’t lie in pursuing traditional male paths of ejaculatory self-elevation. In drawing on women’s wisdom without apology and pushing that wisdom forward into positions of power, we can soothe our world and, maybe, even save it” (Brown). Although Brown does not explicitly question or critique neoliberalism, and her examples are of women leaders in the corporate and political world, the reasoning behind her argument that women should embrace and prioritize compassion and care is not that doing so will help corporations profit or the country to be more powerful, but rather that it will make the world a better and safer place to live.

The primary goal of a truly liberatory feminism must be liberation for all women, and it must acknowledge and prioritize intersectionality. Davis emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in efforts to liberate women from oppression. She states that the efforts of women to gain access to the workforce should be accompanied by efforts to raise awareness of the exploitative nature of a capitalist economic system. She writes, “An effective women’s liberation movement must be cognizant of the primacy of the larger social revolution: the capitalist mode of production must be overturned, like the political and legal structures that sustain it” (Davis, 173-4). Dismantling capitalism will not automatically eradicate sexism, misogyny, and other social inequalities and systems of oppression, but as long as capitalism

exists and the primary goal of mainstream feminism is finding a way to succeed as an individual within it, complete collective liberation will never be possible. We must imagine more, not only for ourselves, but for others.

What King, Brown, and Davis' visions of feminism have in common is the imperative to critically examine the way things are and imagine new ways of being. They question societal conceptions of success and deprioritize corporate and economic advancement. Unlike #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism, which focus on climbing the ladder and achieving individual success, these authors question the ladder and the society that built it. The goal of their feminism is not to overcome barriers, but to remove them. By taking a critical view of the status quo and prioritizing compassion and care, both for the self and others, King, Brown, and Davis' feminisms benefit not just individual women, but all people.

Conclusion

As long as #GIRLBOSS and neoliberal feminism is dominant, women and other marginalized groups will be unable to achieve true equity and justice. In order to make meaningful progress toward liberation, we must adopt a feminism such as the ones that King, Brown, and Davis describe, where capitalism and other oppressive systems are critically examined, and where women are not pressured to assimilate into masculinity and embody the ideal (male) worker, but rather are celebrated and supported as they are. A truly liberatory feminism must place empathy and care at the center of analysis and action, and must be motivated by a collective desire to free all people from the social and economic systems that hold them back, rather than an individual desire to obtain a position of greater power within these systems. Instead of individual advancement, feminism must prioritize collective liberation.

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