

In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism, by Sara R. Farris

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Book Reviews

In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism



Sara R. Farris

Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 272 pp.

In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism, by sociologist Sara R. Farris, is an important and timely contribution to the fields of sociology, gender and women studies, and migration studies. Farris, over five chapters, both introduces the concept of femonationalism and makes a very compelling argument about it as an ideological formation.

The author traces the genealogy of right wing parties' co-optation of the language of women's rights and feminism in order to advance their anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, and xenophobic agendas, in the Netherlands, France, and Italy. Farris clearly lays out how the dichotomous framing of "brutal, savage Muslim men vs. Muslim women victims" reproduces the problem of sexism as one that belongs exclusively to non-Western societies. She continues by arguing that this depiction further renders non-Western societies as dangerous to Western values of "equality" between men and women, while simultaneously shedding light on the patriarchal and misogynistic characteristics of the political parties that use these arguments.

The book investigates the institutionalization of gendered integration policies and their role in normative reproduction of non-Western Muslim women immigrants as providers of affect/care labour. The author gives a brilliant and much-needed materialist intervention into, and analysis of, the economic capital that can be derived from the demonization of Muslim men as violent, and the victimization of Muslim women, "subjected to a backwards culture and savage men" from which they need saving. The author also builds on the tension and hypocrisy of using feminism as a tool to liberate Muslim women immigrants from the cultural chains of

patriarchy. She argues here that anti-immigrant right-wing parties address women as mothers rather than individuals, resituating women's core role and value in society as mothers—a concept feminism quarrelled with historically and refuted.

Farris provides a discourse analysis of the media campaigns of neoliberal governments and the nationalist right-wing parties in question. Through this discursive analysis, Farris deconstructs the gendered nature of civic integration programs and analyzes how the theme of gender equality became central to civic integration. Each of Farris's five chapters theoretically engages with theories of nationalism, post-colonial feminist studies, and critical race studies. Noticeably, after engagement with the last in the fourth and fifth chapters, an obvious and profound engagement with Marxist theory and analysis are used to elucidate the political economy of femonationalism.

Once situated within migration studies, the book's most striking intervention is a historical reminder of Europe's existence as a fortress long before the surfacing of the border crisis—now named "refugee crisis"—that emerged with the flow of Syrian refugees escaping war to seek refuge in Europe. It is also a reminder that the didactic violence of integration policies and institutional violence against migrants existed before the "Syrian refugee crisis." But mostly her most brilliant intervention is in shedding light on how women's rights and feminist ideologies of gender equality are being used and co-opted by European right-wing parties and consolidated by femocrats in order to further discriminate against Muslim and non-Western immigrants. Farris takes us back to the roots of this instrumentalization through a critique of affect/care labour, such as domestic labour, and by showing how

discussions of care labour have been historically central to the critique of patriarchy as exploitation of women. As right-wing parties use immigrant Muslim women's liberation as a way to sugar-coat their anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant agendas, though their cultural and economic policies they resituate female Muslim immigrants as care bearers of the nation who should provide the affect labour from which European women were "emancipated." The book reminds us of the racialization of women's emancipation: as Western women broke the bonds of care labour and went out to join the open market of work under capitalism, the burden of care labour fell on the shoulders of women of colour – in this book's case, Muslim women immigrants and non-Western female immigrants.

Reading the gendered analysis in this book, one finds that it resonates with the tools used by international non-governmental organizations to support female refugees, especially noticeable today in Syrian refugee camps, particularly those in the Middle East. "Empowerment" centres, for example, teach sewing and make-up classes along with other skills for employment deemed "appropriate for the female gender."

Although the author deftly illustrates the consequences of the hegemonic way in which female Muslim immigrants are being produced, she engages little with examples that rupture this hegemonic portrayal; neither does she engage with any form of resistance by female immigrants towards these policies or the normative gender roles imposed on them. Through this, she also falls into a pattern common to post-modernist approaches to tackling Islamophobia, failing to include the voices of resistant Muslim women immigrants in the analysis. Even though she engages with Muslim women

immigrant femocrats who support right-wing parties, she flattens their subjectivities. A different, multi-layered engagement and approach with these Muslim women immigrant politicians would have provided a more nuanced take on the roots of their politics. In addition, an engagement with critical gender governance literature would have expanded and further demonstrated the co-optation of women's rights and neoliberal attempts to absorb feminism.

Most importantly, it is refreshing to read this epistemological intervention on Islamophobia in Europe and its convergence with gender and neoliberal governments and economies. The problematic framing Muslim women as victims in order to further exploit them is clearly reiterated and powerfully demonstrated. A particularly well-made and well-supported argument in this book revolves around the precarity of migrant lives and their production as illegal aliens as having a base in the accumulation of capital stands out very strongly in her book.

In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism, with its theoretical sophistication and solid arguments, is highly recommended for graduate students who are interested in sociology, gender studies, feminism, critical geographies, migration studies, affect labour, Marxism, nationalism, neoliberalism, and capitalism.

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Go Home? The Politics of Immigration Controversies



Hannah Jones, Yasmin Gunaratnam, Gargi Bhattacharyya, William Davies, Sukhwant Dhaliwal, Kirsten Forkert, Emma Jackson, and Roiyah Saltus

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017, 186 pp.

Between July 22 and August 22, 2013, the UK Home Office carried out Operation Vaken, a campaign ostensibly aimed at increasing "voluntary returns" of undocumented migrants. As part of the campaign, vans were

driven through some of the most "ethnically diverse" neighbourhoods in London, displaying a billboard saying, "In the UK illegally? GO HOME OR FACE ARREST." The Go Home vans