

Who is Silvia Federici?

Federici is a feminist activist, writer, and academic/teacher, and has recently been described as “one of the most important political theorists alive today”. She has participated in numerous international movements and social struggles, including feminist, education, anti-death penalty, anti-nuclear and anti-globalization movements, and most recently, in the Occupy movement. Her decades of research and political organizing accompanies a long list of publications on philosophy and feminist theory, women’s history, education, Africa, culture, international politics, and the worldwide struggle against capitalist globalization.

Federici’s work is rooted in feminist, autonomist, and Marxist traditions, and emphasizes the centrality of people’s struggle against exploitation and of autonomous forms of social co-operation as driving forces of historical and global change. In this work, she has been international and historical in her perspective, insisting that attention to the international division of labour and development/underdevelopment on a world scale are essential for developing anti-capitalist politics.

In 1972, Federici was involved in founding the International Feminist Collective, the organization that launched the international campaign for Wages For Housework (WFH). With other members of Wages for Housework, like Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, and with feminist authors like Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, Federici has been instrumental in developing the concept of “reproduction” as a key to class relations of exploitation and domination in local and global contexts, as well as central to forms of autonomy and the commons.

After a period of teaching and research in Nigeria in the 1980s, Federici co-founded the *Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa*, an organization dedicated to generating support for the struggles of students and teachers in Africa against the structural adjustment of African economies and educational systems.

From 1987 to 2005 she taught international studies, women studies, and political philosophy courses at Hofstra University, New York, publishing a number of works in this field, including the acclaimed *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Autonomedia, 2004), which has been translated into several languages – and which you can access in PDF from CLP’s website. The book details the relationship between the European witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the rise of capitalism, highlighting the ongoing relationship between enclosure and accumulation in capitalist development.

Federici argues that we are currently undergoing a renewed cycle of primitive accumulation, by which everything held in common - from water, to seeds, to our genetic code - becomes privatized in what amounts to a new round of enclosures. Her most recent book is *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Common Notions/PM Press, 2012), which is an anthology of her writing since 1975 (and also available as a PDF on the CLP website). The book is organised into three sections: the first as part of her work with the Wages for House Work campaign and in dialogue with the feminist movements of the time; the second covering social reproduction since 2000 and the rise of the Movement of Movements; and the final part on the reproduction of the commons and communing. The constant optic running through her work is the centrality of social reproduction to production, and women’s labour at the heart of that reproduction globally.

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