

# ♀ WOMEN DEMAND WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK ♀

By Paige Durrant

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Women all over the world become wives and are confined to the “responsibilities” of a wife. These responsibilities are not seen in the workplace or in society where their male counterparts are encouraged to engage in. Instead, these responsibilities are linked to the home where the wife and her family reside.

While it is not prominent in today’s society, this issue made noise during second wave feminism or during the 1970’s. Around this decade, the International Wages for Work Campaign was ignited. The International Wages for Housework Campaign was a feminist global social movement, which grew out of the International Feminist Collective in Italy in 1972. This movement was founded by Italian-born Silvia Federici and American feminist, Selma James. Women all over Europe and America advocated for the validation and recognition of the woman. Patriarchal standards not only put women at a disadvantage in the workplace, but also at home. This movement was a way to battle this confinement.

Why is this such a big issue? Some may say that this idea is preposterous, but here is why it deserves more attention. In her book *Wages Against Housework*, Silvia Federici argues that a regular job requires a social contract in the form of wages which gives the impression of a fair deal and that you and your boss are equal. However, according to Federici, the case of the housework situation is qualitatively different. Federici states, “The difference lies in the fact that not only has housework been imposed on women, but it has been transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character” (2). Women are held to these social standards and expectations and are taught that it is of their nature to do housework. They are conditioned to believe that submitting mentally and economically to the husband is normal, but also being a maid, cook, gardener, handyman, babysitter and therapist are also part of being a woman. Federici also points out that it is intentionally done so women can think it is a natural part of their construct and women would have no choice but to accept their unwaged work. The indomitable pressure that women experience in a

place where the man is the head, is seen in almost every culture.

This is related to WGS because it presents a different struggle that women face. This issue surrounds the topic of capitalism and patriarchy. For decades women have been fighting for equality and risking their lives to see a new world, but their work is never done. While there may be noticeable social changes for women, there are still a lot of issues that go unseen. Protests and marches and laws are seen in the public, but there are still issues that remain in private.

While Federici may have used wages to bring light to the matter and its seriousness, I believe that taking it into literal action is a possible approach. Pay women for housework! Being a wife and a housewife comes with a lot of emotional, physical and mental strain. Women become overworked, depressed, angry, resentful, and constrained due to this experience. Another solution can be to have a literal agreement between both spouses to divide the work. A woman who acts as a housewife should be given at least minimum wage for her work. To bring attention to this, the movement should rise again. Women should make headlines on the issue, write articles and take action at home. As far as the contract aspect, it should be informal because there still needs to be something that separates it from a regular job. This should be a temporary matter. It should go on until men and society learn to appreciate the acts of women and also hold themselves accountable for the intentional normalization of our roles in this world.

This effort will not be an easy one. I believe there are a lot of interest groups that would be willing to support the cause such as NOW, UN Women and Association for Women’s Rights in Development. This will make it possible for the issue to reach a bigger platform. The wages that these women will receive comes directly from the husband, and if there is further issue with that, then the spouses can seek help from the government. Let women be independent in society and at home.