

Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World

Leslie Kern

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In *Feminist City*, Leslie Kern shows how cities keep women “in their place” through hidden, understated means while favoring men’s needs and experiences.

Wide-ranging urban plans often come together to influence how women move through city spaces. From the inability of public transportation to accommodate strollers, to daily public harassment and the perpetuation of rape myths that shift blame for harassment onto victims, women find themselves trapped by the social norms imbedded in urban setups.

Kern’s assertions are accompanied by germane stories and evidence, ranging from cities’ landscapes to their access to clean public restrooms. The pink tax, which forces women to make expensive decisions for safety reasons, is discussed in depth: women end up paying fares for cabs or buses, for example, when walking or cycling would be cheaper and healthier, or feel forced to decline night shifts that offer better pay in order to be home before dark.

In eye-opening detail, the text argues that the privatization of security and heightened police presences endanger women of certain demographic groups, while marketers, who present condo living as the safest way to exist in a city, ironically turn women into accomplices in gentrification, forcing low-income women out of safer areas and into environments that are more dangerous.

Kern outlines what a feminist city would entail, but acknowledges there are no easy paths to achieving these goals. Her text is approachable and based in thorough research; it avoids single-sided viewpoints. In the absence of one-size solutions, Kern calls on everyone to consider differing perspectives and needs when addressing the problems of urban planning.

Filled with important data and statistics, *Feminist City* calls attention to often overlooked and multifaceted dangers and aggressions toward women in urban settings.

TANISHA RULE (July / August 2020)

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