



Rosemarie Fike: Women and Progress

THE HUMAN PROGRESS PODCAST EP. 28

BY SEAN KINNARD

Lesson Overview

Featured podcast: [Rosemarie Fike: Women and Progress | The Human Progress Podcast Ep. 28](#) with Chelsea Follett.

Rosemarie Fike is an instructor of economics at Texas Christian University and a senior fellow at the Fraser Institute. Her research focuses on understanding the effects of different types of economic institutions on women's status and lives.

Why is this an important issue? In the interview, Fike says, "People who tend to care about gender issues and issues that are important to women often overlook the benefits that markets can provide women and the benefits that they have provided women historically." She aims to create better and more precise measures of economic institutions.

ROSEMARIE FIKE

Senior Fellow, Fraser Institute



Warm-Up

Imagine that the older women you know—your mother and her friends, your aunt, or your grandmother—cannot choose the career they want. Visualize a world in which they needed the permission of husbands, brothers, or fathers to travel abroad, move to a new city, or do simple financial tasks like opening a bank account.

How would these changes affect you, your family, and your friends?

Take a few minutes to reflect on how life would be different if the women in your life did not have these fundamental economic freedoms.

- How would the emotional lives of women be different in such a society?
- What would be some of the costs of these laws? Think about the costs to women and the social, political, cultural, and economic losses due to such laws.
- Practice perspective-shifting. Why do you think such laws are passed in the first place? What might be the rationale for these laws?
- Assuming you want to change such laws, what would be the best way to do so?

Write a paragraph describing how such changes would affect your life. Be specific. Share your writing with a partner. Reflect and discuss together.

Today you will learn about recent trends in women's economic freedom in different regions of the world. Before we begin, let's examine our own society:

- What were some important milestones in women's liberation in the United States? Do a quick search to find these facts:
 - The year in which women first gained the right to vote and hold office everywhere in the United States
 - The year in which the birth control pill was made legal in the United States
 - The year in which Title IX was passed, which outlawed discrimination against girls and women in American schools
- Use your background knowledge. What are some examples of social norms and laws that limit women's freedom in the United States?
 - Gender roles
 - Unequal pay
 - Limited political representation
 - Violence against women
 - Restrictions on reproductive rights
 - Victim blaming
 - Beauty standards and objectification

Questions for Reading, Writing, and Discussion

Watch the podcast from 33:51 to 39:21 and answer the following questions:

- What is the definition of legal “gender equality”?
- Which regions of the world today have pervasive barriers to women’s economic freedom?
- Which specific restrictions did Saudi Arabia change that gave women more economic freedom? List at least three.
- According to Rosemarie Fike, what was the major result of this change in Saudi Arabian law?
- What is the current global trend in gender equality under the law? Explain in two to three sentences.

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Extension Activity/Homework

Stage a Debate

Many countries have workplace regulations to protect workers, such as limiting the hours that a minor may work each week. In that context, some governments place restrictions on women’s occupations and work schedules. These restrictions, while uncommon in many Western countries, may follow deeply held cultural and religious values of these societies.

Have a debate about the following proposition: “Given diverse cultural perspectives, to what extent should governments be able to restrict the economic freedom of their citizens?”

You may not support any restrictions on a person's economic freedoms. Or you may believe that the state should be able to step in to help shape the labor market and workplace. The goal of the debate is not to win. The goal is to promote understanding, explore different viewpoints, and flex your intellectual muscles.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:

You are the moderator of the debate. Therefore, you set the rules, objectives, and tone of the dialogue.

Before beginning the debate, we suggest you work with the students to establish norms for respectful and inclusive dialogue. You may call them “norms” or “rules” for debate. Write these on the board or a big piece of paper. Examples include: “One person speaks at a time,” “Listen and pay attention,” and “Be mindful of how long you’re talking. Give others a chance to speak.” Students are usually quite good at making such rules.

Make it clear that all opinions will be heard and respected, regardless of whether they align with personal beliefs. Emphasize that all participants must recognize that people have diverse cultural perspectives and backgrounds.


During the debate, focus on commonalities. It’s likely that most students will agree on universal principles of human rights. Highlight shared values and goals that can unite people.

Foster an atmosphere of empathy and active listening. Encourage students to try to understand each other's viewpoints and perspectives. Remember, giving students the opportunity to practice engaging in civil discourse is one of the objectives of the activity.

Emphasize that claims must be backed up with reasoning. In other words, it's not enough just to make a statement. Students must state the reason why they believe something.

Instructions

- Form groups of four to five people. Ask one student to be the leader of each group. To practice, ask students to discuss the following proposition, “Dogs make better pets than cats.” Ask students to practice taking turns debating the proposition. Remind them to 1) follow the norms they established, and 2) back up their claims with reasons.
- After 5–10 minutes, stop the discussion and debrief with the students:
 - Which ideas—from either side—were new to you?
 - Which idea most resonated with you? Why?

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- What surprised you about this debate?
 - Part of civil discourse is the ability to disagree respectfully. How did you and your classmates behave civilly to each other? What could you have done to make the debate format more congenial and productive?
 - Ask the group leader to begin the “real” debate with the proposition, “Given diverse cultural perspectives, to what extent should governments be able to restrict the economic freedom of their citizens?”
 - After 5–10 minutes, stop the discussion and debrief the process with the whole class. Use the questions in number 2 above to frame the debrief.