**READINGS for Point 3, Women’s Seminar, July 2021**

1. Presentation of the topic: Difficulties in forging united fronts in the women's and feminist movements (ultraleftism; intolerance; cross-class alliances, how?
2. Excerpts from FI World Congress texts (1979, 1991, 2021) on our methods of struggle, specifically alliances
3. Excerpts from Ernest Mandel, *Revolutionary Marxism Today*, on united front (3 separate PDFs)
4. Section: “Conclusions: Creating alliances, creating politics of intimacy” from the article “Which ‘Mountain’ Must Feminism Climb?: Challenges for Feminist Alliances between Migrant and Autochthonous Women 's Groups in the Basque Country”
5. Abridged version of the article about Latin American feminist indigenous women’s world view and political proposal of community feminism: “Acercamiento a la construcción de la propuesta de pensamiento epistémico de las mujeres indígenas feministas comunitarias de Abya Yala” (Constructing the proposal of epistemic thinking of indigenous community feminist women of Abya Yala)
6. “From Social Reproduction Feminism to the Women’s Strike”, by Cinzia Arruzza, final chapter of *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, Tita Bhattacharya, ed. (1816 words)
7. Chapter 2, “The Political Context for Women of Color Organizing” of the book *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*, which details the struggle of abortion rights in the U.S. by women of color. (ENGLISH ONLY so optional) separate PDF
8. Selected presentations at the March 2019 conference “Feminist Alliances” (ENGLISH ONLY, no subtitles available and therefore optional):
   1. Chiara Saraceno: <https://youtu.be/HcWfDtoek3g?t=4842>
   2. Mieke Verloo: [https://youtu.be/HcWfDtoek3g?t=6019](https://youtu.be/HcWfDtoek3g?t=6019" \t "_blank) (until 2:02:00)
   3. Q&A Session: [https://youtu.be/HcWfDtoek3g?t=8642](https://youtu.be/HcWfDtoek3g?t=8642" \t "_blank) (until 2:48:00)

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**Presentation**

One of the central tasks we have in any movement is to always try to create different expressions of unity, fostering political debates among participants and strengthening their democratic structures. This implies different kinds of alliances, both internal and external.

We have pinpointed three types of alliances the women’s movement needs to make: 1) those that can be forged inside the movement itself, particularly with a view to creating a united front, that is, a class-based alliance inside the movement; 2) those that can be created between the feminist and women’s movement with other social organizations in struggle; and 3) those that may happen inside or outside the movement with bourgeois or liberal forces around concrete points.

This topic in the seminar will look at the difficulties we face to forge these kinds of alliances and how we have managed to overcome them (or not), in accordance with the situation of each country and specific conditions. These include intolerance among feminists with different positions; the application of “feminist-ometers” that de-legitimize the efforts of others; the scattered nature of some struggles and/or demands of different sectors of the women’s movement; the specific forms of oppression women are subject to for different reasons (class, ethnicity, race, abilities, age, migratory status, sexual orientation, etc.) that divide women; state repression and/or selective repression; vanguardism in the movement; and the use of violence within the movement itself, just to name a few.

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**Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women’s Liberation**

**Resolution, 11th World Congress, 1979**

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**Our Methods of Struggle**

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3. The dominant organizational form of the women’s movement has been all- female groups. These have emerged in virtually all arenas from the schools and churches to the factories and trade unions. This expresses the determination of women to take the leadership of their own organizations in which they can learn and develop and lead without fear of being put down or dictated to by men or having to compete with them from the start.

Before women can lead others they must throw off their feelings of inferiority and self-deprecation. They must learn to lead themselves. Feminist groups that consciously and deliberately exclude men help many women to take the first steps toward discarding their own slave mentality, gaining confidence, pride, and courage to act as political beings.

The small "consciousness raising" groups that have emerged everywhere as one of the most prevalent forms of the new radicalization help many women to realize that their problems do not arise from personal shortcomings, but are socially created and common to other women.

If they remain inward-turned and limit themselves to discussion circles as a substitute for joining with others to act, they can become an obstacle to the further political development of the women involved. But they most often lay the groundwork for women to break out of their isolation for the first time, to gain confidence, and to move into action.

The desire of women to organize themselves in all-female groups is the opposite of the practice followed by many mass Stalinist parties that organize separate male and female youth organizations for the purpose of repressing sexual activity and reinforcing sex-stereotyped behavior- i.e., the inferiority of women. The independent all-female groups that have emerged today express in part the distrust many radicalizing women feel for the mass reformist organizations of the working class, which have failed so miserably to fight for their needs.

Our support for and work to build the independent women’s liberation movement distinguishes the Fourth International today from many sectarian groups that claim to stand on Marxist orthodoxy as represented by their interpretations of the resolutions of the first four congresses of the Third International. Such groups reject the construction of any women’s organizations except those tied directly to and under the politicaI control of their party.

To those "Marxists" who claim that women’s liberation groups organized on the basis of women only divide the working class along sex lines, we say it is not those fighting against their oppression who are responsible for creating or maintaining divisions. Capitalism divides the working class-by race, by sex, by age, by nationality, by skilI levels, and by every other means possible. Our job is to organize and support the battles of the most oppressed and exploited layers who are raising demands that represent the interests of the entire class and who will lead the struggle for socialism. Those who suffer most from the old will fight the most energetically for the new.

4. The forms through which we work can vary greatly depending on the concrete circumstances in which our organizations find themselves. Our tactics are dictated by our strategic aim, which is to educate and lead in action forces much broader than ourselves, especially the decisive forces of the working class, to help build a mass women’s liberation movement, to strengthen a class-struggle wing of the women’s movement, and to recruit the best cadre to the revolutionary party.

Factors that must be taken into account include the strength of our own forces; the size, character, and political level of the women’s liberation forces; the strength of the liberal, Social Democratic, Stalinist, and centrist forces against whom we must contend; and the general political context in which we are working. It’s a tactical question whether we should organize women’s liberation groups on a broad socialist program, work through existing organizations of the women’s liberation movement, build broad action coalitions around specific issues, work through trade-union commissions or caucuses in other mass organizations, combine several of these activities, or work through some altogether different forms.

No matter what organizational form we adopt, the fundamental question to be decided is the same: what specific issues and demands should be raised under the given circumstances in order to most effectively mobilize women and their allies in struggle?

5. There is no contradiction between supporting and building all-female organizations to fight for women’s liberation, or for specific demands relating to women’s oppression, and simultaneously building mass action coalitions involving both men and women to fight for the same demands. Campaigns around the right to abortion have provided a good example of this. Women will be the backbone of such campaigns, but since the fight is in the interests of the working masses as a whole, our perspective is to win support for the movement from all organizations of the working class and the oppressed.

6. Our perspective of trying to mobilize masses of women in action can often best be achieved in the present period through united-front-type action campaigns, which mobilize the broadest possible support around concrete demands. This is all the more true, given the relative weakness of the sections of the Fourth International and the relative strength of the liberals and our reformist, class-collaborationist opponents. For many women and men, participation in the actions organized by such campaigns has been their first step toward support for the political goals of the women’s liberation movement. The united-front-type abortion campaigns in numerous countries provide an example of this type of action.

Through such united-front-type actions we can bring the greatest power to bear against the capitalist government and educate women and the working class concerning their own strength. Insofar as the liberal "friends" of women, the Stalinists, Social Democrats, and trade-union bureaucrats refuse to support such united campaigns for women’s needs, they will isolate and expose themselves by their own inaction, opposition, or willingness to subordinate women’s needs to their search for an alliance with the supposedly “progressive" sectors of the ruling class. And if mass pressure obliges them to support such actions, this can only broaden the mass appeal of the campaigns and increase the contradictions within the reformist and liberal forces.

As we have already seen so clearly around the abortion question, such united- front-type action campaigns are of particular importance in deepening the interaction between the independent women’s movement and the labor movement, since they put the greatest pressure on the labor bureaucracy to respond.

7. Because our orientation is to build a women’s movement that is basically working-class in composition and leadership, and because of the interconnection between the fight for women’s liberation and the transformation of the trade unions into instruments that effectively defend the interests of the whole class, we give special importance to struggles by women in the unions and on the job. Our aim is to organize women to actively participate in their unions and in the women’s liberation movement.

Here as elsewhere in capitalist society, women are subject to male domination, to discrimination as an inferior sex that is out of its “natural place." But the growing number of women in the work force and their deepening consciousness of their double oppression, have already brought significant changes in the attitudes of working women, strengthening their inclination to organize, unionize, and fight for their rights.

Women workers are involved in many struggles for general demands relating to the economic needs and job conditions of all workers. They also frequently raise the special needs of women workers such as equal pay, maternity benefits, child-care facilities, and preferential hiring and training. Both are central to the struggle for women’s liberation as well as to the working class in general. Such struggles and demands by women workers will assume a greater weight as the class struggle deepens under the impact of the economic crisis. They will have a greater and greater impact on the women’s liberation movement.

Most women who enter into such struggles do not think of themselves as feminists. They simply think they are entitled to equal pay for doing the same job as a man, or believe they have a right to be employed in some traditionally "masculine" line of work. They often protest vigorously that they are not feminists.

Working women who become involved in struggles on the job confront the same issues and conditions that have given rise to the independent women’s movement.

They often face sexist harassment and abuse which is organized and promoted by their foremen and supervisors. Even when it comes from their fellow workers, it is often the result of an atmosphere fostered by the employer. Women face the sometimes difficult job of fighting to convince the union to defend them against serious harassment and victimization by management personnel. They have to convince fellow workers that when they give women a hard time on the job, they are only doing the boss’s job for him, and playing into his divide-and-rule tactics.

As women begin to play an active role, to take on leadership responsibilities, to prove their leadership capacities to themselves and others, to gain confidence and play an independent role, they develop a greater understanding of what the women’s liberation movement is fighting for. The correct presentation of clear, concrete demands and objectives by the feminist movement is indispensable in reaching and involving millions of working women whose conscious political development begins as they try to confront their problems as women who must also work a job to earn a living.

**The women’s movement and feminism in Latin America**

**Resolution of women in Latin America – 13th World Congress 1991**

**Introduction**

Starting with a critical look at the XI World Congress resolution, “The socialist revolution and the struggle for women’s liberation”, this resolution aims to be a guide to action for our organizations in their central task of organizing a women’s liberation movement — alongside the masses of Latin American women, other feminist sectors and other revolutionary organizations — that can take its place and play a decisive role in the revolutionary process and in building a socialist society.

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24. The general dynamic of women’s lives today is: a) that more women than ever before are entering social and political struggle; and b), that they find themselves objectively in contradiction with their oppression. But in making the big jump from transforming these conditions into a political movement of women for their liberation, there are a series of political problems that have to be analysed and overcome:

a) The diversity of the demands of women in struggle

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b) Clientelism and paternalistic handouts

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c) The difficulties for the political participation of women workers

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d) The state’s attempts to coopt

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e) The predominance of sexism in the leaderships of the mass movement

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**III. Our orientation**

27. Confronted with any form of oppression, the only solution is the self-organization of the oppressed to fight it. The case of women is no different. It is the independent self-organization of women themselves that can impose reforms to the law and to current government economic policy, and changes in the social and political organizations of the masses, to improve their immediate situation and encourage and create better conditions for their continued struggle. On the basis of self-organization, as the fundamental foundation of their liberation movement, they can reach the numerical strength and political development necessary for having a favourable influence on future events, both today and after the revolution.

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29. To build this movement today, we have to start from the conditions, the forms of organization and the demands that women feel to be theirs, whether they are gender demands or not. Self-organization of women by social sector around their most pressing demands is an essential element in strengthening women socially, collectively and thus individually, creating greater possibilities for the development of consciousness of gender oppression, even though this is not automatic.

Undoubtedly, women’s struggle for their own demands will be closely linked to the struggles of all working people, even with the rise of their own political movement. In building this movement general class demands will combine with gender demands as the basis of unity. Nevertheless, this dynamic will certainly include ups and downs in the promotion of specifically feminist demands.

A better level of organization of the popular movement will encourage greater recognition of women’s struggle for their own demands. This is because a better level of coordination and unity not only means more chance of winning but also a higher level of politicization, the establishment of a more global basis for unity and an understanding of the need to organize in an ongoing way, not just for tackling one problem but a whole series of problems.

In practical terms, it also creates the possibility for a better division of labour within organizations of struggle and for giving more attention to seriously analysing their reality.

The coming together of forces whose objective is extending women’s consciousness of their specific oppression is more effective in reaching larger numbers of women.

But there is no mechanical relationship between the general popular movement and women’s advance. Women have to have their own political expression. And they will only succeed if there is a conscious effort in every movement to promote the growing discovery and politicization of gender oppression, which we can call the feminization of the demands, organization and political dynamic of the women’s movement.

30. In the very process of building the movement, different problems are raised:

a) Given the diversity of demands, which reflect not only different needs but also different levels of consciousness, we must take every opportunity to bring together struggles and establish a system of demands that can move towards the formation of an increasingly clearly defined political movement.

b) Given the dangers of clientelism and self-helpism, we have to reinforce the internal democracy of both the mass organizations in general and the political space and organizations for women, as well as ensuring democratic functioning in the women’s movement as a whole. On the other hand, the political nature of women’s demands should be emphasized — they cannot be met by charity — along with the absolute necessity of keeping the movement independent from the bourgeoisie and the state.

c) Despite the difficulties faced by women workers in terms of their political and trade-union participation, this should not lead to the conclusion that their involvement in the women’s movement is not central. The numbers of women who have gone into the labour market has meant that, despite all the obstacles to their participation, more women are active in trade unions than ever before. And when they enter into a collective process of consciousness raising and struggle around their oppression as women as well as workers, they advance politically more rapidly and consistently than other sectors because of their living and working conditions and their numerical concentration — in sum, their social situation.

d) Given the attempts of the state to coopt the women’s movement, particularly its feminist pole, in addition to strongly maintaining its autonomy for historical reasons there must also be political perspectives for the type of changes considered necessary from now on at governmental level. We should promote the following criteria for these within the movement. Distinguishing between two things: services that the state is obliged to provide with the greatest control on the part of the users; and a position of accepting or promoting the state organizing women (the example of the Women Today programme in Argentina). In the case of legislative proposals, it is more feasible to maintain the independence of the women’s movement in proposing or supporting this or that draft law. But at the level of the executive (ministries for health, justice, social or family welfare), the form of the relationship between the movement and particular state programmes is more complicated. If we demand a programme of maternity healthcare, for example, and win it, we cannot simply leave the state to determine its form, content and application. But neither can the movement take full responsibility for it. The criterion that we can adopt is proposals for and vigilance over such programmes, but without accepting direct responsibility for their functioning.

In the case where the left controls municipalities, the objective of its programmes should be to increase the possibilities for self-organization of the movement, as was done with the Glass of Milk programmes in many municipalities in Peru. The simple implementation of the programme, without women’s self-organization, will neither guarantee its future nor strengthen the women’s movement or the long-term objectives of the left itself.

e) Because of the prevailing sexism in the mass movements and their leaderships, mechanisms have to be established within them to increase women’s space and promote discussion — not only around concrete action proposals and demands, but also around the origins, manifestations and solutions to women’s oppression: that is, a theoretical discussion.

31. To enable this process to move forward, the feminist pole in the women’s organizations and movement has to be strengthened:

a) Strengthening the recomposition of this pole to include more women leaders of the mass movement so that they — along with the women of the autonomous groups, the non-governmental organizations, the political parties and the youth who today would like to get involved in this struggle — can forge a real vanguard of the whole women’s movement.

b) Establishing more opportunities for political and theoretical discussion in the vanguard through conferences, coordinations around concrete campaigns, publications, seminars, and so on.

c) Orienting this pole so that its priority becomes the relationship with the general women’s movement, so that it can:

• take advantage of each opportunity to put forward unifying gender demands;

• take advantage of each opportunity to unify the women’s movement;

• ensure the continuity of the movement;

• encourage reflection and theoretical production — a collective memory for the movement;

• develop independent alternatives to the proposals of the bourgeoisie and the state.

To do this there has to be the development of a political alternative within the feminist pole in alliance with other sectors which have a similar vision. If other revolutionary currents and parties which are today absent from this political elaboration become convinced of feminism this will also help the development of this alternative.

If the clearly feminist expressions of the women’s movement are weakened, in time the organization of the mass of women will also tend to be undermined. The mass sectoral organizations will tend to disperse or be manipulated for other ends, which implies a political weakening which will in time lead to an organic erosion.

**The New Rise of the Women’s Movement**

**Resolution, FI International Committee, February 2021**

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**5. What is our orientation and what are our tasks within the movement?**

We stand for building a broad mass inclusive movement and fight to preserve the broadest possible unity; however, this does not imply we do not fight for a political orientation for the movement.

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**5.2 Mass self-organized action**

This process of politicization and radicalization is also strengthened by the experience of grassroots self-organization, whether in the neighbourhoods, the rural areas, the workplaces or places of study. We therefore place the emphasis on collective action, organized by those concerned.

When campaigns are launched by small groups or collectives of feminist women, we fight to turn them towards the mass of women in the neighbourhoods, the workplaces etc by popularizing demands using appropriate means to reach out (leaflets, street theatre, flash mobs, open discussions, petitions, social media) and proposing actions (pickets, demonstrations etc) that are open to and encourage participation from all women.

We do not support or organize violent vanguardist actions that tend to exclude and alienate most women and keep them from participating in the mass movement, although neither do we support their being repressed by the state. Where contact with institutions is necessary, we fight for representatives to be democratically chosen and for them to be accountable through reporting back in a democratic forum to the women involved.

The proposal of the feminist/women’s strike enables such an orientation of mass action to address all women, those in the workplaces, in the informal sector, at home, by touching on all aspects of women’s lives in both productive and reproductive work. We call on men to support the women’s strike, by assuming – at least for 8 March – the invisible care work so that their partners, friends and colleagues will not be limited in their participation to all the actions planned during that day. In workplaces means participating in the strike in order to do that. As revolutionary Marxists we also explain, and hope to show in practice, the weight of collective action in workplaces in the fight to build a favourable relationship of forces.

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**5.4. Articulation with other social movements**

We must not fall into the trap of making a catalogue of movements as if the women’s movement is separate and unconnected from the workers’ movement, the climate movement, the peace movement, the revolutionary processes underway in Algeria and Sudan, movements against racism and more. Women are in the forefront of these movements and within them are raising the question of the place of women in them – for example challenging the sexual violence used against women.

It is necessary in the women’s movement as well as in all other movements to build links between all those who share the same aspiration: to change society so that it is organized in the interest of the many and not the few. This means pointing out how climate change, how racist and migrant policies, how imperialist wars, how austerity policies, how denial of democratic and workers’ rights, how discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ people affect women in particular and particularly severe ways and seeking to engage the women’s movement, or sections of it, in their actions.

It also means fighting in other movements, and in particular the organized workers’ movement and in a different way in the LGBTIQ movement, to show that women’s specific demands are also demands of those movements. We support the autonomous organization of women (in various forms) within the overall social, trade union and political struggles and organizations as a condition for egalitarian mixed struggles.

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**Conclusions: Creating alliances, creating politics of intimacy**

This paper has addressed the possibilities and difficulties for weaving alliances between autochthonous feminists and migrant women in Basque Country.

Specifically it has analyzed a metaphor that arose in one of the first group meetings between

autochthonous and migrant women regarding the ‘mountain’ as a metaphor of the feminist empowerment. The mountain image, instead of offering an anecdotal exemplification, constitutes an active metaphor expressing some of the complications when dealing with differences associated with a national origin and different experiences of being feminist.

Based on the three different positions analyzed above, it is possible to gather up some relevant proposals in order to create feminist alliances that take account the multiple positions and diversity experiences of being and life feminism.

In first place, future feminist alliances between immigrant and autochthonous women should be aware of the implications of the opposition that reproduces in everyday interaction colonial geopolitical boundaries. As postcolonial feminism suggests, it’s necessary to recognize different differences between women and oppressions that are attached to these differences- in order to weave multiple feminist projects in a diverse and multifarious fabric. At the same time, autochthonous women have to be aware of their built in privilege and how they define woman and feminist experience in terms of their own experience. Patriarchy does not manifest in the same way in different cultural and social contexts, and the oppressions and experiences of women in these contexts can take many different forms. The recognition of these experiences can be mutually beneficial in the identification of the relationships of power that are taking place in a particular context. In this sense, western feminism is just a form of feminism, and it can be improved by including the practices that women around the world have developed in order to survive and fight patriarchy.

As Audre Lorde warns, “ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women’s joint power. (1980: 117).

In fact, ‘race’ and gender do not add up to an easy, happy politics of alliance; they are often contradictory entities (Carby 1982; Chaudhuri, 1992). This can be seen from the numerous occasions like in the analyzed meeting where western women act which purport to be in the interests of women of ‘other’ cultures, but finally they end reproducing the patriarchal and colonialist practices of power that feminism seek to contest.

A second qualification is to keep in mind and don’t forget how “beyond sisterhood is still racism” (Lorde, 1979:70). To combat the racism the passion of anger is crucial to react against the deep investment that exist in forms of racism as well as sexism. In that sense, against the politics of happiness and requirement for docility of oppression, anger translated into action is a liberating and strengthening act against racism and any other oppression. As the migrant killjoy voice that doesn’t silence, in order to create alliances, speaking and disagreements are necessary, even if it involves risks and costs or if we fail to get through other people’s defenses. Anger is creative, opening possibilities against universality and homogeneity.

Finally, the possibility of alliances are possible only by the recognition of the unequal dialogue between different women. In that sense, for Audre Lorde (1980:115) is clear “It is not differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences”. This requires build up a different feminist ethical relation based on a more mutual engagement that recognizes not only the inequalities but also the privileges. In fact, according to Elizabeth Spelman (1988) talking about the differences means talking about the privileges.

Therefore, “it is a politics of intimacies, a politics of getting closer to others -not to wait until the migrant women go up and down the mountain but going to the encounter of the other that will enable the distance and differences between us and move the political terrain in which it is possible to speak an hear” (Ahmed, 2010:29). To that end, it is urged to unlearn the “violence of universalism” and hence to learn to speak to, and hear, different women in order through these engagements we could be displaced, moved or touched by others. As Nirmal Puwar (2004:77) states, the questions of our times, and I will add the core of the feminism nowadays, is “how the “other” can exist without making the other the same”.

In short, the construction of feminist alliances between autochthonous women and migrant women should take into account the different positions of power and privilege that affect women according to different trajectories while, at the same time, building a politics of intimacies and encounters that encourage ethical dialogue. Such dialog must assume “...that the dialogue itself does not lead to ‘grasping’ the truth of another, but allows a movement in-between” (Ahmed, 2010:33). Indeed, creating common articulations across differences need to be understood in relation to those temporary, evanescent and affective “in-between moments” of touch and being touched. As this paper pointed out in the beginning: “An otherness barely touched upon and that already moves away” (Julia Kristeva, 1991:3).

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**Toward the construction of the epistemic thinking of indigenous community feminist women of Abya Yala[[1]](#footnote-1)**

by Lorena Cabnal

Community feminist, Mayan-Xinka indigenous, Guatemala Amismaxaj

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I want to begin by saying that for me, community feminism is a re-creation and creation of feminist and cosmogonic ideological political thought, which has emerged to reinterpret the realities of the historical and daily lives of indigenous women, within the indigenous world.

This proposal has been developed from the thoughts and feelings of indigenous women who see ourselves as community feminists, in this case the Bolivian Aymara women of Mujeres Creando Comunidad and the Xinka women members of the Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María in the mountain of Xalapán, Guatemala. [We aim] to contribute to the plurality of feminisms constructed in different parts of the world, in order to be part of the continuum of resistance, transgression, and epistemology of women in spaces and temporalities, for the abolition of the ancestral and Western patriarchy.

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To be built, this feminism has had a series of preconditions, in which we recognize this transition through categories and concepts of diverse feminisms; it has invited us to look under our skin and inside our community coexistence in the traditional life of the native peoples, in a critical, radical, rebellious, and transgressive way, which has been fundamental for breathing life into it, recognizing ourselves as thinkers. From the moment that indigenous women see ourselves as epistemic subjects —because within the relations and interrelations of native peoples, we have the solvency and authority to question, criticize, and propose abolitions and deconstructions of the historical oppressions that we experience—, we can contribute enormously with our ideas and proposals for the revitalization and re-creation of new forms and practices, for the harmonization and fullness of life.

Our categories and concepts, which are still being built and strengthened, have been fundamental elements for being able to propose reflections in community organizational spaces, among indigenous women, women's movements, and feminists.

Spinning community feminist thought invites us to start this weaving process from sharing what for us is fundamental to name, without fear or hypocrisy, in a self-critical way, but also to recognize and appreciate when necessary to start from those experiences that enrich and nourish our paths.

To begin the reflections that I propose in this short document, I would like to say that some concepts and categories of analysis that we have constructed will be touched on here very summarily, and therefore will only be mentioned in passing, so that in dialogue, debate, and reflection of the organizations, communities, or cooperation, they can be expanded and shared.

1. **Ancestral native patriarchy**

Over time, our native cultures (their existence, ways of life, and territoriality) have demonstrated that they are thousands of years old. This is shown by the existence of physical elements such as ceremonial centers, temples, buildings, plazas, cities, codices, etc., where part of their material history is engraved and written in the form of glyphs, steles, walls, mosaics, and stones. On the other hand, very ancient cultural manifestations survive in people’s daily practices and non-material elements still present in daily life. Examples of this are the oral tradition, knowledge of the calendar (how to keep track of the days, their meanings, their relationship with the lunar energies for the cycles of planting and harvesting), and practices of native medicine.

In turn, Western positivist science has issued anthropological, sociological, archaeological, ethnological, linguistic, etc., theoretical statements confirming this age-old existence, in its academic documents.

Putting forward and rethinking the ancientness and foundational sacredness in the indigenous peoples has been part of the key for indigenous women who consciously see themselves as community feminists, so that we are able to disrupt ancestry, the ancient, what has always been immovable, and ask ourselves over and over again why it is sacred, why you must show unquestioning deep respect, and whether it has always been this way.

Having the audacity and daring, like a child peering into the dimensional door of ancient times at her ancestral culture, has led me to gradually increase my curiosity and doubt, to enter and begin to walk the path of the sacred. Sometimes I do this fearfully, sometimes weeping, and sometimes with indignation or curiosity. On this path I have my own questionings, affirmations, and personally it has led me to suspect, suspect, suspect. So I ask myself sometimes in silence, sometimes as a monologue, and I ask grandmothers and grandfathers, I listen to them, I talk to women in the community, I talk to women of other native peoples, and I live in the constant reminder of the thoughts of how I related to my Mayan and Xinka grandmothers, now ancestors, but also of how I relate and how women in the world relate to me, like my mother, aunts, midwives, elders, girls, and young women. Also, how indigenous men do it and then how we all relate to nature. All this has infused my life with reflections, transgressions and daring.

In this personal path where I am not looking for answers, but for suspicions, to rethink them, question them, confirm them, and propose them, I have begun to approach some reflections. I think that the indigenous nationalities and peoples of Abya Yala are original societies founded on millenary roots, based on their own philosophies and ancestral cosmogonic paradigms.

For me, all the integrality of the life of the original peoples lies in their philosophies —plural— because they have several worldviews, although they have common threads from practices that are recognized or connected throughout the territory of Abya Yala, even with peoples far away, from other continents. So, it is necessary to share that the native peoples have a plurality of worldviews; there is no single one with homogenous life and cultural practices. However, there are threads that connect this plurality, founding threads, among them, their principles and sacred values, that is to say, their cosmogony.

These principles and values, based, among other things, on complementarity and duality as two guiding values to seek balance between women and men and with nature for the harmonization of life, have led me to think about how, since its foundation, a construction of duality and complementarity based on heteronormative human sexuality is manifested.

This human sexuality is reflected in the construction of cosmic sexual thinking, where the stars also enter into the hetero-norm, some feminine and others masculine relate in duality among themselves, and in duality and complementarity with heterosexual humanity.

Women are conceived as complementary in the male whole, for social, biological, and cultural reproduction, which would entail assuming their responsibility together with men, whose established role would be those responsible for symbolic, material, and thought reproduction. This means that the two complement each other and can generate balance for the continuity of life and as a harmonic duality, in their relationship with nature, to maintain the cycles of generation of life of the peoples.

It has been possible to review, to look internally at how we interpret the indigenous world with eyes and feelings from inside ourselves as indigenous women and from a critical position, pointing out that our thoughts have been alienated by the thinking of Western feminisms and that therefore we constitute ourselves as women with reflections and acculturated actions. In this sense, the category "patriarchy" has been taken as a category that allows us to analyze within the intercommunity relations between women and men, not only the current situation based on unequal power relations, but how all oppressions are interconnected with the root of the system of all oppressions: patriarchy. From there also begins our construction of communitarian feminist epistemology, by affirming that *there is an ancestral original patriarchy, which is a millenary structural system of oppression of original or indigenous women. This system establishes its base of oppression from its philosophy that rules the cosmogonic hetero-reality as a mandate, both for the lives of women and men and of these in their relationship with the cosmos*.

This original patriarchy that configured roles, uses and customs, principles and values, was strengthened over time, and certain elements of analysis allow me to prove its manifestations: for example, wars among first peoples, who in disputes over different territorial problems, created the supremacy of victors over the vanquished.

These wars existed in history, and proof of this is what has come down to us as the great narratives in glyphs, ancient books, and stone inscriptions, which tell us of great feats and exploits of great lords, rulers, and warriors. Here is where I reflect: if men were warriors and went and made war against their neighbors, where were the women, what was their role? This sexual division of war also leads me to think about how the stratification of warrior castes, rulers, reigns, spiritual guides, sages, and peoples came into being.

The other important element of analysis is having power *over*, and this is manifested forcefully in the results of these internecine wars. So, I have to see the wars, the violence they generate, and the division of castes, the defeated peoples, and much more as elements that show that the power *over*, which comes from eminently ancestral patriarchal roots, is not linked to the historical fact of later colonization.

And it is precisely in this context that the debate about colonization as a historical, structural, transcendental event for the life of oppression of the peoples and of indigenous women in particular, which has to do with the whole onslaught of colonial penetration as a condition for the perpetuity of the multiple disadvantages of indigenous women, becomes necessary.

1. **Colonial penetration and the intertwining of patriarchies**

"Colonial penetration poses penetration as the introduction of one element into another and the colonial, as the invasion and subsequent domination of a foreign territory, starting with the territory of the body. How words and discourses are auditory forms that position themselves in the face of the discursive hegemonies of power. We can say that colonial penetration can evoke coital penetration, as the image of sexual violence, of colonial invasion. This does not mean that all coital penetration, or sexual penetration in general, is necessarily violent; it is not when it is desired, but no woman desires the violation of our bodies and no people wants colonial invasion."[[2]](#footnote-2)

With this we affirm that the original ancestral patriarchy is refunctionalized with the penetration of Western patriarchy, and its manifestations were contextualized in that historical moment, creating its own manifestations and expressions that are the cradle for the birth of the perversity of racism, then capitalism, neoliberalism, globalization, and more. With this I also affirm that there were previous conditions in our original cultures so that this Western patriarchy could strengthen and attack.

For community feminists, if we want to name patriarchy as a universal system of oppression present in all cultures of the world, we pose it from the following conception: **"patriarchy is the system of all oppressions, all exploitations, all violence, and discriminations experienced by all humanity (women, men, and intersex people) and nature, as a system historically built on the sexed bodies of women."**

Therefore, in order to position ourselves in the analysis of our situation and condition as indigenous women, we cannot start from the partiality, but from the integrality that this multiple patriarchal dimensionality implies in our lives.

1. **The original cosmogonic hetero-reality**

The original world view is the norm based in ethnic essentialism establishes that all human relations and of humanity with the cosmos are based on principles and values such as the heterosexual complementarity and duality of the harmonization of life. However, this constitutes the sublime ancestral imposition of the obligatory heterosexual norm in the lives of indigenous women and men, which is legitimized through spiritual practices that stipulate it as sacred.

The philosophical basis of the original world views (naming the cosmic elements: feminine and masculine, where one depends on, relates to, and complements the other) has been strengthened in these practices of hegemonic spirituality, thus perpetuating the oppression of women in their heterosexual relationship with nature.

That women are in complementary to men would lead to question their Sumak Kawsay or "Good Living," since this would be subject to men and in most heterosexual relationships that are established in the community and in their heterosexual relationship with the natural cosmic elements.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that **Sumak Kawsay**, or **Sumak Qamaña** in principle, is an ancestral world view paradigm that arises in the thinking of the first peoples of southern Abya Yala (South America), which in the last decade has received a strong political ideological impulse from the Southern Cone indigenous movements.

. . .

*Sumak Kawsay* is an ancestral paradigm that establishes its roots in the category of the view of the cosmos of the Andean peoples who propose life in plenitude, understood as a magnificent, sublime balance of the spiritual and material both inside and outside the community, for reaching the sublime. The strategic perspective of the community in harmony is to reach the sublime.[[3]](#footnote-3)

. . .

We find [here] several categories that support this ancestral paradigm: integrality, internal and external harmony, coexistence, being, life in plenitude, community in harmony, respect for the Pachamama, Mother Earth as the generator of life, economic self-sustainability, the Ayllu (where men and women are in equal conditions), the Ayni (reciprocity, therefore, the common good).

However, it is pertinent that I explain the initial reflection I had upon listening to and reading about the Buen Vivir approach. Because of both for the documents I read and the processes in which I have participated, I can argue that much of the approach is from a male world view; also, most of the exponents and heralds of the indigenous movement of the paradigm today "with property and epistemological authority" are men. . .

. . . the indigenous women from the ancient times to the present have not been in equal conditions in relation to men. In Bolivia, for example, in a march of indigenous peoples, people shouted slogans such as, "Sánchez de Lozada [a politician] is a son of a bitch," "Evo Morales is not president because he has no balls," "to humiliate a traitor in the eyes of his community, he must be dressed as a *chola* [woman]," "the man who does not keep his word looks like a woman."[[4]](#footnote-4) For her part, Chilean feminist Victoria Aldunate mentions, "I have seen ceremonies where the indigenous man prays, and the indigenous woman, silent, kneels... Thus, little by little, I remember what the "*warmi pachakuti*," a group of women musicians in Bolivia, tell me. That the belief among indigenous and leftists here would be that they should not play instruments; that women dance and men play, because when women play, their breast milk dries up. ... It would seem then that women ‘desecrate’ masculine places."[[5]](#footnote-5)

To contextualize the oppression against women in the case of Guatemala in the Mayan people, I will point out that custom dictates that it is always the man who has his space within the community, while women do not. An example is the mandate that tells women, "Do not step on a man's feet" (we call it *mamush*), while men can step on women's feet.[[6]](#footnote-6) It is shameful for men that a woman gets to occupy the position of Mayordoma or Principala Mayor in the Xinka indigenous government because that has never been so; in the custom of the ancients that has always been the position of men, because women must to command men or the people.

The oppression manifested against women within our cultures and world views is something that must be questioned head on and named as it is: misogyny, expressed and manifested in the most remote and current daily attitudes and practices, against our bodies, our thoughts, decisions and actions.

Another reflection I want to share is with respect to the relationships manifested in the category of cosmogonic reciprocity, where Pachamama is the Mother Earth whose cosmogonic role is situated within a feminine cosmogonic heterosexual order, as the reproducer and generator of life. Begotten by Tata Inti: the father sun, the sun king, the fertilizing male. It establishes in this relationship something that should be noticed by community feminists, because of the position of power and superiority shown in the fact that the one above is male and the one below, fertilized, is female. Hence, much of the femininity with which we name hills, lagoons and mountains in our world views, ceremonies, and rituals is questionable.

The multidimensional manifestations of sexuality in this heteronormative reality cannot be expressed, because they are burdened by sanctions from the spiritual sphere, in the community and the family. This is one of the reasons why the majority of the native populations deny the presence and existence of lesbians and gays in their relationships, since in some cases it is stated that this "bad behavior is typical of Westerners, not of the indigenous peoples; if there are some indigenous people with this bad behavior it is because they have learned it from the whites and it is a colonial inheritance."

I believe that this reflection should lead us to think that relations between women and men are based on structural principles and values that in my indigenous cosmovision establish an oppressive duality; so, I do not see possibilities for the liberation of women's lives for the total cosmic harmonization, if we continue refunctionalizing ethnic fundamentalisms. These, in turn are legitimized with the femininity of nature and the masculinity of the stars, thus establishing a cosmic, heterosexual imaginary and a regulated sexuality: Mother Earth? Who fertilizes her? Father sun?

Designated by the cosmogonic heteronorma, indigenous women assume the role of caretakers of the culture, protectors, reproducers and ancestral guardians of that original patriarchy, and we reaffirm in our bodies heterosexuality, obligatory maternity, and the ancestral masculine pact that women in continuum are tributaries for the ancestral patriarchal supremacy.

1. **Situated historical victimization**

This is the position that is assumed and affirmed by some indigenous men and women: that all the evils of the indigenous peoples and nationalities in Abya Yala are born from 519 years of colonialist invasion. For those who adopt this approach, this historical fact marks the root or birth of all our historical and current oppressions. Expressions such as "Yes, there are some macho indigenous men, but that is what we are trying to change, because it was colonialism that brought it and dominated us and that is why we are like that now, but not all of them, just some."

This category of analysis helps me to question why we assume a victimizing position in history, because more than five centuries have passed and we have not been able to return to the "state of peace and harmonization that governed the life of the people before the invasion."

To start from the 519 years of colonial penetration would be to deny that my ancestral culture has patriarchal roots. This is also fundamental because with this affirmation, all the results of patriarchal colonialism are by no means absolved of historical responsibility; on the contrary, what is posed is how patriarchy is revitalized as a universal system of oppression.

1. **Racism felt, internalized, reproduced**

Racism, from my perception as an indigenous woman, is like a root; this root is historical and structural of patriarchal origin, and with the colonialist penetration invaded the lives of native peoples of Abya Yala and of women in particular.

It was born, thickened and nourished in the colonial period, then strengthened in the conformation of the structure of countries and republics, where it has created and continues to create conditions for its hegemonic existence, to continue to sustain the domination and subjugation of peoples, through Western institutions and male laws.

I will then approach racism as the historical and structural oppression that is derived from the system of all oppressions, patriarchy, and by attacking the ways of life of the original peoples, began to institute a new hierarchical order of difference as supremacy, power, and control.

In this sense, the next generations of indigenous peoples born into this new hierarchical and symbolic order were born with racialized bodies, whose thinking and activity would be as oppressed men and women in the face of (under) white, male oppressors.

The intention of racism through colonization was so strategic that it managed to lay the foundations for the lives of indigenous women to be submerged in perpetual disadvantage, just because they are women. This colonizing effect has continued to be part of our lives and is rooted in our bodies and minds, which is why it is important for me to question our *situated historical victimization* in order to transcend internalized racism and enable us to see it in our cultural construction, otherwise, most of what we are doing for its eradication will be a partial, because we look at it externally. I think that proposing the process of *conscious internalized deconstruction* invites us to remove the consciousness of oppression and invites us to liberate ourselves, to recognize that it is necessary to eradicate naturalized and embedded racism, to create and recreate multidimensional thinking as wealth. It invites us to transcend situated victimization to become political subjects, thinking and acting, from an individual but also collective vision.

Understanding and posing this thought has been extremely complex and difficult for me, but also necessary for promoting emancipatory and liberating thought about indigenous women’s historical and internalized oppressions.

Talking about racism from academia, from a theoretical standpoint, and from analysis and exogenous concepts, is causing some indigenous women and men to challenge, to rethink ourselves, and to recognize ourselves as subjects with epistemic rights, to create our own thinking and thus to establish new paradigms that allow us to transcend oppressions and involve others in this responsibility of profound transformation that is the co-responsibility of all, to promote justice, equity, peace, and a full life.

1. **Recovery and defense of our body-land territory!**

We take this approach on board in principle as a political slogan, and then give life to it through contents that weave it as a communitarian feminist proposal from the Xinka women. It implies the conscious recovery of our first body territory, as an emancipatory political act coherent in a feminist way with "the personal is political": "what is not named does not exist."

Assuming the individual corporeality as one's own and unrepeatable territory makes it possible to strengthen the affirmation of one's existence of existing and being in the world. This sparks self-awareness, which gives an account of how this body has lived in its personal, specific, temporal history, the different manifestations and expressions of patriarchy, and all the oppressions derived from them.

Recovering the body to defend it from the historical structural onslaught that attacks it becomes an indispensable, daily struggle, because the territory of the body has been for millennia a territory disputed by patriarchies, to ensure their sustainability based on and in women's bodies.

Recovering and defending the body also implies consciously provoking the dismantling of the masculine pacts with which we coexist; it implies questioning and provoking the dismantling of our feminine bodies to free them.

It is an approach that invites us to recover the body to promote life in dignity from a specific place, to recognize its historical resistance and its transgressive, transformative, and creative power.

It begins with the recovery of the cosmic bodily memory of our female ancestors, to weave its own history from its particular bodily memory, and how it decides to relate to others.

She feels, thinks, decides, and acts by internalizing new practices such as autoeroticism, the enjoyment of sexual dimensionality in freedom, pleasure, art, the word, leisure and rest, inner healing, rebellion, joy...

It is a feminist proposal that integrates the historical and daily struggle of our peoples to recover and defend the land, as a guarantee of concrete territorial space, where the life of the bodies is manifested. This is one of the reasons why community feminists in the Xalapán mountains have waged the struggle against mining, because the expropriation of the land by the hegemonic patriarchal capitalist development model is seriously threatening the relationship of the land that we, both women and men, have with life. It has established private property and legal ownership as a guarantee to ensure that it can reign in a specific place.

The process of expropriation of land-territory must be analyzed from the point of view of how it was more forcefully established with colonial penetration, based on the dispossession and massive extraction of indigenous peoples’ natural goods. This seriously threatened indigenous women’s situation and conditions with regard to the well-being provided by nature, for leading their lives.

To this historical process of oppression against nature and its goods is added the current neoliberal extractivist system that, with its Western vision of development, aims to "improve people’s lives," with strategies of community participation and involvement in the extractivist work to alleviate their conditions of poverty. It is also necessary to review how some development cooperation and government agencies, in fostering a new developmentalist current based on the exploration and exploitation of natural resources as an autonomous process of the people, create foundations, organizations, and committees for promoting community development based on the economic logic of domination.

I do not defend my land territory only because I need natural resources to live and leave a dignified life for other generations. When putting forward the idea of recovery and historical defense of my territory-body-earth, I assume the recovery of my expropriated body to generate life, joy, vitality, pleasure, and the construction of liberating knowledge for decision-making, and this power together with the defense of my territory-earth, because I do not conceive of this woman's body without a space on earth that dignifies my existence and promotes my life in fullness. Historical and oppressive violence exists both for my first body-territory, as well as for my historical territory, the land. In this sense, all forms of violence against women threaten this existence, which should be full.

Likewise, all transnational corporations generate a form of violence against the earth when they rush to extract its natural goods to produce commodities and profits, whose objective is to promote war, the economic power of gold, and the biotechnological transformation of beings.

In the last decade the defense of land and territory has increased as a political slogan of Abya Yala continental indigenous movements; important struggles have taken place where communities have risen to defend what historically belongs to them. However, a contradiction within the territorial defense movements is the fact that women who live on the land territory live in conditions of sexual, economic, psychological, symbolic, and cultural violence, because their bodies are still expropriated.

This is why we Xinka women have initiated a historical process of defense of our territory and bodies; that is why we took a public stand before our indigenous authorities for the eradication of violence against women. At the same time, we have defended the territory in the mountains against the 31 licenses for exploration and exploitation of metal mining because we understand the harmonization among each of these energies for promoting life with dignity, and because any form of exploitation of natural resources is a form of violence against the land and against women and men who live on it.

1. **Liberating Cosmovision**

This is a proposal of how we understand, see, and coexist with the world from a liberated point of view. Its content is spun with elements that promote cosmic equity in all the integrality of life; it is a dynamic and cyclical spiral; it is open to deconstructions and constructions. Its symbols promote liberation from historical oppression against women's sexed bodies and against historic capitalist oppression against nature, but, at the same time, evoke and invoke women's ancestral resistances and transgressions.

It recovers the femealogy of our female ancestors, names them, recognizes them, and legitimizes their knowledge, resistances, and wisdom. It recognizes women ancestors from other territories and invokes their energy to strengthen the struggle against all oppressions.

It establishes spaces for evocation and invocation from and for women, connecting us with thinking and feeling energies that revitalize us for the struggles and joys. It promotes creation, art, recreation, leisure, rest, and wisdom of thought.

Evokes voices and silences that intentionalize the action of freedom for energetic connections with the cosmos.

It creates libertarian symbols with feminist content, integrates a new imaginary of spirituality for a transgressive practice.

Our community feminism is still spinning, still weaving; it is an epistemology that is being configured as a new paradigm of feminist ideological political thought to contribute to the proposals of counter-systemic struggle that feminism and social and indigenous movements of struggle have already begun.

Having dared, having dared to walk this path of darkness, of lights and voices, has led me to feel, as my Mayan *queq'chi* grandmother used to say, that each one is born with her own *cha'ím*, her own mission, her own star for the path of life. Writing is to remember them, and for me it is also a recognition of the indigenous women ancestors who have passed away, thinking that the world is like this, and that we women were born to suffer.... It is a recognition of the grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, and transgressing friends whose ancestral and daily energy, every day and night, makes us stronger, more rebellious and more joyful!

1. **Spinning in colors, with others from wherever we are**

This thread of thought, word and community feminist action has led me to see the importance of weaving thoughts with other women, be they indigenous women of the diverse native peoples, or "Western" women, because I believe that it is in the interest of all of us to provide spaces and meetings to reflect, to dare to dismantle, and to collectively build transgressions and proposals for a new life.

I think that as long as we listen to each other, recognize each other in our differences and rethink how to build thinking, feeling, and respectful dialogues, we will be able to continue gathering threads from wherever we are. This will happen as long as we coherently make our actions intentional against patriarchies and against the hegemonies that surround us in our own bodies, in our beds, in the community, in the street, in the city, and in the world. This action is not only for women: it invites men, partners, indigenous brothers, Westerners, and solidarity cooperation to reflect on the contributions they make to social struggles and peoples, whether political or economic; whether they re-functionalize, transform, or aim for abolition.

I would like to state that this short article intends to contribute a little more to rethinking and reflecting on the different anti-hegemonic and anti-patriarchal actions that we do and where we do them from. I also want to express my political intent when I express my ideas, not to impose them and take them for final conclusions, but to share them, so that they can be discussed among the different critical feminisms. Also, because to the extent that we can recognize our starting points for abolition and transformation, we will recognize ourselves in that feminist political power for the construction of a new emancipatory project, and we will generate possible actions for full lives for women, whether we are in the mountains, the community, the jungle, the city, somewhere else where the sun goes down, the West.

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10 **From Social Reproduction Feminism to the Women’s Strike**

Cinzia Arruzza

In the fall of 2016, Polish activists called for a massive women’s strike, which managed to stop a bill in Parliament that would have banned abortion. They were inspired by the historic women’s strike against wage inequality in Iceland. The Argentinian activists of Ni Una Menos also adopted this tactic in October 2016 to protest male violence. Following the mass participation in these strikes, feminist grassroots organizations started coordinating internationally to promote an international day of mobilization in November 2016, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. On November 26, 300,000 women took to the streets in Italy. The call for an international women’s strike on March 8 grew organically from these struggles: it was initiated by the Polish activists who had organized the women’s strike in September and, over the course of the months, managed to extend to around fifty countries.

In the United States, the idea of organizing a women’s strike originated from a specific set of considerations.

The mass nature of the Women’s March on January 21, 2017, indicated that the conditions for the rebirth of a feminist mobilization were perhaps in place. At the same time, the march also exposed the structural limitations of the kind of liberal feminism that has become hegemonic over the past decades. This brand of feminism showed its true face during the Democratic Party primaries, when the Bernie Sanders campaign became the target of a constant attack from liberal feminists supporting Hillary Clinton, who argued that it would be antifeminist to vote for Sanders and that women should unite under the banner of the “women’s revolution” embodied by Clinton. At the presidential election, however, a majority of white women who voted preferred to vote for an openly misogynistic candidate rather than the alleged champion of women’s rights.[[7]](#footnote-7)

While plain racism may explain part of this vote, it does not tell the whole truth, for it still fails to explain why Clinton’s alleged feminism didn’t appeal to these women. One way to address this issue is to raise a very simple question: Who has concretely benefitted from the kind of liberal feminism Hillary Clinton represents?

According to the sociologist Leslie McCall, a woman with a college education in the 1970s, on average, earned less than a man without a college education. In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the situation changed dramatically: while the average income of working-class women and men stayed flat, elite women’s earnings increased faster than those of elite men; in 2010 a high-earning woman made, on average, more than 1.5 times as much as a middle-class man. This transformation was then outcome of progressive legislation such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which eliminated the most blatant forms of gender discrimination in the workplace. This kind of legislation, however, took place within a context of fast-growing economic inequality within society as a whole. The result was the growth of economic and social inequality among women, with upper-class women successfully decreasing the wage gap while working-class women were entirely left behind.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In a piece that appeared in the Nation in early 2017, Katha Pollitt wondered what should count as a feminist issue and concluded that, while reproductive rights and the fight against gender discrimination are clearly identifiable as feminist demands, war, poverty, environmental crisis, and perhaps even the fight against racism extend beyond the scope of feminism.[[9]](#footnote-9) Pollitt here is echoing a very important and central argument of this brand of liberal feminism—a juridical and rights-based definition of feminism. It is thus not surprising that this articulation of feminism failed to appeal to millions of working-class women. Equal pay and the end of gender discrimination in the workplace, for example, are certainly worthy causes, but as McCall’s data show, they have little tangible effect on the lives of working-class women if decoupled from demands for a minimum wage or for income redistribution.

The outcome of the US presidential election marked an impasse for liberal feminism, one that not even the immense participation in the January women’s marches could fully overcome. The call for a women’s strike came from awareness of this impasse, which opened a political space for an alternative feminist politics, and from awareness of the existence in the United States of dozens of grassroots collectives, networks, and national organizations that were already developing an alternative to liberal feminism: a class-based, antiracist feminism, inclusive of trans women and queer and nonbinary people. The strike call came, therefore, from the awareness that another feminism was already there: the call served the purposes of creating a national network of organizations and individuals, of making this other feminism visible on a national level, of challenging the hegemony of the kind of corporate feminism embodied by Clinton and her supporters, and, finally, of opening up a national conversation about empowering working-class, migrant, and black women.

Adopting the term *strike* was meant to emphasize the work that women perform not only in the workplace but outside it, in the sphere of social reproduction. It also had an additional function, which can be better understood by taking into consideration the US labor situation.

From 1983 to 2016 the rate of unionization in the United States dropped from 20.1 percent to 10.7 percent. The situation is even more depressing in the private sector, where unionization dropped in the same period from 16.8 percent to 6.4 percent. If we look at data on formal strikes, from 1947 to 2016 the number of strike days involving more than a thousand workers dropped from 25,720,000 to 1,543,000; 2016 even saw a small surge in strike days, due in particular to the Chicago teachers’ and Verizon workers’ strikes. This situation is the outcome of antiunion legislation and the political orientation and practice of business unionism. Class struggle, however, should not be conflated with labor struggle in the workplace: class struggle takes many forms. Important manifestations of the class as a political actor and an agent of conflict often take place in the sphere of social reproduction, where these struggles have the potential to attack capitalist profitability. In recent years we have seen a number of important labor mobilizations organized by nontraditional labor organizations and networks: for example, the Fight for Fifteen campaign or the mobilizations organized by the Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC); movements such as Black Lives Matter, the migrants’ strikes, and the mobilizations against the wall at the border with Mexico; and the near-spontaneous mobilizations against the “Muslim Ban.” Instead of seeing all these forms of mobilization as alternatives to labor organizing in the workplace, it is more useful to see them as all various forms that class struggle is currently taking, forms that potentially empower each other and can create the conditions for organizing work stoppages in the workplace. The women’s strike was part of this process: it contributed to politically relegitimizing the term- “strike” in the United States, it caused nonconventional work stoppage in three school districts, and it gave visibility to labor organizations where the majority of workers are women, such as the ROC and the New York State Nurses Association, and to instances of local labor organizing and workplace struggles led by women and queer people.

The concrete experience of the women’s strike, as well as the social reproduction theory that inspired some of its organizers, made the question of whether class struggle should take priority over “identity-based” struggles not only obsolete but ultimately misleading. If we think of the class as a political agent, gender, race, and sexuality should be recognized as intrinsic components of the way people concretize their sense of self and their relation to the world, and therefore are part of the way people become politicized and engage in struggle. In lived reality, class, race, and gender inequality are not experienced as separate and compartmentalized phenomena that intersect in an external way: their separation is merely the outcome of an analytical thought process, which should not be mistaken as a reflection of experience.

This is a key insight for political organizing, for political strategies, tactics, and organizational forms should always have their roots in people’s concrete experience. Abstracting from experience leads to replacing materialism with rationalism—namely, conflating analytical categories and subjective reality and projecting bookish blueprints about what class struggle means (or should mean) onto people’s lived realities. On the other hand, if feminism and antiracism want to be projects of liberation for all humanity, then the question of capitalism is unavoidable. The problem of the replacement of class struggle with identity-based

struggles should therefore be reformulated as a political problem arising from the hegemony of the liberal articulation of feminist discourse. This articulation turns feminism into a project of self-promotion for elite women by erasing the key issue of the structural relation between gender oppression and capitalism. How to break this hegemony is what we should discuss now, and the women’s strike was a first important step in this direction.

While not all the organizers of and participants in the women’s strike had a theoretical commitment to social reproduction feminism, the women’s strike can legitimately be seen as a political translation of social reproduction theory. Recent mobilizations are showing a new and increasing awareness of the need to rebuild solidarity and collective action as the only way to defend ourselves against continuous attacks non our bodies, freedom, and self-determination, as well as against imperialist and neoliberal policies. Moreover, they act as an antidote to the liberal decline of feminist discourse and practice.

At the same time, overcoming this understanding of feminism does not mean reverting to economic reductionism or to a universalistic politics based on abstraction from differences. In recent decades we have acquired a greater awareness of the stratification of the social condition of cis and trans women, according to class, ethnicity, race, age, ability, and sexual orientation. The challenge that the new feminist movement nmust face is articulating forms of action, organization, and demands that do not make these differences invisible but—on the contrary—take them into serious account. This diversity must become our weapon, rather than an obstacle or something that divides us. To make this happen, it is necessary to show the internal relations between various forms of oppression and to combine the differences these oppressions generate in a more encompassing critique of capitalist social relations. In this process, each political subjectivation based on a specific oppression can provide us with new insights on the various ways capitalism, racism, and sexism affect our lives.

1. Word in the language of the Kuna people of Panama that names the Western Hemisphere and has been adopted by the different peoples articulated in the movement of nationalities and indigenous peoples at the Continental Summits. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "The Traps of Patriarchy," document for debate and discussion, Julieta Paredes, Aymara feminist of Comunitaria autónoma, Bolivia, October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Op Cit. Luis Macas [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A new text from Mujeres Creando: No struggle without words (August 2003) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Victoria Aldunate Morales - La Haine: 8/5/2010 The Bolivia Summit would save Mother Earth and Father Cosmos. That is, there are two of them and one is a "feminine" Mother and the other a "masculine" Father. A heterosexual marriage [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Paula Irene del Cid. Coloquios Participar Para Compartir el Poder, Desafíos de Mujeres Mayas en Guatemala, June 2007. Page 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. It is important to point out that the number of white women who voted for Trump is very small compared to the total number of white women of voting age in the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Leslie McCall “Men Against Women or the Top 20 Percent Against the Bottom 80? How Does Growing Economic Inequality Affect Traditional Patterns of Gender Inequality?” Council on Contemporary Families, October 16, 2013, <https://contemporaryfamilies.org/top-20-percent-against-bottom-80/> . [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kqatha Pollitt, “Actually, Not Everything Is a Feminist Issue. And That’s OK,” *Nation*, March 23, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/actually-not-everything-is-a-feminist-issue/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)