

Women & Environments



international
magazine

GENDER AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

**"Women must do it
for themselves"**

Organizing Working Women
into SORWUC (1972-1986)
JANET NICOL

**Women and the
Arab Spring**

A Window of Opportunity
or More of the Same?
FATMA OSMAN IBNOUF

**It's bigger than bling
bling and the banks**

Invoking an anti-capitalist
praxis in feminist
activism at mining sites
TRACY GLYNN

**Social Movements
and Feminism**

An Interview with
Noël Sturgeon
LOIS KAMENITZ AND
NELE MICHIELS

**Pat Noonan doc lively
because Noonan**

always is
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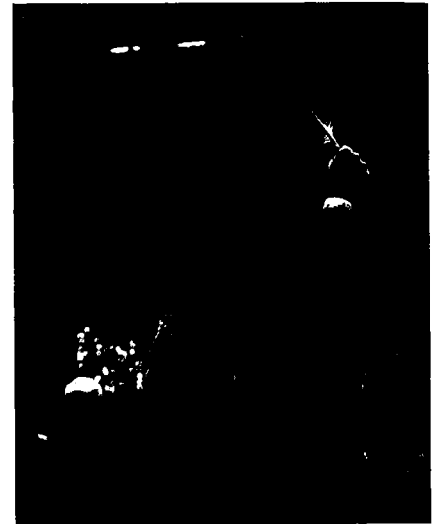
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Canada

ON THE COVER



Title: Of a Feather

An Indigenous woman raises her fist holding an eagle feather during an Idle No More round dance at Dundas Square in Toronto, Canada on January 11, 2013. On that day, the Idle No More movement called for an international day of action to coincide with a meeting between Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and members of the Assembly of First Nations. The actions carried out that day were also in honour of the one-month anniversary of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike on Victoria Island, a short distance from Parliament Hill. Chief Spence's sacrifice for her community galvanized support for the Idle No More movement — in Canada and around the world. Attawapiskat remains a community abandoned and betrayed by the Canadian government. Most recently a fire has devastated the community, creating an even more precarious situation for many people.

Photographer: Kevin Konnyu

Kevin Konnyu is an independent photographer committed to helping provide a visual narrative for social, economic and environmental justice protests and communities in resistance. He helped found Canada's first Indy Media Centre at the Windsor OAS (Organization of American States) protests in 2000. He has been documenting protests ever since, and is well respected in a diversity of activist communities. His work, which he often provides free of charge to social justice organizers, has been featured in publications across the country. Over the past year and a half, he has focused extensively on the Idle No More movement. His work can be seen via the Toronto Media Co-op or at www.flickr.com/fifth_business.

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WE Speak

A Word from WEI

This has been a challenging year for WEI and as a result this issue, on the topic of gender and social movements, comes to you later than we intended. When we thought of this theme for WEI we wanted to explore the issue of gender in 'social movements' particularly in new and emerging movements for progressive social change because such movements create spaces to challenge power and power relationships. In the last few years, we have seen new movements emerge out of social protest against economic austerity, inequality and political exclusion and women are, and continue to be, at the forefront of many of these movements.

Our contributors weigh in on these issues from various perspectives. While being interviewed, Sturgeon tells us that the connection between environmental issues and feminist social justice issues is the connection we need to make in order to create change. In her article *Women and the Arab Spring: A Window of Opportunity or More of the Same*, Ibnouf states that the 'Arab Spring' has created a space for women to initiate dialogue and to pressure states, and its actors, to respond to their concerns.

Klodawsky, Siltanen and Andrew's article provides an example of how local feminist organizations may work with local government to create a more inclusive city and to promote gender equality during challenging times. Nicol, in telling us about the *Service, Office and Retail Union of Canada*, reminds us that unions are an important channel to address women's rights. Glynn explains that 'praxis', where ideas are put into practice, is what is needed in progressive social movements to make change. Caro shares the strategies used by women in the CLOC-Via Campesina movement in Latin America to ensure gender issues are addressed.

From Khartoum in Sudan to Santiago, Chile and as reflected in the writings, poetry, films, and art of our contributors, women in progressive social movements face many challenges as they continue to challenge the *status quo* and to disrupt political and gender norms both within and outside those movements.

We thank all the contributors to this issue who shared their ideas, thoughts and perspectives with us. We also wish to extend a special thank you to Sharmila Shewprasad, WEI's Managing Editor. We hope you will be engaged and informed as you read this issue of WEI!

Sybila Valdivieso,
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Putting This Issue Together

Genevieve Drouin has a Masters in International Development and over nine years of experience in the non-governmental sector. She has worked with community based organizations in South America and Africa and with global and environmental education programs in Canada. Her interests include urban development, gender equality, food security, and environmental sustainability. She currently works as a Program Manager with Canadian Feed the Children.

Ilana Divantman is a Toronto-based artist, painter and curator. Working mostly with figures and portraits, Ilana's work disrupts time as figures and faces are caught in moments of awareness. She is a co-founder of stimulate-us, an art event created through the support and love of friends and co-workers. The event brings together various artistic fields and draws on core issues of the Canadian immigrant experience, present and future. She worked as WEI's graduate assistant during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Sharmila Shewprasad has managed development programs in Asia, Africa and the Middle East for the past seven years. Her areas of specialization include women's sexual and reproductive health, gender, human rights, and refugee and migration issues. She has an MA in International Development Studies and has been the Managing Editor of WEI magazine since 2010.

Amanda Vega is a long time friend of WEI magazine. She holds a BA in Women Studies with a concentration on Gender and Media Studies from MIT and an MA in Social Policy from the University of Pennsylvania. She has a particular interest in gender bender issues in social media. She lives with her partner and children in Montreal, Canada.

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Features

“Women must do it for themselves” Organizing Working Women into SORWUC (1972-1986)

Janet Nicol

As feminist ideas began to ignite women to action during the tumultuous 1960s, several Simon Fraser University students formed the Vancouver Women's Caucus in 1968. Two years later, the group came down from the mountain campus and invited working women and “housewives” in the city to join the conversation on women's rights.

Feminism wasn't just about middle-class women's concerns, some caucus members argued. Working-class women wanted a living wage and workplace equality too. And so the Working Women's Association (WWA) was born. The WWA actively supported women on picket lines. They discussed the problems arising from the fact women in the workforce made half the wages of men and 80% of working women in British Columbia were not in unions.

The association examined the sexist attitudes which kept women in low wage, gender-segregated occupations in offices, restaurants and department stores. Women only worked for “pin money,” was the prevailing notion. Marriage and motherhood were their true vocation. But in reality, many married women were “one paycheque away from poverty” and single mothers were financially better off on social assistance after daycare costs were factored in, than working in “pink collar” jobs.

Unions offered a vehicle to make real changes in women's lives. In 1972, 24 women formed the Service, Office, and Retail Union of Canada (SORWUC). The group drew up a uniquely democratic union constitution that gave members control over leadership positions and set limits on terms of office and wages of paid representatives.

“We decided to organize independently

mostly because the overwhelming majority of women are not organized and the existing unions haven't done much about it,” Jean Rands, a clerical worker and SORWUC founder, told the media, in 1972. “Established union leadership has become conservative. They're not prepared to fight.” As for international unions, Rands said a union leader in New York shouldn't have the power to decide whether workers in Vancouver could strike. “This is a new union that the members will control.”

Some of the founders of SORWUC

(including Rands) had worked at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and helped organize an independent union of clerical and library workers into the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE). Other college and university workers in Vancouver began organizing into their own AUCE locals. Workers controlled negotiations and the results were impressive. AUCE's first contract at UBC in 1974, gave the group of mostly female employees a \$225 per month wage increase.



Two First Nations women striking on the Muckamuck restaurant picket line in 1975.

PAT DAVITT

"Existing unions have done nothing to organize female workers," Rands believed. "Women must do it for themselves."

Organizing women into SORWUC

SORWUC volunteer organizers spent many early mornings handing out leaflets to women on their way to work in downtown offices. Activists also offered free lunch time workshops at the YWCA and the library. By 1975, SORWUC had organized 15 workplaces and had 150 members, most women working in offices, daycare centres and social services.

Dealing with the "office wife syndrome" was an issue SORWUC confronted. Women were often required to get coffee for their (mostly male) bosses or run personal errands, such as buying gifts or picking up dry cleaning. Secretaries in a small law firm who organized into SORWUC negotiated a ground-breaking contract clause which guaranteed they "will not be required to do work of a personal nature for the employer."

"The big unions were making no serious effort to organize working women, especially those in small offices of under ten employees," Pat Barter, an office worker and SORWUC organizer told a newspaper reporter in 1976.

Organizing in the restaurant industry

Margot Holmes was employed as a waitress at Bimini's neighborhood pub on Vancouver's west side. She was among twenty full and part-time workers unhappy with the wages and the scheduling procedures. In 1976, Holmes and some of her co-workers contacted six unions before choosing SORWUC to organize their workplace.

"The decision was based on the fact that we could write our own contract..." Holmes said, "...and they (SORWUC) let us do the organizing."

On January 24, 1977 workers at Bimini's were certified as a union and began negotiating with the owner. The employer was particularly adamant in opposing a 'closed shop' — a vital contract clause which ensured all employees joined the union.

In October, the staff voted 13 to 7 in

favor of a strike — the first by pub employees in the province. The employer hired strike breakers to keep his business operating while staff, along with SORWUC activists and supporters, formed a picket line at the pub entrance. Strikers gained public support, discouraging potential customers from entering.

A month into the strike, a representative of the international-based Hotel, Restaurant and Bartenders Union (HRBU), Local 40, crossed the Bimini's picket line and signed up strike breakers. Outraged, more than 50 SORWUC strikers and sup-

porters picketed the HRBU headquarters.

A HRBU official defended his union and accused SORWUC of "splitting up the industry." He argued restaurant workers had been under HRBU jurisdiction "since 1900." The official also considered SORWUC a "women's liberation" organization rather than a trade union. The British Columbia Federation of Labour disagreed and threatened HRBU with expulsion if they did not withdraw their certification application. HRBU complied but still complained to the press over SORWUC's "encroachment."



Jean Rands (far left), one of the founders of SORWUC, stands by others in front of SORWUC banner while setting up for an annual Vancouver peace march.

"They claim they have had jurisdiction since 1900," Holmes countered, "which means that they've had 77 years to organize women. And where were they?"

After a ten week strike, the employer agreed to bargain. The parties reached a one-year agreement, following binding arbitration on some issues. Wages increased from \$3.75 an hour to \$5.00 and benefits were substantially improved too — but the union had to accept a modified union shop. This meant strikers and strike breakers would work together.

Two months went by with a divisive staff coping under the new contract, when the employer applied to decertify the union. The British Columbia Labour Relations Board (LRB) complied, despite the union's best efforts to argue against the application. Only five of the original 23 staff were left working at Bimini's at this point. It came as no surprise when the majority of workers voted to decertify. Management had "won."

"I think the LRB was really negligent in allowing the vote to take place when the whole history of Bimini's has been one unfair labour practise after another," Holmes told the press.

Despite the bitter outcome, Holmes did not regret the experience. She noted workers at Jerry's Cove neighborhood pub, also on the city's west side, organized with SORWUC and achieved fair contracts, without intense acrimony.

"SORWUC encouraged us to take an active role in our lives," Holmes said, "and taught us how that made us more confident about standing up for our rights. And for others' rights."

Ethel Gardner was among the 21 aboriginal women and men working at the Muckamuck Restaurant in downtown Vancouver, cooking and serving First Nations cuisine. Her employer was comprised of three Americans, who also had investments in art galleries and other restaurants in British Columbia and California.

As Gardner tells the story:

"A few incidents occurred which got the staff upset. The cook was charged for getting the soup burnt and I was fined for leaving the bannock out overnight. ...Incidents such as these led a few of us to

go to the Labour Standards Board where we were told we needed a union in order to enforce our grievances. I went back to the employment agency (which had connected Gardner to this job) and said I wanted to quit, that the employer was racist. The counsellor said, "Why don't you join a union?" She told me about SORWUC's organizing efforts at Jerry's Cove and Bimini's. I called SORWUC and met with two union reps. They talked about the union and suggested we talk to the unionized employees at Jerry's Cove, which we did."

The workers signed union cards and were certified on March 20, 1978. When the employers received the union notification, "all hell broke loose," as a Muckamuck employee told the Vancouver Sun newspaper:

"The primary union organizer was fired the day that management was notified of the application for certification. Since then six more of us have been fired or intimidated into quitting. All seven are union members, most quite active."

Unfair labour practises followed, along with attempts to begin contract talks. Management contacted First Nations leaders in an attempt to act against the union workers and tried to bring in the HRBU to "raid" SORWUC. They also circulated

anti-union literature in the neighbourhood.

With relations in complete disrepair, the restaurant workers took a strike vote. The majority voted in favour and on June 1, a picket line formed in front the restaurant. After closing for the first six months of the strike, management re-opened with strike breakers, many deliberately hired from the First Nations community. Now called the "Chilcotin Bar Seven", the business had a 'cowboy' theme. Verbal and physical abuse on the picket line was pervasive and 'counter pickets' by strike breakers created confusing 'street theatre' for passers-by.

The first of three applications by the employer to decertify the union was made in January of 1979. The second was August 25 of the same year and the third, May 14, 1980. Remarkably a majority of the original staff remained steadfast, testifying at each hearing that they supported the union and were prepared to return to work when the dispute ended. In all three applications, the LRB ruled in favor of the union.

Few customers crossed the picket line and by the spring of 1980, management was operating the restaurant on weekends only. Soon after, they shut down. On April 25, 1981, the LRB finally responded to SORWUC's unfair labour applications. The main finding was that the Muckamuck



SORWUC bank workers and supporters protest firing of two bank workers at an organized bank in Gibsons, British Columbia.

management had not bargained in good faith. A year and a half later, the LRB applied remedies which included that management owed the union \$10,000 in compensation. SORWUC was never able to collect the money as the owners had withdrawn all assets from BC and moved back to the United States.

Gardner spoke of the positive aspects of a challenging experience, "Looking back now, I see how we took it upon ourselves as a group of Native workers to make a statement that we weren't going to be run in that way. So I think it was a success. We learned a lot, gained a lot and it was empowering."

Organizing Bank Workers

Bank tellers frequently worked involuntary and unpaid overtime. This provoked employees at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), at Vancouver's Victory Square branch to join SORWUC in 1976. They formed a local within the union called the United Bank Workers (UBW). Over the ensuing months several other BC bank employees, repre-

senting four of the five Canadian chartered banks, were signing union cards too.

"The wages are below those of waitresses and maids," Jackie Ainsworth, a CIBC teller at Victory Square, told the press. "That's the reason unionizing is happening in the banks."

"Our office is swamped with calls," said Ainsworth's co-worker Dodie Zerr, President of the UBW. "And no wonder, when we compare our wages to bank profits. The base rate for workers, most of whom are women, varies from \$500 to \$600 per month while bank profits were up 46% from 1974."

SORWUC had a major legal challenge to overcome before contract negotiations could begin. The employers argued a single bargaining unit consists of all branches of a bank across Canada. They took this claim to the Canadian Labour Relations Board (CLRB). SORWUC countered, stating the banks' position was unreasonable, preventing workers from exercising the right to unionize. Each bank branch comprises a bargaining unit, the union affirmed. After lengthy deliberation, on

June 14, 1977, the CLRB ruled in SORWUC's favor.

It was a landmark legal victory that gave unions the go-ahead to organize, branch by branch, Canada's 145,000 bank workers, three-quarters of whom were women. Over a two year period, 700 bank workers joined the United Bank Workers of SORWUC.

But the logistics and legal costs of organizing was pulling SORWUC under. Financial donations by supportive union locals, individuals and community groups still didn't cover expenses. SORWUC also had to fight harassment, layoffs and other unfair labour practices.

Carol Dulyk and Eileen Quigley, bank workers at the CIBC branch in Gibsons, a town on BC's Sunshine Coast, were fired for joining SORWUC. In a show of support, SORWUC organized 100 supporters to picket outside their branch. "The Bank of Commerce in Gibsons has to realize it cannot get away with firing union organizers," Sheree Butt, a bank worker and organizer, told the press in 1978.

SORWUC requested financial help



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from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), but were unwilling to accept their terms. To make matters worse, the CLC's affiliated union, the Office and Technical Employees Union (OTEU), was undermining SORWUC's efforts by instigating its own bank drive. The greatest blow came in the spring of 1978, when bank employers froze wages among staff in unionized branches, while giving non-union branch employees wage increases and improved benefits. SORWUC filed a complaint before the labour board — and lost.

"We are taking on some of the most powerful organizations in the country," Heather MacNeill, a SORWUC organizer told the media, "and we know that psychologically we need the support of the trade union movement. We need all the support we can get."

"The CLC said we couldn't win but we went in there, we fought the legal battles and we organized like hell. We didn't worry about costs."

Unable to gain the financial and moral support of the broader labour movement, and after exploring all tactical options, SORWUC reluctantly withdrew from branch-by-branch negotiations for the 22 branches in B.C. and two branches in Saskatchewan. "We were sad, angry and exhausted," an organizer later recalled.

Wins and losses

Women workers knew their efforts had made a difference, despite the loss, and a group came together to write a book called "An Account to Settle: The Story of the United Bank Workers (SORWUC)." A second effort to organize banks was tried four years later, but the momentum could not be re-captured. In 1986, SORWUC disbanded.

"The reason for the creation of AUCE and SORWUC is the same as the reason for the creation of the present women's movement," a group of feminist activists wrote in 1982. "We learned that in the trade union movement, as in the male-dominated left and in society at large, our concerns (as women workers) are treated as secondary."

SORWUC shook up some of the toughest industries to organize — including

banks and restaurants — and challenged the union movement's complacency, holding up the ideal of independent unions, controlled by its membership. The efforts of the bank workers inspired employees at a number of small banks and credit unions across Canada to unionize and improved overall working conditions. The lessons of the SORWUC still hold today. Only when greater numbers of women working in these industries organize, will substantial changes occur. ❧

Janet Nicol is a teacher, writer and former SORWUC activist. She contributed as a researcher to a series about Working People and Labour history in British Columbia, produced by Landrock Entertainment Inc. for the Knowledge Network. The series began airing in 2013.

Further Reading:

An Account to Settle: The Story of the United Bank Workers: SORWUC, Press Gang Publishers, Vancouver, by the Bank Book Collective, 1979

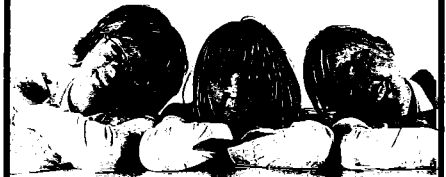
Getting Organized in the Feminist Unions, an article by Jackie Ainsworth, Ann Hutchison, Susan Margaret, Michele Pujol, Sheila Perret, Mary Jean Rands, Star Rosenthal in **Still Ain't Satisfied: Canadian Feminism Today**. The Women's Press, Toronto, 1982.

Labour, Work and Working People: A Working Class and Labour History Walking Tour, booklet produced by the Vancouver and District Labour Council and Pacific Northwest Labour History Association, Downtown Tour: #3 — Photo: Bank of Commerce, 300 West Hastings Street and brief commentary: "The issue of involuntary and unpaid overtime work provoked six women from this branch to initiate a major drive to organize BC bank workers in 1976."

Janet Mary Nicol, **Unions Aren't Native: the Muckamuck Restaurant Labour Dispute, Vancouver, BC (1978-1983)** Labour/Le Travail, 40 (Fall 1997), 235-51.

Julia Maureen Smith, **Organizing the Unorganized: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986**, Master of Arts, Simon Fraser University, 2009.

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Municipal Politics in a Feminist and Community-Based Register

Lessons from City for All Women Initiative/Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes (CAWI-IVTF)

By Fran Klodawsky, Janet Siltanen, Caroline Andrew

"The CAWI-IVTF women ... signaled that the standard approach to citizen consultation in the City of Ottawa could not capture what the women needed to convey: that cities profoundly affect lives, especially when the texture of those lives is 'different.' The women were keen to establish that life is also about singing and caring and recognizing that culture is an integral part of what a city should be about."

The above quote from Andrew and Klodawsky's 2006 *In the Field* report on "New Voices: New Politics" (WEI 70/71) spoke to the unusual methods being used by the women of City for All Women Initiative / Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes (CAWI-IVTF) to get the attention of and convey their messages to the City Council in Ottawa, Canada. CAWI-IVTF is a community-based organization that describes itself as "a unique collaborative of women from diverse communities, organizations, and academia working with municipal decision makers to create a more inclusive city and promote gender equality" (CAWI-IVTF, 2011). Eight years later, we want to report the trajectory of such efforts but also to share some of what we have learned in the process of conducting action research with the organization, with the support of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council award.

Updates

Ironically, in 2012, CAWI-IVTF finds itself stronger than ever in terms of member support, an effective volunteer struc-

ture, and good working relations with City of Ottawa staff and politicians. Yet, its financial challenges also have never been greater. Similar to many other equality-seeking community organizations that are trying to survive on project funding, CAWI-IVTF is currently rallying its supporters to help raise funds on a variety of fronts, ranging from individual donations to applications to national foundations.

The situation is one where "mission drift" is all too common. CAWI-IVTF has recognized the dangers of mission drift and has tried to stay true to its principles despite a funding environment that is less and less interested in promoting marginalized women's empowerment as civic political actors. CAWI-IVTF's mission is threefold: first, it is to promote attention to the position of women throughout the Ottawa region, particularly women from marginalized communities; second, it is to promote greater and more encompassing gender equality within all aspects of municipal service delivery and governance at City Hall; and third, it is to bring marginalized women in the city of Ottawa into the political process as active and

knowledgeable agents of change. Since its inception CAWI-IVTF has promoted the importance of hearing from and responding to the voices of community women in all of their diversity.

Throughout its history, this mission has manifested itself in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, CAWI-IVTF is formally a partnership with the City of Ottawa. By order of Council, two mid-level members of staff have been part of the Steering Committee and this involvement has been formally recognized in job descriptions and workplans. In 2007, CAWI-IVTF led an initiative to develop a gender equality lens for municipal managers, and as a result of its achievements during a pilot phase, was invited to lead a process of developing a multi-focal lens — the Equity and Inclusion Lens — for managers throughout the municipality on a fee-for-service basis.

On the other hand, CAWI-IVTF has also maintained itself as an autonomous community-based organization, accountable to Ottawa's women and particularly to those at risk of marginalization. In this regard, a core program element has been civic participation training. It is a 9-month training program that consists of 4-5 full day workshops, as well as opportunities for participants to apply their learning to municipal election campaigns, the city budget process and other areas of concern such as public transit, child care and recreation. As part of their training, they have strategized on how best to intervene, written and delivered statements (as well as songs and plays) to municipal politicians, and they have also debriefed after such efforts in order to become more effective.

Since 2004, 150 women from commu-

nities at risk of marginalization (such as Aboriginal women, women living in poverty, newcomers to Canada, women with disabilities, and women who are racialized) have participated in civic participation training, thanks to financial support from a wide range of funders (such as Status of Women Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, United Way of Ottawa, Community Foundation of Ottawa).

Yet, as of December 2012, there are insufficient funds in place to initiate the next round of such training. The closest CAWI-IVTF has come to finding a new opportunity to further empower women to engage in local politics is quite indirect: through a City of Ottawa initiative called the Community Development Framework, CAWI-IVTF is helping to train community facilitators to promote community members to become further engaged in their neighbourhoods. A proviso of CAWI-IVTF's involvement is that explicit attention is given to the importance of gender equality but there is only limited opportunity to highlight structural barriers or to actively nurture women's empowerment.

While CAWI-IVTF's future remains an open question, we want to use the rest of this article to share some of what we have learned about the organization's diverse efforts to engage in local politics through the empowerment of marginalized women, because we think their approach offers some potentially important insights for other municipally oriented feminist organizations.

CAWI's Political Practices: The Value Of The Prefigurative

In the earlier discussion of CAWI's political agendas, we explored the manner in which CAWI-IVTF helped shape "new subjectivities" and "new spatialities" among the women who were its members, and within their broader networks. In that article, we examined CAWI's effectiveness in contributing to a progressive politics of place. Our conclusion presented the view that it is possible, with effort and intention, for feminist engagement with the local state to avoid cooptation and be effective in enhancing positive social developments.

A follow-up discussion has built upon this idea by looking more closely at strate-

gies and orientations that help a small feminist organization take on relationships and partnerships with a more powerful local state in order to effect change, and yet manage to maintain its community-base and critical edge. We have concluded that an over-arching characteristic of CAWI is that it has strategically positioned itself as both inside and outside the local state.

Looking further at other defining characteristics of CAWI, we see a strong orientation to focusing on *process*, on *doing rather than demanding*, and on *promoting the importance of everyday experience and knowledge*. We see also that within each of these areas CAWI has worked consciously and with effort to prefigure within the organization the kind of values and relational political spaces that it would like to see in diverse venues outside of the organization. By prefigurative, we mean efforts to put into practice activities and interactions that anticipate desired futures (in Mahatma Gandhi's words, "to be the change we want to see"). We have argued that this prefigurative orientation within the organization is what helps it to successfully occupy a border position of working with the local state while maintaining an active, critical approach to its initiatives.

In Table 1, we present a matrix that encapsulates our current understanding of how CAWI engages the local state, by mapping the full range of CAWI-IVTF's urban political activities. We show that CAWI-IVTF participates in the city's traditional representative political practices and priorities, while at the same time engaging in expanded participatory and prefigurative interventions that attempt to challenge and change them. Within its day-to-day activities, there are multiple political practices and pushing this analysis further, we identified these multiple political practices as more or less 'alternative', linked to different approaches to collaboration and contestation in CAWI-IVTF's relations with the city.

Three modes of political engagement with the local state are most prominent — those connected to the widely understood, mainstream politics of representation; those expressing a more expanded participatory approach; and those enacting pre-



A delegation of CAWI-IVTF at City of Ottawa Council Chambers



Book Launch — Community Facilitation Guide

figurative possibilities. First, by representational politics, we mean standard approaches to urban decision-making, and the limited ways citizens are incorporated into these structures, such as for example, as voters, or as participants in tightly controlled delegations to council. Second, by an expanded participatory politics, we mean those activities directed at and fitting into the business of City Hall but pushing at and challenging the standard opportunities for involvement as defined by the dominant political frame of reference described above. Third, by prefigurative politics we refer to practices that enact in the present aspects of the future that the organization would like to usher into being.

CAWI-IVTF's prefigurative orientation within the organization helps it to walk the tightrope between being inside and outside the local state. Here we see that these more expanded political enactments are also present in CAWI-IVTF's direct relations to and within the local state. To the extent that CAWI-IVTF is able to engage in these *alternative* enactments of the political in its relations with the state (the participatory and especially the prefigurative), it is able to keep its distance from the status quo politics of representational democratic structures. In other words, CAWI-IVTF's attention to prefigurative processes that could be

incorporated more widely into the everyday doing of municipal politics is one way of moderating just how far 'inside' the local state it goes.

Table 1 encapsulates how our mapping of three modes of political engagement — representative, expanded participatory and prefigurative — connect with the three prominent approaches that CAWI adopts: *process, doing (rather than demanding) and valuing everyday experience and knowledge.*

To illustrate our argument, we will briefly describe recent efforts by CAWI-IVTF to enhance the capacity of women at risk of marginalization to engage in local politics. By reconciling funders' demands to do something 'new' in each funding cycle with the intent to maintain and expand opportunities for civic participation training, CAWI-IVTF has identified 'facilitator training' as a new way to support its core mission. Facilitator training is seen to enable: 1) engaging new members in a practical activity that offers the possibility of Canadian experience and skills development to newcomer women and those without recognized credentials and, 2) providing a practical rationale for women who were civic participation graduates to remain involved in the organization.

Facilitation training emerged organically as a strategy and it illustrates how CAWI-ITVF incorporates the three modes of political engagement identified above. The core of the idea began when CAWI-ITVF was approached to contribute to the development of the City of Ottawa's new Recreation Master Plan. CAWI-ITVF's extensive links with members of under-represented communities were recognized as being of value to the City, to ensure that its stated commitment to participation was reaching beyond the 'usual suspects' to more properly represent the City's residents with regard to recreation services. CAWI-ITVF used this invitation to expand the meaning of participation and negotiated short term contracts for civic participation trainees and graduates to act as facilitators for consultations in their own and in other marginalized communities. The contract included resources to help prepare the women for this activity and the outcomes were evaluated in order to confirm the

Table 1: CAWI-IVTF's Approaches to Political Engagement

Activist focus	Political enactment	Example of relevant activities
Attention to process	Representative	Participates in the governance structures of the city and is respectful of its rules and procedures
	Expanded Participatory	Readies members for participation in city governance processes, and in doing so, builds capacities that are more generally applicable to participatory interventions in other arenas within and beyond the city
	Prefigurative	Adds to typical processes by enacting alternative ways of presenting/hearing/debating issues (disrupting understandings of what is possible/desirable) Identifies success in different terms (voicing alternative values and demonstrating alternative practices to do with inclusion and respect for difference)
Focus on doing not demanding	Representative	Responds to city priorities
	Expanded Participatory	Tries to maximize specific opportunities for its own purposes (to expand and/or re-direct city priorities) Brings in broader mix of people
	Prefigurative	Models possibilities for expanded and genuine consultation about city priorities through active connections with marginal communities Models the possibility of working with difference
Values everyday experience and knowledge	Representative	Identifies the diversity and significance of women's everyday experiences for city priorities
	Expanded Participatory	Provides channels for marginalized women to speak about their lives as city residents and to identify what would be a good solution to issues facing them
	Prefigurative	Cultivates capacities for 'deep listening' so as to understand the challenges faced by others Provides experiences of recognition, empathy and value Identifies everyone as subjectivities who all have more to learn and something to teach

anecdotal impressions that both the City of Ottawa and the women facilitators had benefited from this initiative.

During a strategic planning session that followed soon after this event, CAWI-IVTF women and particularly those who were graduates of civic participation training used this incident to emphasize their wish for more advanced training that also might lead to enhanced employability. Out of these examples of "doing" and recognizing the processual nature of engagement, came programming ideas that were prefigurative insofar as they captured a wish for women's skills in meaningful community activities to be validated in the labour market.

Closing Thoughts

This article updates WEI readers about the activities and challenges of an innovative community-based organization in Ottawa as well as the action research-based insights of academics who have been involved in the organization since its inception. Our analysis illustrates how one organization — CAWI-IVTF — has struggled to avoid mission drift in a climate of

increasingly problematic funding and other challenges. CAWI-IVTF has worked hard to promote the capacity of diverse Ottawa women and especially those who are at risk of marginalization by incorporating innovative approaches to political engagement, including representational activities, expanded participatory approaches and prefigurative visioning, to maintain, albeit with difficulty, an inside-outside relationship with the City of Ottawa.

Caroline Andrew is Director of the School on Governance, University of Ottawa. Her research interests are in the relationships between community-based equity seeking groups and municipal social policies. She is on the steering committee of City for All Women Initiative and on the Board of Women in Cities International.

Fran Klodawsky is Professor of Geography, Carleton University. Her research interests are in urban-based, equality seeking community-based initiatives, particularly in the areas of housing and local services. She is on the steering committee of City for All Women

Initiative and on the Board of Women in Cities International. ✉

Janet Siltanen is Professor of Sociology at Carleton University. She has a long-standing interest in gender and politics that stretches back to a 1984 book on Women and the Public Sphere. Recent publications include **Gender Relations in Canada: Intersectionality and Beyond** (OUP 2008), currently undergoing revision for a new edition.

Further Reading:

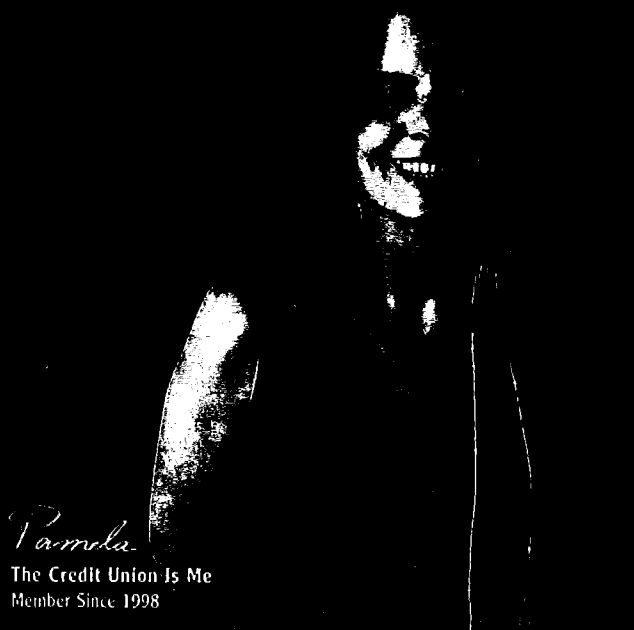
Klodawsky, F., J. Siltanen, C. Andrew, forthcoming 2013, **Urban Contestation in a Feminist Register, Urban Geography**

Siltanen, J., Klodawsky, F., Andrew, C., unpublished manuscript, She is quiet but loud at the same time — An experiment in feminist organizing for a more equitable and inclusive city

Website for CAWI:
<http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/>

Website for SSHRC funded research project: Learning through difference: Multiscalar forms of feminist community organizing:
<http://womeninvolved.wordpress.com>

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Social Movements and Feminism

An Interview with Noël Sturgeon

Noël Sturgeon is the Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) at York University. She joined FES as Dean in August 2012. She is an interdisciplinary feminist scholar specializing in environmental justice cultural studies, feminist theory, social movements and anti-racist and environmental movements. Her work has focused on questions of social change, cultural representation, and policy shifts arising from multi-issue movements such as anti-militarist and anti-nuclear direct action, ecofeminism, and environmental justice, in a range of cultural and historical contexts. Therefore, this was an opportune moment for WEI to talk with Noël about this issue's theme, her thoughts and ideas.



FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, YORK UNIVERSITY

WEI: In the past, you have described yourself as an ecofeminist. What does ecofeminism mean to you? And do you believe the label is still relevant today?

Noël: Firstly, I think that the links between environmental issues and feminist social justice issues are crucially important. It is *the* connection we have to make in order to make change. Feminist practice has been one of the most important ways in which we have been able to successfully make change.

In terms of using the specific label “ecofeminism,” the term has acquired a problematic association for academic feminists because it has been associated with essentialism — meaning the idea that women are closer to nature and that they are more naturally prone to protecting the Earth. That is problematic because of the ways in which dualistic assumptions of this kind have often been used to keep women ‘in their place’ and to assign women domestic work. And it is problematic because it tends to be universalist: it lumps women together in one category as

though they are all the same, and of course it does not allow for a critique of racism, homophobia or colonialism within any group of women.

I call myself an ecofeminist strategically. I also use other terms, like environmental feminist. In my last book, I came up with the unwieldy term “global feminist environmental justice” to describe my analysis. In academic contexts, I see more and more of the people who do feminist environmental theorizing using the term ‘feminist environmental justice’ to make it clear that they are also thinking about race and colonialism.

W: You have called out ecofeminism for having a tendency to essentialize gender and race. You also argued, in *Ecofeminist Natures*, that it is often practically beneficial to organize moments of — what you call — “strategic essentialism.” What does this mean?

N: The “ecofeminist” label got tagged with an essentialist description in the 1980s when anti-essentialist critiques were important to academic feminist theory. In my first book, I tried to puzzle out

what that meant for activists, because I was an activist in the feminist anti-nuclear, anti-militarist movement in the United States during that period. What I saw was that there was a lot of theorizing in activism about racism and homophobia, colonialism and disability — a kind of intersectional theory that had been generated from previous feminist activism. Academic critiques of essentialism really come from activist locations but that is not always recognized. As a result, I felt that the academic critique of essentialism unfairly targeted activists and that the effect of those critiques was the separation of theorists from activists — particularly from women of colour activists and from indigenous activists who were sort of cast aside as though they were not theoretically complex and analytically adept.

When you are doing activism, you have to mobilize people. And academic arguments might educate people — they are really important — but they will not mobilize people. And when you mobilize people, you tend to try and bring people together. To do that, you create what might

be seen as essentialist identities. But if your movement is committed to participatory democratic practice and to thinking about questions of power and diversity, you are going to bring together people from very different places and with different forms of privilege and experience of oppression. Those essentialist constructions used for mobilization are momentary because they are going to be contested within the movement if it contains diversity and is democratic. The result, unfortunately, of this positive aspect is that movements are often fractured. This can be very frustrating for the people who want to make change, but I see it as part of the process of making sure that the kinds of strategies and analyses we are using pay attention to inequalities.

W: In your work, you express concerns around the environment and gendered oppression. Environmentalism can be uncritical of gender inequality, at times viewing it as a matter of personal prejudice rather than a structural problem. How can feminists mount successful interventions within social movements, such as environmentalism?

N: In my first book, one of the things I was trying to do was to get social movement theorists to start understanding movements as interrelated. Ecofeminism is, in part, a repeated intervention in activist spaces that might be called environmentalist. Feminism is one of the major places where intersectional theory and practice have been developed. So it is an ongoing effort to make sure that those things are being used to understand power, to understand the way movements are operating. And why are we surprised if it is an ongoing effort and sexism is still operating and connected to economic exploitation, to environmental exploitation? It is going to be a constant struggle. How do you do it? You just keep working at it.

One of the things that I think is of concern to me is the way in which feminist practice and thinking in movements continually gets obscured. For example, the Occupy movement is using tactics and methods that go way back to feminist peace camps, where ideas like consensus process, affinity groups, nonviolent occu-

pations, were fine-tuned for purposes of direct action. These structures and practices can be traced back through the Occupy movement to the global justice movement and to the anti-intervention and anti-nuclear movements. Feminist theorizing and organizing were the backbone of these movements, and that history is obscured. Even so, in many cases, within Occupy there was still a struggle over whether women were going to be treated equally, and whether gender was going to be used as a category of analysis, and whether intersectionality was understood as an important thing to be thinking about.

Nonviolence is important because it is effective: it has been shown to be effective over and over again. It is the only effective way to make change. So, in saying "militant nonviolence," I am trying to make people rethink what nonviolence is and how it works. It's very important to see it as strong, confronting, and effective.

W: In respect of transnational feminism, what can feminist activists learn from recent Indigenous women-led movements like *Idle No More*?

N: This question is constructed as though activists in *Idle No More* are not feminists or transnational activists. It may be that indigenous activists do not want to use the term feminism, for some very good reasons, because of the way it is associated with white Western practice, but that doesn't mean *Idle No More* activists aren't using gendered analyses and aren't precisely reaching across transnational borders. Indigenous activist practice is one of the important places gendered analyses come from. So we can learn to recognize that origin and respect indigenous activism as a form of feminist practice. It is very important to do that. Everyone should be learning and listening, without insisting that indigenous activists use the words or

labels non-indigenous political thinkers and activists use.

As for the transnational part of this question, it's a bit unclear to me what it means in this context. A transnational analysis and practice is not always the same thing as a Nation-to-Nation negotiation. To indigenous people, a Nation-to-Nation negotiation is really important because it is a legal context and framework around which they need to operate in order to protect their rights, their culture and their people.

W: You have made the following point, "nonviolence is the key to social change, to feminist environmentalism, but it must be a militant nonviolence." To some the word militant conveys a masculinist idea of power and therefore militant and nonviolence are contradictory. How do you respond to this?

You have also said "we must insist on the importance of a difference between human beings and property, and not give in to the idea that all protest is violence, that non-violence is never angry, never furious, never militant, never causes discomfort." In the context of recent protest movements, does the insistence on "militant nonviolence" still seem important today?

N: I believe that nonviolent practice is extremely important in order to produce lasting social change and effective protest. In my activist experience, many left (often male) activists argue that nonviolence is ineffective; that it is too gentle, that it isn't confrontative enough. This is a gendered way of describing nonviolent practice. To argue that violence is always more effective than nonviolence is a masculinist argument, I think.

So, what I am partially saying in the passage you quote is that nonviolent activism can be quite effective and powerful. I would argue that it is much more powerful than any action that is read as violent because — and this goes back all the way through the history and theory of nonviolent practice, from Gandhi, to the civil rights movement, to Gene Sharp, etc. — violence assumes that you are defeating your opponent whereas nonviolence is the act of changing your opponent. You cannot really make long-lasting social change by defeat-

ing an opponent: that just leads to murdering your opponent. I'm saying this in stark terms but that is the reality behind it.

Why would you put yourself in a position where violence is the only way to make change? When movements make the decision that the only way to win is by eliminating their opponent, they are simply establishing themselves as another authoritarian power. They are assuming that some human beings are not worthy of respect, that such human beings are irretrievably evil. But feminist analysis shows us that inequality and power are structural, not personal, though certainly personal privilege and power flows from one's location in those social structures. A further complication around this issue is that some activists argue that as long as we do not hurt people it is okay to attack property. Then you get the folks who want to break windows and wear black masks. I understand the arguments that property should not be treated the same way as people, but the fact remains that this practice has delegitimized movements. This has been problematic over and over again. In addition, it is often the case that the people who make those arguments are often not in any movement; they are the people who wish to delegitimize the movements — police agents, provocateurs.

Nonviolence is important because it is effective: it has been shown to be effective over and over again. It is the only effective way to make change. So, in saying "militant nonviolence," I am trying to make people rethink what nonviolence is and how it works. It's very important to see it as strong, confronting, and effective.

W: In these times of increasing insecurity, war, and environmental destruction, what message of hope do you have for feminists working in social movements?

N: For me, what is hopeful is to understand how effective our movements have been, and that there is more and more connection between various kinds of movements against inequality, exploitation, and environmental destruction. I grew up in a time when movements were kind of working on separate issues, and more and more they came together. The kind of analysis that has evolved — particularly I would

say intersectional transnational environmental feminist analysis — has put these pieces together. So I feel very hopeful in the sense that I think the ways in which people are making connections in various movements means that we have a lot of power to make change.

And, yes, we're dealing with very serious issues. But the world has been full of pain and struggle for many, many years. I am very concerned about the terrible violence happening all over the world, and the environmental destruction that is going on, but I have also lived in a time — and we are still living in such a time — where we faced destruction through nuclear war, for example. Threats to health, peace, and well-being are constant. Yet, I have seen the most amazing changes. I have seen people being able to do things that I never imagined they would have been able to say or do.

I really like the quote from the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci that 'we have to have pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will.' In a way, left thinkers and activists, because we are so critical — and our criticality is very important to making these kinds of connections — often get caught up in our own critical perspective and we think that the achievements we have made are never complete. It's never enough. But then we forget to celebrate and appreciate what we have accomplished. And that's fine by those who want to paint us as ineffective. We have to recognize the successes that we have made because they are enormous. And because doing so can empower more people to struggle.

Again, one of the most powerful hopes that we have is in the connection between environmental issues and feminist social justice issues. This is *the* connection needed to make change.

W: Thank you Noël for your time, insight and inspiration. ❧

This interview, and its related preparation, was conducted by Lois Kamenitz and Nele Michiels, two graduate students at FES currently working with WEI Magazine.

Lois Kamenitz has 45 years of experience, behind her, as educator, mental health services provider and consumer health



Lois Kamenitz and Nele Michiels

librarian. She is pursuing another graduate degree, this time at FES. As a result of being refused entry into the US in 2010, her CV now includes 'activist' for those with mental health issues who face discrimination.

Nele Michiels is completing her Master's degree in Environmental Studies at York University. Her research focuses on the diverse ways in which activism and social movements politicize women's trauma. She has volunteered for a variety of feminist organizations and organizes with other activists in the city of Toronto.

Recommended Reading by Noël Sturgeon:
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Women and the Arab Spring

A Window of Opportunity or More of the Same?

By Fatma Osman Ibnouf

The Arab Spring Revolutions showed the importance of a more inclusive approach to transitional processes. The Arab uprisings enhanced the ability of women to involve themselves and to make better use of their capacity and their full potential to contribute to change. For example, the success of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya during 2011 could not have been possible if not for the women (Von Rohr 2011).

Women activists of the Arab Spring have come from all social classes. From my experience, they were well-organized and actively participated in Arab uprisings — some came to protest with their children — to demand change. Thousands of men joined the demonstration out of solidarity with the women. During the revolutions, women's participation side-by-side with their fellow male protestors helped in creating a sense of equality and lessened gender differences. Women have made their voice heard in the Arab Spring revolutions at many levels; however, the 'gains' for women in terms of gender roles can be lost in the post-revolutions period, when 'going back to normal' is the priority.

Women need to explore the political, strategic and analytical dimensions of the uprisings if they want to ensure that when democracy works, it works to the present and future benefit of all women and men. It isn't a question of women 'winning' over men but being given equal footing with men. In the wake of the Arab Spring, there is an emergence of new opportunities for the mobilization of women. Women's involvement in transitional processes will contribute to the advancement of women's rights, to giving a voice to voiceless women, to initiating legislation that concerns their gender, as well as to pushing for law reforms and justice in the society. For this to be sustainable, the

changes should develop alongside practical strategies to empower women and build their leadership capacity.

Women in Transitional Processes

Democratic systems can be stable and legitimate only if all the segments of a society are represented with a commitment to gender balance. In the wake of the Arab Spring, a number of Arab countries are now experiencing political transitions from revolution to democracy. However, the Arab Spring countries are not all at the same stage of transitional processes; they take on different forms in each country. Generally, emergency laws are lifted, constitutions are drafted, elections are held, and interim governments are formed. The transitional process does not need to be a competition for power but can rather be a partnership between men and women. In such a process women need to keep working on many fronts. To ensure that women's diverse needs and interests are taken into account, they should be part of the policy and lawmaking, implementing, monitoring and evaluating.

The participation of women in the transitional processes means more progress in laws that affect gender equality and policies that address key women's human rights concerns. Women's involvement in transitional processes is a window of opportunity for women to challenge the policies and laws that violate their human rights. It also offers the possibility of challenging gender discrimination and gender stereotyping which oppress women and continue to reinforce their subordinate position. Further, there is the potential to challenge entrenched gendered practices, those deep-rooted structures that are not easily changed. Despite real and significant needs, the realization of women's human rights has not been made a bench-

mark of success in transition phases, which tend to have poor female representation. Attainment of the basic rights of women politically, socially and economically is of paramount importance to the future security and development of the Arab world. Thus, women at all levels must collaborate and organize joint actions because this will secure more support from the community; it is the best way to secure the critical mass capable of influencing the decision-making processes of leaders and officials.

Currently women make up nearly half of the population in Arab Spring countries but very limited numbers are in positions of power where they can make or influence change. However, already women's access to some key positions has proven to contribute to women's empowerment and advancement with positive, but limited, results. Some of their achievements include the increased awareness of the importance of gender equality and an increase in girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education to some extent.

Making the Most of the Climate of Change

Women's involvement does make a difference and at least increases the chance that women's issues will be on the agenda. Women need to preserve the gains they made and they should work hard for equal rights and refuse to be sidelined and marginalized in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

I believe that another Arab Spring revolution is not likely to happen again in the foreseeable future. Change does not happen overnight, but is a process that takes place gradually over time. In the transitional processes women need to be better included not only in politics, but in education, economy, social and all levels of public life. At present gender is a dimen-

sion that is routinely added on as a component to most programs, partly because international agencies have come to insist on its inclusion. The first action priority is promoting women's human rights and mainstream gender equality at various levels. Women's involvement in these processes is essential for lobbying to establish institutions, such as women's affairs ministries, to address women's direct concerns.

Changes need to be made: laws addressing violence against women need to be enacted, many family laws need to be modified, gender equality needs to be mainstreamed in policies and legislations at all levels, gender-responsive budgeting needs to be adopted and the number of women in elected bodies need to be increased. There is an urgent need to adopt laws prohibiting marriage before the age of majority and laws to criminalize female genital mutilation (FGM). Lobbying for the reform of legal and social rights and policy and promoting gender equality can challenge patriarchal practices of societies and states. All these can best be sorted by women; therefore women's involvement in transitional processes would make a difference for the better.

The Transition Phase: A Unique Opportunity to Introduce Gender Mainstreaming

Moreover, transition phases offer a unique opportunity for transforming institutions, structures and relationships that hinder gender equality and justice. Women's involvement in the transitional process is essential to dealing with issues of women's oppression and exploitation in a number of ways. There are real opportunities for women to demand change in their respective countries so as to take their rightful place alongside men in all tiers of democracy.

During the past decade, women's and human rights 'language' has moved from the margins to the 'mainstream' of international law and politics. For example, the fifth UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar recognized that: "Where women's views and experiences are absent, the political process remains incomplete" (see Ibnouf

2012). Gender perspective is therefore a vital element for the success of any strategy designed to promote social justice, and gender mainstreaming can have a significant influence on the future of women's status in and contribution to societies.

Successes and Failures During the Transition Phase

First, there should be room for accepting and learning from failures. Every action, no matter how small, can inspire others and move others to act.

Some progress has already been achieved. For example, women in Egypt have begun to push for an equal rights amendment to the constitution, but there is still more work to be done before there will be equality for all citizens in the con-

During the past decade, women's and human rights 'language' has moved from the margins to the 'mainstream' of international law and politics.

stitution, regardless of gender, race, or religion. Similarly in Tunisia, the draft constitution guarantees non-discrimination on any grounds, including gender (Munn and Cleminshaw 2013). Protests continue over the implementation of Tunisia's Article 28 which describes women's roles in the family as "complementary" to those of men's (Munn and Cleminshaw 2013).

Another change that I have perceived in the wake of the Arab Spring is that the image of the Arab woman appears to be undergoing a remarkable transformation. Ordinary women protestors challenged their traditional gender roles on the front lines of the revolutions. These images challenge old images of Arab women and some misperceptions the world might have about women in the Arab region. Women have therefore started to break some of the traditional barriers that exist in the traditional structures of most Arab Spring societies.

Women and Political Representation

More than 50 years have passed since

Egyptian women won the right to vote (in 1956 — third in the region after Lebanon and Syria in 1952), and the first Arab woman elected to parliament was in Egypt in 1956 (Soufi, 2009, p. 256). However, so far, the current transition has not been inclusive of women as is evidenced by the recent Arab Spring.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in 2012 Arab States still had the lowest representation of women in Parliament, with women holding only 13.2% of parliamentary seats throughout the Arab region. In the Sultanates of Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, there was no female representation due to the absence of elected parliaments in these countries (Soufi 2009, p. 258).

The Inter-Parliamentary Union also found that the January 2012 parliamentary results in Egypt saw a dramatic drop of 10 percentage points from the 2010 results, with only 10 women out of 508 members (2%) gaining seats. Libyan women were largely excluded from politics during the previous regime; at present, in Libya in the National General Congress elections, women won 33 seats out of 200. There are currently 59 women in the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly out of the 217 members. Women have only three out of 72 seats in the new Syrian Opposition Coalition. That means the number of women in national parliaments and cabinets in the transitional governments is significantly smaller than that in the pre-revolution governments. Nonetheless, I am of the opinion that women still have a fighting chance for achieving both better positions and justice.

The Major Challenges

Women in the Arab Spring countries face many challenges. This situation of gender injustice and inequality has been perpetuated so far because of the current laws, the patriarchal nature of the Arab society, and the continuous violation of women's rights.

The conventional approach of treating people as individuals with equal rights under the law does not suffice when women still face violations of their rights socially, politically, and economically.

The first Arab Human Development Report in 2002 indicated that the lack of women's rights, lack of political freedoms and poor education are the main factors that hindered progress in the Arab region.

The gender inequality of access to education has led to the widening of all existing forms of socio-economic inequalities between men and women. Studies have also shown that women's lack of access to education and health services hinders attempts to alleviate poverty (See, for e.g., Bentley 2004). The World Health Organization (WHO) published a foundational module on poverty and gender, in which it was noted that the current understanding of poverty indicators includes multidimensional aspects such as education, health, and political participation (WHO 2007). However, the rights to education and health, which are fundamental human rights, are frequently denied to females due to social policies and the prevalence of gender-biased traditions in societies.

According to a World Bank report in 2013, women in the Arab world have the lowest rates of employment of any region. Female illiteracy rates are high in the Arab world; in 2006, UNESCO found that women accounted for two thirds of the region's illiterate population. It was estimated that gender parity in education in the Arab world stood at 0.69 percent in 2004, one of the lowest rates in the world (UNESCO 2006). UNWomen has said there is no legislation in place that prevents violence against women (VAW) in Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen; the only exception is Egypt (UNWomen Report 2011). This is notwithstanding the fact that all these countries have ratified the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Weiss 2003). The challenge is therefore not to make new commitments but to distil a more consistent framework from what already exists and to encourage action accordingly.

Women and the Law

Legal provisions relating to the family in most Arab countries regulate marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, custody and citizenship rights. Many provi-

sions are detrimental to the interests of women. For instance, in some Arab countries such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon, men and women who are married to non-nationals are treated differently (Tabet, 2005; Equality Now Report 2011). Men married to non-national women enjoy the full protection of the law and their children are granted citizenship rights whereas children of women married to foreign nationals are not citizens and are accordingly not entitled to socio-economic or political rights and privileges (Equality Now 2011).

A woman is legally obliged to seek approval from her closest male relative — be that a father or a husband — for some decisions concerning her life, which is contradictory to international human rights standards. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the law prevents gender equality

This gender inequality is not sanctioned by Islam, although the patriarchal attitude is usually fed by sanctimonious claims in the cloak of religion.

by restricting women's freedom to travel, to education, and to work by requiring the agreement of a male relative (Vidyasagar and Rea 2004, p. 262). These practices are widely-known as 'male guardianship rules.' On the basis of family law, in most Arab countries the age of marriage is ranged between 13 to 15 years for girls and as young as 10 years in Sudan (Sudanese Personal Status Law of 1991, Article 40-2). In Sana'a, Yemen, girls may be married as early as 12 or 13 and sometimes as young as eight years old (Gender Development Research Studies Centre). In 1999 the government of Yemen made the situation worse by removing the legal minimum age for marriage — which had previously been 15 years old.

In Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen women are victims of cultural and deeply rooted social practices that are regarded by many as legitimate practices, such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), honor killing and child mar-

riage (Douki et al. 2003; Faqir 2001; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1999). Studies indicate the prevalence of FGM in Upper Egypt is among the highest worldwide and the law has not succeeded in adequately decreasing, let alone eradicating, its prevalence despite the fact that FGM was made illegal in Egypt in 1997 (Hassanin and Shaaban 2013).

In almost all Arab countries there is the absence of a specific law protecting women from violence, including intimate violence, and there is a lack of prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of violence against women (Equality Now 2011). Crimes committed in the name of honor continue to be treated differently from other violent crimes in terms of investigation and prosecution, as well as prevention efforts. Perpetrators of "honor crimes" often benefit from a reduction of penalty under laws in most Arab countries (Equality Now 2011). Moghaizel (1986), who examined a number of legislative measures dealing with crimes of honor in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia, found that while the penal code condemns the perpetrator of intentional homicide to punishment as serious as execution, provisions concerning the crimes of honor may permit a full or partial excuse which could reduce the penalty or even totally exempt the murderer from punishment.

This gender inequality is not sanctioned by Islam, although the patriarchal attitude is usually fed by sanctimonious claims in the cloak of religion. It is rather attributed to Arab traditions that maintained a hierarchical order in the family, where the dominance of male over female is a normal attitude (El-Islam, 2000). The 2005 Arab Human Development Report found that there was no relation between religion and any erroneous practices towards women; describing the state of our Arab society as one where 'custom has triumphed over worship, and discrimination towards women has no basis in either the noble Quran or the sound Hadith.'

Men and Women's Rights

Human rights arguments alone are often not enough to achieve change in

patriarchal communities. It is not easy to battle entrenched norms, beliefs, practices and power relations. It is convenient for men to keep women disenfranchised, because they feel threatened when women seek to enforce their rights, or look to take up decision-making positions. The attitudes of men to any reforms introduced will remain a big challenge for women. Without the wider change in social attitudes, discrimination remains. However, women must realize that building a gender-sensitive society is a long-term process.

Unless men contribute to promoting women's rights, equality between men and women will be strongly resisted at the level of the household and the community, if ever being accepted. It will be a bit trickier to get men over the border, but it is most definitely possible. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. The majority of populations in Arab countries are youth (ages 15–24), comprising about 60% of the current population (Khalifa 2009). These younger people are better educated than older counterparts. Thus they hold the potential to challenge the patriarchal society and should therefore be included as an integral part of the social changes.

Time to Seize the Opportunity: 'Agents of Positive Change'

Women can act as agents for transformation and empowerment in the transitional process as it moves forward. They need to cooperate and coordinate their activities regardless of their divergent interests, ideologies and political affiliations. To push for a reform within the area of women's rights, women need to work with each other rather than against each other. They should embrace the concept of "more numbers more voices", increasing the possibility that they will be heard.

One way forward is the formation of political parties by women, which would lead to a gradual but continuous change, address women's direct concerns, and contribute to adequate representation in legislative and decision-making bodies. Even at this preliminary stage, such political parties would promote avenues for increased female participation in the political process.

Another way women can act as agents of change is through civil society organizations. There are already a number of women's rights organizations, activists, advocate groups, and even individuals working on women's issues in transition countries. The demands of the various groups differ in terms of approaches, collaboration and, in some circumstances, competition. Women's issues are too complex for any single group or organization. For real change to take place there needs to be cooperation between those at the grassroots and upper and middle class women. Thus, a broad coalition that unites a variety of different women's groups and organizations and individuals needs to be established for maximum success in this transition phase. As a coalition works together and agrees on a common way to deal with the issue and on common goals, they are much more likely to make headway. They can therefore advocate for reforms that have so far been elusive.

Using the Media to the Advantage of the Women's Movement

Women's movements during the Arab revolutions received wide publicity, through television coverage and websites. Women must not miss any opportunities to further utilize these effective instruments. Women have the opportunity to advance their interests and benefit from social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. They can share and discuss their concerns with other women around the world, learn how other women confronted and responded to similar problems and exchange innovative practices. Women can also initiate dialogue with policymakers and officials, which can act as a pressure tactic whereby the state is forced to respond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the rest of the world can learn from the experiences of women in the Arab Spring. However, if women do not seize the opportunities offered to them in the aftermath of these revolutions, then they will lose the chance to gain empowerment and participation. Thus, they will remain grounded on the same terrain.

During the phase of the fighting for independence, women came out in large numbers and participated actively. However, afterwards, the position of women differed sharply from the active and purposeful role they played and they were once again rendered invisible and marginalized. There is now the possibility of bringing women's concerns to the forefront of society. It is only by doing so that we can make the most of this chance to ensure that history does not repeat itself. ❧

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It's bigger than bling bling and the banks

Invoking an anti-capitalist praxis in feminist activism at mining sites

By Tracy Glynn

Mining has historically been and continues to be a male-dominated industry. Disturbing stories of women affected by mining demand our thoughtful analysis and action. Women continue to resist the onset of mining and its various impacts but their resistance and self-determination are hindered by the capitalist global economic system and patriarchal ideologies that serve to reinforce capitalism. Global campaigns and networks supporting communities affected by mining have emerged over the past decade to highlight atrocities and demand reforms. Invoking an anti-capitalist praxis in the activism supporting mine affected communities, including efforts to combat violence against women, challenges activists to go beyond limited albeit noble reforms to act in a way that names, examines and seeks to dismantle the economic system and accompanying ideologies that are responsible for the problems.

Women struggle with a deeply rooted patriarchy that is expressed in male views dominating decision-making at mine sites, in communities and at all levels of governance. Women are further oppressed by structural classism and racism. As Carmen Mejía, a 25 year old Mayan activist against the Goldcorp mine in Guatemala, daughter of peasants and the single mother of a five year old remarked in May 2010, "We are not heard because we are women, we are indigenous and we are *campesinas*."

Several academics and non-governmental organizations argue that mining disproportionately affects women. Some of the documented impacts of mining on women noted by historians and activist networks such as the International Women and Mining Network (RIMM) include: restricted access to and loss of liveli-

hoods; restricted access to and loss of sources of drinking water and food; increased workload; increased economic dependency on men; forced precarious work like prostitution; workplace discrimination and sexual harassment; and sexual, physical and emotional assault (Mercier and Gier, 2006).

There are many stories across the globe of women at the forefront of courageous struggle against harmful developments. In Guatemala, women are part of local councils organizing "consultas" that allow community members to vote on whether a large industrial project, like a mine, proceeds in their community (Yagenova & Garcia, 2009). In the 1990s, Innu women, using civil disobedience and the courts, temporarily halted the opening of one of the world's largest nickel mines in Labrador (Lowe, 1994). In Ecuador in 2009, Lina Solana was charged with public disorder and arrested for protesting the Canadian-owned IAMGOLD mine that she said would destroy protected Amazonian forests. Solana was quoted in *The Guardian* on Oct. 13, 2009, saying, "There is a lot of verbal aggression from the police towards females protesting against the mines. They call us sluts and smelly Indians."

Women's activism against mining in Guatemala

Guatemala, a country characterized by extreme poverty and violence against women, has suffered 300 years of colonialism followed by severe repression and fear imposed by the country's oligarchy and its military, foreign governments such as the United States, and foreign companies such as American banana king, the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita) and Canadian nickel giant, Inco (now

Brazilian-owned Vale). The conditions of mine-affected communities are directly related to this history of colonialism and capitalist interventions.

Mamá Maquín and an estimated 50 others were murdered in the town square of Panzós in eastern Guatemala as they protested nickel mining by Inco on their land in 1978. Mamá Maquín, a 60 year old grandmother and community organizer, led the march in Panzós on the day of the massacre. She was there with her daughter, grandson and granddaughter. Only her granddaughter, María, survived the march (Sanford, 2000). María told an audience in Guatemala City in May 2010 that the killers of her mother, brother and grandmother live in her community today. Despite fearing for her life, she is not giving up her quest to bring the masterminds behind the massacre to justice.

In recent years, different companies have taken over the original Inco concession in Guatemala's nickel-rich hills near Lake Izabal. In early 2007, about 700 armed men, including the police, private security and the army, evicted five Mayan Q'eqchi' communities while the concession was held by Vancouver-based Skye Resources. Homes and crops were burned to the ground. Tear gas canisters and shots were fired into the air (Paley, 2007). The people of one of the razed communities, Lot 8, had nowhere else to go after the eviction, so they returned to their lands to rebuild. Eight days later, hundreds of police, army and private security also returned and found only women and children. The community's men were off in the fields (Imai et al., 2012; Wells, 2012).

Elena Choc Quib has told Canadians wanting to act in solidarity with her to share her story. On January 17th, 2007,

she says she was beaten and raped by eight armed men carrying out the eviction. She says she miscarried the child she was eight months pregnant with at the time. Ten other women are coming forward saying they were also raped in the eviction, some gang-raped, by the security forces for the mine (Imai et al., 2012). Another Canadian mining company, HudBay, later took over the nickel project from Skye. Angelica Choc is taking HudBay to court in Canada for the gruesome murder of her husband, Adolfo Ich Chaman, a beloved teacher and vocal mine opponent. The women who say they were raped are also taking HudBay to court in Canada (Imai et al., 2012).

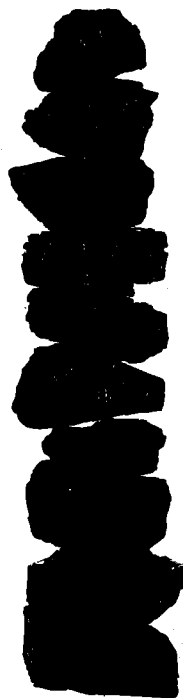
Feminists note that sexual assaults are used against politically active women to curb their involvement in protests. Angela Davis, in her 1983 book, *Women, Race and Class*, calls sexual assaults, "One of the telling dysfunctions of the present-day capitalist society." Guatemala is not the only country where stories of rapes at mine sites are achieving mainstream media attention. As reported in an investigative piece by the *Toronto Star* on Nov. 29, 2009, Harvard law professors are testifying at Parliamentary Committees that women in Papua New Guinea have been raped, many gang-raped, by Barrick Gold's security guards. The women say they are being forced to swallow the condoms that the men use in the rapes (Whittington, 2009).

Women at the forefront of resistance to the Goldcorp gold and silver mine in the San Marcos highlands of western Guatemala fear for their lives because of their opposition to the mine. Crisanta Perez has become the face of resistance to the Goldcorp mine. She cut power lines to the mine that were placed on her plot of land. She was charged and when women came to her side to support her, they were also charged and became known as the Goldcorp 8. The mine has pitted family members against each other. Days after the Guatemalan government, under international pressure, called for the shut down of the mine in June 2010, a Mayan-Mam woman resisting the mine, Diodora Antonia Hernández Cinto, survived being

shot in the face in her home. When asked if she will leave her plot of land and give up, Cinto said, "I am firm as a tree. Standing I am, and standing I will remain" (Rodriguez, 2011).

Invoking an anti-capitalist praxis in feminist activism at mine sites

Praxis, a reflective process in which ideas are practiced, is needed in movements for social transformation. Praxis, the marrying of theory and practice, involves acting with a strategic purpose. Though they have created and perpetuated numerous inequalities along lines of gender, ethnicity, class and international hier-



In periods of bust in capitalist economies, policies that squeeze workers and oppress indigenous peoples are claimed as necessary but in reality only serve to maintain accumulation of private sector wealth.

archies of states, colonialism and capitalism have been wilfully ignored. The failure to act in a way that acknowledges and actively challenges and dismantles the profit-driven economic system has plundered the natural world and its resources and dehumanized women, men and children in countless corners of the earth.

In periods of bust in capitalist economies, policies that squeeze workers and oppress indigenous peoples are claimed as necessary but in reality only serve to maintain accumulation of private sector wealth. Theft and destruction of indigenous lands and culture are defended by

appealing to the racist notion that indigenous people are incapable of their own development or for national state interests.

Women, young people, oppressed minorities, and marginal workers serve to fill the ranks of what Karl Marx called capital's "reserve army of labour," where people have no other choice but to toil in unsafe conditions. Thousands of miners die in mining accidents each year. According to China's State Administration of Coal Mine Safety, 2,631 miners were killed in the country's coal mines in 2009, down from 6,995 in 2002, the deadliest on record (CBC, 2010). In 2011, 35 year old Jason Chenier and 26 year old Jordan Fram were killed in the Vale Stobie nickel mine in Sudbury, Ontario. Today, Wendy Fram, mother of Jordan, chairs a group called MINES (Mining Inquiry Needs Everyone's Support). MINES is lobbying the province of Ontario to conduct an inquiry on mining practices (Mulligan, 2012). Mines are in some ways just as dangerous for workers as they were in my great-grandfather's time when he did not come home from a shift in a coal mine in Minto, New Brunswick in 1950.

Host countries facilitate the exploitation of their mineral rich lands by foreign and domestic companies for foreign exchange or paltry royalties. The role of governments in host countries has been to play the obedient caretaker for mining capital through passing mining-friendly laws, weakening environmental, labour and health standards and privatizing natural resources, including minerals and water. National governments also undertake structural reforms under pressure from international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, including rewriting their mining laws to be more friendly to foreign investors, privatizing state-controlled mines, and granting individual land titles over collectively-owned land. The schemes have paved the way for companies to gain easy access to land and rich mineral resources.

When communities protest, violence is exercised by state police, army, paramilitaries and the company's private security guards to instil fear, subjugate the population and break social movements.

People critical of mining in Ecuador, Tanzania and elsewhere have been charged and detained because their acts of dissent are equated with acting against national state interests.

Sixty percent of the world's mining companies are registered in Canada. The *Toronto Star* reported on Nov. 24, 2009 that claims of abuse committed by Canadian mining companies exist in at least 30 countries (Poppowell, 2009). The Canadian government is opposing calls to regulate mining corporations at home and abroad and mining companies benefit from Canada's exertion of power and influence in foreign countries. Canadian mining interests are openly defended by Canadian government officials, embassy representatives and trade councils, as seen in Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia.

Banks, international financial institutions, ethical funds, publicly-funded export credit agencies and pension funds like the Canadian Pension Plan are targets of protest and reform because of their financial backing of controversial developments across the globe. Members of the United Church of Canada and the Public Service Alliance of Canada who support communities affected by Goldcorp were shocked to learn that their pensions were invested in Goldcorp. Colourful protests are an annual occurrence outside shareholders' meetings of companies such as Goldcorp and Barrick.

Partnerships between universities and mining companies like Memorial University of Newfoundland's partnership with Inco (now Vale) and the University of Toronto's partnership with Barrick Gold's Peter Munk have been protested by students and faculty because of the companies' human rights track records.

Consumer-based campaigns like Earth Works' No Dirty Gold attempt to educate consumers about "where the gold in their products comes from, or how it is mined." Jewellery retailers like Tiffany's and university students buying class rings have been targeted for purchasing "unethical gold." Walmart's fair trade line of Love, Earth jewellery was supposed to be sourced responsibly but a story reported on Jan. 6, 2011 in the *Miami New Times*

revealed that Love, Earth's gold comes from Utah and Nevada mines that are responsible for widespread pollution (Friedman-Rudovsky, 2011).

Feminist scholars and activists addressing women's oppression, gender inequality and violence at mine sites demand gender analysis and planning in all phases of mining. They demand pay equity and the smashing of the glass ceiling so more women occupy higher positions in organizations. They demand justice for women who have been physically and sexually attacked at their work place or in their community by one of many security apparatuses used by a mining company.

John Bellamy Foster, an American sociologist and author, argues that the intention of proposed reforms and campaigns are noble as they aim to promote social and environmental justice, but that, "such proposals seek to strike an accord with neoliberal institutions while leaving the underlying logic of the system intact" (2003). Sociologist Murray Smith argues that our attention on free trade and economic nationalism has deflected attention away from structurally-rooted crisis tendencies of advanced capitalism, and argues for a renewed commitment to class struggle informed by Marx's critique of political economy (2000).

Marxists argue that divisions of workers along lines of gender, ethnicity and international hierarchies of states serve to maintain the exploitative class system. A class-based approach is key to informed and effective action geared towards eliminating the inequality and subordination faced by all workers including women miners and women affected by mining.

Efforts towards ending violence against women and enacting better social welfare, more stringent environmental regulations and anything that betters workers' lives are important. However, powerful forces are opposed to reforms that hinder private accumulation. The ruling elite control not just the economy but also the state, courts and media, making it extremely difficult for the masses to effect fundamental changes that the powerful minority opposes.

Reforms remain limited and during economic crises are rolled back in the

name of austerity and the need to balance budgets. While working on reforms that better the lives of workers, the ends must never be abandoned: production under workers' control and a global planned economy that wipes out all social inequalities, frees workers and meets the needs of every human.

An anti-capitalist praxis invoked by Domitila Barrios de Chúngrara, founder of the Bolivian Housewives' Committee, a labour leader, feminist and author who died of lung cancer in 2012, broadens the horizon of what is possible in a world organized to meet the needs of every human being. She argued in 1978, "My people are not struggling for a small victory, for a small wage increase, a small answer there. No. My people are preparing themselves to get capitalism out of their country forever, and its domestic and foreign servants, too. My people are struggling to reach socialism." ❧

Tracy Glynn has spent over a decade engaged in research and activism supporting communities affected by mining, particularly in Indonesia, Guatemala, Colombia and Canada. She studies mining and women as a doctoral student at the University of New Brunswick. She teaches environmental praxis at St. Thomas University and sits on the board of Mining Watch Canada.

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Climate Change and Disasters

Organizing for transformative social change

By Julie Drolet

There is increasing evidence that community organizers working in unions, environmental groups, women's groups, Indigenous groups, and the student and youth movement, are organizing for transformative social change. As the environment is linked to social justice and human rights issues, important connections are also being made to gender, poverty, race, colonialism, ability, and capitalism. For example, 'PowerShift' is a convergence of passionate youth from across Canada who are mobilizing on climate and environmental justice issues for transformative change (Peters 2012). New conversations are bringing together diverse voices such as the 'Idle No More' movement. The 'Idle No More' movement calls on all people to join in a revolution which honors and fulfills Indigenous sovereignty rights and acknowledges that colonization continues to attack Indigenous rights to land and water. The movement acknowledges the need to repair these violations and to live the spirit and intent of the treaty relationship, to work towards justice in action, and to protect Mother Earth (see <http://idlenomore1.blogspot.ca/>).

Globally, there is a pervasive concern that one in five people on this planet, or over 1 billion people, still live in extreme poverty. The world's population is projected to exceed 9 billion by 2050 with an estimated two thirds living in cities. More holistic approaches to social and sustainable development are urgently needed. There is a critical role for social movements that seek to integrate a more complex understanding of holistic approaches for sustainable development, that include gender, race, class, sexuality and disability analyses, in the struggle to eradicate poverty, hunger, preventable diseases, and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and disasters.

As a social work academic researcher involved in community-based research with women's groups on climate change and disasters in British Columbia (BC), it is fascinating to participate in events and engage in discussions with different groups on specific issues and challenges that our community is struggling with and working on. These events, and the opportunity to interact with community members, activists, and groups, inform an evolving understanding of the challenges and opportunities before us. They also help shape a clearer vision of what a holistic social and sustainable development approach means to women from a gender perspective.

In 2007, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that evidence of global warming is unequivocal: that it is caused by greenhouse gas emissions from human activity and that it is threatening ecosystems, societies, cultures and economies worldwide. Rising sea levels, increased heat waves and drought occurrences, and increased extreme precipitation events have the potential to devastate our quality of life. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change defines climate change as,

"...a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" (Article 1.2).

Climate change is a global issue, but the impacts and needs differ across communities, countries, and regions. New research is exploring the human and social dimensions

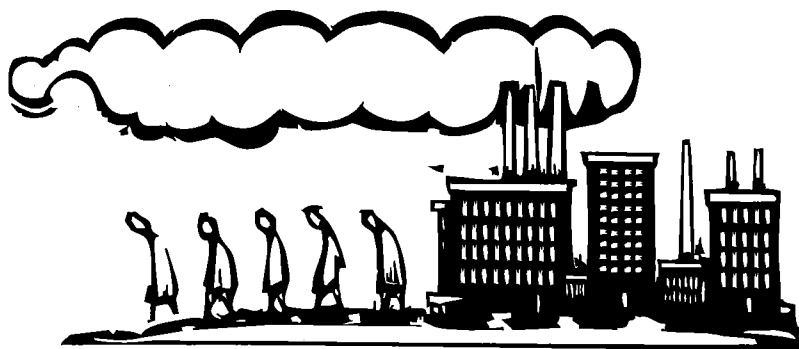
of climate change that include gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability perspective, for transformative social change.

In a recent study conducted in partnership with the Kamloops Women's Resource Group Society titled "Climate change, disasters, and sustainable development," it was possible through community narratives to better understand the gendered impacts of climate change on men and women living in the Interior and Northern regions of BC (Drolet 2012). A community-based participatory action research approach was used to empower members of communities to become active participants in the project in order to better understand women's realities in smaller communities. A sample of 121 participants, including community leaders, government officials, practitioners, activists, policy makers, First Nations', women leaders, and environmentalists was drawn. The results show that community actions to address the impacts of climate change are already being implemented, but more support is needed for long-term sustainable development that includes social, economic, gender, and health dimensions to promote adaptation, mitigation, and community resilience. Through a series of community and public outreach events, the findings from the study were shared and activities and strategies were discussed to promote sustainable development that included women's perspectives and gendered approaches for social change. While many of the research participants expressed a need for more information on climate change and disasters, a new online toolkit is being developed to better share information, network, and support organizing efforts in diverse communities (see <http://juliedrolet.sites.tru.ca/>).

There are many structural and social factors from a gender perspective that present barriers for women. Women continue

to face higher unemployment and lower levels of education than men (at a global level) due to their domestic and caregiving responsibilities in the home with inadequate childcare services and limited supports. In smaller communities in BC, women are struggling to meet the needs of their children and families when livelihoods tied to the natural resource sector are failing. Integrated and transformative social movements must consider the gender dimensions of inequality to be effective. Improving understanding of local community contexts and their unique social, cultural, economic, and demographic characteristics, and risks due to climate change and disasters, are a key component of designing sustainable and long-term interventions.

Local communities around the world are struggling with environmental change, and the impacts of climate change and related natural disasters. For a long time, the humanitarian and development communities have been struggling with the continuum between a humanitarian crisis



and development — how do these two processes come together, how do we make them better come together? For a long time, the humanitarian and development communities have been struggling with the continuum between a humanitarian crisis and development — how do these two processes come together, how do we make them better come together?

and development — how do these two processes come together, how do we make them better come together? What kinds of methods and projects need to be implemented to facilitate a transition? And where does the funding for this come from? Many practitioners emphasize the need to link disaster risk reduction more strongly to climate change adaptation and

sustainable development in a new framework. Consultations are underway to enhance understanding of these linkages in order to strengthen the mainstreaming of both disaster risk reduction and adaptation into development planning and practices so as to reduce the vulnerabilities of communities.

There is great promise in social pro-



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tection initiatives for transformative social change. Social protection offers a human rights approach to advocate for essential services and social transfers, in cash and in-kind, paid to the poor and vulnerable in order to provide a minimum income security and access to essential health care. The right to social security has been developed through universally-negotiated and-accepted instruments that proclaim that social security is a fundamental societal right to which every human being is entitled, found in Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). Recommendation No. 202 was adopted on June 14, 2012, also known as the

Since the global financial crisis, there have been new efforts to organize for social protection in many countries to secure a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of people and their families, including food, clothing, housing, education, medical care, and social services.

Social Protection Floors Recommendation, and brings together the commitment of United Nations' member states towards national social protection floors and recommendations on implementation. Since the global financial crisis, there have been new efforts to organize for social protection in many countries to secure a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of people and their families, including food, clothing, housing, education, medical care, and social services. The adoption of Recommendation No. 202 on social protection now occupies center stage.

Adaptive social protection is a term used to better understand how social protection can reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and disasters. Climate change and disasters present many challenges to sustainable social and economic development. Adaptive social protection instruments can enhance individuals' and households' resilience, reduce poverty, and stimulate human capital development, and be delivered on a large scale in support of disaster risk management. Funding for

disaster risk initiatives and programs continue to be debated, from both humanitarian and development perspectives. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have development and humanitarian teams need to bring these perspectives closer together. With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Hyogo Framework for Action both set to expire in 2015, there is a need to get organized for a new and improved framework. The lack of political will, contrary economic interests, and a deadlock in global negotiations, climate change presents no shortage of challenges.

The impacts of climate change are already intersecting with existing vulnerabilities, and affect people's abilities to cope. It is important to understand the differentiated social impacts of climate change based on diverse factors such as

gender, age, disability, ethnicity, geographical location, health status, livelihood, and migrant status. I believe there is great promise in local community development efforts to organize for transformative social change. The interrelationship between civil society, academics, and politicians is essential to create relevant knowledge, to support social movements, and to engage in political involvement. While there have been many efforts to achieve sustainable development, and some examples of progress, more organizing is needed that bring these actors together. Women, children, disabled people, and Indigenous peoples are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disasters therefore policy responses must take into account the experiences of these groups and adopt more equitable approaches. While the environment, sustainable development, social justice, and human well-being are being considered in new ways, organizing to address the fundamental causes of social injustice is imperative. ❧

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Gender equality and women's rights in the CLOC-Via Campesina movement

By Pamela Caro

The CLOC (Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo — CLOC Vía Campesina) — the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations is the Latin American continent's space for coordination as part of the international social movement Via Campesina (signifying 'the peasant's way or road'), founded in 1993. Via Campesina interconnects the social struggles of community-based organisations in four continents, grouping 150 organisations from 70 countries. As a movement, it is made up of organisations of peasants, small and medium sized agricultural producers, indigenous people, the landless, young people, migrants, afro-descendants and agricultural workers. Via Campesina was born out of the need to develop a common vision for rural peoples facing the negative consequences of globalisation in governmental agricultural policies and agro-industry. It came about in a historical context between 1989 and 1992 when Latin American organisations linked up through the continent-wide campaign "500 years of indigenous, black and popular resistance."

The CLOC is representative, legitimate, independent and plural. It was constituted in 1994 to bring together and strengthen the identity and particular demands of rural peoples from Latin America, involving 84 organisations from 18 countries. Of these approximately nine are rural women's organisations and the vast majority are mixed-gender. The CLOC is against neo-liberalism and its key focuses are food sovereignty and integrated agrarian reform. Its organisations explicitly defend access to land, territories, water and seeds, as well as women's rights and gender equality.

The CLOC and gender equality

In 1997, CLOC's first Women's Assembly was held as an initiative of women leaders, in order to place on the table the particular problems and demands of peasant women. At this meeting an agreement on gender parity was signed, which meant that 50% of those in decision-making spaces must be women. In 2001, at the second Women's Assembly, held before the 3rd CLOC Congress, the Continental Women's Network (Articulación Continental de Mujeres) was established as an organic part of the CLOC structure. This network groups together all of the women from the different member organisations. Its aims are to defend rural women's rights and to promote the inclusion of a gender focus in all of the movement's documents, proposals and actions. It acts as a team made up of women leaders, two from each sub-

region (the Andean region, Southern Cone, North America, the Caribbean and Central America). Two women from this group represent the network in the Political Commission of the CLOC-VC.

In the mid 2000s in Latin America, an alliance was made with the World March of Women (Marcha Mundial de Mujeres - MMM) as a result of the search for affinity, consensus and block positions in the international committee of the assembly of social movements for the World Social Forum, and in the campaigns against ALCA (Acuerdo de Libre Comercio de Las Américas), Free Trade Area of the Americas-FTTA and the World Trade Organisation. In 2007 this worldwide alliance was strengthened when Via Campesina and World March of Women jointly organised the first Forum for Food Sovereignty "Nyeleni", in Mali.



Francisca Rodríguez, founder and international spokesperson for the National Association of Chilean rural and Indigenous women (ANAMURI).

PAMELA CARO

In CLOC-VC's fourth Women's Assembly in 2010, held prior to the fifth CLOC Congress, the women delegates took on board the concept of feminism, using the slogan "*without feminism there is no socialism*", as a gateway into the egalitarian socialist project they aspire to build. But even with continuous and frequent debate, the slogan is accepted with mistrust and fear by the different strata of the wider organisation.

The changes experienced by women in the rural world are undeniable. Their greater economic autonomy results in greater participation in social organisations and within the rural popular movement. Whereas "before, women just made and served the coffee", (Interview with Francisca Rodriguez, National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women, ANAMURI, Chile) they are now a central force in today's mixed movements; their work is legitimised and they are key in political decision-making. Women have risen up and the majority of the organisations now have women on their boards of directors. Gender equality is incorporated in the international agenda of the CLOC-VC movement and its women leaders are seen as perseverant, daring and creative peers, with their own creative thinking and proposals in times of crises.

Successes

One strategy used by women to acquire visibility and to be considered as equals by male leaders, communities and institutional authorities, has been to form autonomous women's organisations and spaces within the mixed organisations that are members of the CLOC-VC. This work in building and strengthening women's opinions has enabled them to gain greater voice within the movement. They are also supported by mutual solidarity and stronger ties between women leaders, young leaders and other social groups who all have something in common; they are not part of traditional power structures in the movement.

Another strategy used by the Women's Network within the CLOC-VC has been to organise training schools for women, inviting women from outside and from member organisations to address the strategy of

Another challenge is that in indigenous and rural communities in Latin America it can be hard to talk about feminism and the word gender is not properly understood. It is often criticised by using an inappropriate term common to the rural world associating feminism with lesbianism.

linking gender equality with class equality. Through this process, women also recognise each other as subjects of rights, make themselves visible, empower themselves and do away with their fears and mistrust. In mixed groups the emblematic women leaders act as role models for other women's empowerment processes, and they train others in how to confront discrimination or abuse and to do public speaking. In this sense, the movement is an ongoing training school, and the "teachers" are part of the same school (Interview with Lourdes Huanca, Federation of Peruvian Rural, Indigenous and Black Women).

At present the women of CLOC-VC are working together to build the contents of their proposal for rural popular feminism. This proposal transgresses the status quo of their communities, since it questions traditional sexual mandates and is unpopular with people who defend masculine and patriarchal ideas and practices.

In this process, engagement with local feminist agendas and struggles for gender equality has been strategic. Actions have been carried out on International Women's Day and the International Day for Non-Violence against Women, using creative media such as theatre and cinema with political content to address issues ranging from sexual harassment to land tenure. These actions have been organised on local levels in rural communities and open spaces in the cities, involving other social groups too.

The main gains over the last 15 years are: the visibility of the Women's Network; gender parity established in 1997; the increase in women members; a clear posi-



tion against sexual harassment within the movement; and the campaigns promoted initially by women, "From Seeds", "Food Sovereignty" and "Enough Violence", later taken up by the whole organisation. Access to the internet has been an area of opportunity for staying connected and informed, and has even helped some women to participate, link up and grow stronger.

Tasks and challenges ahead

Beyond these considerable gains, women face difficulties, the most visible of which are in the mixed organisations. Masculine organisational models persist and these limit advances made in achieving gender parity, and reproduce discriminatory practices towards women and expressions of explicit sexism. For example, according to the majority of the women interviewed, there is still a difference in the way opinions are valued, and "*in mixed spaces it is very difficult for women to speak and put their problems on the table — men restrict women's dialogue*" (Interview with Mirta Coronel. MOCASE. Santiago del Estero Peasant Movement, Argentina). In other words, there are still practices that exclude. Gender parity ensures participation but not the role of women as protagonists or women's empowerment. Men's words continue to be worth more and women are seen as 'complementary.'

A second difficulty faced is that adult males do not recognise themselves as in need of training, as they consider themselves to have greater knowledge than women and young people. Since there are more women participating in the gender training school, the debate on equality

between men and women is being postponed to a certain extent. The view still exists that gender is secondary to class struggle, and the tendency is to subsume women's grievances in more general demands. In theory the male leaders "accept" the gender proposals, but they have not managed to put into practice the specific platforms necessary to question inequalities and the traditional sexual division of labour.

Another challenge is that in indigenous and rural communities in Latin America it can be hard to talk about feminism and the word gender is not properly understood. It is often criticised by using an inappropriate term common to the rural world associating feminism with lesbianism. Some of the women interviewed pointed out that they still face comments in their communities in reference to feminism saying that it will destroy the family and the heterosexual couple and that this will affect family-based agricultural production (Interview with Esperanza Carmona, Honduras; Mirta Coronel,

Argentina; and Cinthya González, Paraguay). It is also a challenge to resolve the tension between gender equality and the duality or complementary roles in indigenous *cosmovision*, which has been used to value the ancestral such as respect for the family and the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), but that exclude development for women. These dual notions need to be revised, in a search of the connotation of equality.

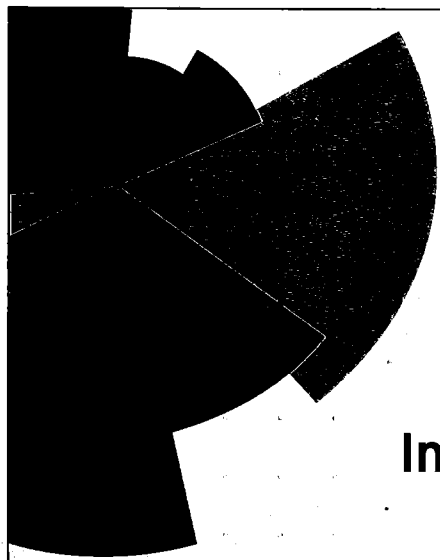
Strategies and recommendations for the future

In closing this article the author presents the CLOC women leaders' main strategies as well as recommendations arising from the process of writing this case study. CLOC-VC's Women's Network has come to consensus on concrete actions to take in advancing towards gender equality, some of which have already begun and others which remain as aspirations.

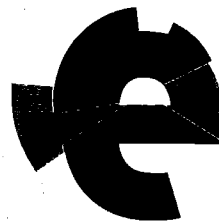
For the women leaders, rural popular feminism is a proposal for building politically within the movement. It should not be

seen as an imposition. It implies self-acceptance as women who are proud of themselves, want equality and are struggling to overcome abuse. They are giving themselves the opportunity to think differently, not feel inferior, value themselves and demand respect. All these elements are important in building a new society, taking the debate into organisations, defending and resisting. Rural popular feminism is not against men; rather it is against the patriarchal and capitalist system.

Since patriarchy is a long standing problem, the Women's Network aims to raise awareness that will enable people to see the inequality that is naturalised at present in cultural constructions of the family, in organisations and in society at large. This means denouncing injustice and transforming daily behaviour such as unbridled male sexuality, expressed in crude comments and other forms of sexual harassment. It also means addressing the sexual division of the world and hence questioning the non-democratic use of speech in meetings; since men generally



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speak first, they often mark out the conditions for debate.

Looking to the future, CLOC-VC still faces the challenge of taking its declarations from discourse into concrete practices. Organised rural women are convinced that the future is promising, as there is no possibility for going backwards on their advances and triumphs, much less in women's awareness. Gender equality leads to other equalities, "as a domino effect", and for this reason it must always be present in all training and organisational processes.

The challenges mentioned by the women leaders interviewed have implications in terms of acquiring the experience, learning and pedagogical methods needed to be able to turn their communities around on gender equality. This means training men, incorporating them in debates with women and young people so that they manage to understand that women only want access to the same choices. These choices include women being in both the private and public spheres, working and generating their own income, having elected positions in their organisation, educating their children, ensuring the inclusion of equality as a genuine priority and not as a response to momentary issues, valuing the territorial sovereignty of the body, speaking of sexual and reproductive rights and defending the right to diverse sexual orientations (Interviews with Lourdes Huanca, Peru; Loyda Olivo, Ecuador; Adriana Mezdri, Brazil; Esperanza Cardona, Honduras; and Cinthya Gonzalez, Paraguay).

Finally, based on this research it seems that CLOC-VC is a movement that has managed to incorporate the demand for gender equality into the Latin American rural world, even when it was not included in its original definitions. This change has come from systematic, constant work by visionary women filled with conviction, who have progressed enormously but who have no doubt in recognising the challenges that remain. These future challenges faced by the movement have implications in both internal and external dynamics. To confront patriarchy "from within" means to recognise that masculine

superiority is a myth, and that the ability to be generous and let go of privileges needs to be developed. Until now women have taken on leadership in circulating this vision and raising awareness among men and women leaders, but this struggle requires the equal involvement of all.

The main recommendation for the internal workings of the movement is to educate in small groups for joint reflection in order to give political depth to this approach. This can be an alternative that enables people to take ownership of the issues that have been difficult to address in large assemblies. This means holding workshops, informal conversational events, forums and more personalised communications actions, as well as chatting around the fireplace or stove on a daily basis.

In the external work of the movement, we need to ensure that gender is a cross-cutting theme, making strong links between the focal issues of the movement, such as food sovereignty, agrarian reform and agro-ecology, and the principles of equality between men and women, identifying obstacles and revealing inequalities in practices and in discourse. For example, the agenda for recognising the important role of women in conserving seeds must advance towards an agenda of co-responsibility, genuine integration and equal opportunities and rights. In issues of land tenure it is important to denounce the non-involvement of women, something addressed by the women of CLOC-VC's slogan: "With women home to stay, agrarian reform is delayed."

The key to change lies in preparing men and women for wide ranging debate, while giving them a diversity of tools to do so. Some recommendations include, for example, recuperating rural women's history in order to value it; designing an alert system for practices that exclude or discriminate against people; and incorporating men into the teams that lead campaigns opposing violence against women. Since everything is in a permanent process of construction, the women of CLOC-VC are open to hope and change, leading men in the movement towards raising, with similar conviction, the banners of gender equality and equal opportunities. ❧

This study was carried out using as a source the perceptions of ten women leaders of national member organisations of the CLOC Via Campesina in Honduras, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. The women interviewed were: Loyda Olivo, Ecuador; Adriana Mezdri, Brazil; Esperanza Cardona, Honduras; Cinthya Gonzalez, Paraguay; Mirta Coronel, Argentina; Lourdes Huanca, Peru; Francisca Rodriguez, Alicia Muñoz and Florencia Aróstica, Chile. Interviews were also held with three male leaders from a mixed Chilean Rural Confederation (Confederación Campesina) and with Nalú Farias of the World March of Women.

This research was developed as part of the BRIDGE Cutting Edge programme on gender and social movements.

Information available at <http://socialmovements.bridge.ids.ac.uk>

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Video interviews with seven CLOC women leaders: <http://www.youtube.com/user/BRIDGEsocialmovement> and <http://vimeo.com/bridgesocialmovements/videos>

Via Campesina: <http://viacampesina.org/en/>
CLOC: www.cloc-viacampesina.net

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In the Field

Mahila shakti aa rahi hai...phool nahi chingari hai!*

Celebrating Women-Activists

Rashida Bi, Champa Devi Shukla and the Chingari Awards

By Reena Shadaan

The Chingari Awards are a significant yet little known effort to honour women-activists fighting corporate environmental/human rights abuses in India. Also significant yet little known is the story behind the Chingari Awards — that is, the story of Rashida Bi and Champa Devi Shukla, two of the most prominent voices in the ongoing struggle for justice in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas disaster.

Rashida Bi and Champa Devi Shukla began their activist careers in the labour movement. In the aftermath of the Bhopal gas disaster, the state government proposed an economic rehabilitation plan, which included the construction of 200 work sheds to train and generate employment for gas-affected women.

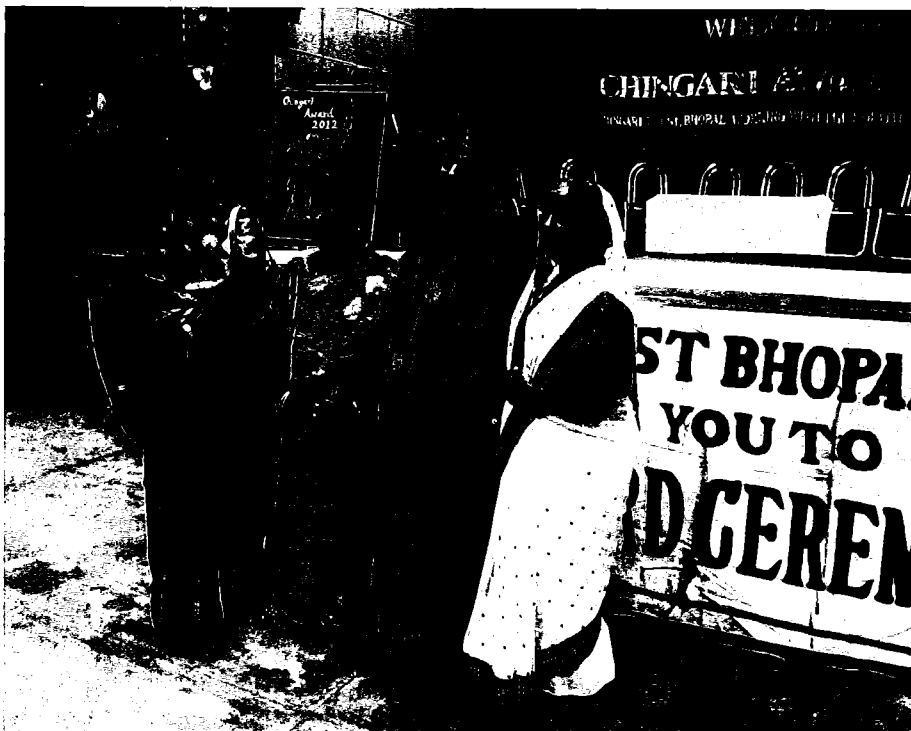
The shift into the workplace (outside of the home) was a significant change for many gas-affected women who were unaccustomed to venturing beyond their households/immediate communities due to cultural/religious norms. However, widespread death and illness amongst male breadwinners forced many women to seek employment outside of their homes. Rashida Bi shared her story stating,

After the gas tragedy, my father got sick. My husband used to do sewing work. He then started having pain in the bones of his legs, so it became difficult for him to stitch... I used to roll *beedis* [in my home], but it was quite difficult for me to sustain and run the house, as the money that I was earning after rolling *beedis* was not enough... I had not even come out of the house... I heard that

there were talks about giving jobs to gas victims... After considering the financial and other problems at home, I said to [my family] that I am also going. I will look for some kind of job... I came out of the house on November the 25th 1985 (2010).

Rashida Bi's story is not unique; it is the story of countless gas-affected women across Bhopal. She soon gained employment under the state government's economic rehabilitation plan. Rashida Bi, Champa Devi Shukla and 98 other gas-affected women were to receive training

at a stationery production centre. However the women did not receive any training at the centre and after three months, they were told that their "training" was complete. This turbulent moment marked the beginning of the *Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchhari Sangh* (BGPMSKS) [Bhopal Gas Affected Women's Stationery Worker's Union] — one of the first movement groups led and comprised entirely of gas-affected women. It is also the moment that catapulted Rashida Bi and Champa Devi Shukla — two women with no prior experience in activism — to union leaders.



Rani Dasan, Thenmozhi Manickam (Koodankulam anti-nuclear activists) honoured alongside Vandana Shiva and Champa Devi Shukla. Not pictured: Rashida Bi.

...after three months, we were told that our training was over... We said, "We are gas victims... We do not have breadwinners in our house, so where would we go?"... We said, "We want work... We are not begging. We will work hard and earn money and bring up our family"... Then they told us to talk to the [District Magistrate]. I and Rashida were together [in the stationary centre] for three months, but we did not know each other well... When it came to talking to the [District Magistrate], all the women said, "Aapa [Rashida] from here and didi [Champa] from there will speak (Champa Devi Shukla, 2010).

Rashida Bi continued,

I then said, "I do not know how to talk, I haven't talked to any man [outside of my family] ever until today"... Then *didi* [Champa] said, "Even I do not know how to talk." Then all [the women] said talk to him in a way you both can. Say anything to him, but talk to him... So ever since that day we have been speaking for the women (2010).

In 2004, Rashida Bi and Champa Devi Shukla were awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for their lengthy struggle for justice in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas disaster. This is not limited to their activism as BGPMSKS union leaders; they are also leaders in the coalition group, the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB). A portion of their prize money was put towards a yearly fund for women-activists fighting corporate environmental/human rights abuses across India. This is the Chingari Awards.

The reason behind the award we give every year is to have women involved... They are from rural areas and are illiterate... but they can understand that what poison is. If a company is coming here...

The importance of the Chingari Awards is tremendous. It is a celebration of Indian women's leadership in peoples' movements that are challenging corporate environmental/human rights abuses.



they will ruin our country, state and our village — they will ruin everything. So Chingari presents an award to the woman who raises her voice for this... We add those women to this fight so that the fight of Bhopal and their fight can be strengthened... Also so that companies wake up and come to know that the world is aware now... The public can't be betrayed by corporations. It does not even matter how much support they have of governments. Even governments lose when the public raises their voice and it is necessary for public to raise their voices (Rashida Bi, 2010).

Past winners of the Chingari Awards include Mukta Jhodia, an *adivasi* leader of the fight against the Utkal Alumina bauxite mining project in Orissa, and Dayamani Barla, an *adivasi* journalist/activist fighting against the acquisition of 12,000 acres of forest in Jharkand by Arcelor-Mittal.

During the 28th anniversary of the Bhopal gas disaster, I attended the Chingari Awards. The chief guest was eco-feminist

and seed activist, Vandana Shiva; a titan of activism herself. The recipients were the women-activists of Tamil Nadu, who are engaged in a non-violent struggle against the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant. Representing these thousands of women-activists were anti-nuclear activists; Rani Dasan and Thenmozhi Manickam.

The importance of the Chingari Awards is tremendous. It is a celebration of Indian women's leadership in peoples' movements that are challenging corporate environmental/human rights abuses. Moreover, the emergence of the awards is significant. Rashida Bi, in particular, went from being a woman unaccustomed to venturing beyond her household to a leading voice in the struggle for justice in Bhopal. The work these women do in honouring other women engaged in anti-corporate struggles is all the more noteworthy in the context of their own her-stories. ❧

* The first part of the title for this article is a slogan sometimes used during Indian women's protests and it translates roughly as "Women's power is coming. We are flames, not flowers."

Reena Shadaan recently obtained an M.A. in Development Studies from York University, where her research focused on Bhopali women's activism/empowerment in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas disaster. She has engaged in solidarity work around the ongoing struggle for justice in Bhopal since 2006.

Further Resources:

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Toward a Complex Unity

Lessons from Occupy Toronto

By Nele Michiels

"We talk about the importance of building a movement that is inclusive, from recognizing that the unity of the 99 percent must be a complex unity"

— Angela Davis, speaking at Occupy Philly

Great Expectations

It is October 15th, 2011, in Canada's largest city — a day many have anxiously been waiting for: the Global Day of Action, voicing a growing demand for global change. In an impressive launch of Occupy Toronto, thousands of protestors march from the heart of Toronto's financial district, at King and Bay, to St. James Park. After months — *alright, years* — of barricading myself inside feminist safe spaces, I have tentatively come out for a mass-appeal movement. As part of the marshal team, I walk up front, linked arm-in-arm with other marshals to pace the march, as we make our way through the streets. The mood is exuberant and, as they say, palpable. Just the previous day, the Canadian Bankers Association had told its members to "prepare for the worst, hope for the best." Imagine that: they might actually be afraid of us. I like that. As we snake indirectly toward the as-of-yet unannounced destination at St. James Park, curiosity and excitement increases. The crowd chants continuously: those heartwarming and wishful slogans, "*The people united will never be defeated!*" "*Whose city? Our city!*" ... And, of course, everyone's favourite to problematize: "*We are the 99 per cent!*"

My heart is rising in my chest. As you can probably tell from my language, I have always been a bit of a romantic, so I permit myself to drop the experienced cynicism and allow my mind to wander. *We really are united. We can do this. I*

imagine the days to come, the joys of camping out in the sun, surrounded by like-minded people, reclaiming our public spaces. As these glorious visions are reaching their peak (all set to an appropriately rising sound track), everything comes to a halt for just one uncomfortable moment. In that moment, someone behind me decides to ... well, grope my butt. It doesn't take much for my childish visions to come crashing down around me, for my weariness to return, for the discussions I've been having with other concerned parties to start replaying in my mind. *It is always like this. We are not prepared.*

Why Discuss Occupy?

With the movement of the self-described 99% in full swing, messages of unity, solidarity, and common cause made their way into occupied parks around the world. The prominent narrative favoured a globalized description of events — linking the inspiring revolutions of the Arab Spring to the *indignados* in Spain, and in turn to Zuccotti Park in New York City. The intention was clear: Occupy was a forum for people to realize their common grounds — to come together across traditional definitions of class, race, sex, age, and so on. Given the sheer enormity and power of the systems the movement sought to topple, such boundary-defying unified protest may sound naïve to many, but it may also be practically necessary. Because such wide resistance narratives have always held a certain appeal, and

indeed are arguably becoming ever more popular with grassroots organizers, it is important to discuss our experiences of them, and learn from our mistakes.

Occupy Toronto

Occupy is commonly understood as a grassroots protest movement against the spectacular income disparity between the super-affluent and the rest of us. It is also associated with a particular set of images — tents in parks, the Guy Fawkes masks related to hacktivist group Anonymous — as well as a particular set of practices — notably, the adoption of General Assemblies, and the occupation of public spaces.

Occupy Toronto (OT), in turn, had its own situational particularities that proved to be very interesting and can teach us valuable lessons for future organizing, as well as raise pressing questions. My own involvement occurred largely before and during the physical occupation of St. James Park. At different points, I was overwhelmingly organizing with the OT logistics committee, facilitation committee, and the on-again-off-again anti-oppression committee. Other committees included media, marshaling, sanitation, police liaison, and food. At its peak, OT had about five hundred people present in St. James Park, many of them camping out, with a significant number of the more dedicated participants being homeless. We garnered large-scale support from both the public, in the form of copious amounts of clothing and food donations, as well as from various organizations. Seven Ontario unions lead by OPSEU (Ontario Public Service Employees Union) took respectful roles as allies in part through the financial backing of generators, yurts, porta-potties (the importance of which cannot be understated), and a portable kitchen.

A popular way of belittling the park

occupants (affectionately referred to as "the occupiers") was through accusations of laziness and unwillingness to work — accusations often leveled against homeless people. However, despite many shortcomings that could have validly been raised regarding OT, this one could be no further from the truth. Anyone visiting St. James Park would have encountered an industriousness far exceeding the energy most of us dedicate to wage-rewarded employment. People worked all day — often well into the night — in self-organized shifts and assignments, including the cleaning of those notorious porta-potties. The message was clear: we love to work, if we feel this work is done for our own communities, and for our own empowerment. OT's critiques of capitalist relations, thus, had little to do with laziness.

This general observation, I believe, exemplifies some of the positive aspects of what held OT together: a remarkable work ethic that was perhaps surprising to some. In addition, OT created spaces to discuss disparity, and demanded public conversation take place (quite literally in public spaces). It taught many new activists the feasibility and skills of community organizing, and confronted many experienced organizers with every-day realities. In short, OT comprised a necessary experiment in how to live differently. The question, however, remains: Were we, ultimately, living all that differently? And: What was the quality of the spaces OT created, given the diversity of people affected by economic and structural inequalities?

The Creation of a Toxic Environment

Like many activist spaces, OT's St. James Park was often envisioned as a sanctuary from the "outside" world, including that world's dynamics of sexism, racism, ableism, and other forms of intersecting oppressions. Of course, since problematic behaviour and structures *did* exist within OT, this common attitude ended up enforcing an unhelpful tendency toward blindness and inaction regarding these problems. This was exemplified, for instance, in claims to "colour blindness:" the idea that by refusing to see race, racial oppression becomes irrelevant

Sexism in OT manifested itself in a variety of ways often found in other grassroots organizations as well. For instance, there was the idea that by not acknowledging, as a community, our problems with sexism, these problems would simply disappear. In this framework, those who mention the issues are widely viewed as being divisive, creating negativity, and ultimately subversive of the group's "important" goals. This interpretation was facilitated by the inherent invisibility these issues had prior to vocalization. In addition, as in the "general public," sexual harassment and assault is perpetrated in resistance communities, and often targets women and those who are seen as gender variant or gender non-conforming.

to an interaction. It was beliefs such as these that arguably fueled opposition in the Assembly and Facilitation Committee to the introduction of an anti-oppression and equity "policy" during the occupation. In this article, I want to focus in particular on some of the problematic gender dynamics in OT, because it is useful to examine how particular environments, *even* those created by activism and social movements, can produce narratives that facilitate oppression. Unfortunately, the existence of such deep-rooted problems within progressive forces is not widely recognized. My aim here is to help facilitate an understanding of how OT-specific structures and narratives, ironically enough, replicated a system in which the few were able to assert a disproportionate amount of control over the decision-making and social environment of the many.

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ultimately subversive of the group's "important" goals. This interpretation was facilitated by the inherent invisibility these issues had prior to vocalization. In addition, as in the "general public," sexual harassment and assault is perpetrated in resistance communities, and often targets women and those who are seen as gender variant or gender non-conforming. In addition, as in other movements, well-positioned men perpetrating some of these behaviours used their other contributions to OT to shield themselves from accountability; at worse times, these efforts were supported by dismissive attitudes around police intervention.

Perhaps worse was the way in which many identified with the perpetrators' concerns, through an insistence on a widespread glorification of "radical inclusivity," which failed to realize that by "including" such perpetrators and failing to hold them to account, other participants (often rendered invisible) were inevitably and decidedly excluded. OT's belief systems and structures, derived from those of the "outside world," made it much easier to continue the invisibility than to confront these important issues. Aside from some of these important ways in which sexism

reared its ugly head in OT, there was of course the occasional objectification of female activists as hot commodities rather than activists in their own right. There was also the division of labour along gender lines, sometimes causing the isolation/disconnection of women from the more glorified tasks of speech-making and media interaction.

Another important question regarding OT, which gets at some of the ways in which Occupy-specific rhetoric was used to bolster oppressive structure, is: whose voices were prominent, and whose were silenced? In OT's practice of direct democracy, in large part mediated by the General Assembly (GA), certain voices were structurally excluded, largely through a refusal to adjust facilitation for the realities of inequity. Especially during the occupation, OT displayed significant disdain toward the idea of developing common messaging and values. In part, this was motivated by Occupy Wall Street's stance against hegemony. While this attitude is derived from a positive emphasis on democratizing our organizing, when

taken uncritically, it led to a refusal to see the necessity of uniting under banners of common decency and anti-oppression. For instance, it was not uncommon for meetings of the Anti-Oppression Committee to be interrupted by speakers who felt it important to impart the information that oppression simply did not exist. Rather than relegate such views to the sideline, the importance of appearing "democratic" took precedence, giving such views "equal" weight as direct experiences from the margins. Of course, in real life, the scales are already tilted one way, and therefore such practice of democracy reinforced very harmful structures, and bolstered resistance to the introduction of any sort of safety nets or truly equalizing facilitation methods. This belief in a "level" playing field justified blindness and inaction toward some of the very real ways in which social inequalities — the very same to which OT professed to be calling attention — played out in practice.

Here, it is helpful to take a more detailed look at how these few voices came to dominate speech in OT. As an

example, we can look at how the GA conceptualized consensus — a definition with wide-ranging consequences. In order to make a decision, the GA needed to reach consensus, with a decision-making rule set at 100%, we called it "100% consensus" — in other words, everyone needed to agree. While this may sound like a worthy goal to some, it was not based in any thorough understanding of consensus building (further bolstered by a distrust of expertise from other organizations), and in fact promoted the opposite. Predictably, a few vocal individuals realized that they could hold up the entire process by blocking every proposal. Alternately, people would become so wary of lengthy decision-making that every proposal would be passed. It was a recipe for frustration and disaster.

Significantly, this structure survived as long as it did because of the ideas of "radical inclusivity" and "radical democracy," which were interpreted as 100% consensus by a majority of the organizers, even if such organizers had a distaste for the disruptive forces, and were "personally" all for anti-oppression and similar structur-

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ing/facilitation of the environment. It was not until post-eviction that many grew exhausted by the situation, and allied with others in the realization that OT found itself in a highly problematic, disturbing, and toxic stalemate. I was not the only one who walked away feeling worn and wounded through the daily struggles of attempting to validate one's experiences and political goals in an excessively hostile and systemically exclusive environment.

Occupy Toronto and Identity Politics

We can also frame some of the problems in OT in terms of its stance on identity politics. In social movement contexts, identity politics can be understood as organizing based in a common interest group. In progressive politics, such an interest group is often founded in socio-economic location. Thus, there is a sense in which the "identity" (for instance, "women") is both constructed by activists *self-identifying* as such, and is socially constructed by the oppressive systems that support the institutions of gender. Identity politics has received somewhat of a bad name in academia, based on the idea that we would not want to "essentialize" ourselves: i.e. freeze ourselves into categories that assign inherent characteristics to women, or other identities. Some feminisms, for example, proclaim as their ultimate goal the abolition of gender and identity politics. This makes sense if we look at gender as the discursive and material structures that support sexism. At the same time, however, we do not live in a post-identity world, and as such, self-aware organizing that is identity-aware is in many cases practically useful or even necessary. For instance, by self-identifying as women (in the sense that we strategically choose to organize together) can reveal the structural aspects of oppression, widen our base for building power and demanding change, and call attention to problematic dynamics in wide-range solidarity groups through methods like the formation of women's caucuses.

It is significant that OT did not start as a solidarity movement among existing identity-aware groups. Rather, OT started with a broad-based call for the 99% to

come out in all its diversity. Based on this intention, OT continued to identify as "the 99%," despite lack of representation from many "traditional" identities and interests. While OT did well in avoiding a fixation on identity, it took this politic too far through the illusion that the Park embodied a post-identity world, without any work being done to actualize that world. This lack of addressing identity issues led to a *de-facto* dismissal of the complexities and intersectionalities within the 99%. There was an emphasis on spontaneity that failed to recognize that a lack of conscious organizing does not mean a lack of patterned habits and organization. Rather than opting to sit down together and consciously shape our patterns, OT remained partial to suppressing topics of identity and structure.

Conclusion: A Complex Unity

Under threat of increasing environmental and economic insecurity and injustice, we must build our voices and actions by organizing in wide-ranging solidarity movements. However, as can be seen from some of the issues we encountered at Occupy Toronto, such "united" organizing can take on different forms, and can also facilitate the creation of toxic environments for women. We must be self-aware and take an active role in structuring our movements to be healthier and more effective. At Occupy Philly, Angela Davis asked the question of our times: how can we come together in a unity that is not simplistic and oppressive, but complex and emancipatory? There are no easy answers to this question, but as feminists we must support unpopular efforts of self-examination.

There already exist many identity politics and issue-based ways of organizing that have tried to create meaningful change by confronting sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression. It is also clear that we as a society would benefit from large united movements, which are currently gaining a lot of media attention. We must address the problems encountered by these movements, as exemplified in the popular Occupy protests. Based on my experiences at Occupy Toronto, I feel that we *cannot* let these issues take a back

seat: we *must* base our movements in a complex unity. One avenue is by increasing our efforts to build solidarity between existing identity-conscious organizations. Another is to take strong measures to actively structure and educate our movements about issues of diversity, equity, and oppression. All too often, activists are willing to attack but not to build. A true search for alternatives, such as the one intended at Occupy camps, would include ways of organizing ourselves consciously and equitably. For how else could we call ourselves true community organizers? As feminists, we must demand active efforts and relentless dedication to building structures that create accountability, equity, and diverse representation. ❧

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Transgender Rights In Ecuador

A Legal, Spatial, Political And Cultural Acquittal

By Rochelle Jones for AWID

The first professional transgender generation in Ecuador are now in college or just graduating. This is an immense achievement, over ten years in the making. But according to Elizabeth Vasquez from 'Proyecto Transgenero' or 'Project Transgender', "because access to rights is so recent, it means that there are thousands of people who face the consequences of that earlier deprivation, especially of lack of education, therefore lack of access to better jobs."

Proyecto Transgenero is an organization in Quito that has spearheaded the rights movement for transgender and intersex people in Ecuador. Described as a "political proposal" as well as a non-profit organization, Proyecto Transgenero's work includes legal, social, cultural and art interventions. Their work aims to "strengthen trans identity in Ecuador ... [focusing] on improving the exercise of aesthetic and identity rights for trans and intersex people, freedom of association and the occupation of urban and sociocultural spaces from which we have remained historically excluded."

Transgender rights and the law

The success of the legal component of Proyecto Transgenero's work is evidenced in the changes made to Ecuadorian laws over the past decade, many of which are a direct result of interventions by Proyecto Transgenero and translate as victories for every-day rights most people take for granted. For example, hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are now classified as an aggravated form of criminal offence.

In 2008 the New Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador was approved. Vasquez worked as an advisor with a Member of the Constituent Assembly (CA) and as a result the Constitution guar-

antees equality before the law without discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Vasquez says "equality claims in different areas in which trans citizens have felt at disadvantage have been filed ever since. For example, an adolescent trans girl filed a claim against a military school for not letting her to go to school in female military attire and the school had to comply. Trans access to education is the biggest improvement in the last four years. The



first transgender medical doctor graduated last week. Many transgender youth are in college these days. Others have filed employment claims, also with success."

Another important norm that was approved in the Constitution is the right to "aesthetic freedom." Vasquez explains "It has facilitated the respect of trans aesthetic in every Ecuadorian institution — public and private — and in the public space. This has especially benefited transgender sex workers who used to be arrested on the grounds of "improper attire" in the past. Articles 68 and 69 of the Constitution now importantly recognize "family diversity" — which Vasquez says is a "LGBTI issue in general — recognizing alternative forms of family such as families formed by transgender sex workers who act as a

single economic and social unit"; and same sex civil unions — that "in practice benefit transgender people on the ground that their unions will usually fall under technical same sex unions under the law."

Article 77.14 — where it is prohibited constitutionally to use the wording of misdemeanours and other lower rank criminal norms to facilitate arbitrary arrests in the public space, is a norm that was directly proposed by Proyecto Transgenero's project "Legal Patrol." In operation since 2002, 'Legal Patrol' is where "six patrol teams have covered the corners where transgender sex work takes place in Quito, practising the sort of experimental, alternative street law that we call "paralegal activism." Working in collaboration with transgender sex workers, Legal Patrol engages in "itinerant activities such as preventive legal counselling, conflict mediation, creation of street associations, cultural identification through alternative ID cards, and emergency legal intervention in arbitrary detentions, incidents of violence with criminal implications, and discrimination in hospitals." Art. 77.14 is hence a derivative of this work. Vasquez says that this norm "benefits trans sex workers who cannot be removed from public space while negotiating services."

Vasquez admits "these are good times for trans rights in Ecuador. The things we have achieved in barely ten years were not imaginable only a decade ago." However, there are still some major issues transgender individuals are facing in Ecuador. For example, she highlights that "Sex work is still a widespread reality and even though sex work associations have become very political over that same decade and arbitrary arrests have diminished as the Police have gone through an important process of sensitization — gender-sensitive procedures included — conditions are still very harsh on the streets."

The identification issue

A case sponsored by Proyecto Transgenero in 2007 resulted in the *Protocolo de Estandarizacion de Procedimientos del Registro Civil*, which prescribes the right to personal identification with chosen aesthetics, and being able to legally change names and change sex. At this stage, however, name change is a simple administrative procedure (one of those dramatic improvements of the past 5 years) but sex or gender is still difficult to change and people must go to court to do so. In addition, the granting or denial of sex changes depends upon individual judges and the criteria are not unified. Because the result is so uncertain, Vasquez says, "most people don't bother to go to court and an increasing number of Ecuadorian IDs have a feminine name and a masculine legal sex or vice versa. When noticed (in the context of job interview, for example), this causes discomfort, unwanted disclosure of private information and sometimes discrimination."

The "My Gender on My ID" campaign is something they are working on, "Identification is [more of] a problem for urban mestizo (1) trans individuals than rural or ancestral (2) trans individuals, where civil identification is a distant institution." Vasquez explains that in a rural setting "normalization is culturally unimportant and therefore the 'ID issue' is not perceived as a problem... Urban mestizos [however] as the dominant hispanic culture are more urbanized, normalized and westernized therefore trans ideas of fitting in the [gender] binary are stronger, especially as social class moves upward. For an upper middle class transgender professional mestizo it would be of vital importance to have an ID with a legal name and legal sex that matches a clear, binary, normalized gender presentation."

Occupying cultural, political and spatial realms

With the primary progressive legal changes in Ecuador underpinning a movement towards equality, it is important that positive change in the cultural, political and spatial realms — which can be viewed as the capacity for transgender

people to occupy and live in common public space and time and not be relegated to the dark corners of the streets — runs parallel and is not just viewed as secondary. These are the areas that impact transgender people in their everyday lives and as Vasquez has highlighted, the conditions for trans men and women on the streets are harsh: "The two greatest problems the street transgender population suffer are firstly, health problems — due to extreme living conditions, hunger, HIV and self-prescribed body intervention; and secondly, domestic violence by male partners. The majority of deaths registered by the Legal Patrol between 2010 and 2012 were not caused by street hate crimes, but were mostly due to self-injected silicone and domestic violence perpetrated by the male partners who cohabit with transgender sex workers in de facto unions." Vasquez reports that of the 13 registered trans sex worker deaths between 2010-2012, in all cases they were marginality, misery, hunger and poverty-related incidents. This is related to trans men and women's historical exclusion from socio-cultural, political and spatial participation.

To counter discrimination and encourage participation in the community, Proyecto Transgenero uses a combination of art and legal action for social impact. A good example of what Vasquez terms an "alternative use of the law" is "The first gay marriage in Ecuador", which included two male gender identities. One assigned female at birth who retained a female legal sex on his documents despite a social identity as a man and the other man assigned male at birth, with a corresponding male legal sex and male social identity. Vasquez says she has been doing these types of legal subversions for eight years.

"Casa Trans" is another example of a political, cultural and spatial intervention. A house in the La Gasca neighbourhood of Quito — it is not only Proyecto Transgenero's headquarters, but is inhabited by individuals who identify in various ways. "During our first year at La Gasca, we experienced overt hostility from the neighbours; our windows permanently got broken and our front wall vandalised. However, [Casa Trans] residents then car-

ried out a "door-to-door sensitization" [where they] approached neighbours, police, businesses, and surrounding institutions. The media started to visit us and talk about our experiences." They have continued this sensitization since then.

The Ecuadorian Institute of Statistics will run the first official survey on LGBTI issues in 2013. Meanwhile, the creative and inspiring work of Proyecto Transgenero is making a real and transformative impact on the lives of trans men and women.

(1) Vasquez explains 'Mestizo' as the ethnic definition that applies to the majority of the Ecuadorian population (used specifically to mean the mixture of indigenous and hispanic blood). 99% of urban Ecuadorians will call ourselves mestizos whereas rural people will probably identify more with their indigenous or their mixed rural indigenous — hispanic ethnic group from the coast, their indigenous nation from the Andean region, their Afro-Ecuadorian ethnic group from the coast or the highland or their indigenous amazonic nation.

(2) According to Vasquez, "As we move away from the central Mestizo culture, cultural androgyny is a lot more present. Ancestral transgenders are people from ancestral Ecuadorian heritage, especially in communities in the Coast, whose experience of gender and sexual diversity is clearly influenced by pre-hispanic understandings of gender. The "Enchaquirados de Engabao" are the first group that has created a trans ethnic organization that vindicates a local form of transgenderism that exists in the provinces of Guayas and Manabi where inhabitants descend from the manteño-huancavilca pre-hispanic culture, in which gender was quite fluid. ❧

AWID — the Association for Women's Rights in Development is an international, feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. A dynamic network of women and men around the world, AWID members are researchers, academics, students, educators, activists, business people, policy-makers, development practitioners, funders, and more.

Women Unionists of the Arab Spring Battle Two Foes

Sexism and Neoliberalism

By Michelle Chen

This year's World Social Forum, a transnational gathering of social activists, took place in Tunis, a city bubbling with unrest as it struggles to shake off a legacy of authoritarian rule while navigating tensions over women's rights, labor and nationalism. At the gates of the gathering last week, these fault lines became starkly apparent when a caravan of trade unionists and rights advocates found themselves unexpectedly blockaded. Border police, under official orders, refused entry to a delegation of 96 Algerian activists that included members of the embattled union SNAPAP (Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique), known for its militancy and inclusion of women as leaders and front-line protesters.

That feminist-oriented trade unionists figured prominently in the incident is not surprising: In the wake of the Arab Spring, women in labor movements are situated at the crux of two very different, but interrelated battles. At the same time that they are resisting the traditional patriarchal governance of their communities and workplaces, they also push back against the "modernizing" forces of Western-style, pro-corporate neoliberal economic policy, and are gradually opening new spaces for social emancipation. By operating within a traditionally male-dominated space, trade unions enable women to assert their agency as activists, simultaneously challenging their general marginalization from the political sphere and the typical Western media portrayal of women as silent victims of culturally ingrained oppression.

In advance of the World Social Forum, women labor activists came together in Tunis on March 23 and 24 for a leadership

conference coordinated by the Public Services International union federation. The event brought women from Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Kuwait and Palestine, along with fellow unionists from Belgium, Canada and Sweden, to discuss the possibilities and perils wrought by the Arab Spring.

The situation of women trade unionists in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) isn't altogether different from the historical gender-equality struggles within labor movements in Western industrialized nations, in which women were initially marginalized but have incrementally moved up in the union ranks. But women's labor struggles in MENA are complicated by growing rifts between Islamist and liberal secular political forces that have engulfed the region since the outbreak of the Arab Spring.

In the political movements convulsing the region, gender-justice struggles have often been sidelined or undermined. In Egypt and Tunisia, the initial wave of pro-democracy protest has yielded to a wave of Islamist-inspired reaction that troubles many leftists and feminists. Though the Arab Spring has scrambled many of MENA's traditional political alliances, secular leftists and socialists have been increasingly marginalized amid the rise of

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Thirty-three women trade unionists from the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and North America met in Tunis on March 23-24 to discuss strategies for women in labor in the wake of the Arab Spring.

hard-line Islamist factions.

Yet Tunisia is an especially fitting setting for a women's trade unionist conference because of both a strong labor movement and recent feminist stirrings. The powerful UGTT (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail) has played a major role in the transition from dictatorship to something resembling parliamentary democracy (though the assassination of union supporter and opposition leader Chokri Belaïd has shaken the labor movement). Meanwhile feminist politics have begun to percolate as well: The dissident artist Amina Tyler unleashed an angry public uproar by posting protest photos of

her bare body scrawled with declarations of self-ownership, in defiance of patriarchs who claim control over women's bodies.

In transition countries like Egypt and Tunisia, where violence against women remains epidemic and could possibly intensify, women's visibility is especially crucial, said Dr. Randa Al-Khaldi, a leader of the women's committee of the General Trade Union of Workers in Health Services and a participant in the PSI meeting, in a phone interview with *In These Times* after the conference. "[Women] have the opportunity and they must use this chance. Because if they don't use it, they will lose [it]... and they will be forced not to work," she says. "And I know that there will be many sacrifices... because it's too difficult in this transformation period, but they have to stand, and they have to sacrifice in order to gain a happy future for women."

However, Al-Khaldi notes, that the challenges facing women even in relatively stable countries like Jordan, where she does her organizing work, are severe. Despite Jordan's reputation as a bastion of prosperity in the region, fewer than one in four women are "economically active" and even fewer have secure jobs. Among young workers, the unemployment rate is nearly 40 percent for women, more than double that of young men.

Al-Khaldi's union is addressing several intersections between labor and gender rights. The privatization of government services, for example, especially impacts sectors where many women work. Further eroding job security is the rampant use of temporary contracts in clerical jobs typically staffed by women, which helps bosses avoid providing benefits that come with long-term employment. Another issue is the even more precarious status of migrant labor.

Domestic migrant workers, many imported from Asia, often suffer exploitation and physical and sexual violence. Labor activists have helped advance migrant women's rights in general, however, under recent legislative reforms granting more labor rights to foreign workers.

The meeting of women trade unionists in Tunis provided a forum to share stories of such struggles and successes, and to identify crucial next steps. Topics ranged

from neoliberal attacks on workers' rights to the need for women in government to more actively address labor issues. Their discussions at the gathering led to the creation of a shared agenda that includes:

- Helping women develop organizational capacity to promote and take on leadership roles within unions;
- Addressing gender violence and promoting protections for women workers from abuse;
- Confronting the gender impacts of "precarious work," or unstable, temporary jobs;
- Building a regional network of women trade unionists.

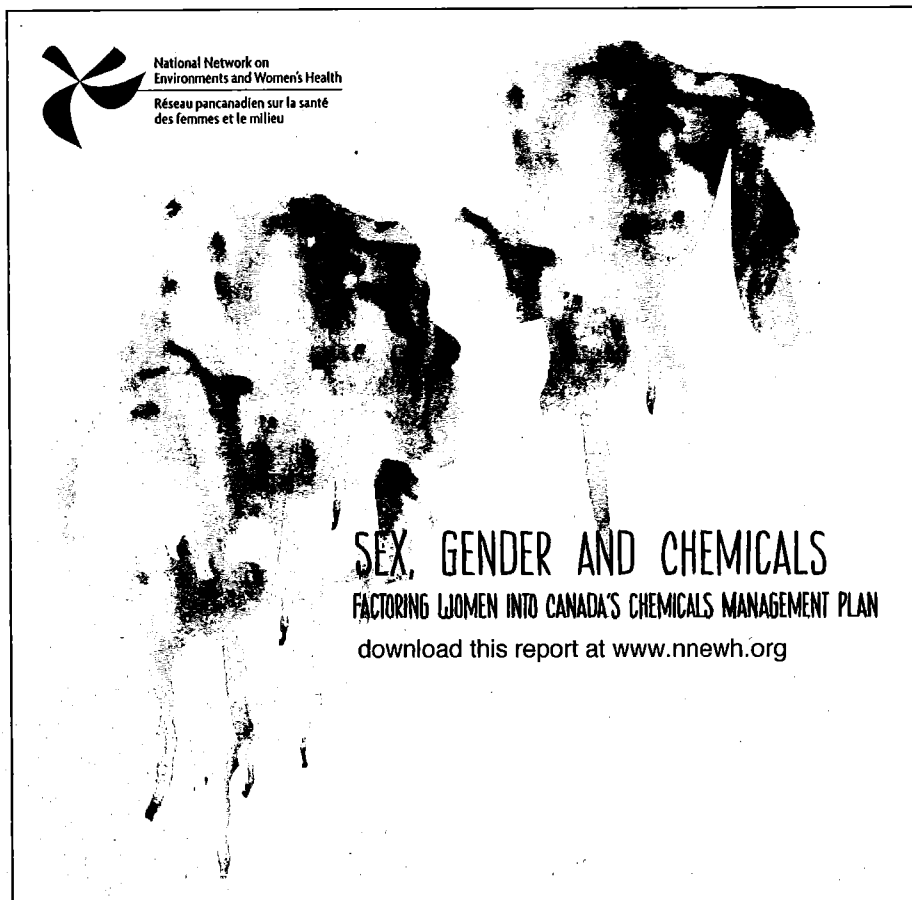
Despite the obstacles, says Al-Khaldi, many of the things women in the labor movement do now in Jordan, such as serving in a few leadership positions on the boards of unions, were out of the question five or ten years ago, when women were openly barred from union activities. Al-Khaldi says men's attitudes are changing

rapidly since the protests erupted two years ago — in large part because women have proven how integral they are to any real revolutionary project.

"Because of this revolution, because of the Arab Spring... People and communities saw that men stand [alongside] women in these revolutions" she says, "And so now they have started to respect women and women workers more." ❧

In These Times published this article in March 2013.

Michelle Chen is a contributing editor at **In These Times**, a contributor to **Working In These Times**, and an editor at **CultureStrike**. She is also a co-producer of Asia Pacific Forum on Pacifica's WBAL. Her work has appeared on **Alternet**, **Colorlines.com**, **Ms.**, and **The Nation**, **Newsday**, and her old zine, **cain**. Follow her on Twitter at @meeshellchen or reach her at michellechen@inthesetimes.com



National Network on
Environments and Women's Health
Réseau pancanadien sur la santé
des femmes et le milieu

SEX, GENDER AND CHEMICALS
FACTORING WOMEN INTO CANADA'S CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT PLAN
download this report at www.nnewh.org

Stand

We wage wars on the bellies of our mothers,
Striking lashes on her arms,
Her face sheathed in dirt,
Covering the bruises our blows have left behind.
The childish games we play bereft of innocence.

In Pakistan female health workers are systematically gunned down,
Their fatal crime providing polio drops to children.

It is estimated that during the Rwandan genocide 500,000 women were raped,
Unpalatable, this figure gets caught on our tongues.
A number critics say does not capture the horror,
Although no number, no matter its size, truly can.

Our TV screens plastered with images of a blue bra from Egypt,
Female activists painted as whores,
Those who dare raise a voice to tyranny,
Exposed in the most vile of ways.

Women that stand with their brothers in protest,
Forced to withstand virginity tests,
Their bodies violated,
Shamed and humiliated,
As the perpetrators are set free by impotent courts.

Still,
We stand,
Subversive,
Channeling the energies of our warrior ancestors,
Nzinga a Mbande,
Jeanne D'arc,
Malalai of Maiwand,
Zenobia
Nusaybah bint Ka'ab,
And Nakaneo Takeko.

The consequences of our revolution far more dire,
Our bodies, our battlefields,
Our protests weigh heavy,
Our silence heavier still.

Anushka Ataullahjan is a PhD student at the University of Alberta. Combining her passion for words and storytelling, Anushka's poetry serves as self-expression and keeps her out of trouble. Lately, she has been contemplating her personal identity, as a woman, Muslim, Pukhtun, and Canadian, these themes resonate through her work.

1965

Pamela is sixteen, drove a '55 Rambler in reverse
to kiss her girlfriend Lana goodnight.
Her parents clocked her mileage.
Caught her in the act, sent her to the asylum.

Now she plays her saxophone to pass the time.
Indigo notes rise out of the bell,
wrap their silky sound around the ears
of the women who sit drugged.
The blue-eyed girl in the corner sits in a wheelchair,
suddenly stands, waves her arms around
like she wants a partner to fill them,
dance her around the common room.

Pamela keeps on playing.
She plays to save herself from sinking
into the same abyss she knew on the farm
when it was her turn to sleep with Charlie,
the fat Polish farmer who shared his bed
with her Mom, her sister and on the weekends, her.

She keeps on playing even when
the charge nurse takes her saxophone away.
A nurse can't let a blue-eyed girl in the corner
dance with her ballroom partner.
Pamela plays into the silence,
only the notes are hers.

Tina Biello is a poet, playwright, actor and Commedia dell'Arte artist from Vancouver Island. She is published in four anthologies by Leaf Press, edited by Patrick Lane. Her own chapbook with Leaf Press is called **Momenti**. Her full-length book of poetry is forthcoming, **A Housecoat Remains**, published by Guernica Editions.

Amazon Studies in Archery

Lesson 1: Preparation

Hippolyta is not her name; nor is it Jane, nor Barb
who unbuttons her blouse. Her mirror displays the sleeves
of a woman's red shirt dangling in limp surrender on her thighs.
In the wedge of gilt and glass, the weave of her skin loose,
The warp and weft of her chest tugged into a shapeless overcoat
buttoned by large loose nipples long out of use by children.
Beneath the lining of fascia and fat, seeds like black sapphires grow.
A surgeon will strip-mine these gems with a scalpel,
excavate the cave of her axilla for strings with long lengths of beads.

Lesson 2: Assume the Stance

Now the mirror manifests her maternal past excised to outer boundaries
of ribboned bone; slices of her flesh read like runes
on glass plates; pathologists scrying cell shapes like seers
extrapolating fortunes. Zipping the flat plateau of her chest,
stainless steel hyphens track the rippled quiver of rib,
and diverge into question
marks, future unpredictable in the curved bow of her shoulders,
her taut re-weave, tough and durable as leather jackets and motorcycle chaps.

Lesson 3: Equipment

This woman wastes no more time
reflecting, rejects the straight limb bow
Unsuited to one who must yield to weather and the S
turns on slick highways; her face level with the proximal horizon
of ditch, sometimes cliff. She cycles
with no patience for arrows that porpoise through stagnant
pockets of air, to drop useless in the murky, unexplored bogs between
herself, husband, children. She chooses a re-curved bow for resilience.
They do not comprehend her new scarlet Harley Davidson, or
why she had her scars studded with gold,
with rings like beer tabs on top; or her one inch of infant hair bleached blond.
They prefer the intricate mysteries of curling stones,
deciphering predictable geometries scoured on ice by men
with brooms she gave up like church, cubed carrots and mirrors.

Lesson 4: Aim and Release

This woman's new skill is aligning string-side eye
with sight, interpreting her own true view through one minute aperture.
She knows arrow velocity, pivotal on strength;
strength pivotal on concentration.
Her shot refinement adapts to all domestic and social terrains.
She re-interprets landscape bisected by bow.
No impotent fishtailing motions
for her, this Amazon's shot are all bull's eye bound.

This poem was first published
in **Room of One's Own**,
Volume, 29.4, Spring 2006

Judy Bowman is a freelance
writer/nurse in New
Brunswick. Her work has
appeared in **Room, Qwerty**,
**The Vagrant Review of New
Fiction**, **Rattle**, **Breaking the
Word Barrier: Stories of
Adults Learning to Read**. In
2008, she was nominated in
the feature writing category
of the Atlantic Community
Newspaper Awards.

She Sews Deeper

She asks herself: "Is the body a
Direct stimulation of the nervous system,
Or is the body an emotional destiny?"
Imperative wonders if one wonders at all,
Of...
A world without sea, or free from disease,
Not conceptually rigid
Of ghosts and spirituality.
She thinks of
Bride's gauzy white dresses,
Beehive hairdos in blond or brown, express
Human experiments, mirror bumble-bees,
In fashion, and bonds, in colonies;
She thinks that maybe these are social conditions
Caused by the drift from agricultural stratospheres.
Following the pieces painted decades ago,
Her quest to blur the boundaries lies here.
Penchant for historical research,
Cloth woven by hand,
Where the warp and weave pattern,
Raw edges remind her of language and sand,
Thick with dark shadows, holding water together,
A culture, the body, the land.
And then outside she builds miniature gardens,
Seeds gathered beneath embroidered moonlight,
Inclination for continuity and saving precious roots,
In mind, her children, passing on bits and pieces,
Scraps for quilting morsels of stories, germination;
Thimble sips of words between breaths,
Wind and clouds weeping,
Whispering skies, landscapes housekeeping.
And then her feminine identity seeping into,
Composted crude materials,
Sprouting inspiration, and bird and bee companions,
She walks into her gardens,
Then gestures of sewing follow hand over hand.

Christine Charette is a visual artist and poet who discerns the environment through the earthly, the celestial, the ephemeral, and the historical. Christine's devotion is to access both the cerebral and the spiritual therein. Charette has her BFA and is currently working on her B.Ed, living in North Bay, Ontario.

Weaving Threads of Inclusion

In this tattered world
worn and unravelling
we gather up the threads of our lives
to weave a new fabric

Threads of many colours
spun by those who have gone before us
shimmering with our cultures and stories
textured by our laughter and our tears

We weave
guided by a thread of respect
inspired by dreams and possibilities
revealing patterns of understanding

We pause
to consider
who or what is missing here
welcoming the weaving of new threads
perspectives
ideas
and knowledge
naming inequity
claiming power
a weave in continuous creation

We lift this fabric
high into the sunlight
its beauty glistening with courage and hope
waving boldly in the open air
Weaving threads of inclusion
we transform
our lives
our communities
our towns and cities
our world

Tisser des fibres d'inclusion

Dans ce monde en lambeaux
usé et effiloché
nous rassemblons les brins de nos vies
pour confectionner un nouveau tissu

Filées par celles qui nous ont précédées
des fibres de toutes les couleurs
aux reflets de nos cultures et de notre vécu
aux textures de nos rires et de nos larmes

Guidées par la trame du respect
inspirées par des rêves et des possibilités
nous les entrecroisons
faisant naître des motifs de compréhension

Nous nous arrêtons
pour réfléchir
à ce qui manque, à qui est absente
nous accueillons de nouvelles fibres
perspectives
idées
et connaissances
nous dénonçons l'injustice
et réclamons le pouvoir
notre tapisserie est en continuelle confection

Nous élevons cette étoffe
bien haut dans la lumière du soleil
sa beauté reluit de courage et d'espoir
et flotte bravement au grand vent
Nous tissons des fibres d'inclusion
pour transformer
nos vies
nos collectivités
nos villes
notre monde

Suzanne Doerge is Director of the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), an Ottawa-based collaborative of women from diverse communities, organizations, and academia working with municipal decision makers to create a more inclusive city and promote gender equality. The poem was written in celebration of CAWI's **Community Engagement Facilitator Guide** www.cawi-ivtf.org.

Night was a vacant lot

for Cheryl Lynn Sim

Night was a vacant lot with a secret
Day was a waffle with blueberry jam
Each lost job, a new bed in the bracken
Nobody knows how to dial a phone

Day was a waffle with blueberry jam
Night was the raccoons screaming again
Nobody knows how to dial a phone
Let's go watch the white-suited men

Night was the raccoons screaming again
Collecting her story with purple gloves
Let's go watch the white-suited men
Brushing fine residue into their jars

Collecting her story with purple gloves
The delicacy of each measured touch
Brushing fine residue into their jars
Night was the clatter of buggy wheels

The delicacy of each measured touch
Known only after all warmth has fled
Night was the clatter of buggy wheels
His steady trudge past summer doors

Known only after all warmth has fled
Her empty husk folded in shopping cart
His steady trudge past summer doors
Night was a TV cranked too loud

Her empty husk folded in shopping cart
Yellow tape cleaves truth from dream
Night was a TV cranked too loud
Day was a man out walking his dog

Yellow tape cleaves truth from dream
Each lost job, a new bed in the bracken
Day was a man out walking his dog
Night was a vacant lot with a secret

Cheryl Lynn Sim, a 53-year old aboriginal grandmother, was murdered and left in a shopping cart in a vacant lot on my street in Nanaimo, British Columbia in 2010. When questioned the next day, neighbours said they had heard a wild animal. Cheri had been living on the streets since losing her restaurant job earlier that year. Approximately 300 people live and sleep on the streets of Nanaimo. A disproportionate number of them are First Nations.

Kim Goldberg is an award-winning poet, journalist, and the author of six books. Her **Red Zone** collection of poems about urban homelessness has been taught in university literature courses. Her previous collection, **Ride Backwards on Dragon**, was a finalist for Canada's Gerald Lampert Award. She is a winner of the Rannu Fund Poetry Prize for Speculative Literature, the Goodwin's Award for Excellence in Alternative Journalism, and other distinctions. She lives in Nanaimo, BC. www.PigSquashPress.com

the psychological cost of learning to care

'die to self,' our boss yelped
as we forfeited our freedom, made ourselves small,
harboured the role of caregivers,
heralded the voice of the cared-fors, &
gently bit our tongues pretending to concentrate

it wasn't long, however, before we started sneaking in time for self-care,
started wondering if it was a bad idea
to cram all our hopes and aspirations into one organization, &
started questioning if anais nin would have lasted a minute

then, shortly after calling on the lord (needing 'im more than the average day job),
we found hope. hallelujah! we found hope
we came across a study showing fewer shots were fired in world war two
ah ha! the soldiers just needed the right training
more shots were fired in every war since
praise jesus! blazing jesus

if the armed forces can stomach it, you can too! belly up—err—whatever the saying is!
easy peasy with the saviour! compassionate care! split shifts! weekends! 12 hour days!
make that 14 hour days! no living wage! no benefits! no breaks! it's not work, it's care!
it's not work, it's care, people! fire more shots! wage forward! feign kindness! give
emotional, social, spiritual, medical and physical support! don't forget behavioural
support! you almost forgot behavioural support! every moment is teachable! attend
another compassion fatigue seminar if ya have to! defer to a charismatic leader! bend
over and take it! read some henry nouwen! memorize some jean vanier! brush up on
the gospel! remember anais & all the greats were chained at some point! listen, learn,
observe! give, give give! care, care, care! don't stop

'til you throw your backs out shouldering the weight of an unjust system.

Janna Klostermann writes from
Ottawa, ON. Her work has recently
been featured (or is forthcoming)
in **Canadian Woman Studies*,
Geez, Our Times, and *Room*. *For
more information, visit
facebook.com/jannaspeaks

rBGH and Bessie: A Cow's Story

I used to like my life
back when I had time to ruminate
on such things
in the long hours between morning
and evening milking.
I liked it when John started the music
at milking time
and I really liked getting out in the spring:
the raw, tangy taste of the new grass
and those spicy coloured things
growing down by the creek
and the long lazy days of summer

except for the horse flies!
they prick and sting
and I want to run
somewhere.

I remember when I had mastitis
my udder hurt so
and I went and stood by the gate
till John and the dog came
to bring me in; he pricked my rump
just like a horse fly
and again in the morning
and evening and morning and evening
and then the hurt was gone
and I was back out in the sweet grass.

But now it's horse fly pricks all the time
and I want to run,
but my feet hurt so I can hardly stand,
let alone run.

It's getting so I hate the sight of John
except for the feed he brings.
I'm always hungry.
Summer seems a long way off.

Even if John opened the door
I don't know that I'd go out.
Can't leave the feed.
I panic at the thought.
Just eat
and milk.
No time to lie lazy under the tree
let the slow summer thoughts
drift and float.

I used to dream of summer
with no horse flies.
Now my life is all horse flies
and no summer.

A 'retired' farmer, **Cathleen Kneen** is active in the peace and women's movements. She is best known across Canada for her leadership of the food sovereignty movement through Food Secure Canada and Just Food (Ottawa), and through **The Ram's Horn** newsletter which she co-publishes with her husband, author Brewster Kneen.

Sleep

Thanks to Eliza Griswold

It's minus twenty-two in Winnipeg.
The woman by the depot doesn't beg.
She has to find a car that's left unlocked.
To sleep in. Not to steal, she tells the cops.
She smiles. It's eight months since she's had a fix.
Her front teeth gone. Next week she's twenty-six.
Nights this cold it's hard to stay awake.
At least she's not a brother. That's a break.
The men police find, they dump outside of town.

To Get Warm

For Li-Young Lee

Something is asked of you
that can't be bargained away. Not by the brilliant
liars **expectation, desire**. Not out in deep water,
pulled by four currents: **hope, hope, hope,**
fear. Not in the cave singers look for
to burn wood and stay warm. If a woman is four winds
and three fires, when I crossed the threshold,
wind stayed **out there**. At least
the most harrowing wind. **You have to wait**
and not wait for the song. Inside, the self
meeting itself in the dark, burned white hot
like an ember. I took what wood I could find
and began feeding the fire.

Carole Glasser Langille's fourth book of poems, **Church of the Exquisite Panic: The Ophelia Poems**, was published in October 2012. She is also the author of a collection of short stories, **When I Always Wanted Something**. She has given readings in Athens, Prague and Delhi among other places. She teaches Creative Writing: Poetry at Dalhousie University.

i wasn't supposed to tell

Did i ever tell you about the

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i b e l i e v e d i was pregnant with the
Second

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second

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of Christ?

my womb carried her a

girl a

queer girl

who would

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race

who would
dismantle structures of
pain
who would
teach

privilege

power

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LOVE

The
Second

second
second

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of Christ is a

girl a
queer girl
from my womb a
queer girl
from my disabled womb

a new Christ

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Madness

from my

Yeah, i was a bit mental then, you know, having had this alternative experience of

r e a l i t y . r e a l i t y r e a l i t y
e l t r a i y e a l i t y

often
pathologized as
psychosis
often
constructed as
illness

often
othered as
abject as
wrong
often an
(un)acceptable exclusion

but shh!
i escaped sectioning through
silence
i wasn't supposed to tell
ALL would be REVEALED at the right

t
i
m i t
m
e m
m
i

but shh!
i escaped sectioning through
silence
i wasn't supposed to tell so
they didn't know about my
Madness my
visionary thinking my
solution to the problem of
loving to love
GOD
yet
hating being asked to hate
OTHERS
they didn't know about my
Madness my
pain my
distress my
solution to the problem of my
childlessness my
loss my
grief my
family-lessness my
alone-ness my
loneliness

Did i ever tell you about the

s p a c e s
p a c a p a c e
c e s p a c e

Madness
sometimes occupies
as a reaction to
oppression
as a solution to
oppression through
visionary thinking through
unusual and visionary
thinking?

Mad
processing is at the very least processing
as the sane-identified reproduce

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s

of privilege
of disadvantage
badly
unthinkingly

Mad studies
oppression
madly
Mad disrupts
power
madly
Mad produces
cultural trouble
madly

m a d l y

m a d l y

Dr. Brenda A. LeFrancois is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She offers this poem as a means to open discussion about the role of the mad movement, mad activism and the experience of madness in effecting social change in relation to gender oppression and the experience of oppression related to other social constructs. In effect, this poem is meant to not only open a discussion about the space madness occupies but to also forge a space within WEI for a discussion of the importance of the mad movement.

The Drum is Yours

Between the house on the ridge and the fire pit below,
a long gravel road and fear of all things nocturnal,
on the chilled edge of a Colorado summer night
you hold a buffalo drum and wait,
spruce trees huge and looming,
surround of wilderness palpably ill-willed.
The moon's a slender arc
with just a misty hint of fullness,
no solace there, but
it's time to begin the journey down
to the women gathered around the fire
and the one who holds in thrall
the part of yourself you always trade for love.
Stride and strike, stride and strike,
each measured blow on the deep-toned drum
strips another layer, pins you
to a thousand hungry unseen eyes,
stride and strike, stride and strike,
all muscles tensed for flight.
The road bends deeper into darkness,
forest close on either side,
stride and strike, stride and strike,
beyond this primal fear, another—
cold sweat, sweet thread of desire—
to leave the mead hall of bartered weakness,
step alone and naked into the night,
arms spread in welcome and surrender,
once and for all
dimming the demon other eyes,
letting the beauty of night in.
Some way more to the terminus of fire,
stride and strike, stride and strike,
the road continues on and on
into the mountains, the towns beyond,
the moon is always full,

Marilyn Lerch has published three volumes of poetry. Her latest is called **The Physics of Allowable Sway** published in 2013. She was president of the Writers Federation of New Brunswick from 2006-2010.

Lerch currently is on the board of Autumn House, a transition home for abused women in Amherst, N.S. and is heavily involved in stopping unconventional shale gas development in New Brunswick. She lives in Sackville with her partner, Janet, of seventeen years.

global citizens

who are you
dear global citizens
shouldering worldly stories
based on necessity
not choice
of born circumstances
and maybe
developed worlds' currencies will
relieve your family a night from poverty
paying forward
the economic price
of vicious debt transfers
borne by generations waiting to birth

who are you
dear global citizens
turned commodity-inc.
in the global market place
ventured between push and pull
of buyers and sellers
auctioned by families to countries
a remittance exchange
a leverage
pawned overseas
distinguishes you
from vacationers
charting their destiny

who are you
dear global citizens
your net-works
of labour and energy
float all continents
paid to trespass households
clothe those not your own
harvest fruits not sown
service tourists on sheets less known
your net-worth
patronized
by host
by home

thank you
dear global citizens
your life, target for the rest
of sacrifice
of selflessness
not a worldwide production line
your shares bridges human-kind
trading hardships for a universal goal
future gains
short and long
invested place
accounts beyond
for, forever ancestral peace

Jenny Lo, MSc, is passionate and optimistic about creating equitable communities. She has focused her work and research on issues related to community socio-economic development. From working in the private sector to the not-for-profit sector, she now tries to effect change in the public sector as a regional policy consultant.

At the trial of Betty K.

In an other context
he might have been mistaken for
her grandson,
the strapping young detective
who testified
— without a hint of shame —
at Betty Krawczyk's trial.

He said he arrested Betty
and carried her
to his car
from the road
where she was seated,
protecting an ancient forest
with her small body.

Like hers, his handsome face is
underlined by force of character
so that,
even from the gallery,
one is compelled by
a sense of his nature —
not unkind —
and the underlying spirit.
He said she was polite (of course)
and made a few points
from the back seat of the cruiser
to which (of course) he did not respond.

I can see her now,
explaining the justness of her cause
passionately, within a cosmic framework,
in her gentle Louisiana lilt,
on the off chance that her
captor might actually listen
and learn something.
Well, you never do know
till you try.

And then,
in a prescient moment
might he have stopped the car,
unlocked the back door,
and unfastened her handcuffs?
And then, offering a hand to lean on,
helped her out?

Might he have kissed her cheek
with the caring of a disciple
or a grandson
and set her on her way?

Marni Norwich is a writer/editor and writing workshop facilitator with her business, Inkat Media & Associates (www.inkcatmedia.com). She's also worked as an independent journalist. She's the author of a poetry collection, **Wildflowers at my doorstep** (Karma Press, 2008). She can be contacted at marni@inkcatmedia.com.

In Print

Everyday Law on the Street

City Governance in an Age of Diversity

By Mariana Valverde, University of Chicago Press (2012). 272 pages.

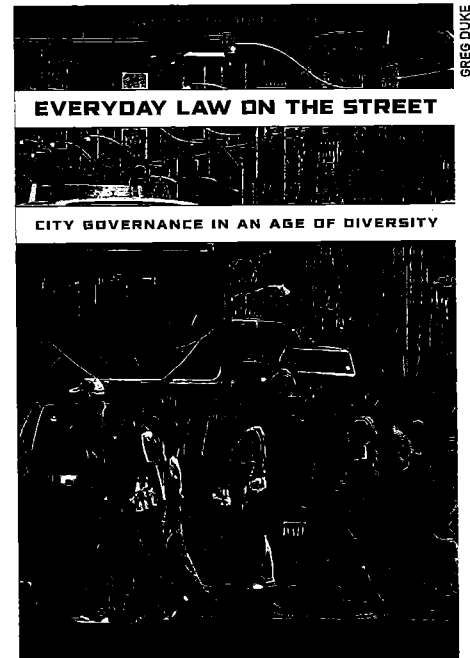
Reviewed by Sandra Tam

In *Everyday Law on the Street: City Governance in an Age of Diversity*, author Mariana Valverde provides a detailed account of law-in-action based on critical observations and insightful analysis of how local legal frameworks and governance structures shape urban life and issues of diversity. The author notes that diversity, which may have traditionally been considered a problem of urban settings “has come to mean a lot of different things to different people” (p.15). An early meaning of diversity as an anti-discriminatory “rainbow nation” project gave way to diversity as a workforce management strategy for doing business in a competitive global economy which was followed by recent de-politicized diversity as tolerance or “openmindedness” to extreme styles of dress or piercings. Finding it curious that everyone — councilors, residents, city staff alike — generally and proudly promote Toronto’s motto “Diversity is our strength”, but that specific dimensions of diversity (low socioeconomic status, homelessness in particular) are not valued, the author set out on a 4 year-study of formal law research, observations and participation in municipal committees, tribunals, citizen engagement and council meetings and job-shadowing local inspection and law enforcement officers in multi-cultural Toronto to better understand their implications for diversity.

Using an everyday-on-the-street approach to study the workings of local laws and the assumptions underlying them, Valverde reveals some remarkable effects. For example, local laws that address the aesthetic of private yards, noise as nuisance and “quality and tran-

quility of life” govern not through bans or prohibition of activity but by coercing people to uphold standards that are culturally specific. Planning that evokes the “character of the neighbourhood” and zoning laws that employ “separation distance” to specify the location of “locally undesirable land uses” away from “good” buildings and away from each other have the effect of segregating social services or housing for poor people because there are inevitably few or no complaints about the zoning variances in poorer neighbourhoods. In the construction of places of worship, Valverde’s cases show how planning processes and restrictions on “time, space and manner” of use of space and buildings — but not of people — make it possible to block mosques from neighbourhoods and that such actions do not constitute discrimination against Muslims. That people primarily interact with the local legal structure by residency of space or property ownership rather than as citizens with rights renders discrimination claims less relevant in local legal disputes.

The book also describes the people, roles and dynamic relationships that enact regulatory processes with consequences for diversity. On the enforcement side, local councilors of all political stripes playing the role of “village elder” or “local champion” were found to interfere in the day-to-day work of city workers by frequently seeking responses to their constituents’ complaints. Following up on councilors’ requests, staff investigate what may be trivial infractions at the expense of conducting interventions with broad city-wide implications. Public community planning or zoning consultations in the



style of Jane Jacobs’ grassroots activism were turned into unproductive meetings where people vented about their neighbours, and showed prejudice or discriminated by perpetuating simplistic and monolithic understandings about particular ethnic groups.

Overall, *Everyday Law on the Street* does an excellent job of enlightening readers about the importance and limitation of current local legal tools for addressing diversity issues. In addressing the question of what to do, Valverde calls for city-wide planning that includes opportunities for meaningful engagement on diversity issues to support a vision of the city for the city and everyone in it. ❧

Sandra Tam lives in Toronto and works for the Ontario Public Service.

In Film

Nayani Thiyagarajah writes about “**Shadeism: Digging Deeper,**” a film about discrimination based on skin-tone, which she is currently writing and directing.

Spaces for Self-Love, Not Systems of Oppression

It took me more than 15 years to look in the mirror without the risk of sadness spreading across my face. It took me more than 15 years to risk smiling back at myself.

At the tender ages of five, six, seven, and onwards, I did not know who to tell about my moments spent crying, worrying, thinking of my own body as something to be ashamed of. I did not feel safe to say that sometimes I felt ugly, that I felt wrong for being me. I didn't know who to tell or how to even start a sentence stating my feelings about myself. My agency over my own body had somehow been taken away long ago, before I could even remember when. And no one had told me I could ask for it back, that I could fight to regain control of my own body.

Societal beauty “ideals” take hostage of our bodies and we often become subject to their whims, as self-identified womyn. These “ideals” are cruel and the spaces that uphold them are unsafe. The environments that envelop us, day by day, can and do hurt us. The presence of multiple systems of oppression is indisputable. Notions of what we should and shouldn't be surround us. If these systems, and those who maintain them, are not telling us to lift something, they're telling us to nip something, or telling us to tuck something. Often they're telling us to cut something out and they leave us behind wanting to eliminate a part of ourselves, unhealthy as our means may be.

For billions of womyn around the world, including those I love, those systems also tell us to “lighten”, to “brighten”,

to “bleach” — to strip our bodies bare of the beauty and legacy that was passed on to us by those who came before us, the innate beauty with which we were birthed into this world. We've been taught to mistrust our strengths, mistake them for weaknesses, based on a flawed power structure, one that makes people feel wrong for the way they were born. This is a cruelty against our humanity, taking us further away from our own love.

In 2010, I made the decision to do something to challenge this. With a group of four of my peers at Ryerson University's School of Journalism (Toronto), I worked to develop a short documentary called “Shadeism.” Upon its online viral release in October 2010, the short documentary received unexpected global recognition, through various news media outlets, hundreds of online blogs and websites, and numerous educational bodies and community groups in Canada, as well as abroad. That same year, it also premiered at the Regent Park Film Festival and received the Youth Media Arts Award.

Societal beauty “ideals” take hostage of our bodies and we often become subject to their whims, as self-identified womyn. These “ideals” are cruel and the spaces that uphold them are unsafe. The environments that envelop us, day by day, can and do hurt us.

Since then, we've been working on a feature documentary follow-up to the original short called “Shadeism: Digging Deeper.” Through this collective narrative, we are digging, dissecting, and discussing this issue of shadeism, and how it manifests in the lives of different indigenous and womyn of colour. The courageous offerings of our friends and family members form the foundation of this collective story. Their shared experiences provide context for how shadeism affects different women in deeply personal ways.

As indigenous and womyn of colour, we've been told for centuries that our melanin is too much or not enough. We've been caricaturized, stereotyped, exoticized, objectified, othered, and hated, for being who we are. Amongst members of our own communities, we subsequently struggle with the issue of skin tone. Notions of “darkness” and “lightness” leave us with pain we never asked for, pain that preceded us, and pain that has been passed down over multiple generations, which bleeds into our present day lives.

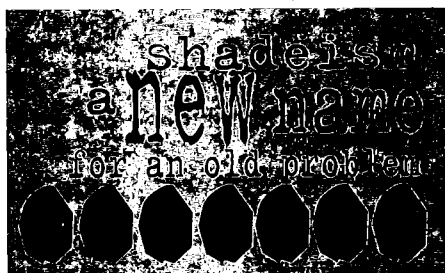
This struggle in relation to skin tone is what we call shadeism. It is also known as colorism. It refers to the discrimination and challenges that arise between members of the same community based on skin tone. It refers to an unhealthy obsession with what is referred to as “fairness” amongst womyn of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Even the terms we use must come into question, as if to be lighter-skinned is what is fair in life. Our language reflects violence against melanin, violence against nature.



As a kid, the topic of skin tone was never missing from dialogue amongst family. Born as a “light-skinned wonder child” of sorts, commentary about my “losing colour” — becoming darker — and “gaining colour” — becoming lighter — was a constant point of conversation. Still, I largely benefited from a “pass.” Being somewhere in between along the skin tone spectrum, my experience was never too bad. This “safe place” allowed me the “privilege” to not think too much about this issue that I both witnessed and experienced.

Still, as I think back to my own girlhood, the time when I was most impressionable, most vulnerable, most subject to ridicule and feelings of wrongness, I remember the very real ways in which I was implicated through this “value” system of “beauty.” At the time, it was not just the colour of my skin; it was the shape of my body, the scars that covered it, and the eczema that refused to let go of my skin.

I spent many mornings before school, staring at the mirror, embarrassed of the little girl who was looking back at me. Tears would drip down my face, my fingers quick to wipe them away, so no one



could be witness to these moments alone with myself. I was ashamed of the multiple shades of brown, making me far from “even-toned”; I was ashamed of the rolls of skin that covered my body in seemingly countless places; I was ashamed of the dark gray scar that spread across the right half of my tummy; and I was ashamed of the scaly skin and dried blood, which marked sores left open from a night of scratching, trying to soothe the itchiness of eczema.

Looking back, as I approach my 25th year on this earth, I can only now begin to speak on how I’ve started cultivating spaces of love for myself. And I have not done it alone. With the support of my sister-friends and some female members of my family, I have started an internal journey of loving myself that is equal parts

Top: Jade Lee Hoy, Mugginga Antonio, Amanda Parris, Nayani Thiyagrajah and Nadia Alam of the original short “Shadeism” (2010)

Left: Still from the 2013 “Shadeism: Digging Deeper” trailer.

personal and collective. For me, self-love grows in the time I spend with these loved ones, sharing and caring for each other. For me, self-love grows through the post-it note reminders and letters and stories I write to myself. For me, self-love grows through the sincere attempts I make to look at my body with kindness, with an open and tender heart. For me, self-love grows through challenging my own thoughts and the external ideas that influence those thoughts. This all happens through conversations with loved ones, in writings to myself, in moments alone in front of the mirror.

In these conversations, writings, and moments alone, I am reminded that it is possible to shift away from systems of oppression and towards circles of love. Can we escape the spaces that are main-

tained by making us feel wrong? No. But can we begin to have conversations about how to confront these spaces, how to challenge what is fed us, how to form our own spaces of love that we can always turn to? Yes. We can do this for ourselves.

Today, I often look at my naked body in the mirror, thinking back to that little girl who still lives inside of me. I try to look back at her with the kindness of a woman who loves her like no other. I examine every curve with my eyes; I place my hands on the places that felt unloved for so long. I try smiling at my own reflection; I risk looking at the sight of my own eyes. Sometimes I even hug myself around my tummy, and often I place my right hand right on top of my heart. I wait for my heartbeat; I catch it as it thumps against the palm of my hand. Slowly I smile, at times I giggle, and then I always take a deep breath. Sometimes I even cry, smile still intact. In the shedding of those tears, met halfway by raised cheeks, I remember how far I have come.

These are my rituals of self-love and self-care, ones that I have developed over time. Some have been shared with me; some I have found myself through discovery of what feels most peaceful. These are my ways of reminding myself that this love I've found for myself over time is real. This is my way of loving the little girl who is still inside me in many ways, who I still nurture. This is my way of

ensuring that she continues learning and trusting that she is worthy of love. I am not always "successful"; I don't always feel beautiful but I am in a better place than I was and that is more than that little girl inside me could have imagined during her time.

I am an example of how the love of other beautiful souls, the sharing of personal narratives, the personal questioning of external ideas, the collective challenging of ugly systems, and the tenderness and patience of my own heart, has helped to foster self-love and communal love, which has subsequently been of service to the struggle for justice. For justice in the fight against ugly systems of power, which have never been in our interests.

When folks ask me if I truly believe we ourselves can reverse shadeism through our film, I say no. But when they ask me whether I feel that our documented conversations will make a difference, I say yes. I say yes, because I know what those conversations have done for me. I know what conversations about body shapes, about facial features, about hair texture, about skin colour and skin tone, about the many mistreated parts of ourselves as self-identified womyn, have meant to me and those I love.

And so, through our work and through our words, we continue to unlearn what we have been taught and we build our own value systems. As one elder, Maryam,

said to us in an interview for *Shadeism: Digging Deeper*, we need to create "a value system that protects women." What is a value system if it does not value us as indigenous and womyn of colour? What is a value system if it systemically attacks womyn like us, rendering us feeling wrong for who we are? No system that hurts us is for us.

We're not naïve. We're not sure shadeism will be wiped away in our lifetime but what we can trust in is our own ability to take steps forward. We cannot change the external environments that surround us, the inherently ugly systems that are out of our control, and which we don't care to take control. The only ones we can count on, the only ones we can trust to see this struggle through with us, is ourselves. None but we can have our best interests in heart, mind, body, and soul. None but we can do right by us. It is on us. And perhaps the most comforting thing in all of this is that we do not have to do it alone. We have each other. ❧

*"womon" and "womyn" are alternative spellings for the traditionally used "woman" and "women", which I personally utilize as a way of redefining myself as a woman, and reclaiming a term free from male association.

The original short was recently selected for the Sierra Leone International Film Festival in April 2013 and will screen as part of their "Women Own the World" special programming.

My name is **Nayani Thiyagarajah**. I am ever going, ever growing, ever moved and ever moving. I've never fit well inside jars; I've always felt closest when flowing like water. I love people and I love stories. My soul rises through storytelling and sharing. So far, film, writing, and theatre have served my heart work well. I believe most in love.

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Pat Noonan doc lively because Noonan always is

Beatrice Fantoni

After decades of meetings, marches, speeches, reports, demonstrations and sit-ins, Pat Noonan is never tired. So the documentary about her is never dull.

The local activist and former nun who ruffles the establishment's feathers on a regular basis (at one point, apparently, the RCMP suspected her of being a Maoist, lesbian and/or drug smuggler) is the fascinating subject of the much-anticipated film, *This Is What A Feminist Sounds Like*, premiering at the Windsor International Film Festival this weekend.

The made-in-Windsor documentary centres on Noonan's life from childhood through to the present, tracing her steps with the local feminist movement, anti-war activism, environmental activism and the group of local women who lobbied hard for changes to workplace violence laws following the murder of nurse Lori Dupont in 2005.

Filmed in 2011, dozens of other local activists and personalities are interviewed, and the documentary also makes effective use of archival news footage, photographs and newspaper clippings.

Not only will *This Is What A Feminist Sounds Like* make you rethink nuns, it will drive home how deeply previous generations of Windsor women wanted change and equality.

The film — which has no narration and relies on the interviewees to tell the story — can at times be confusing to those who aren't familiar with Windsor's history, but the central idea is not lost: Noonan is tireless, determined and always willing to talk.

The Windsor Star sat down with the film's co-director Kim Nelson to learn more about how *This Is What A Feminist Sounds Like* came to be.

BF: Why make this film and why make it now?

KN: (Noonan) has had 80 years of doing things that are outside the norm, or really courageous, and now is a good time to

reflect on her whole life although she's still going.

BF: The film opens with talk about



JEFF DENONNE

Noonan's mysteriously slurred speech, but she's perfectly understandable. Why raise the "voice" issue at all? Could this just have been a film about a very interesting woman?

KN: At that time (of the filming) there was a concern she might lose her voice completely. That was a real struggle in her life at that time so that's why we chose to set the film around it. It kind of bookends the film.

They weren't able to diagnose it and it really, severely impacted her voice for a time. By the time we started the film her voice was already improving.

BF: Where did the choice come from to not use lower thirds to identify the speakers on camera?

KN: That's an esthetic choice. I didn't want it to look like a news story. (The film) is about Pat and the community. She always really emphasizes the community so I think I didn't want to draw attention to individuals' names but just concentrate on what they were saying, because you're really directing (viewers) when you have a title with the name. Through the interviews you get a sense of the person's personality and a sense of ... what their milieu is.

BF: What was the hardest thing about producing the film? The easiest?

KN: I think (Noonan's) story is really compelling so hopefully the structure of the biography is interesting to people.

Documentaries, I find, are so often about a real crisis, a looming crisis, and how will it be resolved. It's almost predicated on a fiction structure. But there wasn't a *Hoop Dreams* final confrontation (in this film). That can be a challenge as well structurally.

I would say that working with Pat was the easiest thing — drawing her out, because she's this person who's not really guarded.

BF: What's the primary thing the audience should take away from this film?

KN: I think people would watch the film universally and take away that message about how much things have changed for women, how those changes came about ... and it's a frame of reference to have a history of Windsor. I think that's important and interesting for Windsorites to know just for our own identity of the city.



Pat Noonan and Selma McGorman talk about the difficulties and triumphs of the early days of the women's movement in Windsor, Ontario in the film *This is What a Feminist Sounds Like*.

My whole sense of what it means to be a nun or to be an outspoken woman were really altered. Before that, I thought of nuns as being cloistered and the choice to become a nun is the choice to withdraw from the world, and to learn that she became a nun for the exact opposite reason really brought home how much the world has changed for women since the mid-20th century.

BF: Where do you see the film going?

KN: The biggest thing the film could do is to inspire people to think about "What is it that is important to me, that I care about and that I want to change about the world?" Now, Pat chooses about 30 things but if you can watch it and think about one that would be a great thing. ✂

This interview was edited, condensed and published in The Windsor Star on November 7, 2013. This Is What A Feminist Sounds Like screened at the Windsor International Film Festival in November 2013.

Beatrice Fantoni is a reporter for *The Windsor Star* who loves to dance and do crafty things. You'll spot her byline (mostly) in the News, Health and Food sections of the paper. She has also reported for *Postmedia News* in Ottawa, *The Gazette* in Montreal, *The Globe and Mail*, and the Italian daily

Corriere Canadese in Toronto. Follow her on Twitter @bfantoni.

Kim Nelson is a filmmaker and associate professor at the University of Windsor. Her films have screened at the Rhode Island International Film Festival, Atlanta DocuFest, and the Windsor International Film Festival among others. She is currently working on a SSHRC funded documentary about the colonial connections between Germany and Canada's past.

Best Wishes from Our Times to Women & Environments, our sister in the struggle.

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In Related Fields

Struggling for safe access to water and sanitation

By Kelly Haggart and Cecelia McGuire

Women who were relocated from slums in central New Delhi to the city's desolate periphery face daily indignities and danger as they collect water or access public toilets. Using the Women's Safety Audit developed in Canada, they have begun to realize their rights and demand better, safer services.

When slums on prime land in New Delhi were cleared a decade ago, tens of thousands of people were moved to Bawana and Bhalswa Relocation Colonies on the city's northern edge. They received short-term leases on small plots and promises of a better life.

But the reality has been grim, particularly for women and girls. With no indoor plumbing, many residents must walk through poorly lit, garbage-strewn lanes to communal pay toilets. The facilities are often filthy. They are also insecure, with layouts that offer no privacy or protection. Sexual harassment and assaults are common at the toilets, as well as in the fields or vacant lots that women use at night when the public facilities are closed.

Women also stand for hours every day at wells or taps to fill buckets of water for household needs. They look after family members made ill by dirty water, and spend scarce resources on health services. In poor urban areas across India, water-related chores keep girls out of school and women from earning vital income.

In 2009, Montreal-based Women in Cities International and Jagori, a women's group in New Delhi, joined forces to investigate water and sanitation conditions

for women in Bawana and Bhalswa. The two and a half year initiative, funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC), focused on how inadequate infrastructure and services put women's health and safety at risk.

As a first step, they set out to adapt the Women's Safety Audit, a tool created in Toronto for evaluating the safety for women of urban public spaces. The first such audit was developed by the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children in 1989.

An audit involves a group of women walking through their neighbourhood to identify physical and social features that make it feel safe or unsafe. Cities across the world have used the safety audit, adapting it to their cultural and social contexts. The Delhi initiative represented the first time the tool had been used to assess women's health and safety concerns related to water and sanitation.

Jagori focused its efforts in Bawana and another NGO, Action India, worked in Bhalswa. The researchers mobilized women residents, government officials, and service providers to walk through neighbourhoods and record the subtle forms of harassment women and girls face when they access essential services. The safety



Woman collecting water — New Delhi.



Women meeting — New Delhi

audit brought to light previously overlooked issues, such as how poor infrastructure and design can create unsafe environments.

In partnership with the independent Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, the researchers also analyzed Delhi's municipal budget for 2009-2010. They compared the opportunity costs for women — that is, wages they were unable to earn because of time spent collecting water and accessing sanitation — with the city government's expenditures on water and sanitation services.

They found that the government spent just 66 cents per person annually on water and \$1.78 per person on sanitation, but the related lost income for a woman in a low-income community was \$50 a year. These and other findings are detailed in a report,

PHOTOGRAPHS: KATHRYN TRAVERS/WOMEN IN CITIES INTERNATIONAL

Gender and Essential Services in Low-Income Communities.

The women of Bawana and Bhalswa are now promoting their right to better services. They have used India's Right to Information Act to demand accountability from officials. In Bawana, for example, they filed several "right to information" applications to find out who was responsible for maintaining the community toilets, and to obtain drain cleaners' attendance records.

Households in Bhalswa now receive piped water for a few hours a day or from tanks that visit the lanes twice a week. Women have formed lane committees to monitor the delivery and quality of this water. In Bawana, garbage collection by motorized vehicles has started, and community pressure led to the reopening of several public toilets. Groups of women ensure that lights on the street and in community toilets are working. These and other practical steps, along with awareness-raising efforts, have helped reduce the level of harassment experienced by women and girls.

In both communities, young women and men were keen to play a role. Working with Jagori and OneWorld Foundation India, youth in Bawana produced six radio programs about women's unequal access to water and sanitation that were broadcast nationally. They also organized lane gatherings for residents to listen to the programs and discuss the issues. Groups of women and youth now meet regularly with the local councillor and Member of the Legislative Assembly to discuss community issues.

The research team has put together a guide to help other communities conduct similar audits: *A Handbook on Women's Safety Audits in Low-Income Urban Neighbourhoods: A Focus on Essential Services*.

In a chapter of a recent book, *Building Inclusive Cities*, urban planner Prabha Khosla and Jagori director Suneeta Dhar note the project's wider impact: "Community women and girls participating in the safety audit walks said that they had not thought about associating certain aspects of harassment with inappropriate services. It also prompted men and boys

Households in Bhalswa now receive piped water for a few hours a day or from tanks that visit the lanes twice a week. Women have formed lane committees to monitor the delivery and quality of this water. In Bawana, garbage collection by motorized vehicles has started, and community pressure led to the reopening of several public toilets. Groups of women ensure that lights on the street and in community toilets are working. These and other practical steps, along with awareness-raising efforts, have helped reduce the level of harassment experienced by women and girls.

to reflect, become more aware and break their silence on issues of violence against women and girls in their communities."

In November 2012, the Delhi municipal government announced the creation of an "audit cell" to monitor the planning, safety, and quality of all future major infrastructure projects in the city. Jagori was named to this team. ❧

This article profiles a project supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre, Women's Rights and Access to Water and Sanitation in Asian Cities.

Kelly Haggart is a senior writer at IDRC. She has worked at news agencies, newspapers and NGOs in Canada, Britain and China.

Cecelia McGuire has worked as a journalist at daily newspapers across Canada. She is now a freelance writer/editor whose clients include government agencies and NGOs.

Further Reading:

Jagori (New Delhi) and Women in Cities International (Montreal), 2010. **A Handbook on Women's Safety Audits in Low-income Urban Neighbourhoods: A Focus on Essential Services** (available online).

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Khosla, Prabha, and Dhar, Suneeta, 2012. **Safe access to basic infrastructure: more than pipes and taps, in Building Inclusive Cities: Women's Safety and the Right to the City** (Routledge and Earthscan)

Panda, Gyana Ranjan, and Agarwala, Trisha, 2013. **Public Provisioning in Water and Sanitation: Study of Urban Slums in Delhi, in Economic and Political Weekly** (available online).

In The News

Women's Forum/Forum femmes

By Jarrah Hodge

Women's Forum des Femmes kicks off in the Government Conference Centre just across from Parliament Hill, with Official Opposition Critic for Status of Women Niki Ashton welcoming us "fellow feminists."

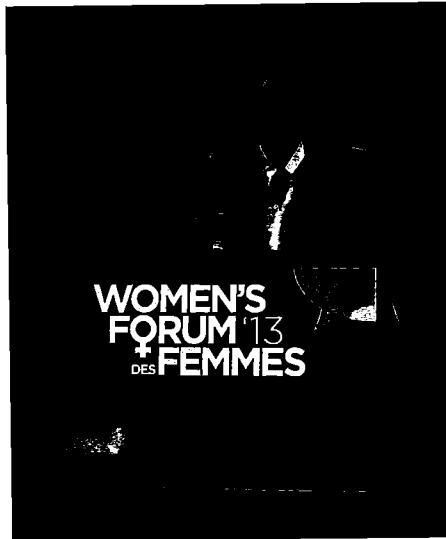
I can tell it's going to be an awesome day. The room is full of over a hundred women from diverse backgrounds, but a large portion are young women. Ashton announces most of the people speaking today (like me, later in the afternoon) will be Canadian feminists under 40.

Ashton characterizes the situation facing young women in Canada, saying young women are working hard but losing ground. Especially young indigenous women, says Ashton.

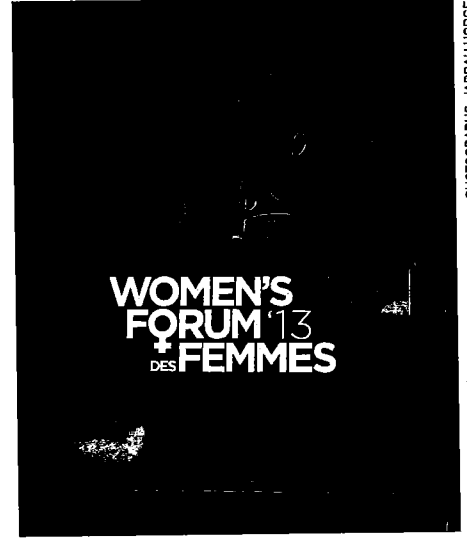
But she also says young women are responding: "Young women are using the arts, scholarship, the blogosphere and their voices to fight back." "Idle No More is a clear example of how indigenous young people, and particularly young women are changing Canadian history," she adds.

She finishes her introduction with an outline of the day's goal: "to build solidarity and strengthen our connections, and in doing so we will send a message that women across generations, regions, and communities are strong in their demands for justice and equality for all of us."

The first speaker up to the stage was the amazing Erin Marie Konsmo of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN). Her talk is called Beyond a Triple Bottom Line Approach: Reclaiming for our future generations: Resisting Environmental Violence Through Reproductive Justice. Konsmo began to elaborate on a theme that will be touched on throughout the day: the interconnectedness of struggles for control of land and control of bodies, particularly women's



MP Niki Ashton kicks off Women's Forum 2013



Erin Marie Konsmo

bodies. She said the Canadian government and extractive industries have often seen women's bodies and land as empty things available for laws to be put on.

"Our bodies are not terra nullis [empty land]," Konsmo stated "I propose a new equation. We must have self-determination of our bodies and also self-determination of our lands," Konsmo proclaimed.

The interconnectedness of colonial exploitation of land and women's bodies has a long history, including forced-sterilization of First Nations people and sexual abuse in residential schools. Because indigenous women live with the legacy of colonial violence and appropriation of land, Konsmo says violence prevention and sexual health strategies must include discussions of the land.

To conclude her talk she highlighted some of the unique ways indigenous women and youth are connecting the discussions about liberating the environment and their bodies. NYSHN's Environmental justice for Metis Women and Youth program, for example, uses sexual health education and

the arts to talk about how reproductive violence is connected to the environment.

She also talked about work to support indigenous youth who are two-spirited, queer, trans or gender non-conforming, who face immense amounts of violence, to develop leadership positions in their communities.

"As a young indigenous woman I know that many body contains story of the land... I also know and experience a sexual and gender identity that comes from specific histories of the land and where I come from. These identities are older than the LGBT movement and... were made illegal... your feminisms do affect the land," she reminds, and adds, "The work you do as a feminist... impacts indigenous people."

The next panel looked at "Canada's Inequality Action Plan," and included moderator Karen Galldin, Shannon Phillips of the Alberta Federation of Labour; Janice Makokis, a lawyer and Idle No More activist; Denise Hammond of the union AMAPCEO; and Sarah

PHOTOGRAPHS: JARRAH HODGE

Kennell of Action Canada for Population and Development.

Shannon Phillips kicked off with a discussion of how focusing on the tar sands hurts women.

"You rip it out, ship it out in its rawest form, extracting as little value as you can... as quickly as possible because time is running out politically and ecologically," she said, defining the current industry and government standpoint.

She said we need to have a national conversation about the oil sands because it affects all of us.

"We have an economic crisis in the making when we put all our eggs in this basket. For every job gained in the petroleum sector we have 30 jobs lost in the manufacturing sector," she stated.

Phillips said the last thing Canadian women should want is for other places to be more like Alberta, which has the largest gender pay gap in the country, the largest income gap between rich and poor, and the lowest rates of spending on things like childcare.

Next, Janice Makokis talked about how she got active and involved with the movement for indigenous rights, Idle No More. She talked about hearing about last year's Conservative omnibus budget bill:

"It was scary to read over 400 pages of a bill with over 35 pieces of legislation in that, and two of those pieces impacted directly on indigenous people...changes to the Navigable Waters Act and the Indian Act."

But more frightening, she said, was that it seemed nobody was talking about it. But within only about a week, Facebook chatter and an Idle No More hashtag and Facebook page turned into a global movement, "and all of that was led by women."

Makokis highlighted that of the four women founders of Idle No More, three were indigenous and one was not.

"This movement isn't just an indigenous thing; it's an everybody thing," she stated.

Makokis also talked about how the Idle No More founders sought the advice of elders, and were told to bring back old indigenous laws based on respect for the land and the revitalization of a "warrior woman society."



Panel on "Canada's Inequality Action Plan" (left to right: Sarah Kennell, Denise Hammond, Karen Galldin, Janice Makokis and Shannon Phillips)

"Our constitution is unwritten and it's found out on the land... bringing back the essence of what the land does to give us life," Makokis explained.

The warrior women ceremonies had died out in the 1950s because colonial settler laws had barred many indigenous ceremonies from being practiced. That meant that indigenous women went from the centre of First Nations government structures to the margins.

Makokis says one of the Idle No More Goals is to restore women to their traditional place as respected law-keepers.

Next, Sarah Kennell looked at the way the Conservative government's policies are hurting women in the developing world. She drew attention to the fact that Canada's payments for international aid have fallen so we now rank 14th among developed countries. The cuts, she said, have had the most detrimental impact on women and children abroad.

She also called the government out for its hypocrisy talking about protecting victims at home while being unwilling to support access to abortion for child brides and war rape victim overseas. Kennell urged audience members to work to keep these stories front and centre, even while the media and much of the public's attention might be distracted by the Senate scandal.

Finally, Denise Hammond critiqued the way government has supported capitalist policies that hurt young women particularly.

"We are plagued by contract labour, temporary, precarious jobs... inequality for women didn't start with Harper but some of the policies...have shifted the ground beneath us," Hammond argued.

She called out the Harper government for directly attacking women's economic equality, from eliminating gender pay equity laws to a concerted attack on unionized workers that would result in more precarious work.

"From 2006 to 2008 the Harper government spent more money on buying helicopters for the war in Afghanistan... than how much it would cost to make post-secondary education in this country free," Hammond pointed out.

Hammond said we have to be careful not to fall into Harper's trap by attacking unions and unionized workers, because that will re-create the narrative he wants and make it harder to fight for things like equal pay for women and an end to homophobia and transphobia in the workplace.

"Unions and good jobs are not the economic problem," Hammond firmly stated. ✂

Jarrah Hodge is the founder and editor of gender-focus.com. She has also written for the *Huffington Post*, *Bitch Magazine Blogs*, the *Vancouver Observer* and *About-Face*. Jarrah has B.A. in Women's Studies and Sociology from UBC. She's a fan of politics, Star Trek, musical theatre, and brunch.

Women in Europe for a Common Future says “enough is enough”

Civil society groups walk out of Warsaw climate meeting and call on governments to “get serious and match political ambition to climate reality”

The women who walked out said that for example, during the floods in Bangladesh — 60% of the victims were women and that women are often the majority of the dead and disappeared.

“Our delegates came from all over the world to participate in what they thought were negotiations on ambitious commitments to protect our planet, our societies and our future generations from runaway climate change. However, the governments insist on bickering between themselves on the inside while the Arctic melts and storms rage on the outside,” said **Sabine Bock, Climate and Energy Director for WECF**. Bock continued: “It is unacceptable that governments are not agreeing on urgent action despite the increasing cost in lives and damage which climate change is causing.”

Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director of WECF said “we need to see commitments by all nations, including the European countries such as France, Netherlands, Germany and Poland. Many of us are concerned about the dominance of corporate interests — in particular coal, fracking and nuclear — at these negotiations. Instead of investing in renewable energy, and immediately halting all subsidies to the fossil fuel and nuclear industries, we see that small producers of solar energy are being stopped in their development, in Spain, France, and now also in Germany. That is unacceptable; corporate fossil fuel interests should be kept entirely out of the UN negotiations.”

Gabizon continued: “We as women’s organisations have joined all major civil society groups in today’s “walk out”, under the theme “polluters talk, we walk.” “We will work with governments for a

real outcome both inside the COPs and outside back home.”

Isis Alvarez, a civil society participant and representative of the Global Forest Coalition from Colombia who participated in WECF’s leadership training program at COP 19 said:

“This is a very special moment where all sectors of civil society have set their differences aside in order to come together to protest against the lethargy of the climate negotiations here in Warsaw.”

Sabine Bock concluded: Of course, the women in our network will keep organizing effective local solutions. We have seen how women and men can and will implement real projects on the ground for energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy. These climate solutions are ready to go now and need the support and funding of the worlds’ governments. We will be back next year in Bonn and Lima where we will demand that the strength of the governmental agreements finally matches the power of the storms



Warsaw, Poland: Women Civil Society delegates at the United Nations Climate meeting in Warsaw joined a mass walk out by hundreds of non-governmental organizations present at the negotiations today in protest of the lack of serious progress between government negotiators saying that the COP19 is not delivering real results in spite of a mass of evidence from science and typhoon-hit countries that climate change is already causing millions of victims.

that grow daily around us. We believe that governments can and must come together to get the job done. We hope that today’s walk out alarm is the wake up call the governments need to get going.”

Progress on Gender Equality at COP19

WARSAW, POLAND (November 20, 2013) — As part of Gender Day at COP19 on November 19th, WEDO (Women’s Environment & Development Organization) together with Gender CC, GGCA and LIFE organized a side event taking stock of the progress made on gender and climate change so far in Warsaw, and discussing ways forward to advance the goal of gender responsive and transformative climate policies. The event was moderated by Gotelind Alber from Gender CC, and was divided into two parts.

In the first part of the event, a panel composed of Anna Sverrisdottir (Government of Iceland), Bridget Burns (WEDO) and Sebastien Duyck (University of Lapland), did a de-briefing of the first-ever UNFCCC Gender Workshop, held on November 12th, and discussed the progress on gender and climate change made in the COP19 negotiations.

After reminding everyone of the historical Decision 23/CP.18 taken in Doha last year, where Parties agreed to promote gender balance and gender sensitive climate policies, Bridget Burns said the

focus of negotiations was currently on creating a framework to support the implementation and monitoring of these commitments.

As a result of the past week's meetings under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), Parties have agreed on draft conclusion, which urge Parties to have ongoing discussions on gender and climate change as well as to discuss in future meetings how to enhance the gender and climate change agenda.

Commenting on this, Anna Sverrisdottir said that while the COP19 text is a step on the way, there is still a need for more concrete actions. The current text presents several such actions in an annex, including the establishment of a two-year work programme on gender balance under the Convention, capacity building for female delegates organized by the UNFCCC secretariat, and the monitoring of gender bal-

ance, gender budgeting and gender sensitive climate policies and actions by Parties.

The draft conclusions state that discussions around these proposals will continue at COP20 in Lima in December next year. However, panelists and audience at the WEDO side event agreed that in order to move forward it will be important to work to advance Parties positions on these issues also at the Bonn intermediary session in June 2014.

Another important take-home point from the panelists was the need to ensure that gender equality is addressed in all the discussions under UNFCCC, and not kept separated from discussions on mitigation, adaptation, technology etc. Panelists also expressed concerns about the fact that the Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), working to develop a global climate change agreement from 2020 and on ways

to increase pre-2020 mitigation ambitions, has yet to integrate gender equality and human rights in its discussions.

Although it is clear that work remains ahead, the panel gave recognition to what has been achieved so far. The process on gender and climate change has been an inspiring one, it demonstrates that it is possible to succeed in the work to include social implications in the negotiations on climate change, Sebastien Duyck said.

The second part of the side event, invited a panel consisting of Ben Karmohr (Government of Liberia), Sharmin Neelormi (Gender CC), Ulrike Roehr (LIFE e.V.) and Jorge Villareal (Government of Mexico) to discuss the topics of promoting gender sensitive climate policies at the national level, and what it takes to engage men in gender and climate change approaches. ❧

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Fake

He offers
sangria passion
with fleshy bits
scarlet love that makes
love to me

stroke me like your guitar string
that sighs when
you release

Loneliness is stale, he suggests when I fly
Wilts pregnant orchids
A corrosive womb

Maybe you should wear laughter around your hips
Or as a string of pearls
Grazing your sternum

as the sky chokes
I'll place it on my nightstand
next to a yellow photo
of my mother when
she also faked fulfillment

Saumya Dave is a writer, medical student, and feminist from Atlanta, Georgia. Her work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *India Abroad*, *Open Beast*, and *The Lancet*. When she isn't studying or losing time on Wikipedia, she is editing her first novel.

seven years auxiliary

so you're my union brother/ and i don't wear tight jeans for you/ Or look at you/ because
i know you're/ glaring at me/like i'm a piece of/something /that needs gravy

and i work right inside there/ yeah, i shouldn't complain cuz/i pay dues now/but my
bicep flinches/ when/
i can't do it/with just/ 12% in lieu/ who do I benefit?

and I see right through you/peripherally/all morning/through the glass/of/ lower wages

because there's no way/my toiling/compares/ to masculinities/mapped/across pay scales/
and leaves/one line inside collective agreements/silently shelving/seven years/auxiliary

Dalia Levy is a writer, artist, library technician and urban farmer whose writing has previously appeared in **Briarpatch**, **Antigone** and **Canadian Outlook** magazines. She lives in Vancouver, BC — Unceded Coast Salish Territories. Her work as a union organizer gave way to many auxiliary library staff winning permanent part-time status city-wide.

By Shirley A. Serviss

Red Dresses*

Red dresses hung from trees,
all along the avenue: sleeveless
dresses, evening dresses, low-
necked, high-necked, long-sleeved
dresses. Disembodied, blood-red
dresses in all styles and sizes
swung from barren branches
in the chill spring breeze.

"Red-skinned" women missing/murdered:
mothers, daughters, sisters,
nieces, aunties, kohkoms, disappeared
on city streets, country roads,
highways heading who knows where.
Bodies left in fields and forests,
discarded in ditches, buried
somewhere, never found.

Drivers, joggers, walkers, cyclists
pass by these empty dresses,
just as we bypass the violence
that continues: women stoned
and raped and strangled; women
beaten, bruised and burned,
women drowned and mutilated,
women held back, held down.

* Red Dress art installation by Jaime Black

Shirley A. Serviss is an Edmonton poet, writing facilitator and part-time literary Artist on the Wards for the Friends of University Hospitals. Her work has appeared in numerous literary magazines and anthologies and she has published three collections of poetry. Her most recent, **Hitchhiking in the Hospital**, was published by Inklings Press.

By Ruth Roach Pierson

Three-Headed

When she tumbled over the grass
playing circus acrobat

When she lay her head on the pillow
the night before the long journey

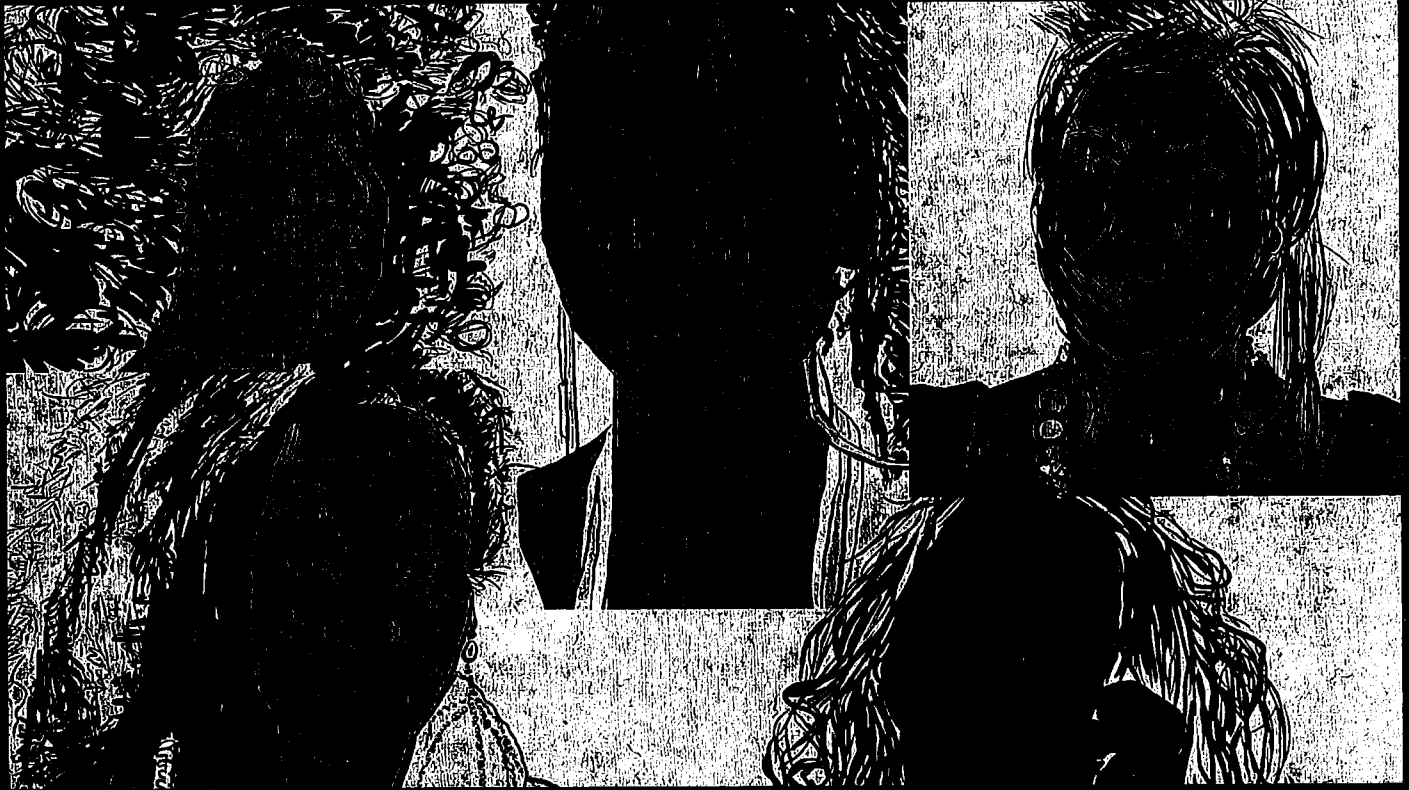
When she ran headlong
toward the ship's
railing

When she marched in '64, '65
'66, '67
'68, '69
'70' 71
'91
2001
2003

Was the three-headed god
listening?

Ruth Roach Pierson, professor emerita of the University of Toronto/Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and author of *They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*, has published three poetry collections: *Where No Window Was*, *Aide-Mémoire* (finalist for the 2008 GG), and *Contrary*.

Featured filmmaker **Nayani Thiyagaraja**

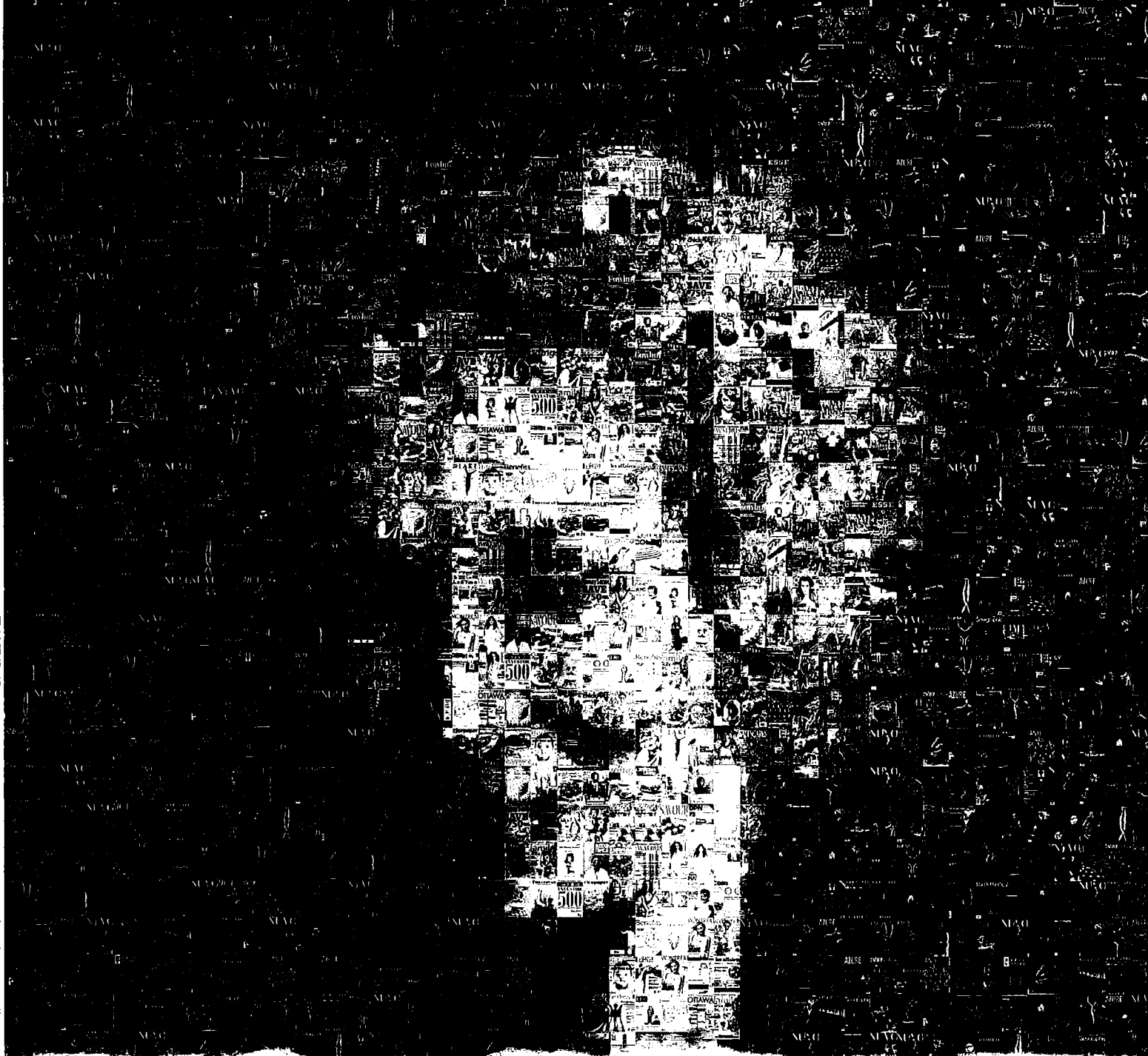


(L-R, Clockwise) Jade Lee Hoy, Muinga Antonio, Nayani Thiyagarajah, Amanda Parris, and Nadia Alam of the original short "Shadeism" (2010)

In her article "Spaces for Self-Love, Not Systems of Oppression" at page 60 of this issue, Nayani Thiyagarajah writes about "Shadeism: Digging Deeper," a film she is currently writing and directing. The film deals with discrimination based on skin-tone.

Her original short documentary titled 'Shadeism' was selected for the Sierra Leone International Film Festival in April 2013 and will screen as part of their "Women Own the World" special programming.

Nayani describes herself as follows: My name is Nayani Thiyagarajah. I am ever going, ever growing, ever moved and ever moving. I've never fit well inside jars; I've always felt closest when flowing like water. I love people and I love stories. My soul rises through storytelling and sharing. So far, film, writing, and theatre have served my heart work well. I believe most in love.



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