Land, Labor, Liberation

VOLUME 1
ISSUE 3

JULY 1,
2025

TOTAL WOMAN VICTORY

Total Woman Victory **is a quarterly radical feminist newsletter that aims to amplify the voices of women across the globe. We have a responsibility as students of feminist theory to reach the masses of women in desperate need of radical politics. We are dedicated to making a space where women can speak unapologetically about the issues that affect us. The collection and codification of the stories of survival of Third World women takes precedence to uphold our anti-imperialist line of struggle.**

Volume 1 Issue 3: Land, Labor, Liberation

"Land, Labor, Liberation" is a revolutionary feminist theme that grounds Total Woman Victory in the material conditions of proletarian women in global class and national liberation struggles, especially in the Third World. It centers land as the site of conquest and resistance, labor as the terrain of exploitation and survival, and liberation as the political axis of freedom and autonomy. Female liberation is the revolutionary demand for the overturning of feudal and postmodern patriarchal rule, the destruction of female sex-class oppression, and the end of all imperialist domination. ***"Land, Labor, Liberation"*** calls forth the fighting traditions of women who have risen against the simultaneous forces of imperialist accumulation, caste, colony, and male domination—and insists that freedom must be built from the ground up through collective feminist struggle.

Total Woman Victory is a collection of art and writing submitted by feminists from all over the world. This publication is made possible because women have generously given their time, creativity, and ideas for free. Each issue is a testament to the power of community-driven content and the contributions of women who believe in sharing their voices. We invite others to participate as well, as submissions for art and writing will be open for every issue. **To stay updated, announcements for when submissions are open will be made on our Twitter, and submission forms will be posted on our website at totalwomanvictory.com.**

Special Thanks to our Contributors:

E.V., Isa, Hana, Nessa M., Sathi Patel, @na74362408, Saaleha, Drosera, EG, Vas, Maya, Aasiya, Winnie & Judith Lark, and all Anonymous Authors and Artists

Thank you to everyone who helped proofread and edit!

And a huge thank you to anyone who has ever donated to keep Total Woman Victory alive and thriving!

From the Editorial Team:

Sathi Patel, Maya, Ro, Winnie Lark, Judith Lark, Isa, and Tifidi

For questions or comments, please contact us at totalwomanvictory@gmail.com.

Table of Contents

I am a Daughter of the Dispossessed

By E.V.

Beneath the iridescent shimmer of thick-lying heat, the reliable comfort of shade was my home as a child. I spent my time between the heavy sunflowers and stalks of corn towering above my great-grandmother's rich garden, the porch of my grandparents' trailer elegantly draped with a lush willow tree, the meandering creek smothered in woods behind my father's trailer. None was as constant as the leaden clouds that hung over my family, the dragging remnants of a storm that swallowed us whole.

The shuddering white lights of a modest courthouse chapel broke wide open that storm; my mother was entering her second marriage to a man who, despite my public protestations in the aisle, would become my new step-father. In short order my mother was pregnant and I was placed entirely in her care, moved across county lines into my new step-father's house. Surrounded by fields of ground-hugging soybean—the farms still eking out a living forced into high-risk, low-reward mono-cropping—the feeling of exposure was both environmental and familial, external and internal. Final was the severing of my family, begun by the dispossession of our land and ended by forced physical alienation.

For I am the granddaughter of sharecroppers, those unfortunate souls some have looked down upon as trapped on the land, a conclusion my family would laugh in the face of as we were forced off the land by the state through eminent domain. Our choice, our fight, our fate decided for us by our landlord. On or off land, the real trap was the system that kept us in the inescapable cycle of working too much for too little. Yet off the land we could afford ourselves no protection, the communal labor of life parceled; many hands make light work, solitary hands toil. The land my family tended now houses an armory, land that once gave life now a home to the tools of death.

Then a mere child, my mother had only known the care of a multi-generational farmhouse when her large family fractured into smaller nuclear units. Left to fight over the scraps of a familial life once lived together, my family turned their backs on each other and learned that to fight each other for the little that's left is the only way to survive. After a quick shotgun wedding, my birth, and a hasty divorce, it's no surprise my mother craved her own nuclear family in which to raise me. The physical isolation, my step-father removing her from the small radius her family lived within, was how she became trapped in the cold reality of that ideal.

"I am a daughter of a family and a class struggle broken by the state, dreaming of a return to struggle against our chains rather than against each other."

The hopes of a family she undoubtedly had that included me soured; family photos from that time a testament to my non-existence. To escape the alienation of home I spent every weekend at my best friend's house, suffering Sundays in a strip mall church. Our skin smeared with the pepper of wood smoke that warmed her home as we slept through the winters, parishioners speaking in tongues would surround us, writhing on the cheap industrial carpeting, clawing at the fire and brimstone preacher's legs in desperation, tears carving hot streaks down their faces, seeking a salvation I could find no hope in.

Sunday mornings took on a new meaning when it was made known I was old enough to pay my own passage—I became a waitress at a 24-hour interstate diner, vying for the chance to work the church rush, a privilege for the veteran waitresses. Regardless of state law I worked almost full-time, most evenings after school and dreaded weekend nights when handsy drunk men would stain the place with the stench of danger. The tips rarely amounted to minimum wage and the owner never paid the difference, knowing I was unable to advocate for myself.

A vacant diner on a bare stretch of interstate, the slanting afternoon sun alighting on dust and grease suspended in the still air, the middle-aged cook out back smoking cigarettes or gone to the liquor store; a liminal space that still feels like home, like a motel room in the silent moment after the finality of the door closing. A fresh space, no matter the actual cleanliness, to stretch out into, alone.

Graduating from high school meant graduating from home, a decision my mother was merely the messenger of, and a graduation from waitressing to working overnights in the warehouse of a large corporation. A job that paid more than anywhere else, just enough, driving out smaller businesses and ensuring employees had nowhere else to go for work. Sleeping in my car with a box of books and a bag of clothes, surrounded by desperate people, I began to see myself in them, no goals other than my next shift, my next paycheck. Naive and trusting, despite it all, it took too long to learn the lesson that offers from men, a home with a TV for the day off or a couch for the night, don't come for free. I left for the cities, one after another, where I remain, graduating too from the churn of motel rooms to my own apartment.

Sorrow for myself is sorrow for my mother, who was in many ways a child herself, struggling to make adult decisions within an ancient felled oak of a family, trunk splintered and rotted. A swift act of violence had ripped away the reliable shade once provided, rendering it unable to support the tender green new growth. Vulnerable to the impersonal devastation of the nuclear family, she became easily trapped within the home. Raised in a family that did not perceive a difference between private and public spheres, where home was a place of labor and leisure for all, she alone labored, the first to wake and the last to bed, never to leisure. Her husband, cleaved from his family by the winds of industry as his fathers before him, like chaff winnowed from wheat, was taught to understand all relations through a transactional lens. We both wanted to save her, just as we both wanted her to save me.

Land dispossession is not new nor is it complete; it is an ever-evolving tool to concentrate wealth and power. Enclosures, not just of land, close us off from control over our own lives, nearly every decision for the many predetermined and circumscribed to enrich the few. A video recently came across my social media, a man in the symbolic red hat, a twang to his voice that sounded like home, begging for an end to tariffs he knew he'd pay the price for: "Mr. President, please, Walmart is all we have." I heard the pain of dispossession, loss, entrapment. Decades of rural death. And as those around me in the blue state I find myself calling home laugh and jeer, I wonder when they'll realize they're next: the vibrancy of their cities dying, land dispossession and enclosure a forgotten memory, their lives made smaller to pave the way for corporate enclosures.

During the Great Depression more than half of Americans lived as my family did—living off the land, they suffered but did not starve. A century later nearly all Americans have been trapped off the land, no longer insulated from the frequent economic calamities, reliant on corporations with unrepentant profit incentives to feed us and the government for the veneer of protection; the means of survival out of our hands, sold back to us for pennies on their dollar.

Historians who have studied tenant farming, of which sharecropping is a subset, argue it functioned like a form of indentured servitude. I'm not convinced being a tenant has changed much. Mired in additional steps that lend plausible deniability, it's no longer a direct exchange of production, yet most of us still work longer hours than we have, in more jobs than is feasible, often with nowhere to go and always paid just enough to snuff out aspirations, with nearly nothing left to show for our labor except what's needed to pay a landlord's rent. Mind or body, one is bound to be broken.

Disappeared from the land, barred from the ache of fulfilling labor, stiff work gloves adorn my hands in place of the slick sheen of warm soil; in place of soft yielding ground, I stand for hours on slabs of concrete; the sun, a sky burdened with stars, displaced with the smothering blankness of the city night sky, my sun cold warehouse lights; the hymn of insects in the night replaced by the sound of industry driving, the sound of the world as she dies.

For I am a daughter of the dispossessed, working for a slumlord and the corporations my modernized life depends on. What they call progress, we call labor. I am a daughter of a family and a class struggle broken by the state, dreaming of a return to struggle against our chains rather than against each other. I am a daughter of those trodden upon as others claw their way to the so-called American dream. I am a daughter of the land of no opportunity.

I am a daughter of an unrelenting cycle of eviction and displacement: the English enclosure movement, the Irish Plantations, the Scottish Highland Clearances, the American tenant farmers whose labor was deemed more valuable in factories. I am a daughter of organized resistance: the Diggers, the Highland Land League, the Irish Tenant Right League, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. I am a daughter of the women who fought back, often on the front lines, women like Eliza Nolden, a striking sharecropper flogged to death by anti-union planters in 1936.

I am the living memory many have forgotten, the scar calcified through years of mounting dispossession and obedience rendered in flesh and blood. My family was your family, is your family, will always be your family unless you remember—now, before it is too late—there are more of us than them.

The Dichotomy of Land and Female Liberation

By Isa

There is no such thing as neutral land. Soil remembers conquest. Beneath every mining site, every pipeline, every acre ripped for profit, lies the scar tissue of violated bodies, scorched ecologies, and dismembered kinships. The violent seizure and commodification of land is more than the theft of territory—it is the degradation of relational worlds, and no one bears this weight more than women whose lives are interwoven with the land itself. Across the globe, land extraction violently reorganizes women's labor, safety, and sovereignty. It is not merely a neutral act of violence but a sexed project: one that dismembers life-giving systems and replaces them with death-making machinery. To understand the consequences of extraction, we must center those who are always made into collateral—the women whose resistance, survival, and ultimate disposability define the underside of accumulation.

The global extractive regime—built on conquest, slavery, and racial capitalism—does not simply excavate minerals or fossil fuels. It extracts time, bodies, cosmologies, and reproductive futures. Women, especially those racialized, colonized, and impoverished, become raw material within this system, just as much as lithium or gold. Their unpaid reproductive labor sustains not just the labor force, but also the extractive class itself—ensuring that the powerful reproduce not only their workforce, but their own social position and dominance. Their dislocation makes way for extractive infrastructure; their protest is criminalized or silenced. In every mining boom, oil rush, or land grab, women face forced labor on poisoned lands, expulsion, or even death. Their land-based knowledge systems, spiritual ties, and food sovereignty are obliterated under the boot of development. In these zones of extraction, women's liberation is not just delayed—it is declared irrelevant.

Land is not a backdrop to human action or economic development. It is kin, archive, and co-conspirator. The land sustains not only nourishment but memory, ritual, and resistance. Across the Americas, the African continent, and Indigenous territories worldwide, land has long been feminized in cosmology and attacked in colonization. The settler project, from its inception, required both the domination of the earth and of the female body to conquer stolen land and people—the two were never separate. Plantation logics, from cotton fields to cobalt mines, yoked women's bodies to soil through rape and forced reproduction and labor. Contemporary extractive industries are only the latest iteration of that same logic. The economic violence of extraction is built upon older, more intimate forms of domination: sexual violence, forced displacement, and cultural erasure.

In the Niger Delta, multinational oil extraction has devastated ecosystems while unleashing militarized repression upon local communities. The women of the Delta, particularly the Ijaw and Ogoni, have not only lost access to fishing and farming, but have been subject to systematic abuse by soldiers hired to "secure" oil operations (Okonta & Douglas, 2003). Women's

"This is not simply environmental damage, nor can this be reduced to national oppression—it is intergenerational femicide."

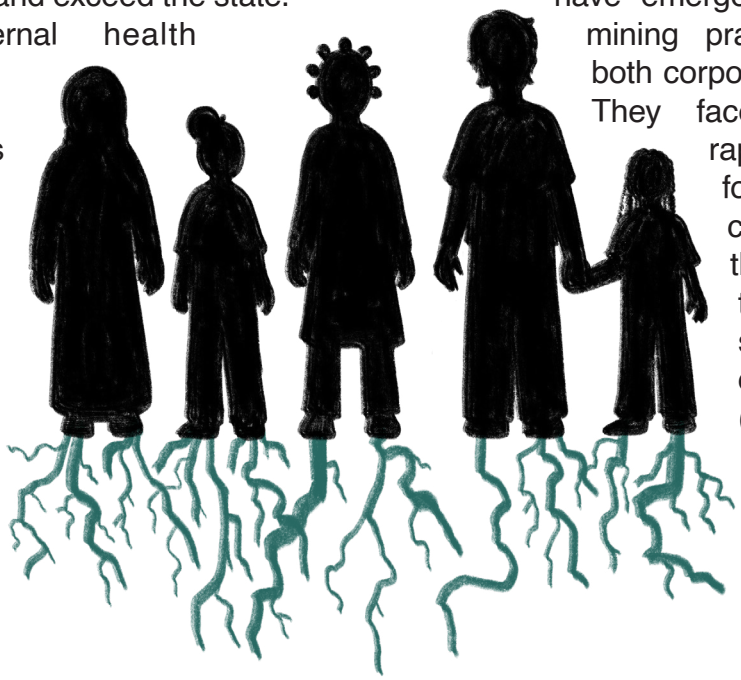
protests have been met with imprisonment, rape, and lethal force. Their calls for ecological justice are rendered illegible because they do not speak the language of capital or diplomacy. Instead, they speak from the womb of the poisoned river, from the ash of burned farms. They speak for futures that Exxon cannot quantify.

In Latin America, Indigenous women resisting extractive megaprojects are routinely targeted for violence. Berta Cáceres, a Lenca environmental defender in Honduras, was assassinated for her role in opposing a hydroelectric dam on sacred Indigenous land. Her death was not incidental; it was structural. The violence that killed her is the same violence that built the dam: a violence that sees Indigenous women as obstacles to accumulation. As transnational corporations push deeper into rainforest and mountains, they bring with them a militarized masculinity that demands silence and complicity from women. Land defenders are criminalized as terrorists; their grief is pathologized; their rage is surveilled.

But it is not merely the loss of land that is at stake—it is the unraveling of reproductive autonomy, bodily integrity, and intergenerational wellbeing. When women are cut off from the land, they lose not only access to food and medicine but to the very infrastructures of care and survival that precede and exceed the state. In extractive zones, maternal health deteriorates, domestic violence increases, and traditional midwifery is rendered obsolete by displacement. Women's hormonal cycles are disrupted by exposure to toxins; pregnancy becomes more dangerous, and infant mortality rises. For example, in Nigeria's oil-producing regions, women report miscarriages, stillbirths, and infertility linked to flaring gas fields. In the Peruvian Andes, mercury and arsenic contamination from mining have led to chronic illnesses and toxic breast milk—delivering extraction's poison into the bodies of newborns (Salazar, 2018). The land is a site of reproductive sovereignty. When it is violated, so too is the ability to choose, to heal, to birth outside the logic of the market. This is not simply environmental damage, nor can this be reduced to national oppression—it is intergenerational femicide.

But women do not merely suffer extraction: they sabotage it. Across Africa, Asia, and the Americas, women have led movements to blockade pipelines, reoccupy ancestral land, and revive agroecological systems. These are more than just protests—they are declarations of life. In Kenya, the Green Belt Movement led by Wangarĩ Maathai mobilized thousands of women to plant trees, defend forests, and reject the logic that reduces land to timber or fuel. Their ecological work was also a feminist endeavor: asserting the right to live in a dignified relationship with the land rather than under the boot of global capital.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where coltan mining has both fueled wealth for tech companies and organized war crimes against women, grassroots women's groups have emerged to reclaim artisanal mining practices and challenge both corporate and state violence. They face staggering odds—rape as a weapon, forced displacement, criminalization—but they continue to resist, to cultivate land under siege, to bury their dead and plant anyway (Mthembu-Salter, 2009). Their resistance is not romantic. It is necessary.



The war against women is often fought on terrain that appears simply economic, but it is also fundamentally spiritual and existential. Extractive industries do not just dig into the land—they hollow out possibilities for relational life. They separate women from their histories, from their waters, from their dead. They desecrate sacred sites, criminalize ancestral knowledge, and demand a kind of forgetting that is the precondition for accumulation. Liberation cannot be mapped onto this logic. It requires refusal.

This refusal is not only physical but epistemological. Women's knowledge of land—seed saving, medicinal healing, lunar harvesting, storytelling—is a revolt. It refuses fungibility. It cannot be patented or mined. Yet it is precisely this knowledge that is under attack, erased through agribusiness, privatization, and development schemes masquerading as empowerment. Microcredit programs and gender mainstreaming projects aim to integrate women into the extractive economy, often entrenching them in debt and dependency rather than promoting liberation (Shiva, 2016). These are not solutions. They are PR campaigns for imperialist globalization that cannot survive without women's unpaid labor.

The fantasy of green capitalism, too, conceals its bloodied roots. Lithium mining for electric cars, rare earth metals for solar panels—these are not clean alternatives. They are extractive continuities repackaged as progress. In Chile's Atacama Desert, lithium extraction has drained freshwater reserves, threatening Indigenous livelihoods and biodiversity (Tadesse, 2020). The women of these communities, tasked with caregiving and food production, are the first to feel the loss of water. They experience "climate solutions" not as salvation, but as theft. A feminism that aligns itself with these technologies without interrogating their colonial-imperialist core is a feminism that serves capital, not liberation.

To speak of land and labor without centering women is to misunderstand all three. To extract resources through women's labor without accounting for the reproductive and ecological destruction left behind is not development—it is annihilation. The liberation of women is impossible under a system that treats us as an inexhaustible resource and requires our disposability. There can be no freedom in a world where the land bleeds and the body is treated as soil to be turned.

True liberation demands the abolition of the extractive paradigm. It demands the return of stolen land—not as property, but as relation. It demands reparations for ecological harm and reproductive violence. It demands that we listen to those who have long been silenced by development's bulldozers: the grandmother tending a poisoned garden, the midwife whose herbs no longer grow, the girl who walks five miles for water stolen by a lithium mine. It demands the freedom of women to labor for the continuity of their ancestral wisdom, not systematized and exploited for accumulation. These are the voices of the revolution. They do not ask for inclusion. They demand an end.

In the end, the question is not whether women will survive extraction. They already have, again and again. The question is whether the rest of us will choose to join them in dismantling the machine, or continue pretending that clean energy and CSR reports will save us. Politically, this calls for rejecting development models that treat land as capital and people as collateral. It calls for demilitarization, land rematriation, abolition of debt regimes, and the dismantling of trade agreements that legalize resource theft. It demands a feminism that refuses co-optation—a feminism that does not aim to manage the extractive economy more gently, but to end it entirely. These are not abstract ideals, they are survival strategies. The future is not built through lithium batteries alone, but through the restoration of reciprocal relations: with land, with each other, and with the memory of what has

been taken. Those who resist extraction do not ask us to innovate a more efficient machine—they ask us to stop the machine altogether.

The Earth is not dying. It is being killed. Women are not dying. We are being killed. And those who kill us and our land have names, contracts, uniforms, and PR budgets. But so too do those who resist—not with institutional power, but with inherited memory, collective action, and the unwavering will to survive. Often barefoot, often unpaid, often singing, their resistance is no less organized, no less enduring. This is not metaphor. It is war. And in every war against land, women are on the frontlines. On every front to exploit, women are the base. Not by choice, but because the system leaves women no other place. Yet still, we rise, not as victims, but as visionaries. We do not ask to be saved; we reckon that remembrance of both women and the land is not mute. That land grieves, that it rages; that land, like women, refuses to die quietly.

References

Maathai, Wangari. *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience*. Lantern Books, 2003.

Mthembu-Salter, Gregory. "Natural Resource Governance and Vulnerability in the DRC:: The Case of Eastern DRC." *Institute for Security Studies Paper* 165 (2009).

Okonta, Ike, and Oronto Douglas. *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil in the Niger Delta*. Sierra Club Books, 2003.

Salazar, Milagros. "High Mercury Levels Found in Peru Mothers and Children Living near Oil and Gas Fields." *Mongabay*, 2018.

Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development.* North Atlantic Books, 2016.

Tadesse, Lily. "Chile's Lithium: When the 'Battery of the Future' Threatens Indigenous Culture." *Earth Journalism Network*, 2020.

Land, Labor, and Liberation: A Sudanese Woman's Story

By Hana

In Sudan, where I was born and raised, inequality wasn't a policy debated in halls of power; it was a fact of life, as real and omnipresent as the red dust in the air. It existed in every home, in every village, in every acre of land we tilled. I grew up between Darfur and Omdurman, two places deeply different in geography but painfully similar in what they revealed about how power moves through people, especially through women. In both, land was everything. It meant survival, dignity, and legacy. But no matter how vital women were to working that land, we were never allowed to own it. We labored over it with our hands and our backs for our entire lives—and still, it was never ours.

From the time I could understand language, I could also understand hierarchy. I saw my mother, aunts, and neighbors rise before dawn to collect water, grind grain, feed animals, and plant seeds. They worked until the sun gave up, then returned to cook, clean, and prepare for the next day's demands. These women were nothing short of heroic. They were the engines of the village—providers, caretakers, leaders. And yet, they had no say over what happened to the crops they grew or the money it brought in. Decisions were made by men who rarely lifted a hand in the fields. Men who arrived at the end of the season to sell the yield and pocket the profit, without ever asking the women what they needed or wanted in return.

I remember one season in particular when the harvest was especially difficult. There had been flooding early on, then drought. My mother still managed to salvage enough sorghum to feed our family and a few others. She walked for miles to trade it in the market, only to return and hand the earnings to my uncle, who insisted he would "handle the finances." A week later, we couldn't afford kerosene for our lamps. When she asked where the money went, he told her it was "none of her concern."

This was the arrangement: women did the work, and men reaped the rewards.

Food became a language of inequality too. Men and children were always served first, with the best meat, the freshest pieces of bread, the richest parts of the stew. Women—who had planted, harvested, cooked, and served—would sit back and eat whatever was left. Often the scraps, sometimes nothing at all. Even as a child, I understood what this meant. We weren't simply being fed last, we were being told we mattered least.

It wasn't just tradition—it was a system of enforced dependence. A structure designed to keep women small, silent, and subordinate. Education for girls was not prioritized. Access to credit was out of reach unless a male relative co-signed. Ownership of land or livestock was a legal impossibility for most women in rural Sudan. Ambition was punished. A girl who dreamed too loudly of a life outside marriage or farming was often met with suspicion or shame.

I remember a neighbor, Noura, who wanted to start a small peanut oil business. She had the skills and the drive, and even saved enough money to buy her own equipment. But when she applied for a loan to expand, the officer laughed in her face and asked where her husband was. When she said she was unmarried, he told her to come back with a man. She borrowed money from a cousin instead, but he used the debt to control her. When she missed one payment, he confiscated her grinding machine and told her she was lucky he didn't take her dignity too. The business collapsed within months.

For many women, marriage was not a partnership, but a trade. Your labor for his approval. Your silence for his name. You cooked, cleaned, gave birth, submitted, and still you might be cast out without warning or support. Women were often sent away with nothing but the clothes on their back if their husband grew tired or found someone younger. The community would say, "Be patient. It's your duty. At least you have a home."

"This was the arrangement: women did the work, and men reaped the rewards."

But even homes were not safe, especially during conflict. War came like a slow-moving storm and then all at once. In Darfur, we learned to read the sky not just for rain, but for danger. Soldiers, militias, and raids turned villages into graves. Many women were forced to flee on foot with children strapped to their backs, carrying nothing but fear and prayer. On the road, predators lay in wait. In the camps, privacy was nonexistent. Sexual violence became a weapon of war. And still, when survivors returned, they were blamed more than the men who hurt them. I met one woman, Aziza, who was assaulted while escaping South Darfur. When she finally reached safety, her husband refused to take her back. "You're dirty now," he said. "Go live with the NGOs."

It was after years of this that I finally left. I applied for asylum and came to the United States. I thought I was leaving the injustice behind. But injustice, I learned, doesn't always need an army. Sometimes it just needs unfamiliar paperwork, unfamiliar language, and systems that don't see you. Here, I faced different walls. I had to learn how to navigate a new country while healing from an old one. I had to start over without a safety net.

I remember my first job interview in the U.S.—I was asked if I had reliable male support at home. I didn't know how to answer. Had I fled one patriarchy only to walk into another, clothed in professional language?

In many diaspora communities, the same cultural chains remain intact. Women are still expected to serve, to obey, to stay quiet. I've known women here in the U.S. who are doctors, teachers, even lawyers but who are still forced to hide their successes to avoid their husband's resentment. Who are discouraged from attending community meetings because it's seen as "unfeminine" to speak too confidently in public. Some are isolated by language, others by fear. Some have escaped war, only to end up prisoners in homes ruled by invisible laws.

And yet, here, something else began to grow: space. Space to think, to read, to write. Space to organize. I met other Sudanese women who were also tired, also angry, also ready. We began to speak more openly about land, about ownership, about power. We were no longer just surviving. We were remembering who we were before the world told us we were nothing.

For Sudanese women, true liberation must mean more than escape. It must mean transformation. It must mean land reform that puts titles in the hands of women who have always

cared for the soil. It must mean financial systems that give women access to loans and opportunities without requiring a man's name. It must mean educational programs that prioritize girls, legal protections against gender-based violence, and immigration policies that honor our full humanity and not just our trauma.

To liberate the land, we must liberate the labor. To liberate the labor, we must liberate the woman. I carry my past with me, but I am no longer owned by it. I am the product of women who endured with grace, who resisted with silence, who survived without praise. They didn't just pass down recipes and traditions, they passed down strength. And now I use that strength to speak, to write, and to demand.

Let no one say we are voiceless. We have always had voices. It is the world that must learn to listen.

Liberation is not a favor someone gives you. It's a fight you take on, not just for yourself, but for those who never had the chance. I fight for a world where the land belongs to those who feed it, where women's labor is paid and protected, and where our futures are not inherited cages but chosen paths.

That is the Sudan I imagine. And that is the Sudan I will help build, one story, one voice, one acre at a time.

EG, "All Good Things 2", 2025

Reflection

By Nessa M. (@FourthWaver)

The Feminist Struggle for New Afrikan Liberation

By Sathi Patel

> **"When they told me my newborn babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly of their own."** Harriet Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

> **"Without an appropriate theory and practice on women's oppression, there can be no valid and worthy theory and practice on revolutionary national liberation."**
> *Vita Wa Watu*, book 9

It is no secret that the plight of women and national oppression have a complex relationship: does the liberation of women need to be a precondition for the nationalist struggle? Or will national sovereignty place women in a better position to struggle for our self-determination? The historical endeavors to answer these questions have sharpened the contradictions between feminist imperatives and the interests of the nation, resulting in women being forced to constantly put our needs second to those of our people. Unpacking these contradictions requires a deeply intentional study of nations and sexual relations both central and peripheral to capitalist-imperialism. Because of this, I thought it was crucial to look to a revolutionary theory of a national liberation struggle that I believe has correctly identified women's emancipation as the "cutting edge of all theoretical and practical activity"[1]: New Afrikan Political Science (NAPS)[2]. To develop the feminist case for New Afrikan national liberation, we will trace the origins and transformations of Black women's oppression while engaging with the revolutionary thought born of their captivity and that of their nation as a whole.

NAPS is a revolutionary theoretical framework birthed from the liberation struggle of Black people in the United States—a nation (among the many which developed due to the permeation of the transatlantic slave trade across the Americas) comprised of the descendents of enslaved Africans whose social, political, and economic subjugation to the US empire constituted them as an internal colony. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, US Black people have been kept captive for yankee imperialist accumulation through their integration into US capitalist patriarchy as "paper citizens"[3], referring to the issuing of US citizenship after denying the Black nation its right to self-determination through the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. NAPS correctly identifies US Black people as a colonized nation within the borders of the US, subject to military occupation, economic exploitation, and cultural domination by the white settler-colonial state. NAPS asserts a philosophical continuity with Africa and African peoples while recognizing the distinct development of a new nation because of the historical transformation of conditions, culture, and relations through human trafficking in chattel slavery. Black nationalists coined "New Afrikan" to

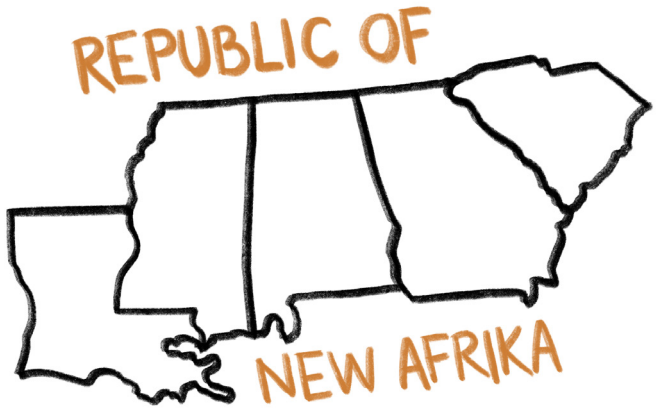
[1] Anonymous, 1986, Vita Wa Watu book 9, pg 1
[2] Onaci, E. 2012, Self-determination Means Determining Self: Lifestyle Politics and the Republic of New Afrika, pg 67
[3] PG-RNA, 1968, Declaration of Independence of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, pg 1

refer to "all African people born in the New World out of the slaving experience"[4].

New Afrikan national liberation demands an independent nation-state surrounding the Black Belt—a national secession from the US with sovereign political control of the lands of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. The Black Government Conference of 1968, a convening of 500 Black nationalists from various organizations around the country, determined this land to be the national territory of New Afrika. It was also during this convening that a national declaration of independence was signed and the Provincial Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PG-RNA) was established. NAPS also recognizes the capitalist mode of production as a basis of New Afrika's continuous captivity, thereby requiring new economic modalities to socialize production and the state through socialist revolution. Hence the slogan "Land, Independence, and Socialism."

James Yaki Sayles was a leading theoretician of NAPS. He developed his nationalist consciousness while incarcerated, helping form the New Afrikan Prisoners Organization (NAPO) in 1977. NAPO published a New Afrikan theoretical journal called *Notes from a New Afrikan Prisoner of War*. Throughout this essay, I will reference book nine of the journal, which contains an anonymously published essay titled *Notes on the Link Between Oppression of New Afrikan Women and the New Afrikan National Liberation Revolution* which theorizes the liberation of women as integral to the New Afrikan national liberation struggle. The essay begins with a search for the roots of this "link": "To find the link between women's oppression, national oppression, and the struggle for socialism, we must analyze and reanalyze the past, look for points of origin, and trace the paths of development"[5] because "the contemporary forms of New Afrikan women's oppression and exploitation continue to reflect a material base in the common roots that all forms of women's and national oppression share."[6] The author traces the oppression of New Afrikan women to the development of the tributary mode of production in precolonial West Africa showing that "the oppression of New Afrikan women predates by thousands of years the European colonization of Africa"[7]:

> **"Such a mode made appearance in Africa long before any foreign influences, and forms of (women's) oppression and (class) exploitation thus became the 'traditional' ones that the oppression of New Afrikan women, and the exploitation of the New Afrikan nation by capitalist-imperialism, would build themselves on"[8] because "when animals were first captured, tamed/domesticated, used in agricultural production (especially meat and milk), they were characterized as INSTRUMENTS of production (and as such were the 'personal property' of men, similar to the ways instruments [that] were used by men in the hunt were considered 'personal property')"[9]**



[4] Obadele, I., 1985, New African State-Building in North America, pg 1
[5] Anonymous, 1986, Vita Wa Watu book 9, pg 1
[6] Ibid., pg 6
[7] Ibid., pg 5
[8] Ibid., pg 22

and that "men came to appropriate more and more of the products (surplus) derived from these means; the surplus turned into privately accumulated wealth, and the wealth into private property. Women were thus gradually removed from direct relation to major means of production, and the quality of their socially necessary labor was ever-greatly reduced in value."[10]

The tributary mode of production differs from capitalist production in that it was organized for the extraction of tribute for a ruling class—instead of for capital accumulation—in the forms of (corvée) labor, wives, bride-price and dowries, and ceremonial gifts through political or religious authority.[11] The social organization of production in tributary West Africa is closely associated with familial organization as material relations were organized around a base of kinship. The institution of marriage served as the keystone of the superstructure. Women, as both the means and the site of reproduction, were regarded as the most powerful prospective means of production. Control over access to women legitimized the superstructural kinship hierarchy to establish a ruling class that collectively owned tribute and governed territories through institutionalizing the authority of the dominant lineages and castes. As a result, the traditional significances of dowry and bride-price, a trade between families of women-for-assets, served as sanctions of this social order. The function of dowry and bride-price was the cost of acquisition of new heirs, especially for the ruling lineage. Consequently, polygamy functioned as a structural mechanism for the reproduction of heirs, the social reproduction of tributary relations for the ruling class, as well as the creation of individual production units for subordinate lineages to meet their tributary obligations.

"The revolutionary theory of New Afrikan Political Science has correctly identified that national liberation is impossible without the emancipation of its female half, whose bodies have borne the weight of domination and whose resistance has remained unshaken."

The weight of women's oppression, once constrained by the obligations of this tributary order, was violently compounded into a system of relentless exploitation and brutality by European arrival. The interventionism of European trade within West Africa resulted in the undermining of the continent's precolonial relations. Europeans transformed the integrity of and the dynamic relationships between various West African social formations by antagonizing long-existing contradictions. This especially isolated women from their safety networks (family or tribe).[12] I believe that the emergence of new political economies and modes of production in West Africa, through the disruption of political autonomy and independent socioeconomic formations, is central to understanding the intertwined oppressions of New Afrikan women and New Afrika—each was forged and reproduced through the other, bound together in the vessels of captivity and exploitation—especially through the transatlantic slave trade.

The transatlantic slave trade was integral to the primitive accumulation of capital for the newly established settler colonies of the Americas. The first permanent English colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607, and the first recorded

[9] Ibid., pg 19
[10] Ibid., pg 20
[11] Amin, S., 1976, Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism, pgs 14-15
[12] Rodney, W., 2018, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, pgs 125-126

arrival of Africans in English North America occurred in 1619, just twelve years later. *Primitive accumulation* refers to the historical process by which pre-capitalist modes of production were violently transformed into capitalism. While Marx locates capitalism as the historical epoch of class society in which workers are compelled to sell their labor-power for a wage just sufficient to live—producing surplus-value for those who own production[13]—surplus-value was clearly also extracted from the labor of enslaved Africans. This labor was a precondition for the development of "free" labor markets in the settler colonies, the profits from which were reinvested into settler economic infrastructure to employ white wage-laborers, including white women.[14]

The relationship between the development of capitalism as such in the colonial US and the slave mode of production marks the beginning of a new epoch of class society. The political economy of slavery had a distinct and new social material organization shaped by, and integrated into, the global capitalist market, yet not reducible to a free-market economy. The nascent empire understood that it must also secure a monopoly over New Afrikan women as an ostensibly inexhaustible reserve of labor to establish and maintain the base of its accumulation process.[15] This violent symbiosis marks the bloodstained genesis of what will forge into the world's modern imperialist division in its most advanced form, and with it, the foundation laid for the brutal American racial-caste superstructure we inherit today. This entangled coexistence inevitably transformed African languages, customs, and social bonds, while enslaved people—torn from each other through the brutal slave trade—navigated survival in unfamiliar lands among unfamiliar faces. In the very architecture of the lands of the South, New Afrikans carved out strategies of endurance and inscribed their distinct national existence.

This primitive (and subsequent) accumulation of capital in the early (and late-stage) settler colony was entirely dependent on sexual violence against enslaved women and girls. Female captivity found its cruelest expression in the commodification of New Afrikan women's reproductive capacity—bought and sold as vessels of reproductive capital. Stripped of personhood, enslaved women were violated and bred—their wombs turned into engines of profit to reproduce enslaved labor for the plantation economy. The political economy of slavery was not a prelude to capitalist-imperialism but the foundation of its very formation. The pillars of modern imperialist globalization were built through the violent enslavement of New Afrikans—primarily through the rape of enslaved women.

The lives of enslaved Africans in the Americas were completely encapsulated by white patriarchal sexual relations. Harriet Jacobs, a woman of great fortitude who escaped enslavement in 1835, wrote an autobiographical account of life, from her birth into enslavement in 1813, to the writing of her slave narrative in the "free" North in 1861: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Harriet's early childhood felt like freedom only because her parents had carved out a fragile independence within slavery—an illusion shattered by her mother's death, which exposed her to the brutal realities of being legally owned and passed between white families. The patriarch of the enslaver family she was sold to at age 12 swiftly laid bare the brutal truth of racial slavery for young girls:

> **"My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import. I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt. The master's age, my extreme youth, and the fear that his conduct would be reported to my [free] grandmother, made him bear this treatment**

[13] Marx, K., 1990, Capital Volume 1, pg 1017
[14] Robinson, C., 1983, Black Marxism, The Making of the Black Radical Tradition, pg 4
[15] Fox-Genovese, E., 1988, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, pg 57

for many months. He was a crafty man, and resorted to many means to accomplish his purposes. Sometimes he had stormy, terrific ways that made his victims tremble; sometimes he assumed a gentleness that he thought must surely subdue. Of the two, I preferred his stormy moods, although they left me trembling. He tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred. But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof as him—where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revoked against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men".[16]

Harriet became the subject of the cruel sexual violation of enslaved women from prepubescence—a child torn from innocence, bonded to the violence of the white patriarch, her youth devoured by the sadism of his desire. At fifteen, Harriet went on to meet a neighboring white man, one who juxtaposed himself to the cruelty of her master by feeding her promises of buying her freedom—which never happened. She had two children by him before the age of 19—both the property of her master, "for slaveholders have been cunning enough to enact that 'the child shall follow the condition of the mother', not of the father; thus taking care that licentiousness shall not interfere with avarice".[17] *Partus sequitur*

ventrem, a Latin phrase meaning "that which is brought forth follows the womb", was a law established in colonial Virginia in 1662, meaning that under this law, children born to enslaved women were automatically enslaved, regardless of the father's status—whether he was free, white, or enslaved. This reversed English common law tradition, where a child's status typically followed the father's. Its primary purpose was to ensure the heritable, perpetual enslavement of New Afrikan children born to enslaved women, even if the father was white. The interminable enslavement of New Afrika was the only thing worth bringing back "matrilineality" for whites.

The political economy of slavery grasped that the forced reproduction of enslaved women could generate more profit than the purchase of human beings for labor, weaving rape into the very logic of slavery, especially after the outlawing of the overseas slave trade in 1807. In the auction

[16] Jacobs, H., 1990, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, pg 45-55
[17] Ibid. pgs 117-1181

block's cruel arithmetic, fertility became a price point, and sexual violence a means of multiplying wealth.[18] *Partus sequitur ventrem* anticipated and legitimized the enslaver's unchecked access to those he owned, understanding well the routine nature of sexual coercion and rape. It tethered generations of New Afrikans to a lineage forged through domination, marking them as a people shaped by a specific history within settler-colonial society—one in which nationhood emerged not only from survival, but from systemic violation.

Partus sequitur ventrem consequently established the patriarchal doctrine of *coverture*, institutionalizing (white) women entering courtship as the property of their husband. *Coverture* was codified in the 17th century to secure male inheritance rights, as explained by Erlene Stetson in *But Some of Us Are Brave*: "As the colonies became more populous, the real and apparent autonomy of women began to be checked. For one thing, the same laws that stated that children must follow the condition of the mother, and that slaves could not own property, made it implicitly obvious that the only way the white man could secure inheritance rights of private property was through his free children. Thus white women became 'marriage material.' Gradually, the white woman was forced into the 'woman's sphere' of marriage, motherhood, and the family".[19] *Coverture* forged the legal architecture of institutional marriage in reproducing the political economy of modern capitalist patriarchy—confining generations of both settler women and New Afrikan women in wifehood and motherhood. This also signals the emergence of a distinct New Afrikan nation, marked by a shift in the role of women: no longer embedded in the visible labors of agrarian or mining economies as in their original West African societies. Because of *coverture*, New Afrikan women became increasingly confined to the hidden interior of domesticity—a transformation that reshaped the very fabric of social relations.

Enslaved women were well aware of the value of their reproductive capacity, often resorting to subtle acts of resistance meant to escape the notice of watchful enslavers who would not hesitate to unleash brutal punishment on both mother and her children. Mary Gaffney, a woman interviewed post-Emancipation about her life as an enslaved woman, said she "kept cotton roots and chewed them all the time but I was careful not to let Maser know or catch me, so I never did have any children while I was a slave".[20] Refusing to bear children into chains, to nurse new life only to see it ripped away at an enslaver's whim, to allow their wombs to replenish the labor-force of the enslaver—the resistance of enslaved women starved the plantation economy of its lifeblood. By the time of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, it was not only armies that had strangled the system of slavery, but enslaved women who, in shielding both themselves from forced breeding and their progeny from bondage, helped bleed the plantations dry.

Many New Afrikan women also ran away from captivity. At about age 22, Harriet Jacobs had attempted to flee North, making her way to what she referred to as the "Snaky Swamp", a refuge of "fugitive slaves" who formed their own autonomous society deep in the swamplands of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. This refuge is now known as the Great Dismal Swamp. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, many self-emancipated New Afrikans—known as maroons—sought shelter in the swamp's dense terrain which was tangled with vegetation, snakes, and insects, and often submerged in water. It was nearly impenetrable, and for that very reason, it offered a permanent sanctuary for those who understood that even these conditions surpassed the inhumane quality

[18] White, D., 1999, Ar'n't I A Woman?, pg 69

[19] Stetson, E., 1970, But Some of Us Are Brave; Studying Slavery: Some Literary & Pedagogical Considerations on the Black Female Slave, pg 75

[20] Federal Writers' Project Slave Narratives

of life that enslavement rendered them.[21] Maroon societies across the Americas rose from the fierce will of the enslaved to live beyond the reach of the whip, in hidden corners of the world where the land itself became an ally—dense forests, deep swamps, and rugged hills. There, fugitives from bondage built quiet sanctuaries of freedom, carving out life with their own hands, sustaining themselves with what the earth would give. The wide terrain of land became inseparable from the birth of the New Afrikan nation, as they pressed their defiance into the soil—building self-sufficient communities beyond the reach of settler-colonial domination and the economic order it imposed, both in the US and across the ocean from Africa.

Maroon societies were disproportionately composed of young men, as many enslaved women were less able to undertake the risks of escape due to prioritizing the wellbeing of their children. Women who did self-emancipate most often did so with their children by escaping as far north as possible to prevent the re-enslavement of their families.[22] The Underground Railroad was a secret network of routes and safe houses organized and operated by everyday people, largely by free New Afrikans, to coordinate the liberation of enslaved New Afrikans to the North. Some women who self-emancipated via the Railroad, as in the case of Harriet Tubman, even dedicated their lives to freedom, risking everything to support their nation's emancipation. Harriet Jacobs escaped in 1842 with the help of New Afrikan maritime workers who hid her on board their laboring boat—a lesser-known but critical part of the Underground Railroad, often called the maritime Underground Railroad. The very existence of women who seized control of their own reproduction, maroon societies, and the Underground Railroad threatened the order of slavery through the revelation of a dangerous truth: that freedom was not granted, but taken.

As New Afrikans waged their liberation struggle, the contradiction between the white settler nation and the captive New Afrikan nation reached a new threshold, effectively undermining the stability of the US slave empire. The settler-colonial state responded with repression: the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. This law required citizens to assist in the capture of escaped enslaved people, extending the reach of slavery into the North. This law emboldened whites to view all New Afrikans—free or formerly enslaved—no longer as the neighbors they'd long known, but as fugitives to be scrutinized, surveilled, hunted, and trafficked back into enslavement for a cash grab, effectively criminalizing New Afrikan presence even in so-called free states.

This federalization of the political economy of slavery was an attempt to reassert control over the resisting New Afrikan nation. The contradiction between national resistance and national oppression grew over the next decade, heightening individual acts of rebellion and escape into open war. The four-year American Civil War (1861-1865) is described by historians as a bourgeois conflict between industrial and agrarian states demanding autonomy under federalism—but, in the final analysis, the Civil War was the eruption of the contradiction of national oppression consumed by intra-imperialist interests. The slavocracy of the South fought to preserve its dominion over the New Afrikan nation through chattel enslavement, while the bourgeoisie of the North fought for control over the New Afrikan nation through its integration into the political economy of yankee capitalism. Neither faction of whites had the interests of New Afrikan liberation in mind. They differed, rather, over *how* the New Afrikan nation should remain colonized—whether by the enslaver or the factory boss. Dubois quotes Wendell Phillips, a white yankee abolitionist, who articulated the North's interests in abolishing slavery: "The African must

[21] Sayers, D., 2014, A Desolate Place for a Defiant People, pg 1

[22] White, D., 1999, Ar'n't I A Woman?, pg 70

be given the franchise because we have no other timber to build states with, and unless we build with him, we must postpone reconstruction for so many years.."[23]

The Civil War created conditions favorable to New Afrikan national liberation, but the imperialist "paper citizen" integrationist strategy crushed this revolutionary potential. Reconstruction was not an emancipatory project—it was the systematic pacification of a national liberation struggle. Through lynchings, sharecropping, convict leasing, Jim Crow, and other endless acts of violence and degradation against New Afrikan people, the nation was re-subjugated under racial capitalism. This imperialist strategy was felt most deeply in the lives and bodies of New Afrikan women. During Reconstruction and beyond, the same forced reproductive labor of enslaved women was reconfigured into the mold of white domesticity to now reproduce "free" labor. The hyper-extraction of New Afrikan women's reproductive labor was enforced through the violent imposition of the empire's patriarchal codes of female respectability, which demanded obedience, piety, and maternal duty. Any deviation was potentially lethal. Integration into the political economy of the US empire ultimately served to subordinate both the New Afrikan liberation struggle—shifting the struggle for freedom from one of political sovereignty to one of individual "rights" within the settler colony—as well as the liberation struggle of New Afrikan women from bondage in motherhood and wifehood, many of whom as free people had already been living and working independently as single women without children and husbands.[24]

Claudia Jones, revolutionary New Afrikan feminist and nationalist, sharply recognized that the internal sidelining of women from the militant frontlines of national liberation, relegating them instead to prescribed womanly duties, did not safeguard the struggle, but stifled its very possibility of victory: "The bourgeoisie is fearful of the militancy of the [Black] woman, and for good reason. The capitalists know, far better than many progressives seem to know, that once [Black] women undertake action, the militancy of the whole [Black] people, and thus of the anti-imperialist coalition, is greatly enhanced".[25]

The author(s) of *Notes on the Link Between Oppression of New Afrikan Women and the New Afrikan National Liberation Revolution* principally understand that this internal contradiction suppresses victory, explaining that the reasoning for amalgamating the struggles for female and national liberation is "because we don't want to repeat the practice of other movements where, once in power, they failed to fulfill the promises made to women in the course of struggle—a failure intimately related to their inability to fulfill other fundamental aims and principles of the socialist society for which they fought".[26] The essay ends with a resolute reflection, asserting that "if the evolution of Africa had not been impeded, we'd still face the struggle we face today. The link between the oppression of women and the oppression of the nation is the rise of the capitalist relations of production. To end the oppression of women, and to liberate the nation, is to struggle for socialism".[27] Most crucially, NAPS correctly identifies that for the liberation of New Afrikan women, oppressed by both male domination and capitalist-imperialism, "there must be (an) autonomous women's organization(s), mass-based women's leadership and full participation in all levels of struggle, organization, and spheres of life."[28]

---

[23] Dubois, W., 1998, Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880, pg 200
[24] Fox-Genovese, E., 1988, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, pg 51
[25] Jones, C., 2024, A Fighting Dream: The Political Writings of Claudia Jones, pg 99
[26] Anonymous, 1986, Vita Wa Watu book 9, pg 3
[27] Ibid. pg 22
[28] Ibid. pg 3

The historical material conditions of New Afrikan women's oppression, rooted in the historical transformations of the sex contradiction from tributary Africa all the way to the integrationism of New Afrika, demand their centrality in the theory and practice of NAPS. The trafficking, enslavement, rape, exploitation, and denial of national sovereignty of New Afrikan women is the foundation of capitalist-imperialism. The revolutionary theory of New Afrikan Political Science has correctly identified that national liberation is impossible without the emancipation of its female half, whose bodies have borne the weight of domination and whose resistance has remained unshaken. NAPS understands that the condition of New Afrikan women reveals most clearly how male domination weaves through and underpins national oppression, making it the most unifying force in the struggle to dismantle all systems of dispossession.

Feminists, therefore, must take up the cause of New Afrikan national liberation as an essential component of feminist struggle itself. It was through the rape and torture of our New Afrikan sisters that the legal claim of husbands over all women was violently cemented into law. The brutality acted upon New Afrikan women was the foundational mechanism by which capitalist-imperialism took shape, making their continued subjugation the fulcrum of global exploitation. Feminism that does not oppose the subjugation of the New Afrikan nation in its entirety—at the level of land, labor, and national sovereignty—fails to threaten the global political economies that reproduce female subjugation. To struggle for land, labor, and liberation without anchoring it in the struggle of New Afrikan women is to sever the struggle from its deepest source of insight and revolutionary strength. *Total Woman Victory* uplifts this truth: that sex is not a secondary contradiction, but the thread that binds all others—and it must be cut to tear the whole system down. This "Land, Labor, Liberation" issue would be hollow without honoring the centuries of unwavering resistance led by New Afrikan women, and the deliberate, disciplined vision of NAPS to secure the freedom and power of its female half.

EG, "Calendari Lunari 2", 2025

References

Amin, S. (1976). Unequal development: An essay on the social formations of peripheral communities. Monthly Review Press.

Anonymous. *Vita Wa Watu: A New Afrikan Theoretical Journal,* Book 9. (1986). Spear and Shield Publications.

Dubois, W. (1998). Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880. The Free Press.

Federal Writers' Project. (n.d.). *Born in slavery: Slave narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938*. Library of Congress. Retrieved [May 10, 2025], from https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/

Fox-Genovese, E. (1988). *Within the Plantation household: Black and white women of the Old South.* University of North Carolina Press.

Hull, A. G., Hull, G. T., Bell-Scott, P., & Smith, B. (1982). *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies.* Feminist Press.

Jacobs, H. (1990). *Incidents in the life of a slave girl*. Oxford University Press.

Jones, C. (2024). *A fighting dream: The political writings of Claudia Jones*. 1804 Books.

Rodney, W. (2018). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Verso Books.

White, D. G. (1999). *Ar'n't I a woman?: Female slaves in the Plantation south*. WW Norton.

Under Our Noses: The Genocide of Native American Women

By @na74362408

When you think of the word "genocide," what comes to mind first? Presumably, the brutal attacks against the Palestinian people by the Israeli Occupation Forces are at the forefront of the current public consciousness. The Shoah—that is, the Holocaust—remains the poster child of the word, representing the state-sponsored extermination of millions of European Jews during the 1940s. The Rwandan genocide saw hundreds of thousands of members of the Tutsi ethnic group slaughtered by neighbors and members of their own communities. This violence, though seemingly interpersonal, was deeply rooted in colonial systems—Belgian rule institutionalized the Hutu-Tutsi divide, while foreign support, including military aid from France, gave structure to the slaughter. Three million Cambodian people are estimated to have died under the systematic persecution of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, whose ascent was a direct response to the vacuum left by U.S. bombardment and Cold War-era interventionism. The Armenian people saw the destruction of their lives and identity during the Armenian genocide of World War I. In the mind of society, "genocide" carries a certain image—military uniforms, guerilla warfare, pillaging of homes, chattel slavery.

These genocides, though separated by geography and historical context, share a common thread. They were all brutal instruments of imperial power. From Europe to Africa to Southeast Asia, various empires took the idea of mass extermination and honed it into a cold, unflinching machine. It exemplified the pervasive greed of each and every metropole, who sought to subsume ever more land and resources into itself, and it did so by targeting, disenfranchising, and destroying the people whose normal lives represented the greatest threat to its domination.

Yet within these histories of violence, something is consistently omitted: the specific experiences of women. In dominant accounts of genocide, the suffering of women is often sidelined or silenced altogether. We are told of armies and camps, of borders and treaties—but not of the women raped as tools of war, sterilized without consent, or abducted and erased to destroy entire bloodlines. These are not footnotes; they are foundational strategies in the architecture of genocidal violence. And the erasure of women's suffering is not accidental—it is deliberate, a political act that helps minimize both the scale and the continuity of these atrocities.

This context is essential to understanding another genocide—one that is not only missing from the public imagination, but one that continues today. The genocide of Indigenous nations in what is now known as the United States, Canada, and Australia began over 500 years ago with land theft, disease, war, and forced assimilation. That violence never ended—it only changed form. Today, it continues through the targeted erasure of Indigenous women.

Theirs is a genocide that is slow, silent, and persistent. Every day, on the basis of their sex and their nation, they are victimized; the violent mechanisms of the settler-colonial states, put in place so long ago, have intentionally been turned upon them, denying Indigenous nations political sovereignty. And women are not just collateral

damage in a flawed but well-intentioned system, as some might claim—the cultural, political, and reproductive roles of Native women are being trampled upon, reinforcing imperial control as part of the ever-ongoing project of settler-colonialism.

These women are living under empires built on the occupation of stolen land, whose systems are engineered to exploit, violate, and erase them. Far from naïve, the U.S., Canada, and Australia use government policy, military force, and everyday violence to secure the subjugation of Indigenous women, as well as their marginalization and disappearance. The violence of settler states is a structured approach in which every institution—and every citizen who benefits from them, who participates in them—is complicit in the brutality caused.

We can look at the objective numbers—such as those gathered in a survey for Statistics Canada by Heather Hobson, Joanna Jacob, and Tina Mahony—to understand the extent and intentionality of the plight of Indigenous women. They found that Native women are up to 3.5 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than any other race of women, with one in three Indigenous women being sexually assaulted in her lifetime and with over half being assaulted by an intimate partner. From 2001 to 2015, the homicide rate for Indigenous women in Canada was almost six times higher than the homicide rates for women of any other race. Native American women are among our most relentlessly targeted sisters, and yet their suffering remains hidden or mostly an afterthought in the public consciousness.

These are not just numbers: they represent the names on missing person posters no one shares, and the faces on T-shirts worn by grieving mothers at candle-lit vigils. They are women with families, memories, and morning routines. They are the unspoken fears passed down from mother to daughter:

Don't walk alone. Don't trust the police to care. Don't expect the media to notice.

This reality is not random. It is structural.

Colonialism's Legacy in the 'Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women' Movement

Whereas women from all walks of life are subject to misogynistic violence and sex-based discrimination, Native women are caught in the unique intersection of their womanhood and their nationality, grappling with the ramifications of colonialism hundreds of years later.

One example of these crosshairs was the U.S.'s *Indian Relocation Act of 1956*, a policy that accelerated the mass dissolution of federal recognition for tribal authorities. Framed as an effort to "integrate" Native American people into the Neo-European society and U.S. capitalism by forcibly displacing them from sovereign homelands into urban centers—spaces marketed with promises of jobs and housing, but designed to assimilate, isolate, and dismantle tribal cohesion under economic pressure. Such an act

of integration was, in reality, a strategic move to undermine Indigenous sovereignty. By forcing Native nations into the fold of the U.S. empire, the government could more effectively extract Indigenous labor and land while dissolving their political autonomy. Recognizing them as self-governing entities would have meant ceding control over vast territories and disrupting the seamless flow of capital. Instead, the act removed vital funding from tribal institutions such as schools, hospitals, and any jobs they may have created for their constituents in their self-governing communities. This propelled Native people to seek employment in nearby urban centers, heightening their exploitation, and often facing job discrimination in the process—leading to the 27% poverty rate Indigenous nations face even to this day. Poverty begets poverty, with low graduation rates in inner-city Native communities stemming from this economic hardship, and in turn, perpetuating the cycle.

"The erasure of women's suffering is not accidental—it is deliberate, a political act that helps minimize both the scale and the continuity of these atrocities."

As such, Indigenous women are often excluded from access to social safety nets and economic stability. According to one study, 40% of sex trafficking survivors are First Nation women—and yet, these disappearances are investigated with little urgency, if at all. Their stories remain invisible.

The case of 18-year-old Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, for example, is one that makes blatant the lie that is the justice system. Her body was found and identified in the same neighborhood she had been reported missing, days after the fact, but it took nearly two weeks for her family to be informed—time they had spent desperately searching for her. When the coroner in charge of the case convinced Kaysera's family to go against their beliefs and cremate her remains, it simultaneously destroyed any evidence left on her body. No investigation was launched into the circumstances—suspicious as they were—around Kaysera's disappearance nor into the law enforcement officers involved in her case.

This was not a failure of the system, however. It was the system working exactly as designed—delaying, denying, and ultimately erasing Indigenous lives in order to preserve the impunity of the state.

This epitomizes what makes these circumstances a genocide. Not the single, explosive horror of one event, but the cumulative effect of a thousand omissions. The refusal to act, to see, and to care. These tragedies are not isolated. They are the expected outcomes of the systems of the settler colony put in place to disappear Native women without consequence—because the genocide of Indigenous women does not require mass graves. It requires only that we look away.

Where Do We Begin?

If this genocide is the logical end result of a settler empire, then its unraveling must begin with dismantling the foundation it stands upon. It persists because it serves power—political, economic, and social—and so, undoing it requires more than compassion; it requires confrontation.

While a push for legal reform, as with the implementation of the *Not Invisible Act* in the United States and the enforcement of the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* in Canada, may offer immediate tools for visibility and protection, these initiatives remain confined within the logic of settler governance. Reforms like these require

recognition from the very systems that have harmed Indigenous women for centuries. They are temporary stopgaps, not solutions.

True liberation means moving beyond the settler legal framework entirely. It necessitates that Indigenous nations reclaim authority over their own justice systems—ones that are community-accountable, rooted in traditional laws, and fundamentally independent from that of the colonial state. National sovereignty is not a lofty ideal; it is the only viable path toward safety, healing, and self-determination for Native peoples. After all, Canada, Australia, and the U.S.—founded on the exploitation and genocide of Indigenous nations—have no genuine interest in undoing the conditions that reproduce this violence.

This reclamation is already underway. Across many Indigenous nations, women and their communities have taken up arms—not as metaphor, but as direct defense against the violence settler colonialism deploys through both state agents and private actors. These protection networks form a sovereign line of resistance: not reacting to a system that fails, but confronting one that operates exactly as designed—to disappear, destabilize, and destroy. Protecting Native women from the colonial state, and from the men who carry out its violence, often requires meeting brutality with force.

This is not a new development. During the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, Indigenous women like Regina Brave and Madonna Thunder Hawk did not wait for the state to act; they armed themselves, took leadership, and physically defended their communities from state-sanctioned violence. Oral histories recall women leading coordinated bar raids in Rapid City to confront spaces of white violence, and forming front-line protest units even as federal agents aimed machine guns at them and at children. This behavior was rooted in the recognition that the state does not fail to protect Native women—it functions to erase them. As such, protection becomes an Indigenous mandate. Today, this tradition continues through groups like the Women of All Red Nations and other grassroots collectives who train, organize, and stand ready to both resist and reclaim. Their resistance against colonial violence—and, by extension, their own sovereignty—becomes a matter of survival.

Donations and other such support can still provide critical aid in the short term, allowing young women to pursue education, escape cycles of abuse, and build financial independence. But no amount of aid will replace the need for political and territorial autonomy. That autonomy must be more than symbolic—it must reestablish Indigenous control over governance, law, and land—revitalizing tribal institutions that have been systematically dismantled and defunded. Indigenous power must be rebuilt from the ground up: tribal courts, community defense, matrilineal kinship structures, and land-based economies, free from settler oversight. **Appeals to the empire do not last long—liberation comes from ending the imperial dominion altogether.**

Non-Indigenous women have a responsibility to center our sisters in these conversations about which laws help them, which ones harm them, and how real justice looks. Justice cannot be done for Indigenous women if it is not done with them, either, so it is crucial to continue honoring the lives lost through public memorial, art, and education, while uplifting Indigenous voices in this conversation.

Their lives and stories matter. If a single person chooses to act, then it helps to ensure that the future of Indigenous women not be written in neglect—but in justice, in healing, and in power. **The future cannot be built on recognition alone—it must be built on return. The return of land, of power, and of dignity to those this empire has tried to erase.**

Land Bloodied and a Lady's Labours

By Saaleha (@faalehavii)

Instead of counteracting undesirable deviations from appropriate biochemical levels, the body's positive feedback loops *amplify* them until the event that provoked deviation is either completed or reaches a limit. Take childbirth—contractions activate the production of oxytocin, which in turn induces more contractions, producing more oxytocin, and so on, until the baby is delivered. Even if the event (childbirth) is never completed, the body can only accommodate so much before it approaches collapse. Too many deviations will prompt physiological failure, which contributes to maternal mortality, as in cases of hypotonic labour characterised by weak contractions (Dike and Ibine 2024).

Positive feedback loops—these systems of amplifying harmful biological deviations to continue until the deviating process is complete or the body in which they are occurring cannot take anymore—do not apply exclusively to the human body. Entire socioeconomic and political bodies have been fattened from feeding off this exploitative paradigm with women and women's labor, especially of the female proletarian class. Women, the land on which they stand, and the various kinds of labour they perform are commodified and objectified under capitalist-patriarchal orders. What ought to be respected and protected is instead bastardised and shackled as befits those who value profit over people. Still, like the human body, the societal body does not have an infinite capacity to accommodate harmful phenomena. *Through examining these manifestations of feedback loops, what becomes clear is that Earth and her most vulnerable denizens can only tolerate so much before they can take no more.*

Saaleha, "Sickle & Treats, Alienated", 2025

The Female Body, Commodified

Organ selling usually elicits a visceral disgust; mothers use this scare tactic to get their kids home by sunset. This disgust seemingly dissipates when it's a woman's organs, a woman's body being bought and sold. Surrogacy is a rental service of women's bodies, with the children of such arrangements created to be bought and sold. Beyond the physiological dangers that women whose bodies are rented may suffer, the trade itself—and it's indeed a lucrative business for the moguls—renders both the women and babies as commodities. Neither is a humanised party. More sinister is the nascent phenomenon where women's organs are plucked and priced and bid upon. The female body has become a shopping site: which female organ will be available for purchase next? Or for altruistic donation? Why must women be so

altruistic anyway, insofar as they might undergo debilitating procedures so that others may feast on their physical being? Medical sciences advancing to enable the selling of women faster than the healing of them should be considered a great societal failure. Liberal proponents will, undoubtedly, condemn horrific cases of flesh trade such as the Thai women imprisoned in Georgia for 'egg farming' (Woldeselasse 2025)—but you cannot support one and not expect the other as a logical consequence. Once you have approved the trade, you have legitimised all accompanying heinous practices. If the correct, natural state for women is one of safety, respect, and progression, then the flesh trade and all its variants are a stark deviation from that state. *Like a positive feedback loop, these deviations cannot continue without eventually leading to a total system shutdown.*

Land Upon Which Women Stand

Earth possesses an explicitly feminine connotation across space and time. Mother Nature. Gaia, primordial mother. Indigenous creation stories of progenitresses. So, is it any surprise that imperialist wars have defiled Earth through technology to exploit her raw materials in pursuit of capital accumulation, the exploitation of the people who call her home, and more? Trump's first presidential term "resulted in a vast expansion in fossil fuel production and infrastructure, with the United States emerging as the leading fossil fuel producer of both oil and natural gas in the world" (Foster et al. 2019). Earth suffers deep wounds from violent extraction methods and ecological wounds from napalm, nuclear weapons, drone strikes, and murder machines. *The wealthy who orchestrate these murder games take from lands they defiled and drink from the blood of children they killed.* To what end will we stand by whilst our planetary home is desecrated by those who will never suffer the consequences of this desecration? Women will bear the brunt of these consequences: Mexican women in maquiladoras, young girls in Congolese mines, East Asian women in EPZs, and too many more.

Among the many consequences of the climate crisis are the "failure of crops, outburst of pests and diseases and depletion of land and water resources" (Abid et al. 2018). This is inherently a feminist issue, as women, in almost all nations, make up the bulk of the agricultural workforce (538). This is a terror attack on women and their livelihoods; indeed, the climate crisis "directly affects household nutrition and incomes and a decrease in woody vegetation makes it difficult to feed their animals" (538). While the imperialist-patriarchal system engorges itself, the women who toil hardly receive a morsel. *Some day, the earthly fissures such vile systems have created won't go any deeper, and women workers cannot and will not carry more in their laps.*

Forms of Women's Labour

Women's labour in fields, factories, and homes hardly belongs to them. Marx's theory of alienation, whereby workers and consumers are estranged from processes and products made by less fortunate hands, has been useful when analysing these conditions. A woman's labour, in any setting she occupies, is estranged from her as she suffers from a dual noose: her class and her sex relegate her to dependence on an employer, male kin, or both. Her physical being is at risk. Agricultural work will erode her body, and pollutants may "enter women's body tissues and breast milk which cause reproductive and immunological disorders" (Abid et al. 2018). The girls in the mines and factories are deprived of healthy bodies able to play, explore, and create. Worse still are those who have the gall to assert that it's men's labour that runs the world—that the global labour force is a masculine network. *It's not enough that women suffer from the thankless labour that they have no claim over; they must also be denied acknowledgement of their work entirely.*

Women's labour in the childbed hardly belongs to them. When we witness mothers and children reduced to numbers in genocides, to

tools for labour, to a class ripe for indoctrination, *to accessories of humanised adults*, we have simultaneously witnessed the most successful campaign to strengthen the capitalist-patriarchal regime. It's the most spirit-breaking, stomach-churning development in human history. Society adulterates motherhood in the traditional ways, of course: rapes, abusive marriages, surrogacy, concubinage, etc. Then there are methods that we bear witness to daily: a pregnant woman denied a seat on the bus, the glares at a woman soothing her wailing child, the denial of maternity leave, the pornified perception of pregnancy as having been 'creampied' and, as Dworkin phrased, "confirmation that the woman has been fucked" (1981). *The proclaimed reverence for mothers is a farce; ownership is the accurate term.* Renate Klein prescribes a pill: "[W]e need a '"mother revolution'" in which women stand up and reclaim pregnancy and birth as life events in which they are fully in charge" (2020). Motherhood must be violently taken back and returned to where it is safe: in the hands of mothers themselves.

The saddest thievery in the world is children robbed of personhood. It has been decided, before their conception, that they will constitute an oppressed class. Noble children bartered for political schemes. Heirs used as routes for social mobility. Poor children rotting in factories and mines, chains unremoved even in death. Sons sent to die in wars on foreign land for people who don't care for their names, much less their lives, and daughters brutalised in these wars. What solace is 'national glory' or 'religious struggle' to mothers who have seen generation after generation of children killed in these murderous systems? How can we tell women that their reproductive labour, which has already been estranged from them, has been fruitful for warmongers and the parasitic class? This stripping of personhood doesn't need to be militaristic either; violation of our most vulnerable occurs at home. A child beaten to invoke fear, a molested girl who is quieted, a shame-ridden child, a trans child mocked in the face of their suicide, a child used for bragging rights. What a violent, sickening thing the world has allowed. For a child to be the object of one's ire and perversion, or to be rendered a yoke to drag mothers to the depths of dehumanisation, is an indication of a plagued society. *This cannot be sustained forever; such a society will swell with sickness and become a turgid cell, and its membrane will rupture under its weight.*

A Proportional Relationship

For Marxists, feminists, and revolutionaries of other kinds, this text will not be substantially outrageous. This is not to say that there is no disagreement on how gendered dehumanisation manifests. Indeed, these theses must continue to be deliberated so that we may capture accurate frames of how women, children, their labour, and land are commodified. Rather, the crux of this dilemma for revolutionaries is understanding how the rupture of these capitalist-patriarchal orders will occur, and further, what action plans must be developed to ensure such ruptures are mediated by and to the advantage of women and the proletarian class. Thankfully, we are not completely in the dark. Truly inspiring women precede us and exemplify what it means to be revolutionary. The women of the Cuban revolution, of Maoist China, of the Vietcong, and so many more have given us ample material to learn from, as long as we devote ourselves to such lessons. Now, we see a stunning bulk of the resistance against Zionism constituted of women. The suicides of these feedback loops are inevitable. *Land, labour, and women are intimately related to each other. You cannot dehumanise and oppress one without dehumanising and oppressing the others, and you cannot liberate one without liberating the others.*

References

Abid, Zaineb, et al. “Detrimental Effects of Climate Change on Women.” *Earth Systems and Environment,* vol. 2, no. 3, 2018, pp. 537–51.

Dike, Nkechi O. and Rebecca Ibine. “Hypotonic Labor.” *StatPearls*, StatPearls Publishing. 2024. 16 May 2025.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. Putnam, 1981.

Foster, John Bellamy, et al. “Imperialism in the Anthropocene.” *Monthly Review* (New York. 1949), vol. 71, no. 3, 2019, pp. 70–88.

Renate Klein. “The Misogyny of Surrogacy: Disappearing Women as Mothers.” *Hecate*, vol. 45, no. 1/2, 2020, pp. 187–208.

Woldeselasse, Blene. “Trapped in the Surrogacy Boom: Thai Women Rescued from Human Egg Farms in Georgia.” *HRRC*, HRRC, 18 Feb. 2025.

The Colonization of Indigenous American Land

By an Anonymous Artist

Our moral compass is informed by the society we live in. Patriarchy values individualism, domination, exploitation, and profit. In contrast, Heide Goettner-Abendroth's theory of matriarchal societies describes community, egalitarianism, consensus decision-making, and subsistence. What we view as "ideal" influences how farmers tend the land. In indigenous American societies, female farmers use biodiversity to safely keep everything in perfect balance, as well as repelling pests—no death nor violence necessary. Biodiversity in the soil's nutrients maximize nutritional density in the crops. Every type of life is valued in this practice.

The current United States industrial farming system embodies patriarchal values. Single crop farming and chemical agents kill the soil and everything around it. Everything but the crop itself is seen as an enemy. Single crop farming led to the dust bowl; the colonizers didn't listen to the warnings of indigenous nations. These patriarchal farms have become the new norm.

> **"Together these plants—corn, beans, and squash—feed the people, feed the land, and feed our imaginations, telling us how we might live. For millennia, from Mexico to Montana, women have mounded up the earth and laid these three seeds in the ground, all in the same square foot of soil. When the colonists on the Massachusetts shore first saw indigenous gardens, they inferred that the savages did not know how to farm. To their minds, a garden meant straight rows of single species, not a three-dimensional sprawl of abundance. And yet they ate their fill and asked for more, and more again… By late summer, the beans hang in heavy clusters of smooth green pods, ears of corn angle out from the stalk, fattening in the sunshine, and pumpkins swell at your feet. Acre for acre, a Three Sisters garden yields more food than if you grew each of the sisters alone."** (Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013, p. 163)

> **"Settler-colonialism intentionally targets Indigenous women in order to destroy families, to sever the connection to land-based practices and economies, and to devastate the relational governance of Indigenous nations. Indigenous women's role as decision makers, keepers of tradition, holders of oral knowledge, and matriarchal governors in many nations through house groups and clan systems was disrupted through colonization."** (Carol Muree Martin and Harsha Walia, *Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*, 2019 p. 39).

> **"Among [the new chemicals] are many that are used in man's war against nature. Since the mid-1940s over 200 basic chemicals have been created for use in killing insects, weeds, rodents, and other organisms described in the modern vernacular as 'pests'; and they are sold under several thousand different brand names. These sprays, dusts, and aerosols are now applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests, and homes—nonselective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the 'good' and the 'bad', to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in the streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film, and to linger on in soil—all this though the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects. Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down such a barrage of poisons on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life?"** (Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962 p. 13)

It is hard for some to know
the world is a living being.
They live with forgotten truth
replaced with belief. Perhaps that's why
the books of the Mayans were burned,
and written languages destroyed in the North.

You can weep over such things
as lost love, or the passing of loved ones,
but always remember those birds, the bison,
their grief, too, and how the land hurts
in more chambers than one small heart
may ever hold.

(Linda Hogan, *A History of Kindness,* "Creation," 2020, lines 18-29)

Q&A: Sisters Speak

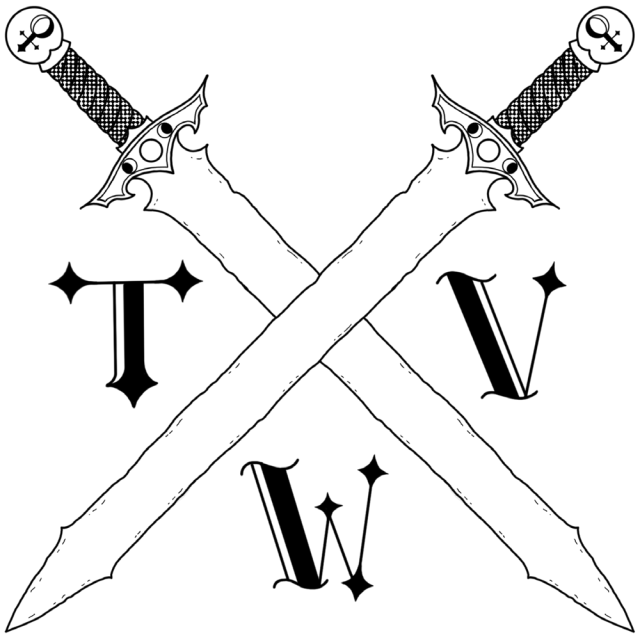
Every issue, Total Woman Victory's Editorial Team answers questions sent in by our readers!

Q: How do you suggest going about finding a consciousness raising group in your area? Would it be easier to start one from scratch?

A: *Sathi:* The truth is, you likely won't find a consciousness-raising group—you'll have to build one. That's because the kind of feminist clarity and integrity consciousness-raising demands doesn't often survive in liberal or progressive spaces, where male violence and women's suffering are abstracted, sanitized, or outright denied. That's what we found when organizing Project Priceless. The women of PP and I had never been invited to analyze our lives politically before. But we were all ready. We didn't wait for existing services to develop the programming for us or even for the resources to appear; we just started with what we had: each other, honesty, and the refusal to accept that our abuse was normal or deserved.

So yes—start one! It can begin small: two women telling the whole truth to each other. Begin with the principle that *the personal is political* and ask radical questions: What have men done to us? How does society depoliticize women's conditions? Why? What would it mean to put women first? Don't worry about fancy language or theory at this point. Let the raw, lived experience of one another be the ground you build from.

That's how Project Priceless was born: through women raising consciousness together, realizing neither we nor society were broken—our oppression was inscribed into the social material organization of society. The goal isn't just insight; it's political awakening that leads to material development of a larger movement for women's liberation. Find the women around you who are angry, hurting, questioning. Because just as much as you're looking, so are other women. Despite prevailing narratives by progressives and



conservatives alike, feminism is not "antiquated". Women are in desperate need of radical politics to address their deep and intimate plight, especially when we've become so alienated from one another in the crossfires of gender ideology. Trust that something real can grow from your refusal to leave your sisters behind.

Q: I'd like to ask this question to any members of the team living in the Third World! Do the people in your lives (or at least some) know you're a radical feminist? Are you open with your radical feminist views whether they do know it or not? I feel there is always a limit to acceptability when it comes to people (especially my female relatives and friends) agreeing with my feminist views, and it quickly descends into a line gone "too far" for them to engage with. I'm not someone who's able to articulately argue my points, especially since a lot of them go against religious beliefs (like I can't speak about being against marriage

as an institution, since that would be against forming relationships in a halal way). How do you manage balancing this while still instilling these views, as I've found a lot of women, especially those around my age (anywhere from early to late 20s really) tend to agree with the realities of the female condition? I deeply want to foster that and have these conversations in real life.

A: ***Maya:*** None of the members of the TWV editorial team currently live in the Third World, but many of us still have plenty of family there.

Personally, I was born in India and moved to America when I was a kid, but I still have to interact with my family in India a lot. I personally grew up in a Hindu household and not a Muslim one, but of course I still feel that pressure when it comes to marriage in my family. I've been comfortable telling my grandparents, aunts, and cousins about my communist views due to our history of having had family and friends who were part of the CCP. Unfortunately, the only people who know about my radical feminist views are my parents, but I haven't even told them about TWV.

They despair about my views on marriage and kids and think that I'm too radical when it comes to feminism, and even admonish me for "thinking too much about these things". I'm not sure what your situation is, but I'm the youngest among my immediate cousins by many years, and it makes me more hesitant when trying to change my family's opinions on these topics. If you have any younger female family members and friends, I would start with them! Since you have trouble articulating your views, maybe you could find pieces of text that you feel best encapsulate your thoughts and discuss the text and its ideas together with them! I find that with my parents they tend to agree with my logic, but balk at my conclusions at the end (due to that limit to acceptability you mentioned), so maybe you could find case studies or statistics that prove the benefits of the conclusions that radical feminists come to! I would start with subjects that your family will readily accept and slowly escalate from there.

Keep calm and rational when discussing your points, and try your best to prevent your family from derailing the specific topic you're focusing on at the moment. For example, with my parents I started by explaining my views on surrogacy and how it's exploitative, and then followed that line of logic to prostitution, and now I'm struggling with the marriage topic. This process has taken me many years because it's hard for older people to rewire their beliefs so drastically like this, so be patient (unless you're worried about being forced into something you don't want to do)!

Q: How do I maintain relationships with men? (not romantic; eg, coworkers, family members, classmates, etc.)

A: ***Sathi:*** I maintain relationships with men—coworkers and other males in the community—by asking myself questions that help me maintain clarity in their presence, because under patriarchy, the answer to "does this man care about women?" is pretty much always no. So instead, I ask: *What do I need to say and how do I need to behave right now to stay loyal to women? Am I shrinking myself to avoid his reaction? Am I performing patience to appear reasonable?Am I speaking to be understood—or to be liked? Do I leave this interaction clearer or more diluted? Would I say this the same way if I were speaking to women?Am I softening my language to make this easier for him? Am I speaking like someone who knows what she knows—or like someone asking for permission to believe it?*

When we live in a world where men dominate every social sphere and institution, we can't just withdraw. Doing the work that I do, I've had to be in rooms with male cops, city officials, professionals, academics, radicals—men of all walks of life who all think they're "anti-patriarchal" but equally recoil the moment a woman says

something unflinching. I've learned to hold my ground without wasting my time. I'm terrified a lot of the time, trust me lol. But I say what needs to be said, and I say it plainly, because I understand what's at stake if I don't. If they want to push back, they can—but I won't capitulate to justifying why women are an oppressed class of people.

At Project Priceless, we practiced this together. We role-played these hard conversations. We practiced saying "no" to each other. We named what male entitlement looks like in real time. Not so we could "fix" the men around us, but so we wouldn't disappear inside their expectations. That's the risk: not that men will overpower you with force every single time, but that even the gradual wearing down of women by the demand to keep things polite, flexible, soft, is just as effective to sustain and reproduce male power.

So I ask: *Can I look myself in the mirror after this interaction? Did I spare myself of regret not having said what I should have? Did I show up as a woman who knows the world is built on our subjugation—and refuses to pretend otherwise for the sake of cordiality or so-called political correctness?* If the answer's yes, then I've maintained myself. Everything else is strategy. So I don't maintain relationships with men so much as I maintain myself in society. If a relationship can exist without pulling me out of line, I'll tolerate it. But if I leave an interaction having made myself smaller to survive it, that's a loss. And I don't take those losses lightly—and neither should you.

Q: Which books would you recommend to someone who recently became interested in radical feminist theory?

A: *Isa:* *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* by Alice Walker, though a womanist rather than radical feminist piece of literature, is a collection of personal essays examining how Black women and mothers are both suppressed and oppressed through sexism and racism (misogynoir).

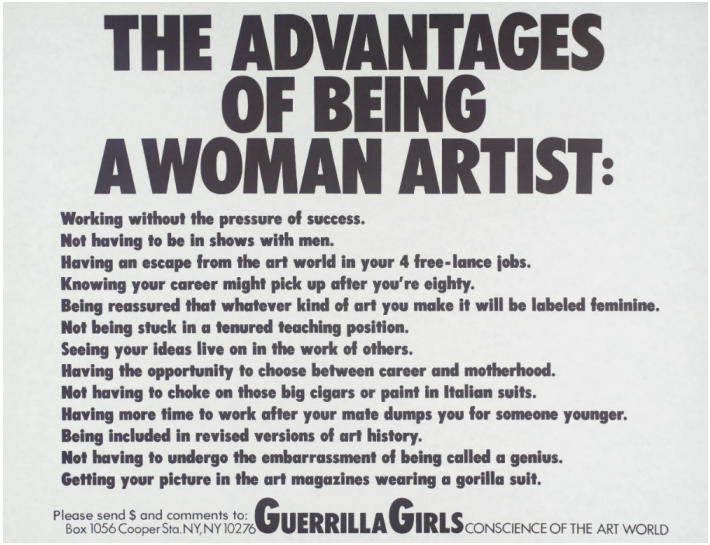
Invisible Women by Caroline Criado Perez: Although this is not a labeled radical feminist book, it provides an empirical study of the male data biases prevalent in contemporary society.

Any Andrea Dworkin piece of literature. My favorites are *Intercourse*, *Woman Hating*, and *Pornography* (which delves into the dichotomous relationship of sexuality and sexism). A "runner up" would be *Right-Wing Women*, discussing how conservatism radicalizes women through the exploitation of fear.

The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir theorizes on how the socialized "woman" came to be represented in the West and how these standards reduce female existence to male subordination.

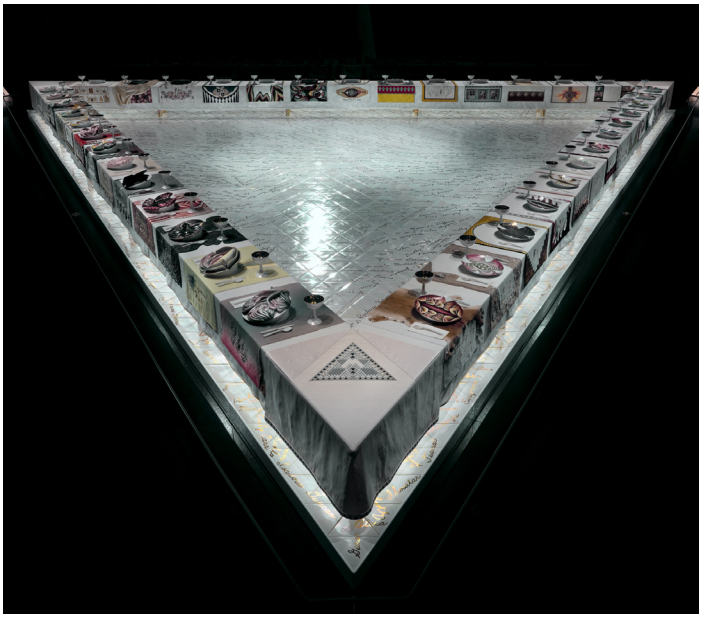
Q: What are your favourite pieces of radfem art? By which I mean, art which was made with a deliberate radical feminist statement or art that you interpret as conforming to radical feminist ideas.

A: *Winnie:* There's so much amazing art made by feminists that it's hard to pick my favorites, so for this I chose three pieces made by artists that I encourage readers to look further into and view their full bodies of work, as they focus primarily on feminist themes.



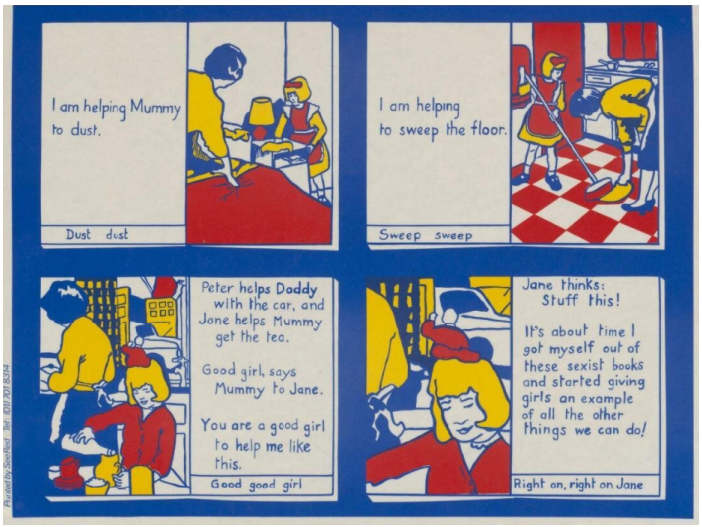
The Advantages Of Being A Woman Artist
Guerrilla Girls, 1988

The Guerrilla Girls are an anonymous group of female artists that create posters, billboards, books, and more to bring attention to sexism in the art world. They formed in New York City in 1985 after they picketed the Museum of Modern Art because its exhibition, "An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture," included only 13 women out of the 165 artists featured.



The Dinner Party
Judy Chicago, 1979

The Dinner Party is an installation by Judy Chicago that imagines a dinner with 39 historical female figures each represented by a ceramic plate, chalice, and embroidered runner inspired by their history, complemented by a floor made of 2,300 hand-cast porcelain tiles inscribed with the names of 999 additional women. I encourage everyone to look at some of the specific place settings for the women—each one is so detailed and intentionally designed. In the 1970s, Judy Chicago founded the first feminist art program in the United States at California State University.



Right On Jane
See Red Women's Workshop, 1977

See Red Women's Workshop was a collective screen printing studio in London that was founded by three ex-art students in 1974. They met when the radical feminist magazine, *Red Rag*, put out an ad for a group that would combat negative images of women in media. The workshop closed in 1990, but in 2016, members wrote a book that was published by Four Corners: *See Red Women's Workshop: Feminist Posters 1974-1990*. It features gorgeous full-color prints of many of their posters!

Javeria and the Bulbul Brigade

By Drosera

Like any girl born to see 'wife' as the ultimate form of a woman, Javeria had been fond of fairy tales in her younger years. *A valiant prince, a delicate princess made to be saved, a glamorous castle and an evil witch*. These features made for great stories. Even when maturity would scrub away the magic, the stubborn glitter of romance lingered. But right then, sitting cross-legged on a creaking bed, her muscles and bones too weary for a thirty-year-old, Javeria had learned that romance was simply the sedative slowly spoonfed to girls before they were sent for slaughter. It irked her now that she was sober. But wasn't it crueler to withhold the sedative? And so, she read the story to her daughter, tasting the words as they left her tongue and almost flinching at their deceptive sweetness. She felt near sickness at the allure her little girl, Manahil, would feel—the desire for her prince, for a happy ending. But then she heard the soft breathing, the rhythmic heaving of her daughter's chest against her leg and relief washed over her.

Javeria gently closed the book, as if she were folding the wings of a butterfly and slowly peeled Manahil's tiny arms off her leg. Instead, she slid between them the wool doll she had stitched a few days ago. It had been a lengthy project, with elaborate requests from Manahil on her hair color, length and eyes. The end product looked up at Javeria now, the pink yarn of its hair spilling over her daughters' arms and the unseeing, red button eyes fixed on her. Slightly unsettled, she spared a glance towards her son, Rehan, who had fallen asleep about an hour ago. He was seven now, no more in need of stories or her arms to gently ease him into the dark, empty nothingness of sleep. A small wave of sorrow cramped Javeria's heart at the thought. It pained her to think a day would come when her children would no longer need her. She didn't know much about who she was outside of being needed, but she felt the contours of that woman. She flirted with her shadow at this time of the night, this pocket of time where no one needed her.

Quietly, Javeria got to her feet and stepped out of the room into the courtyard. She settled on the firm *charpai*, pulling out her box of fabrics from underneath it. Unfurling her latest project, she started to examine it. The calm green of the kurta and the pink embroidery she had started to stitch on it was rosewater to her eyes. She caressed it, tracing the pattern around her fingers and with a smile, she set a needle to it again. The precision, the translation of the swirling flowers in her mind into thread and fabric left her breathless. Her mind and heart felt as if they were on fire, burning in harmony. This feeling, she thought, is what they should write fairy tales about—not the illusion of romance that slashes one's power by disrupting the synchronicity of the heart and mind.

The trance didn't last long. Her little bubble was pierced by the blaring radio in the distance, and the slurred singing of her husband, Hamza. Clenching her jaw, Javeria gazed into the direction of her children's room, making sure the door was shut. She waited for him to step out, for his drunken rage—or worse, desire—and her body turned to stone. Blood and sensation left it until nothing but fear and dread beat inside her. A dull wave of pain rocked her left arm from being twisted that evening, a warning signal. It was a pain she had been ignoring but in this still, quietness of her body, it became the only thing she could feel. The door slammed shut, muffling his raving and singing. Slowly, Javeria exhaled. But who knew when he would come out, even if he was content for now? She remembered the last time he had walked in on her at this time, and the fit of anger over something about dinner, how it had

ended with a kick in her stomach and torn fabric. He resented this hobby of hers, particularly that it brought in some money. *Peanuts*, he called it, and *an insult to his manhood,* although he didn't say that part out loud. He would loaf around all day, coming home when he wished and doing as he pleased. Money wasn't a concern. Except when she made it. He would rather she beg family for charity, scraping away her dignity. Who wanted a high-strung woman?

Javeria folded up the kurta, stashing the box back under the bed. Her fingers brushed across the newspaper which had been folded into a cylinder, probably thrown down by Rehan after a game of telescope. She picked it up, unfolding the creased page.

KARACHI, 14 March:

Last night the blue silhouettes of the Bulbul Brigade flowed into a quiet neighbourhood and put an abrupt end to the wedding of nine-year-old N. Residents say the militants arrived quietly…

Javeria skimmed it.

Public shaming of the 58-year-old groom…..

Threatened parents to continue the girl's education….

Her eyes froze on the black-and-white image of the leader. A woman with slightly wrinkled skin and crinkles around her eyes, her dark lips curling into a content grin. One hand rested on the dupatta that she was wearing like a sash and the other clutched that of her comrade, who matched her expression. The seven of them stood together with linked arms like a chain.

Like most people, Javeria didn't know how to feel about them. Their unorthodox ways and violence was certainly unbecoming. There were rumours they practiced *kaala jaadu*, black magic, on their enemies. When troublesome men started disappearing without a trace, there were whispers that the leader, Saima Khan, had ties with the don of the biggest mafia in the city, which was why they got away with minimal police interference. Yet despite these accusations, they were the go-to fighters for desperate women. *Desperate* being the keyword. What respectable woman would associate with witches and criminals? Even if they all silently shared satisfaction when a bunch of them beat the neighbourhood pervert with sticks.

The group didn't bother to clear up the rumors or to defend their honor. They merely winked at them, operating from the blurred boundary between fact and fiction. It was universally known that gossip tended to spread like wildfire until it burned a woman's reputation to ashes, but these women wore the flames around their head like halos. They refused to smolder. It was as if the laws of the universe didn't apply to them, as if they merely existed for them to bend and twist. Javeria wondered what it would be like to move through the world like that. Her heart fluttered in her chest like a trapped butterfly at the idea, but then Manahil let out a loud snore and she remembered how much she had to lose. She had been getting by, hadn't she?

Yet there was something about those women she had to acknowledge. Even if it was just to herself in this hour of darkness. Admiration stubbornly blossomed as Javeria recalled the

times she had encountered groups of them at the market.

They wore translucent white dupattas that trailed behind them like seafoam and metallic blue bangles jingled on their wrists, announcing their presence. As if matching their attire, they moved with graceful fluidity in a group, like that of water. Often one of them would wander from the rest, a stray droplet trickling away. Javeria knew that the fastest way to signal for their help was through leaving a message with the aged fruit-seller who ran a solitary stall next to the school, or through word-of-mouth. When gossip carried the story of a woman's victimization, the *Bulbul Brigade* would intervene as soon as it reached them. The second method was preferred by those who needed them but wanted to minimize their association as much as possible. Plausible deniability.

Javeria prayed for it but she knew the second path was barred to her. Hamza was smart; he always spared her face. No one would know unless she opened her mouth.

Javeria shook her head, condemning the evil thoughts and tossed her braid over her shoulder. *Sabr. Patience*. That's what her mother would say. The most important quality in a woman. What did it matter if he hurt her? The children needed a father. Her mind drifted to the games of cricket he played with them, the times he dissected cockroaches with Manahil to play "doctor", the way he carried the children, and most of all, the sparkle in their eyes when they listened to his stories and lectures. She was the nagging presence who ensured they got what they needed but he was the fun, a light in in their lives. The children might not need him, but they wanted him. For some reason, the realization made Javeria's eyes moist.

She used that to defend him the next afternoon, when her sister enquired about Hamza's job search for the umpteenth time and implied he was a poor father.

Husna pursed her maroon-painted lips. "Forgive me, sister," she raised her hands in defeat. Kajol lined her sharp eyes and the usual white dupatta flared around her head, pulled back enough to expose some of her puffed up dark hair and the silver streaking it.

Javeria had a complicated relationship with her younger sister, who made no secret of the fact that she looked down on her. After all, she was the professor of Islamic Studies at a prestigious university and Javeria couldn't even read the English storybooks she gifted her children. Husna didn't remember how her older sister had dropped out of school to care for their younger brother so she could continue her education. How she had ironed her uniform everyday, made her breakfast, packed her lunch. But those aren't the kind of things that count.

What counted was the note that Husna inconspicuously slipped into Javeria's hand after she had seen the empty fridge, before her sister could protest.

"Do you remember Murtaza?" she said offhandedly as Javeria washed the plates from last night. She nodded. Of course, she remembered. That was the wealthy, studious cousin from their father's side.

Husna silently pursed her lips as if she was tasting her words before releasing them. "His wife really liked the suit you made last Eid…he told me he was thinking about making you his partner for a boutique he's opening here."

Those words kept Javeria's feet off the ground the whole day. She felt as light as a feather, a being who floated amongst carefree things in the clouds. Hamza noticed the airy attitude when she served him dinner.

"What's got you smiling like that?" he enquired with his mouth full, suspicion glinting in his narrow eyes.

Javeria thought it would be best to keep the news to herself but then again, she didn't want him to fly into rage over baseless accusations so she confessed.

"Don't flare your wings too much," he scoffed. "Boutique? My wife? I'm going to squash this ridiculous idea out of his head when he dares to show his face. Who does he think he is?" It didn't take long for the ridicule to turn into anger and specks of spit drizzled onto Javeria's face. "Focus on your work instead of nonsense like this." He pushed his plate towards her, spitting out a ball of rice. "Too much salt!"

That was the night Javeria decided she would rather her children have less fun than empty stomachs. The next morning, she paid a visit to the old fruit-seller. Plausible deniability be damned.

ONE YEAR ON: VANISHING OF HAMZA ALI STILL BAFFLES POLICE

It has been twelve months since Hamza Ali, 34, vanished from his Lyari home on Thursday, 18 May 1976. Despite multiple leads and more than two dozen interviews, investigators say the file "remains open with no actionable evidence."

Ali is survived by his wife, Javeria Hamza, and their two young children. Reporters located Mrs. Hamza yesterday during a free sewing workshop for under-privileged women, an event she organised with the militant *Bulbul Brigade* group at *Roshan Boutique*. While the Brigade's involvement has stirred local suspicion, police confirm no direct link between Mrs. Hamza and her husband's disappearance.

Notes

While this short story does not directly mirror my grandmother's life (since I changed many identifying details), it was strongly inspired by her experience. She lived a difficult life in poverty and an abusive marriage, supporting her children through sewing and relying on favors from her sisters. Although her work was never a major source of income that threatened her husband, when a real opportunity arose for her to establish it as a small business, he crushed it outright, despite not contributing financially himself.

I can't speak on the universality of this phenomenon but it is something I have very much noticed in men of my culture. They will often choose poverty and financial turmoil over letting their wives work in a formal sense. Maintaining their egos and keeping their wives subjugated is a bigger priority for them than improving their living conditions or wanting better for their children. They are happy to leech off of women's domestic labor and informal work, as long as it doesn't give them enough power that they may be able to assert financial independence and resist patriarchal control in any way.

I often wonder about how many female dreams and potential have been crushed by male egos for this reason. I wonder who my grandmother could've been if hers hadn't been too. This story is a reimagining of that. The "Bulbul Brigade" is loosely inspired by the ***Gulabi Gang****, a successful militant feminist group in India known for fighting child marriage, avenging abused women, and empowering widows and marginalized women economically. I hope a similar group emerges in Pakistan someday.*

Empirical Study of the Chinese Socialist Strategy for Women's Emancipation

By Sathi Patel

Radical feminism has long understood the capitalist accumulation process and imperialist globalization as part and parcel of male domination. Before the radical feminist framework, which extended pre-existing class analyses to encompass the plight of womankind, women had historically committed to socialism, which seemed to offer the most promising theoretical artillery necessary to combat their dispossession. In this essay, I will evaluate the effectiveness of the socialist strategy for women's liberation. I will do so by tracing its theoretical roots in classical Marxism and examining its implementation during socialist construction in China—one of the most committed class struggles to incorporate the "woman question" into its political project. Ultimately, I argue that the failure of socialist China to fully liberate women was not merely a result of unfinished revolution against semi-feudal capitalism or even cultural 'lag' within a fully realized revolution, but of a deeper theoretical misapprehension within socialist thought: the abstraction of patriarchy as women's superstructural exclusion from social production, instead of a historically produced and materially enforced system of female exploitation for the class interests of men.

"Did this strategy succeed? And if not, was the failure in implementation—or in the theory itself?"

The theoretical basis for the interconnectedness of the exploitations of productive and reproductive labor begins with Marx and Engel's *The German Ideology*, in which Marx theorizes the origins of consciousness:

> **"[Prehistoric] sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act, then the division of labour which develops spontaneously or "naturally" by virtue of natural predisposition, needs, accidents, etc., etc.,".**[1]

Marx defines the original divisions of labor that formed around the sexual division of labor, woman-the-gatherer and man-the-hunter, as based on "natural predispositions"—ones that organically occurred because of our animalistic consciousness. He refers to the period in which the only divisions of labor were sexed as the epoch of humanity that predates social development because "division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material or mental labour appears."[2] According to Marx, women's sexual, reproductive, and subsistence labor are "naturally-occuring" and therefore exist outside of material arrangement in social history.

[1] Marx, K., 1998, The German Ideology, pg 50
[2] Ibid., pg 50

Marx defines labor in *Capital Vol. 1* as "a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants."[3] The labor of men, the manipulation of nature, is conducted through his arms, legs, hands—but the "naturality" of the work of the womb, vagina, and breasts themselves exclude them as instruments of labor because *nature manipulating nature is not labor as such.* For one, women weren't just at the mercy of nature—they were also regulating and controlling the material reactions between herself and nature through evolutionary midwifery and other means.

Engels expands on Marx's theory of the origins of labor as the origins of history in an attempt to answer the "woman question" in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State.* He claims that the monogamous patriarchal family "was the first form of family to be based on not natural but on economic conditions [...] The Greeks themselves put the matter quite frankly: the sole exclusive aims of monogamous marriage were to make the man supreme in the family and to propagate, as the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own" and that "it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period."[4] Thus, Engels argues that because the proletarian family has no wealth or private property to inherit, the commodification of women's labor loses its economic basis—dismantling the foundation of patriarchal authority and, by extension, the material conditions of the "struggle between the sexes".

The claim that the sexual division of labor was harmonious before class systems emerged to transmit wealth is undermined even by observing certain primate social structures. Gorillas devise harems, chimpanzees form patrilocal groups, and bonobos build matriarchies shaped by their own social interests and sexed hierarchies. Marxism's misapprehension of the sex contradiction is the theoretical root of the misidentification of the *privatization* of women's "naturally-occurring" labor as what Engels calls the "world historical defeat of the female sex."[5]

Following this logic, revolutionary socialist thought predicts that women's oppression will be resolved through our entry into social production from the "unproductive" and "primitive" domestic sphere. This, they claim, will equip women with the material base required for liberation. The socialist theory does not necessitate a reorganizing of sexual and reproductive labor because women's oppression exists outside of productive forces—making it a social question and not a matter of exploitation as such. Any remnants of chauvinism or misogyny will be dealt with on an ideological plane. Engels presents the liberation of women as subsequent to the victory of communism:

> **"With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not. This removes all the anxiety about the 'consequences,' which today is the most essential social—moral as well as economic—factor that prevents a girl from giving herself completely to the man she loves. Will not that suffice to bring about the gradual growth of unconstrained sexual intercourse and with it a more tolerant public opinion in regard to a maiden's honor and woman's shame?"**[6]

[3] Marx, K., 1906, Capital Volume 1, pgs 197-198
[4] Engels, F., 1995, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, pg 128
[5] Ibid., pg 120
[6] Ibid., pg 139

This theoretical thoughtline—that women's oppression is rooted in our exclusion from social production through monogamous confinement—became the cornerstone of socialist revolutionary praxis. Nowhere was this more clearly tested than in China, where women's participation in socialist construction formed a major pillar of Chinese revolutionary thought and policy. But did this strategy succeed? And if not, was the failure in *implementation*—or in the *theory* itself? To evaluate whether the socialist strategy succeeded in answering the "woman question" in China, I will examine whether socialist construction in China even adhered to the socialist strategy by (1) integrating women into social production and (2) concomitantly dismantling the patriarchal family structure.

Mao included the freedom of women from feudal social relations in the development of his revolutionary political position, exemplified by the Chinese communist theory reached during its anti-imperialist crusade against Japan. In 1947, Chen Boda, communist political theorist and the political interpreter of Mao, laid bare the communist position on female liberation two years before the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established:

> **"Previously, the endurance of oppression was the virtue of women. Now, the reverse is true: to resist oppression is the virtue of women. Previously, women's duty was to live a dependent life. Now the reverse is true: their duty is to lead an independent life. All this means those women must stand straight up. They can not only speak and walk loudly but also lift up their fists and shoulder rifles to pursue whatever task which, in their opinion, is rational. In other words, women ought to stand straight up, secure their individuality, manage an independent living, not to be the slaves of their parents-in-law and husbands, and to oppose every system and form of prostitution. [...] The main theme is to fight: to fight alongside all those oppressed men."**[7]

After the Chinese Revolution, in which the Communist Party of China (CPC) defeated the Nationalist government (KMT), Mao's establishment of the socialist PRC was followed by various infrastructural changes. Unlike the leaders of the Soviet Union, the CPC prioritized rural development instead of rapid industrialization, which may have contributed to the more substantial interpolation of women's emancipation. The PRC passed the Marriage Code of 1950 alongside the Law on Land Reform to "combine the abolition of patriarchal husband-power with the introduction of women into 'social production'."[8] During this land reform movement, approximately 43% of the country's cultivated land was redistributed—not to families, which, in

[7] Boda, C., 1949, "Xin funu de rensheng guan" (The life philosophy of the new woman), in "Funu yundong wenxian" (Collected works on the women's movement), pg 79
[8] Mies, M. 2024, Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale, pg 182

practice, would have been given to male heads of households under patriarchy, but to individuals, notably to women, who were already working on the land.

Understanding the nature of patriarchal social relations, the CPC's combination of the Marriage Code with land redistribution provided women with a tangible means of divorce. "As Delia Davin reported, many rural women immediately grasped the significance of this combined reform, and said that they would ask for a divorce when they got their land title, then their husbands could not oppress them any longer. Meijer estimates the number of divorces that occurred in the first four years after the marriage reform at 800,000."[9] However, male cadres in the countryside, understanding the loss of female labor under patriarchy, were slow to implement the marriage reform. Local cadres feared that allowing women to divorce or live independently would undermine agricultural productivity. They attempted to resolve pre-existing male violence through persuasion to keep women controlled in the patriarchal family unit in the name of "social harmony".

The "Five Goods Movement" was also launched in the 1950s by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), under the direction and ideological leadership of the CPC. The campaign promoted the ideal socialist woman through five key virtues: supporting production, promoting hygiene, educating children, upholding family unity, and practicing thrift. Framed as a tool to mobilize women for socialist development, the movement idealized a female subject who could shoulder productive labor for the nation while continuing to absorb the burdens of subsistence labor for the family. Far from dismantling the patriarchal family, the campaign reinforced it by celebrating women's domestic servitude as revolutionary virtue. The movement's emphasis on self-sacrificing, disciplined femininity left the sexual division of labor untouched, tightening the grip that marriage, motherhood, and domesticity already had on women.

By 1958, Mao attempted to accelerate industrialization through the Great Leap Forward. This political campaign sought to address the slow progress of earlier reforms by integrating every household member into social production. This required socializing domestic services to free women from subsistence work to contribute labor in production: "Nurseries, kindergartens, community dining rooms, grain mills, etc., were set up. According to an estimate in 1959, 4,980,000 nurseries were set up in rural areas and 3,600,000 public dining rooms. But much of this collectivization was done along the same sexual division of labor as before: men used to go into the more capital-intensive, collectivized, or state-owned sectors of industry and agriculture, whereas women had to build up the so-called risk-sector in collectivized services, street factories, and workshops."[10] These millions of nurseries and socialized domestic services were closed down after 1960, after the male state realized that the (still-existing) private labor of mothers and grandmothers was more cost-efficient than maintaining costly state subsidies. The efforts to relieve women of their burdened workload to integrate them into social production during the 50s was short-lived, and there was no subsequent attempt to socialize housework again. Maria Mies explains the contradiction between China's communist theory and practice as the continued class dominance of males over women:

> **"It can be expected that the shift towards modernization, rapid growth and industrialization will aggravate the dilemmas which Chinese women already had to face, namely, the contradiction of being ideologically mobilized into social production, but in fact being pushed back into the sphere of the privatized household**

[9] Ibid., Mies summarizing Davin (1976: 46) and Meijer (1971: 120), pg 182
[10] Ibid., Mies summarizing Croll (1979: 25), pg 183

> **and informal sector. This is so because the maintenance or reconstitution of a patriarchal sexual division of labor with women responsible for household and subsistence production still provides the cheapest means not only for the reproduction of labor power, but also for lowering the production costs of marketable consumer commodities. Thus, a policy of rapid modernization will, of necessity, lead to the reconstitution of the housewife model..."**[11]

Despite its ideological commitment to women's equality and ambitious concrete programs designed to achieve it, Chinese socialism failed to liberate women in three key respects: (1) the socialist strategy was repeatedly undermined by the realization of just how dependent men and their state are on the cheap and flexible labor of women, especially when socialized services became too costly; (2) women were not equally integrated into social production as the industrialization of the economy still organized divisions of labor by sex, keeping women in the informal and subsistence sectors; and (3) the patriarchal family structure remained intact through the state and the average man alike allowing male authority within the household to persist, as local cadres resisted fully enforcing reforms like the Marriage Code and through the ACWF's framing of female domesticity as revolutionary. These contradictions ensured that even as women were drawn into social production, they remained subordinated to male structures of authority and exploitation, both in the public and private spheres.

Because the confinement of women to the household wasn't correctly analyzed to be *functionary* of the political economy of patriarchy, the position of women during socialist construction remained the same as it was under feudal and bourgeois rule. The CPC failed to deal with patriarchy as a system of accumulation for the interests of men in its own right. Women's oppression was reduced to exclusion from social production and superstructural chauvinism that could be mitigated on an ideological plane. However, the rapid rollback of socialization after 1960 reveals the fragility of rhetorical reforms. As long as female labor remained unrecognized as class exploitation, the re-privatization of this labor was not only possible, but guaranteed.

Therefore, the failure of the socialist strategy in China, in the final analysis, can be attributed to the incoherence of the socialist analysis of sexed labor to begin with, which started with Marx's naturalization of the sexual division of labor in the 19th century. The socialist transformation of productive relations—from being organized for the extraction of capital, to being organized for collective ownership through shared labor—is presumed to be a precondition for the equality of the sexes. Any persisting male dominance is considered to be cultural lag or the ideological vestiges of feudal or bourgeois society. The confinement of women to exploitative labor is not considered to be part and parcel of the basic structures of production.

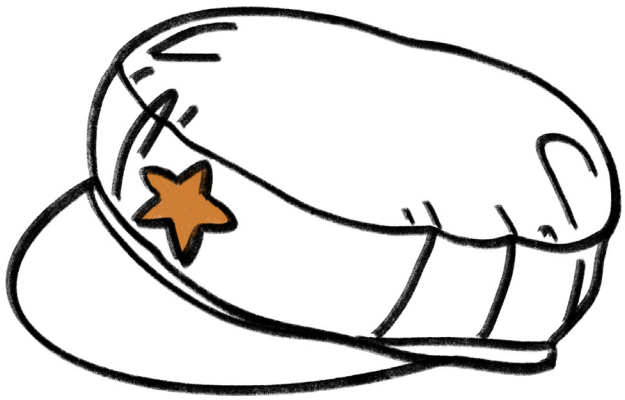
The socialist distinction between 'public' (productive, therefore male) and 'private' (subsidiary, therefore female) labor is based on Marx's ontological framing of the sexual division of labor as a natural, evolutionary process of one form of nature appropriating another. This error obscures the reality that patriarchy is a socially constructed system where men are guaranteed ownership of women as inexhaustible resources to exploit. Masking itself through rhetorical scripture, these misconceptions rely on the same liberal paradigm it claims revolutionary distinction from: liberals attribute women's oppression to the exclusion of women from the social and cultural sphere, while socialists attribute women's oppression to the

[11] Ibid., pg 184

exclusion of women from social production. Both understand women's oppression as incidental to the organization of male or capitalist society, and not the deliberate enslavement of women to toil for the individual and class interests of men in and of itself.

The supposed dialectical distinction between "productive" and "reproductive" labor is ideological, not economic in essence. Men depend fundamentally on the appropriation of women's labor and reproductive capacity as a "natural" resource to control social production in both capitalism and socialism. It is not until we truly reorganize the sexual division of labor to both alleviate the burdens of women and force men to also shoulder responsibility that "social production" can be equally accessible to the sexes. Chinese socialists viewed male domination and patriarchy as a residual superstructural ideology that persisted in people's consciousness despite changes in productive relations. However, the subjugation of women is not merely an ideological leftover; it is a material social relation and system of power that continues to be actively reproduced through labor structures, even within socialist societies. The integration of women into social production without addressing socialism's naturalization of the sexual division of labor simply extends female exploitation across both domains and/or displaces reproductive labor onto the women of another oppressed nation.

The campaign to 'include women in development' frequently serves, as the Chinese case explicitly shows, as a cover for exploiting women as the cheapest and most manageable reserve labor force in the imperial peripheries. The sexual division of labor isn't just an interpersonal affair nor is the patriarchal family organized solely for the interests of capital. The socialist project of integrating women into social production presumes women are not already exploited for value production in the household. The underlying misunderstanding is a failure to realize the extent to which men as a class of people have vested interests in maintaining unrestricted access to women, our bodies, our labor, and our sexualities, which is to say nothing of their interests in reproducing their heirs, lineages, cultures, races, classes and nations. Violence against women is a fundamental tool of patriarchal accumulation—men use force to extract what they want from women, materially and sexually, and to secure continued access to that extraction. Whether under bourgeois or proletariat rule, this violence is economic in nature, enforcing women's confinement to systems of exploitation.



Despite its shortcomings, the Chinese socialist revolution marked one of the most ambitious attempts to realize sex equality within a broader anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle. However, its failure to abolish the structural roots of women's oppression reveals the limitations of the classical socialist framework when applied to the sex-class system. Reproductive labor was never fully socialized; women were relegated to marginal sectors of the economy; and patriarchal authority within the household persisted, often with the tacit approval of the male socialist state. This failure did not stem from partial or incomplete application of the socialist strategy, but from a fundamental inability to recognize the antagonistic nature of a contradiction that was obscured and naturalized centuries ago. Fortunately, radical feminism has correctly traced the roots of the sex contradiction and understood its dialectical form to provide us with the tools needed to fully

realize female liberation within class and national struggles. With the correct tools in hand, world-historic revolutions such as the Chinese revolution would have been far better equipped to suck the lifeblood out of male domination, eliminating the conditions that reproduce women's subjugation in so-called liberation. There is too much at stake to continue letting revolutionary moments slip through the fingers of the masses of oppressed women. The interests of men in preserving their control over women and women's labor make it clear that women must autonomously mobilize against the simultaneous forces of oppression that bind us to male tyranny.

The contradictions traced above and the radical feminist critiques they call for are symptoms of a political theory that treated women's exploitation as derivative rather than central. By naturalizing sexual divisions of labor, and treating male domination as an ideological residue rather than a material political economy, socialism reproduced the very exploitative relations it sought to destroy. The Chinese case therefore demands a deeper reckoning: if women's liberation is to be achieved it cannot be an auxiliary task of class struggle, but must confront male domination as the political economy of female oppression. Without this, socialist revolution cannot claim victory in liberating oppressed nations and exploited classes while leaving half of humanity in bondage.

EG, "All Good Things 1", 2025

References

Boda, C. (1988). *Xin funu de rensheng guan (The life philosophy of the new woman) in Funu yundong wenxian (Collected works on the women's movement)*. Chinese Women's Press.

Engels, F. (1995). *Origin of the family, private property and the state*. International.

Marx, K. (1906). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1. Modern Library.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1998). *The German Ideology*. Prometheus Books.

Mies, M. (2014). *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour* (3rd ed.). Zed Books.

EG, "Origin of the World 1", 2025

Isabel Coe: The Woman Who Shaped Aboriginal Resistance

By an Anonymous Author

The 1960s-1970s marked an epoch largely defined by anti-colonial activism. Some examples of significant triumphs include Algeria finally securing its independence from French colonialism, the South African anti-apartheid movement at last embracing armed struggle, and grassroots organising like the American Indian Movement (AIM) which advocates for the restoration of tribal sovereignty and returning land to Native American communities.

It is no secret to those who've studied colonized women's history that the activist groups of the 60s-70s were objectively male-dominated, with the lack of feminist analysis and oftentimes overt male chauvinism alienating women from anti-colonial causes that directly concern us. Knowing this, I feel it is important to shine a light on the achievements made by the uncompromising women who persisted despite this, refusing to be shut out from anti-colonial activism. In this article, I will be focusing on Isabel Coe, a Wiradjuri woman—the only female founder of the Aboriginal sovereignty movement.

Isabel Coe was born in 1951 on the Erambie Mission in New South Wales (NSW). Erambie Mission was established by the government of NSW in the 1890s, with the primary goal of segregating Aboriginals from wider Australian society. Missions were managed by either a mission manager or a stand-in government official. These positions of authority were, of course, strictly to be held by whites, giving them complete control over every aspect of Aboriginal life. Mission managers decided what was to be taught in our schools, how food rations were to be divided, and who was allowed to marry who—but most notably, they were in charge of categorizing which children were "half-cast", a categorization of Aboriginals with fairer complexions as a result of mixed ancestry, forcibly removing those fairer-skin children through either assimilation (adoption by white families) or taking them as enslaved domestic labor for white families. With life at the mission unambiguously defined by the legacy of colonialism, it is no surprise what Coe's politics would eventually develop into.

Coe made the move to Sydney in the late 1960s at the age of 17. The late 60s was a period in Australian history in which mass Aboriginal migration from missions and other rural areas occurred, which was largely due to the aforementioned borderline dictatorial conduct in said areas.

Aboriginal nationalism gained momentum in the late 60s-70s. The groundwork was laid by being integrated into Australian society through securing the right to vote in 1962. Activism then strategized by increasing media coverage, such as the case of the 1965 freedom ride, in which a group of students from the University of Sydney, led by Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins, formed Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA). The freedom ride lasted 15 days, with SAFA members travelling to towns in NSW in which open segregation—most notably the barring of Aboriginals from public facilities—was still in practice. The freedom ride brought national coverage to the apartheid of rural NSW, an open secret that urban populations were for the first time forced to contend with.

Eventually came the 1967 referendum, in which the constitution was amended. There were two sections of the Australian constitution that were overtly discriminatory towards Aboriginals:

1) Section 51 of the Australian constitution stated that the Commonwealth Parliament is to make laws for "the people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws", meaning that the federal government could make laws about any racial group with the exception of Aboriginal people, leaving our affairs solely under state control.

2) Section 127 of the Australian Constitution stated that "In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted."

The referendum passed with 91% of Australians voting in favour, codifying into law that Aboriginals are to be counted in the census and updating the aforementioned sections of the constitution.

The referendum's incorporation of Aboriginals into the census and placing us under federal jurisdiction along with the wider Australian population is largely celebrated as a step forward for "Indigenous rights"—I would argue the opposite. The referendum's reforms addressed surface-level inequalities, but were ultimately a predictable way for the government to side step the more radical (notably, material) demands of Aboriginal nationalists. This performance of inclusion was a strategic avoidance of any direct confrontation to colonial structures. Operating on the basis of integration into the Australian state as the end goal leaves colonial structures intact.

"When examining Isabel Coe's impact, what stands out the most to me is her unwavering determination to advance Aboriginal nationalism."

With rural Aboriginal populations moving to urban areas, political organisation that once seemed impossible from our spread-out missions and communities was now suddenly a viable option. Because Aboriginals were now living in close proximity, an identity of shared struggle began to take form.

I find that the white Australian discussion of the rise of Aboriginal nationalism is lacking due to their tendency to downplay the influence that other national liberation movements around the world had on our communities, compromising the accuracy of their commentary. Aboriginals, now living in urban areas, were watching colonized Black people in both South Africa and the United States organize, establishing Black national liberation struggles. To speak anecdotally for a moment, the elders in my family idolised Malcom X: a Black man who openly rejected the idea of integration into white society and advocated for Black sovereignty, emphasizing that he saw the U.S. as an immoral imperial power holding his

people captive. This was all ideology they had never seen before, or at the very least never seen on such a scale! Now, it was being broadcasted right to their living rooms. I see the influence this had on Aboriginal movements, with Isabel Coe and her peers outright rejecting the very concept of "Australia", refusing to validate its existence.They were not simply advocating for better treatment within a settler-colonial state but demanding sovereignty over the very lands this country occupies.

All the above led to the formation of many Aboriginal organizations—with Redfern becoming the hub for the Aboriginal national liberation struggle in NSW. Coe's legacy begins here.

In the late 60s-70s, Coe was a part of a core group of aboriginal nationalists, starting with the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS). The ALS was created in response to the widespread police brutality and open discrimination towards Aboriginal people in inner-city Sydney, providing legal support for those challenging police brutality in a way that hadn't been seen before in Australia's history. In 1972, the Tent Embassy was founded, a protest site demanding land rights and full sovereignty for Aboriginal people, and Coe, once again, was instrumental in its establishment.

> **"We are the first people, not just of this country *but of the world* and that recognition hasn't come [...] and when there is another genocide you people [...] will be a part of the conspiracy to commit genocide now!"** Isabel Coe, 1998

Isabel Coe was the primary litigant in the 1993 High Court case *Coe v Commonwealth*, in which she was acting on behalf of the Wiradjuri nation. The case pursued formal legal recognition by the Australian settler-colonial government for the Wiradjuri peoples' sovereignty, extending this argument to the assertion that the Wiradjuri constituted a sovereign nation independent of the British Crown, and entitled the Wiradjuri nation to a form of self-governance or autonomy within the colony. This case also raised the issue of historical injustice, bringing up the State's genocide of Aboriginal nations and further crimes against humanity. Her case ultimately failed, but her efforts remain significant, as Coe led one of the most direct challenges ever made to the legitimacy of British and Australian settler-colonial control over Aboriginal lands.

> **"Now the Aboriginal tent Embassy is all about Sovereignty, this is Aboriginal land, always was and always will be and we are there to tell the truth about Sovereignty. The time has come for us to sit down: we're mothers, we're grandmothers, aunts, we're sisters and we all have a common goal and we all have a stake in this country because we all have children and if we are to go into the next century in peace and harmony we have to address the sovereignty issue. That dirty word that no-one wants to talk about, Aboriginal Sovereignty."** Isabel Coe, 1998

Coe's activism was, above all, community-based. Although she is better known for the more public displays of sovereignty, I find that her true values and love for her people come through best in her lesser-known work.

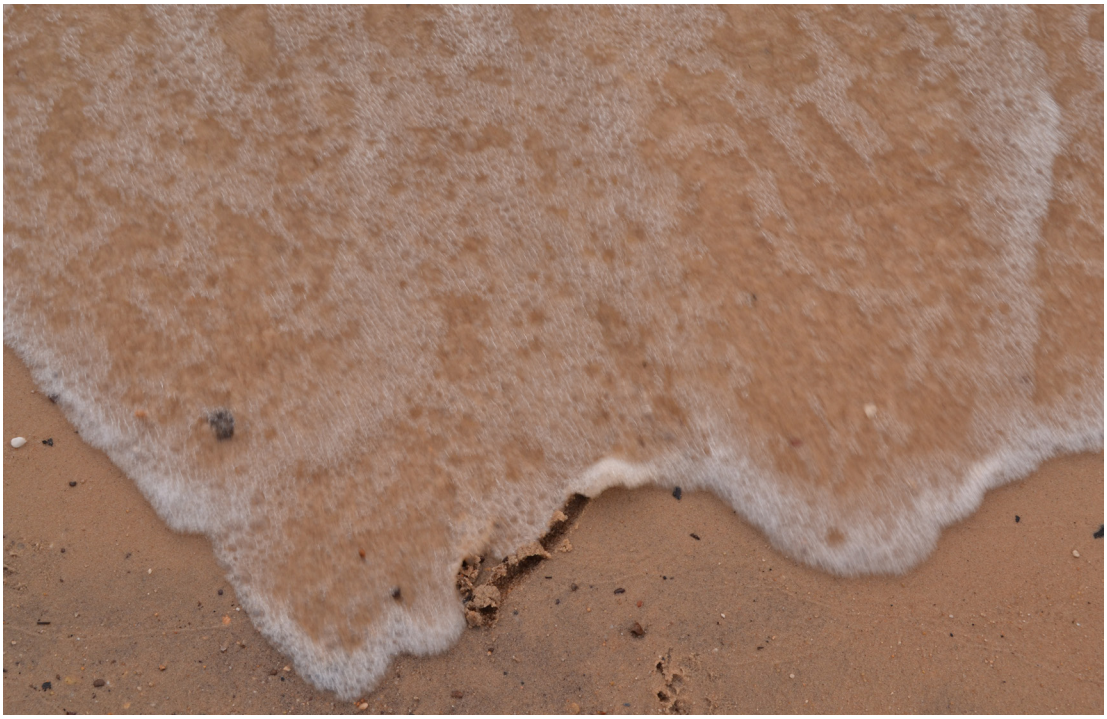
She played a significant role in the inner-city Aboriginal communities' response to the AIDS crisis, helping set up the National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS, as well as other housing, medical, and legal services for Aboriginal people in Sydney, including being a founder of the Redfern Aboriginals Children Service (ACS). In 1997, she was a member of the Indigenous Advisory Council contributing to the landmark "Bringing Them Home" report released in 1997, officially titled the *Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. The report was the first ever national enquiry to document the experiences and impacts of the decades of state-sanctioned removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

When examining Isabel Coe's impact, what stands out the most to me is her unwavering determination to advance Aboriginal nationalism. She was either directly involved in founding or had played an active role in nearly every significant Aboriginal political challenge to the Australian and local states in Sydney, making sure to never leave women and children behind in the national liberation struggle. Even today, I observe that leftist groups in Australia, both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous, tend to fall short in their feminist analysis compared to their counterparts in other Western countries. Despite this persistent gap, women like Coe refused to be silenced. She asserted her right to advocate for her people's liberation, confronting both misogyny and racism, forces that too often work in tandem to marginalize and silence colonized women. Her steadfastness and refusal to be sidelined from the struggle for Aboriginal national liberation stand as a powerful testament to her commitment to justice.

And As It Once Was... It Will Be Again

By EG

EG, “And as it once was”, 2025



EG, “...it will be again”, 2025

Are Black Women Racists for Wanting to Be Free?

By Vas

It depends on who you ask. In my opinion, as both an observer and a participant—a black American woman who grew up witnessing other black women acting as Atlas for the community—the answer is no. But to others who conceptualize us differently, as "feminine energies" and not people, because "hominids evolved from the rib of the black man", the answer is yes.

I'd like to defend my case. I feel the rage toward black women who seek political autonomy is undue. They're treated as unnecessary dividers, or worse, as federal "plants" ordered to shred black people's "one struggle" toward personhood. But it isn't "one struggle." Black women are still *women* and are treated as such. They do back-breaking, community-building labor behind the scenes, but see little to no recognition for it. I would like to lay this bare and ask: *if liberation is a feast black women cook for others, why are they never allowed their own bite?*

LABOR AS "THE HELP"

Black American women have a history of dogged perseverance. Two atmospheres of pressure bear down on them—racial oppression and male supremacy—but they always claw their way into making something of their own. Historically, one facet of this meant being the tastemakers of white society. Black women were *the* seamstresses and dressmakers, so much so that fashion evolved on their time. During slavery, they pushed forth harlequin fabrics and headwraps. Post-emancipation, they loosened lace and bathed in sequins: flapper fashion was a style black women had a heavy hand in making. In the late 19th century, they designed the dresses of the politically powerful. It was Ann Lowe's hand—unchained from child marriage and forcible housewifery—that weaved the gown Jacqueline Kennedy wore while walking down the aisle.

Another facet of this meant shouldering the burden of domestic and care work, even more so than their white female counterparts. In 1880, 35.4% of married black women and 73.3% of single black women occupied the labor force, as opposed to 7.3% of married white women and 23.8% of single white women. White male employers would often exclusively hire black women to cook, clean, nanny, and toil in crop fields for incredibly low wages. The black woman was seen as a source of cheap and even liberatory (in the eyes of white women) labor. This reflected in policy: the *Social Security Act of 1935* was designed to provide monetary assistance to single mothers so that they would no longer need to work to support their families. However, black women were excluded from this until the 1960s. Much of white America's prosperity depended on the labor offloaded onto black women, just as the successful careers of men often depend on the foundation built by their wives.

Today, black women see more of the benefits from their own work. Black women are the fastest growing demographic of entrepreneurs in the United States. From 2014 to 2019, the number of businesses owned by black women skyrocketed by 50%. During that time period, black women accounted for 42% of all women opening a new business and were 36% of the employing force. This is *despite* challenges securing funding: 61%

of black women's startups are self-funded. This is partly due to the generational pigeonholing of black women's business interests into healthcare and social work, interests that are notoriously difficult to secure external funding for. But black women also fail to receive financial help from white male investors, who are three times more likely to reject a black woman's proposal, as well as from their partners—out of every race of woman, black women have the highest rate of being the providers in their marriages, with 81.1% of black mothers being the primary or sole breadwinner in their household.

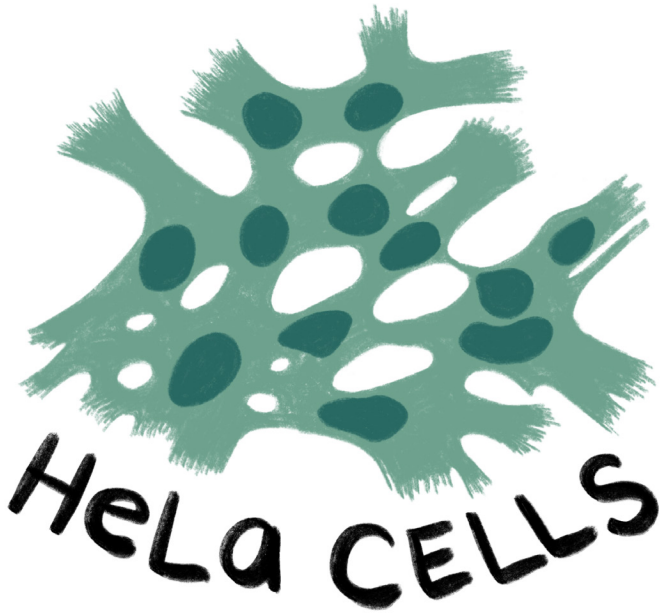
Black women, made endlessly productive by a system that thirsts for their blood, are also the faces of black education. Among black college students, 64.1% of Bachelor's degree holders are women, 71.5% of master's degree holders are women, and women earn 65.9% of doctoral, medical, and dental degrees.

LABOR AS THE DIAPHONIZED...

Black women have made consensual and non-consensual contributions to science. Non-consensual study sought the hyper-feminized body: the happy and exploitable slave woman, complete with a female reproductive system. Gynecology as we know it came from the vivisection of black slave women. J. Marion Sims, the "father of gynecology," used black women's bodies to understand and treat vesico-vaginal fistula, a condition where, often during childbirth, the bladder and vaginal wall tear and urine spills into the vaginal canal. To *create this ailment*, Sims would perform painful surgeries on black women without anesthesia.

The idea that black women "feel less pain" and thus have no need for pain relief medication still persists today, setting the precedent for modern gynecological practices: unmedicated pap smears, the staggering black maternal death rate, and the gaps in research toward conditions like early menopause and PCOS are all modern apparitions of healthcare's failure to humanize black women.

Another horrifying example of the systemic abuse of black women by science is Henrietta Lacks, whose cervical cancer cells were harvested and taken in for study without her or her family's knowledge. Her cells became the first immortal cell line, dubbed HeLa cells, and were still used



with no monetary compensation toward her family until 2023—72 years after their initial harvest. The body of Henrietta Lacks was divided and sold as a product, and a *lucrative* one at that: one milliliter of HeLa cells costs $2,000 USD. HeLa cells were instrumental in the discovery of HPV's link to cervical cancer, the polio vaccine, the effects of space radiation on human cells, sickle cell anemia treatment, and more—to this day, they are still reproducing HeLa cells to study science. There isn't a part of black women that isn't seen as a lucrative, renewable resource—her wishes be damned.

...AND AS THE INVENTORS

As for consensual contributions, there are countless. The book *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly covered the lives and pink-collar labor of the black NASA computers; it included that of Katherine Johnson, who calculated the trajectories for the Mercury and Apollo spaceflights. But there were even more throughout history: Alice Ball, at only 23, figured out a way to distill the formerly thick and ornery Chaulmoogra oil into the first functional leprosy treatment. Mamie Phipps Clark's research on the psychological effects of segregation on black children desegregated schools. Valerie Thomas' illusion transmitter revolutionized surgery, television screens, and photos taken in outer space. Marie M. Daly discovered the link between high cholesterol and heart attacks. Bessie Blount Griffin created a special feeding tube that gave independence back to amputees. Gloria Twine Chisum's research created protective goggles that darken for pilots. This list is non-exhaustive—there are thousands more.

LABOR AS THE COMPANION

Like all women, black women are treated as a resource to further propagate the race. Unfortunately, black women face an additional kind of pressure. Civil rights concerns added urgency to the adage of "*we are stronger together.*" The message is noble, but it is often pushed at black women's expense. With that, "struggle love" was born.

"Struggle love" is a propaganda piece aimed at black women to convince them to accept one-sided and even abusive relationships. "Struggle love" posits that love *should* hurt, and a good woman will do whatever it takes to "hold a man down." This means taking him back when he cheats, staying silent while enduring physical and sexual violence, and completing all domestic labor (as well as additional labor to keep "looking good.")

Black media knows this trope well. So many "romances" that feature black women—be it in movies, shows, or larger-than-life social media posts—depict successful black women suffering in relationships with black men. The women are rewarded for staying "despite all odds" while chastised for attempting to leave. It's more than mere pictures on a screen—it's both an industry and a source of social control. Black women and girls internalize the message that love should brutalize them because it's *everywhere*: in church during sermons on loyalty and biblical humility, in policy that insists they're vicious and incapable of being abused, and in the family where violence against them is made mundane.

Black women have the highest rate of victimization from domestic violence of all races—the figure, a whopping 9.2%. Black women see the highest rate of partner abandonment of all races, with 42% of single mothers being black. As for the abuse of black girls, a study found that 60% of the black women surveyed were already sexually abused by age 18. This violence, for the most part, is intracommunal.

What makes matters worse is that sometimes "pro-black" ideologies can stake a claim over black women's bodies. There is further pressure for them to stay "race loyal," and this

shows in statistics—as of 2015, 12% of black female newlyweds were married to a nonblack spouse. This hangup is not seen in black men, as in the same study, 24% of black male newlyweds had a nonblack spouse. Black women are being pushed into the arms of men who they, conveniently, can never criticize.

LABOR AS THE ADVOCATE

There is a deep-rooted historical precedent for black women politically organizing. From Harriet Tubman leading black people to freedom with nothing but her geography knowledge and a gun, to Sojourner Truth's riveting speeches, to the pen of Ida B. Wells and the Congress seat of Shirley Crisholm—black women have always been there, *active*, and leading the revolutionary charge.

Black women were there during the Reconstruction era: black people scrambled to find the national identity, economic independence, and land ownership denied to them by slavery, and black women were no exception. Years of extraction in the form of repeated rapes, forced births, familial separation (and ensuing deaths), and labor in extreme conditions took a toll on their minds and bodies. To combat this, black women sought community with one another in land ownership.

Land during this era meant everything—food, money, shelter, security, earnings, and independence that could span generations. Black women formed charities that would not only advocate for black female land ownership, but would gather funds for black communal benefit—the *Daughters of Zion Society*, for example, raised $200 with one campaign to purchase a lot for their use. In today's money, that is about $6,332.65. By the end of Reconstruction, black farmers (male and female) represented 14% of all land owned in the United States. Unfortunately, 90% of that land has been lost in the modern day. Racial violence like mob attacks, lynchings, and policy designed to make it easy for black land to be relinquished to the state forced separation between black people, especially black women, from the generational wealth they attempted to build.

"Black women are seen as mere tools for the betterment of black men and white people alike. They face a cruel dual-oppression: they're not male enough to be human and not white enough to be shielded."

Black women were there during the suffrage movement. Integral in the passing of both the Fifteenth and Nineteenth amendments, they did promotional work for universal suffrage in churches, schools, universities, and newspapers. Believing that suffrage was too big of an issue for one organization to tackle, they tried to foster cooperation between white women, black men, and themselves. However, their pleas fell on deaf ears. Black men yanked them in one direction, writing agendas that ignored specifics for the women in their community and expecting them to fight for black men's suffrage alone. White women yanked them in another direction, expecting them to fight for white women's suffrage first and outright banning them from large women's suffrage conventions. As a result, black women were denied easy and accessible voting until 1965: 95 years after black men and 45 years after white women were enfranchised.

Black women were there during the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Panther Party is one of the black community's fondest memories, and for good reason. It was an oasis in a desert of resources for black people. Starting in 1966 as an armed patrol group to guard black communities from racist police violence, it blossomed

into a many-armed Kraken of protection *and* philanthropy. The expansion of the Black Panther Party into childcare, food access, housing access, and otherwise couldn't have been possible without the black women in the movement. In fact, women built the Panther Party's image from the ground-up—the masculine, gun-toting revolutionary associated with the Panthers came from the pen of Tarika Lewis. She created some of the first artwork at the Party's conception. Some of her slightly lesser-known work also features women with similar poses and weapons. In real life, female Panthers matched Tarika's vision, rejecting the domestic labor compelled to them and taking up arms to defend black communities.

By the early 1970s, women made up two-thirds of the Party, distilled across leadership *and* membership. This prolonged the survival of the movement, as the FBI explicitly targeted male members in an attempt to destabilize it.

Despite black women's incredible contributions to the Panthers, they were still undervalued. Elaine Brown, the first woman who took a leadership role in the Panther Party, explained it in her memoir, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*: "A woman in the Black Power movement was considered, at best, irrelevant. A woman asserting herself was a pariah. If a Black woman assumed a role of leadership, she was said to be eroding Black manhood, to be hindering the progress of the Black race." While in her role, she experienced misogynistic harassment and even threats of violence from the men in the Party. In 1974, she stepped down due to the vicious assault of another female Panther in leadership not being taken seriously by male Party members and continued her groundbreaking activism elsewhere.

The Black Panther Party was also rife with sexual harassment and abuse. Men in the Party believed the women to be freely accessible sexual resources. In another harrowing case, Regina Jennings, a young female soldier in the Party, experienced routine sexual harassment from her captain. When she rejected his advances, he continued to humiliate her more. When she tried to report this abuse to the Central Committee, the all-male board sided with her captain. They said, "they believed that [Jennings'] attitude of sexual abstinence was both foolish and counter-revolutionary."

Black women are still here now, fighting in the modern day. Unfortunately, the collective silence in response to black women's call for liberation persists. For example, modern social justice movements focus on the violence experienced by black men from the police, but largely ignore black women, who experience similar rates of violence at traffic stops and disparities in arrests. Black women, in fact, experience *more* violence by police on average, namely in the form of sexual violence. These concerns aren't addressed, as black women disappear behind the issues black men have.

CONCLUSION

Black women are seen as mere tools for the betterment of black men and white people alike. They face a cruel dual-oppression: they're not male enough to be human and not white enough to be shielded. They've always had to fight for others with no time spared to fight for themselves. The black community wouldn't be where it is today without them. I urge all liberatory movements—radical feminism and black nationalism included—to spare black women a second glance. Black women shouldn't be mules. They're intelligent, determined, resourceful, and above all else, *whole*. And they have a right to be treated as such.

How South Asian Women's Feminized and Racialized Labor Spins the Wheels of Global Capitalism

By Drosera

The image of a South Asian woman in a bright *shalwar kameez* hunched over a sewing machine in an overcrowded sweatshop is immediately conjured when one thinks of the hyper-exploitative fast fashion industry. While this image is seen as symbolic of poverty and labor abuse, the imperialist-capitalist structures that led to it are often ignored. Unfortunately, it is a reflection of a trend that goes beyond a singular industry and begins to expose itself as an intrinsic feature of global capitalism. For profit-hungry predators, the cheapest labor to buy is from brown female hands because those are among the ones they can most easily invisibilize.

This global exploitation of South Asian women's labor is a direct result of intersecting imperialist, capitalist, and patriarchal structures that devalue our work while profiting from our oppression. Global supply chains—from agriculture, garments and textiles, to technology and domestic work—are dependent on such exploitation. There are two key concepts that sustain this exploitation: the feminization and racialization of labor.

"Feminized labor" can be seen as not only work that is undervalued because it aligns with patriarchal stereotypes of what women "naturally" do (such as caregiving, domestic work, or teaching) but also any kind of labor that exploits a group of women in uniquely gendered ways to discipline and mold them into more compliant, productive workers. This includes the use of gender-based violence such as control over reproduction, and psychological or physical manipulation designed to suppress resistance and maximize output.

"Racialized labor", meanwhile, refers to workforces that are stratified and exploited based on race, ethnicity, or nationality. They are constructed as inferior, docile (or any other racial stereotype that aligns with their exploitation), and viewed as disposable in the eyes of capital. In the case of South Asian workers, especially women, their labor is racialized through systemic assumptions of subservience, uncleanliness, and replaceability, which are used to overlook and justify their exploitation.

Women account for up to 60-98% of the farming workforce in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Despite this, they have "half" the decision-making power as male farmers since they are unable to own assets or control their income. The male supremacist hierarchy in traditional families, most strongly enforced in rural and semi-feudal South Asian regions, ensures that women cannot own the fruits or means of their labor. Instead, income is controlled by the male head of the family, be it husband or father, while a male landlord owns the land.

Ultimately the biggest slices from the fruits of this exploitative framework are devoured by Global North corporations, such as multinational food and commodity traders (e.g., Unilever, Nestlé, and Cargill), who are happy to source agricultural products like tea, spices, and other cash crops from South Asia at the lowest possible prices.

Meanwhile, female farmers continue to be exploited. In addition to this labor-intensive, low-reward work outside the home, they also bear the burden of unpaid domestic labor in the home. The nature of the work of female farmers is seasonal, low-paid (often unpaid when it comes to settings like "family farms" or debt bondage) and interrupted by climate change.

Many of these women are threatened into this exploitative work by severe poverty and coercion. A 2019 report on Assam tea plantations described the women workers as trapped in "near-feudal" conditions through debt and housing dependency, with wages insufficient to cover basic needs. An Indian study from 2017 concluded that "the feminization of agriculture may better be described as the feminization of agrarian distress." This distress takes particularly brutal forms across Indian regions: for example, in Maharashtra, at least 13,500 sugarcane women workers have been coerced into undergoing hysterectomies—an extreme measure forced upon them to meet harsh harvest quotas and avoid lost wages due to pregnancy. This practice reflects one of the features of feminized labor described earlier: reshaping and violating women's bodies to better serve capital. Here, female reproductive autonomy is being strategically stripped to render women more efficient and uninterrupted laborers.

Within the garment industry the conditions are just as bleak. South Asian women workers are a significant part of the workforce in this sector, along with other Asian women, who the International Labour Organization approximates make up 75% of the industry's labor power.

Investigative labor rights reports, such as one by IndustriALL Global Union in 2022, highlight the severe abuse faced by South Asian women working in garment factories, where sexual harassment, verbal degradation, and even physical assault are wielded as disciplinary actions by primarily male authority figures. Female workers are also often penalized for taking bathroom breaks, menstruating or becoming pregnant. Their wages remain stagnant while they mass-produce high-end clothes for European and North American brands such as Gap, H&M and Victoria's Secret.

In the technological sector, Global North companies such as OpenAI and Meta are hailed as the masterminds behind the boom of generative AI (artificial intelligence). As they shine in the spotlight, the invisible and low-paid work of data annotation, filtering, and labeling (vital for training artificial intelligence systems) is outsourced to African and South Asian workers under exploitative conditions, a significant portion of which are women and children..

The domestic work sector in the Gulf Arab states also reflects this pattern. A huge proportion of South Asian female migrants work as live-in maids for local Arab families. In some cases, they are even trafficked and bought from "slave markets" online. They are bound to their employer under the Kafala system, a framework that binds a migrant worker to their employer by allowing the confiscation of their passport and control over their mobility. Most of these women are unable to return to their home countries, see their families at will, and are severely underpaid—but how can one complain to local authorities when their immigration status is tied this tightly to their employer?

The barely regulated nature of domestic work, as well as its concealment in the private sphere, enables prolonged abuse to take place. Female South Asian domestic workers are often raped by male members of the family, while also

being degraded and physically assaulted by the patrilocal women and children. The personal identities and cultures of these workers are also stripped from them, as they are forced to adhere to the culture and religion of the family they are employed by. Many domestic workers in the Gulf report to organizations like Migrant Rights Org that they are even denied the right to use their own name, as some families opt to call domestic workers by an "alternative name" that is more "comfortable" for the family, erasing the workers' identity.

The way that domestic workers are treated, as well as the general view of their work, is both racialized and feminized. Domestic work is generally seen as low-value and a "woman's job". The local Arab families, including female members, see domestic work as "dirty" work that is beneath upper-class Arab women and better suited to a group of women they view as inferior and subhuman. This mirrors the attitude that upper-class and upper-caste women hold in South Asia regarding domestic labor, as they outsource it to lower-caste women. In this context, however, the superiority complex is tied to race instead of caste. It is a belief that hinges on stereotypes of South Asians being inferior, unhygienic, and merely cheap, disposable labor.

To varying extents, this process of racialization—by which South Asian identity is constructed as inherently inferior and suited only for servile labor—is applied to all South Asian workers in the Gulf states. In more formal employment sectors such as retail, construction, IT, and education, the salaries of workers, above all other factors, are determined on a nationality scale. Of course, South Asians, along with East Asian and African workers, rank at the bottom of this scale. Trailing behind domestic work, the retail and education sectors are the second-largest beneficiaries of the racialization and feminization of South Asian women's labor in the Gulf.

The feminization and resultant degradation of labor is consistent in all these examples. Women are mostly exploited to carry out the kind of work that is viewed as low-value, menial, and repetitive, or the kind derogatorily categorized as "women's work" (such as domestic work or teaching).

However, the racialization of South Asian women's labor follows a different mechanism by the two architects discussed: the West and the Arab Gulf states. In the Gulf, this exploitation is structured through a sub-imperialist framework where the Gulf states exert control over migrant labor flows and enforce racialized hierarchies through systems like Kafala. These states dominate the South Asian labor-exporting countries while remaining structurally dependent on Western capital, military protection, and markets. In contrast, Western powers have the highest level of self-autonomy and rely on a different kind of mechanism: neocolonialism.

In most of the South Asian examples discussed so far—whether in agriculture, garment factories, or tech—local capitalists and feudal lords pocket huge gains from exploited female labor, but Western corporations devour the lion's share of the profits. It is therefore unsurprising that even after economically crippling the subcontinent through colonialism, the West has

continued to design policies and geopolitical manipulation which ensnare these countries in perpetual cycles of poverty and dependence. Imposing poverty in South Asia, much like in the rest of the Global South, cultivates the fertile ground from which Western capitalists reap an unending crop of cheap, exploitable labor. This is carried out through neocolonial practices, which are deliberate imperialist strategies disguised as "free trade", "development" and "investment"—how altruistic!

Beginning in the 1980s, the IMF and World Bank conditioned loans to Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka on austerity measures (strict economic policies that force countries to pay back loans by cutting social spending and infrastructure investment). These austerity measures included currency devaluations (indirectly solidifying the power of the U.S. dollar and Western currencies), subsidy cuts, privatization of state enterprises, and the deregulation of labor markets, paving the path for Western capitalists to access exploited labor and resources at the cheapest costs. For example, in Pakistan's 2019 IMF program, fuel and food subsidies were slashed which pushed rural households, especially female farmers, deeper into debt bondage and further exploitation.

In a similar vein, Export Processing Zones (EPZs) were established in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the 1990s. These areas used perks, like tariff-free imports of raw materials and relaxed labor inspections, to attract Western garment and electronics manufacturers. While foreign capital flowed in, local workers (predominantly women) faced severe exploitation. The success of EPZs can be seen in the overrepresentation and exploitation of Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan women in the garment industry today, all while profits abundantly flow to Western capitalists.

"Intellectual property" is another tool used to sway this reward-labor imbalance in the favor of imperialists. Global intellectual property policies (like TRIPS—Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) act as long-lasting locks that keep key seeds, drugs, and technologies in the hands of Western firms. This forces South Asian populations to buy, or sometimes go without, resources they themselves could often produce more cheaply in the past, or have the capability to do so in the future. Limiting South Asian self-sufficiency becomes another way to control and economically neutralize us. This particularly affects rural populations, diminishing the status of female farmers who already face marginalization by society. Their knowledge and the seeds they have cultivated are used to "develop" new products, which are then sold back to them shrouded in IP (intellectual property) laws which fertilize, then enrich, the large seed industry. The transactions, of course, are handled by men.

"Women revolutionaries are on the frontlines of these movements, sowing the seeds for collective control over land and labor. Their resistance is not just for better wages but for national and feminist liberation, which can only grow from the withering of both imperialist exploitation and male domination."

In Pakistan, women's traditional role in seed management was similarly sliced by the so-called "Green Revolution," a large-scale agricultural initiative launched in the 1960s by Western institutions such as the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, with strong backing from the United States government. This "revolution" introduced a narrow range of high-yield seeds and promoted monoculture farming, which not only displaced centuries-old biodiversity but also undermined the agricultural

knowledge and labor of women. As traditional seed-saving and crop diversity practices were erased, women, who had been central to these roles, were sidelined. They lost both economic power and control over their contributions to food production. Meanwhile men were recognized as farmers and set to reap the benefits of technology transfers, training, subsidized inputs, machinery, loans, and market incentives. Today, even though Pakistani women are estimated to produce 60% of the country's food, they remain excluded from land ownership and decision-making. Religious minority women, such as Hindu and Christian women, are even more vulnerable to exploitation by power-hungry landlords.

Overall, the "Green Revolution" and its backing by western agribusinesses, as well as US-AID support, caused dependence on western inputs, inequitable benefits and debt traps. Its prioritization of industrial agriculture delivered a crushing blow to subsistence farming, trapping small farmers in cycles of poverty.

This manufactured poverty by Western neocolonialism in South Asia hits the marginalized hardest—particularly women. "Feminized poverty" is used to refer to the phenomenon of women disproportionately making up those who live on or below the poverty line. According to UN women, poverty rates for women are 15.8% in Central and South Asia, while being 14.5% for men. When adjusted for women outnumbering men in the population, the women in Central and South Asia are 8% more likely to live in poverty than men. Although it is a global issue, reports on this pattern have consistently shown that the feminization of poverty is most visible in South Asia and MENA (Middle East North Africa). This disproportionate poverty faced by South Asian women coerces them into entering high-risk or low-paid (oftentimes both) forms of employment. It is what makes them easy to exploit.

Land is not just a backdrop for this exploitation but a central site of both colonization and feminist resistance. Colonial and imperialist projects have forcibly seized, transformed and commodified land across South Asia, stripping rural women of autonomy and survival. For most, control over land is not just economic but political because it means control over life itself. Imperialist agribusiness policies and neocolonial interventions threaten to slash this lifeline, making women's access to land a matter of sovereignty as much as survival.

However, South Asian women are determined to survive and breathe freely without the crushing boot of imperial-capitalist patriarchy on their necks, as evidenced by countless examples of their resistance and fights to rise above oppression.

In Bangladesh, garment workers have led mass strikes to demand living wages and safer factories, which led to the 2013 *Rana Plaza Agreement*, setting improved safety standards.

The "Home-Based Women Workers Federation", or HBWWF, is the first all-women-run trade union for informal workers in Pakistan. Composed of members involved in garment, agricultural, and traditional embroidery sectors and more, the federation achieved a major milestone in May 2019: official recognition of home-based workers as part of the labor force in Sindh. This made Sindh the first region in South Asia to implement legal protections for home-based workers.

In India, Self Employed Women's Association, or SEWA, is a trade union based in the city of Ahmedabad that works for the rights of independently employed, low-income female workers. SEWA defines informally employed female workers without a fixed salary and social protections as "self-employed", which includes textile and agricultural workers of different castes, from rural areas to urban slums. The association's primary goal is to organize female workers for full employment and self-reliance. SEWA has been

involved in initiatives for female literacy, economic empowerment and, in June 2024, an insurance policy to help thousands of women in India deal with the effects of extreme heat.

Meanwhile, female farmers in India, particularly caste-oppressed Dalit women, have been spearheading initiatives to restore seed diversity in their communities and fight against the erosion of traditional seed knowledge caused by USAID-supported agrichemicals. These bold women have started up seed banks, grassroots organizations, and in some cases even local self governance bodies. Asian rural women as a whole have shown resilience and solidarity in this kind of organizing. For example, The Asian Rural Women's Coalition against imperialist globalization blossomed from the minds and labor of Filipino and Indian female farmers.

This land struggle in South Asia is not simply economic, but deeply political. The fight for seed-keeping, anti-GMO organizing and rural women's collectives is a fight for national liberation against imperialist agriculture. These efforts to reclaim women's autonomy over land, seeds, and food production deliver blows to the dominance of Western agribusiness and their local collaborators.

More militant organizing is done by the Maoist Naxalite movement, based in India's rural and tribal "Red Corridor". Rooted in Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology, the movement consists of around 40-50% female cadres who fight against class oppression and gender-based violence, and most frequently, they disrupt extractive industries that serve Western capital and contribute to the exploitation of female labor.

Women revolutionaries are on the frontlines of these movements, sowing the seeds for collective control over land and labor. Their resistance is not just for better wages but for national and feminist liberation, which can only grow from the withering of both imperialist exploitation and male domination.

Thus, the South Asian liberation struggle is inseparable from the struggle for sovereignty over land and labor. So long as South Asia remains under imperial capitalist domination, the women of our region, particularly the most marginalized ones, will remain the lowest caste of international labor.

Full liberation can only be achieved when the global systems that exploit South Asian women's labor are dismantled—beginning with the neocolonial domination of the Global South by Western powers, the sub-imperialist labor regimes of the Gulf Arab states and the internal South Asian structures of caste, capital, and militarized nationalism. In addition to being dispossessed of land through imperial corporations and forced into exploitative labor, South Asian women are also silenced by settler-colonial violence in Kashmir and crushed under military occupation in Balochistan (two among the many struggles of oppressed ethnic groups across the subcontinent for self-determination). These are not separate struggles. They are all part of the same machinery that treats South Asian women's bodies, labor and lands as expendable. Feminist liberation cannot be achieved without dismantling this entire web of extraction. True freedom for South Asian women means sovereignty over land, self-determination for oppressed ethnic communities, and the right for all of us (not just the privileged few) to live, work and exist with dignity. No woman is free as long as patriarchal control, imperialist domination, ethnic oppression and casteist hierarchies exist.

Thus, our vision of freedom must confront all these interlinked structures. This also means rejecting liberal Western feminist narratives that pathologize female biology by treating menstruation, fertility and embodiment as hindrances to productivity. Such logics mirror the dehumanizing frameworks that have justified invasive interventions on working-class women's bodies across South Asia, such as the coerced hysterectomies of women laboring in industries like sugarcane farming.

Transnational feminist solidarity is needed from international feminists to support the resistance of exploited South Asian women and amplify their movements. In the short term, this can mean supporting and boosting the resisting organizations on international platforms, joining consumer boycotts of fast fashion brands, pressuring AI companies for ethical data labor practices, raising awareness, and advocating for the abolition of the Gulf's Kafala system, as well as the Western neoliberal trade.

In the long term it must mean fighting for an economically socialist (eventually communist) and culturally feminist world. A world free of exploitation, power imbalances, and patriarchy. A world where the Global North doesn't use the hammer of capital to crush the Global South into submission—benefitting from the blood, sweat and tears of their most marginalized.

Resources for Further Reading:

https://pan-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/women-reclaim-our-seeds.pdf

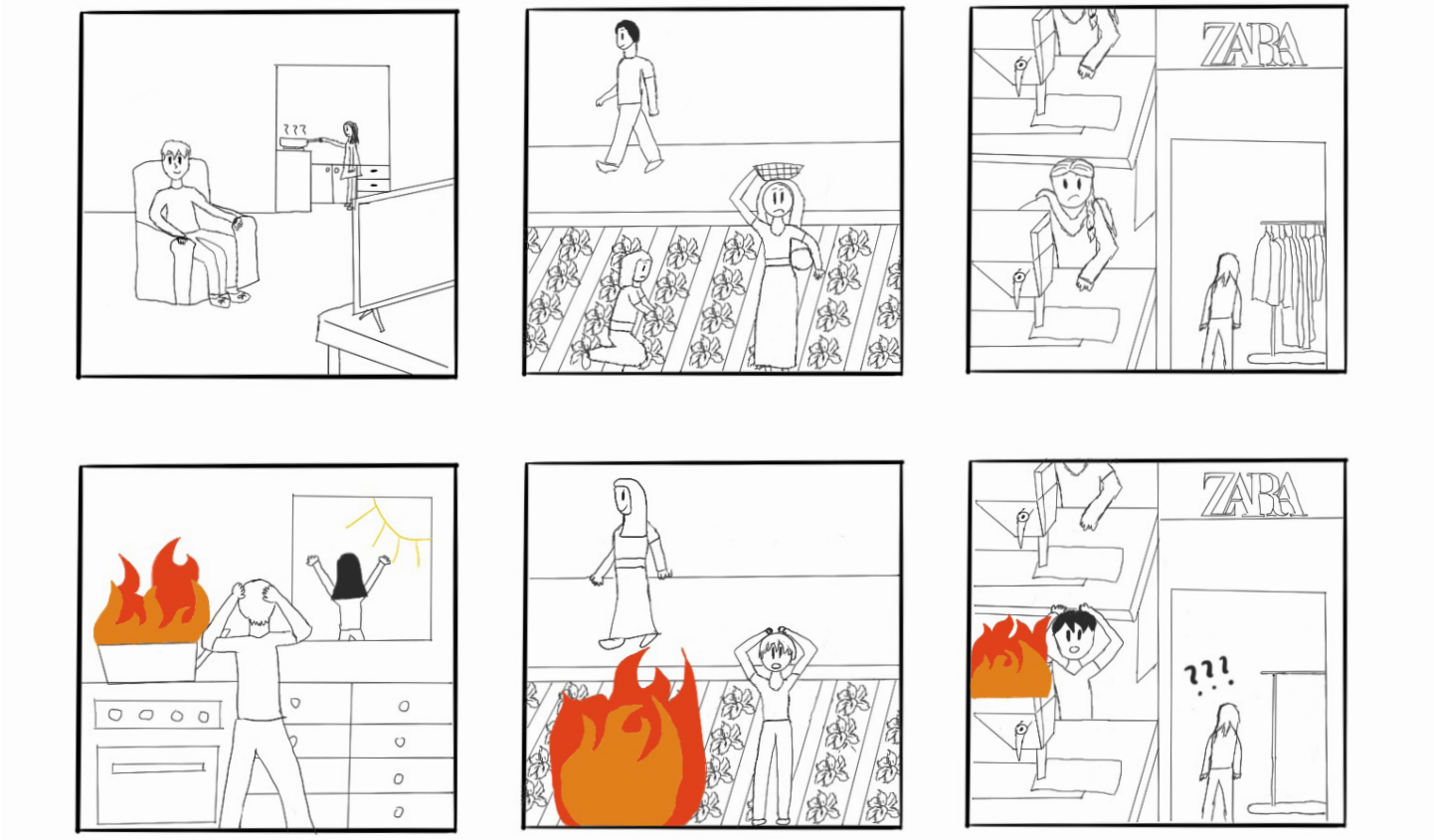
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2020.1753705#abstract

https://www.thegovernancepost.org/2020/12/seed-patenting-threat-to-food-security/

Feminist Funnies

By Maya (@mayaafem)

Women's Day Off



Struggle and Security: Women and Resistance in Occupied Kashmir

By Aasiya (@scheherezedes)

What does it mean to be secure when every source of security is a threat? This is the question that conditions the daily life of women in Kashmir. Between a state that militarises women's existence in the name of national security and a society that surveills their bodies and choice in the name of culture, Kashmiri women are caught in a battleground—both literal and symbolic. What this essay intends to do is illustrate the double bind within which Kashmiri women are caught: military conflict in the state and the patriarchal structure within their own society. **Both claim to be sources of security, whether by national security or traditional honour, but, in the final analysis, both are systems of oppression.** To explore this, we will discuss the militarisation and the inherent insecurity of the region, the rhetoric of security as control on a state and a local level, and the resistance and resilience of Kashmiri women, accompanied by a handful of case studies on particular movements and resistance to land occupation.

After partition in 1947, the area of Jammu and Kashmir, which had formerly been a princedom, emerged as an undistinguished entity. It was not politically delegated to either India or Pakistan. The partition of British India was done along the lines of religion, with areas that contain a Muslim majority being assigned to Pakistan, and the rest remaining as India. Had Kashmir been designated on the same terms, it would unquestionably have gone to Pakistan—more than three quarters of its inhabitants are Muslims, and Muslims are a majority in every single province.[1]

"Between a state that militarises women's existence in the name of national security and a society that surveills their bodies and choice in the name of culture, Kashmiri women are caught in a battleground—both literal and symbolic."

In the following years, both Indian and Pakistani forces attempted to bring Kashmir under their thumb, and the Viceroy of British India, Mountbatten, attempted to aid its smooth transition into one of the two states. While the Kashmiri government was able to establish standstill agreements to prevent economic coercion to choose a state to join, when military operations were prepared in Pakistan to force the region into their control, an Azad—*free*—Kashmir government was established.

Kashmir means different things to both India and Pakistan. Due to the Muslim majority population, Pakistan believed that the land belonged to them, so even its independence and non-affiliation was considered an Indian victory. In India, similarly, the Kashmiri freedom movement was painted as Pakistan funding Muslim tyranny over the religious minorities in the region.[2]

[1] A. Thorner, "The Kashmir Conflict." *Middle East Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1949, p. 18

[2] A. Thorner, "The Kashmir Conflict." p. 28

Further, Indian propaganda has often lauded Kashmir as a paradise—a beautiful landscape with a servile population perfect for tourists. There is inherent imperialism in all tourism: the exoticisation of culture and subsequent commodification, the usurping of resources to the detriment of the native population, the rhetoric of economic development that couches exploitation and consumption of natural beauty. This is twofold in the case of India and Kashmir. The tourism that is encouraged by the Indian state reasserts its occupying rule and supposed superiority over a Kashmiri population who retain no agency over their land or their service. Despite the fact that Kashmir technically has an independent government, it is entirely ineffectual due to Indian military presence within the area.

The militarisation of Kashmir has created massive insecurity for women in specific and highly gendered ways. As per studies conducted in Kashmir, security has been defined as the absence of violence: military, economic, or sexual.[3] By the latter two definitions, peacetime is also not necessarily secure for women, who face economic and sexual violence as a constant reality. **However, war zones heighten the constant violence women face in distinct ways.** In long-term conflicts like the one in Kashmir, civilians' lives are put on hold as every aspect of their life becomes about surviving the next encounter with violence. In Kashmir, the patriarchal society leads to there being a massive skew towards men entering direct conflict, and thus becoming casualties of war. Responsibility has, as such, fallen upon women to hold the community together[4], increasing their responsibilities with no parallel increase of their societal power.

Women's unpaid labour is the backbone of life in occupied territories. Women take unto themselves the labour of care, not just for themselves and for their families but often for a large part of their community. They manage households in the traditional way of domestic labour as well as economically, often "providing bread" for their families on their own when their men are targeted. But women are not absent from liberation movements either. Liberation is not simply freedom from violence, but the idea of a fully realised future of Kashmiri independence. Women have a nationalist consciousness and value the preservation of their culture and land—after all, they are doing unspeakable amounts of labour to protect it. It is not a new concept that **colonialism is often framed as a masculine power conquering a conceptually feminised land and people**, but it is also tangibly evident upon consideration of the maintenance work, the tireless labour and the revolutionary effort of women that is usurped by a settler-colonial power that positions itself as hypermasculine.

Women working in fields, Kashmir, 2012 (by flowcomm)

The work that women do in occupied land does not exempt them from victimisation; in fact it often exacerbates it. Women are denied agency by imperial powers, and this often leads to them having to find other ways to secure themselves. Child marriage is common in heavily militarised areas so that young girls can be 'protected' by a

[3] J.A. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*. Columbia University Press, 1992.
[4] N. Kaul and A. Zia "Knowing in Our Own Ways - Women and Kashmir." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 Dec. 2018. p. 2

husband when their fathers die on the front lines. They are protected through provision, or from rape by soldiers. This is one of many points in this essay where we will see the interlocking nature of competing patriarchies. Military occupation cracks down on all people, but young girls are not only left to deal with occupation violence as such—they are also married off to older men within their own communities, a promise of safety through a practice that infringes upon their own immediate security.

For young girls particularly, one of—if not the most—destabilising impacts of the militarisation in Kashmir is its impact on schooling. The occupation has squashed educational opportunities, and even where they persevere, the dropout rate is on the rise. Children, especially girls, are harassed by the Indian army en route to school.[5] This limits their progression, a true tragedy considering that Kashmir has strong political participation among women even in the fraught climate. A prime justification for Indian revocation of Kashmir's political sovereignty was gender equality, entangling with the stereotype of Kashmiri women as the victims of oppressive Muslim men, but little to no emphasis has been placed on renewing and retaining the educational opportunities and consequent progression of women. This necessarily hinders the economic growth and sex equality of Kashmir.[6]

Furthermore, one of the most harrowing examples of women's victimisation by the conflict is the handling of rape. Rape is used as a machination of war, to express power and to suppress women of the enemy culture, but in prolonged instability such as the Kashmiri one, it is especially effective. Women have no recourse in the way of legal justice, and they are heavily stigmatised by their own communities after the fact.

Beyond the opportunities and possibilities that Indian occupation of Kashmir hinders, the bottom line is that **the lack of national sovereignty and consequent insecurity is why women's advancement is hindered, and their suffering is pronounced.** Due to tourism being an imposed part of Kashmir's economy, women are locked into service roles; due to the focus on simply sustaining life under siege, it becomes impossible for women to even attempt to improve their quality of life.

On a more theoretical level, the rhetoric of securing women is used by both the state and local society—the former by way of so-called antiterrorism and the latter by modesty and insularity. These security measures are a double-edged sword: they are purported to protect but ultimately make women more vulnerable. As established, militarised environments limit women's mobility, participation in public life and access to justice. Women's very places in society, however, are also being constantly written and rewritten in Kashmir. Women are being constantly constructed as—according to religion, nationalism, and, of course, patriarchy—sources of honour.[7] From the view of state actors, women are battlegrounds to be conquered, symbolic of cultural and political domination. War is inherently fixed as a masculine endeavour, and the enemy is thus painted as feminine. **The feminine of the feminine, then, is the prime target of subjugation.**

The idea of honour is one that has deep significance on the subcontinent, a significance that strips women of protection and recourse when it is violated. Honour-based crimes become intracommunal issues, where security and control intersect. Men, as agents of patriarchy first and foremost, treat violation of women as a violation of security. This is true on a personal level—women who have been victimised by male domination

[5] M.U.H.A. Sikander, "Women in Conflict: Surviving and Struggling in Kashmir." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 9, 2012, p. 24
[6] S. Zeeshan and H. Aliefendioğu, "Kashmiri Women in Conflict: A Feminist Perspective." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 11, 2024, article 259, p. 11
[7] Zeeshan and Aliefendioğu, "Kashmiri Women in Conflict", p. 3

have transgressed their community-sanctioned boundaries, but they are also emblematic of cultural security being breached by outsiders. Stigmatising women, whether by refusing to marry rape victims in a society where marriage is constructed as protection and rank for a woman, refusing them justice, or ostracising them, is a furthering of the patriarchal oppression levied upon women from both sides.

Despite this, Kashmiri women are at the forefront of resistance, and their part in the struggle is vital to recognising and reclaiming the agency of women. In India, Kashmiri resistance is viewed as the byproduct of an Islamist nationalism that is inherently patriarchal, disregarding women's roles in political life.[8] These representations of Kashmiri women **disrespect the historical and contemporary resistance of women against political repression and communal violence.**

Soura, a community in Kashmir, is a key example of women's resistance. In 2019, the Indian government revoked the political sovereignty of Kashmir by removing Article 370 from its constitution. This section, ratified in 1952, gave a special designation to Jammu and Kashmir as all but an independent state—the region had its own constitution and autonomy of governance. When the article was revoked, it was not just a removal of legal independence. The Indian constitution now superseded Kashmir's independent status, thus bringing it under coerced control of the Indian state.

Following this ruling, some twenty thousand people of Soura in Srinagar, including many women, maintained a barricade against security forces entering their valley. When the police fired on the peaceful protestors, women were the ones who left safety to chase them away.[9] Kashmiri women were well aware of the politics of the revocation, and the attempted erasure of Kashmiri identity and sovereignty. However, the revocation had a wider impact on women than they were politically prepared for.

Article 35A of the constitution, which was revoked in 2019 alongside 370, allowed the Kashmiri state legislature to define their residents. This meant that the Kashmiri state could be selective with their granting of citizenship to exclude Indian citizens. Because of this provision, however, Kashmiri women were discouraged from marrying out-of-state, for fear of losing their residency and any property. This was an application of the law, not an instrumental facet, but it was widely enforced: Kashmiri women's residence certificates were at birth issued only until their marriage, and if they married non-residents, the ministry refused to renew their status thereafter.[10] This, naturally, was a discriminatory policy. Not incidentally, the so-called Indian fight against Kashmiri gender inequality was advanced as a key justification for the annulment of Article 370. However, as we have established, post-revocation, Kashmiri women faced more instability of position than ever.

The specific annulment of Article 35A was fundamentally an imperialistic move. What began as tourism, albeit with implicit encroachment, was clearly made settler-colonial at this point. It opened up Kashmiri land to being bought and inherited by Indian men. Kashmir's autonomy was purported to be the cause and defense of oppressive patriarchal structures, and the liberation from these structures in this context was thus framed as rebelling—marrying Indian men. This would give Indian men landhold in Kashmir, and, on an interpersonal level, beautiful (read: light-skinned) Kashmiri women. The appropriation of Kashmiri land was thus entangled with entitlement to the lives and bodies of Kashmiri women.

[8] S. Kazi, "Women, Gender Politics, and Resistance in Kashmir." *Socio-Legal Review*, vol. 18, 2022, p. 100
[9] Kazi, "Women, Gender Politics, and Resistance in Kashmir." p. 114
[10] Kazi, "Women, Gender Politics, and Resistance in Kashmir." p. 105

Soura is an example of women as part of liberation movements. However, women are not merely on the fringe of these battles. Militancy is generally considered outside of the realm of women's socially accepted role in revolutionary politics—stone-pelting and care work are considered the extent of women's participation. When the guns come out, women are not expected to pick up arms. But this categorisation does not make them tangential to, or in any way less politically involved in Kashmiri independence. Asiya Andrabi, the founder and leader of Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of the Nation, DeM), relayed this:

> **"I told [the militant commanders] that if women also picked up the gun and joined jihad, then the entire system would be destabilised, homes would be destroyed, as we are the ones who look after your homes when you leave. But if we women were also to join you, then what would remain of our homes, who would look after the children?"** (2012)[11]

Perhaps this is not the radically transformative movement for women one would think of as empowering, but it does highlight the ingenuity of women along strategic lines. In liberation movements, women have always and frequently been relegated to distinct roles, often domestic, and there is something to be said about the advancement of women's roles in militancy, and how this would aid liberation. In the case of Kashmir, women's presence in revolutionary movements became a systemic force. Women demanded justice from the courts, had men freed from unfair jail time, and created agencies that targeted specific problems. For example, the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, which demanded accountability for disappeared men and children, galvanised women specifically into action.[12] Asiya Andrabi and her organisation encouraged women onto the streets and into the valleys where active protests were taking place.

Kashmir's Women's Self Defence Corps, 1948

It is important to note that Andrabi and the DeM are an Islamist movement with a history of patriarchal incursions, and that other organisations did encourage women into active combat. It is not for us to judge on the right or wrong of women's participation, but it is instrumental to recognising Kashmiri women's agency that the many different faces and influences of the freedom movement, be they religious, social or political, are taken into account when considering their resistance. **The most primary stereotype to dispel is that of the passive Kashmiri woman, pushed helplessly between disparate tides.**

Kashmiri history is wider in scope than any short essay can attempt to capture, but the primary purpose of this one was to impress the reciprocal nation of war and sexual oppression from above and below. Implicit in feminist theory is that of

[11] S. Husain, "The Other Face of Azadi: The Presence of Women in the Movement." *Social Scientist*, vol. 48, no. 7/8 (566–567), 2020, p. 65

[12] S. Husain, "The Other Face of Azadi", p. 66

the convergence of militarism and masculinity, and how war is an exercise in gendered, often aggressively masculine, power in conflict-ridden areas. The sidelining of Kashmiri women, and their objectification and exploitation is sanctioned by society. Likely the most useful way to conceptualise the violence which Kashmir women face is as a spectrum between everyday acts embedded in culture, and acts of repressive state violence. Despite that, the trope of the victimised Kashmiri Muslim woman is a harmful one, and not rooted in reality. In the words of a woman from Soura:

> **"Our fight is bigger than Article 370. The abrogation of the article stripped us off our identity; however, our battle is older than this. We are fighting for Kashmir's liberation and until that is achieved, we will keep fighting, even if it takes several months or years."**[13]

[13] Kazi, "Women, Gender Politics, and Resistance in Kashmir." p. 116

References

Husain, S,. “The Other Face of Azadi: The Presence of Women in the Movement.” *Social Scientist*, vol. 48, no. 7/8 (566–567), 2020, pp. 59–74.

Kaul, N., and Zia, A.. “Knowing in Our Own Ways - Women and Kashmir.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 Dec. 2018.

Kazi, S.. “Women, Gender Politics, and Resistance in Kashmir.” *Socio-Legal Review*, vol. 18, 2022, pp. 95–117.

Lalwani, S.P., and Gayner, G.. *India’s Kashmir Conundrum: Before and After the Abrogation of Article 370*. US Institute of Peace, 2020.

Malik, S. “Professor Papiya Ghosh Memorial Prize: Marginalized Women and the State in Kashmir: 19th–20th Centuries.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 71, 2010, pp. 1271–1278.

Sikander, M. U. H. A. “Women in Conflict: Surviving and Struggling in Kashmir.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 9, 2012, pp. 21–24.

Singh, P. “An Indian Perspective II.” *Asian Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, pp. 40–53.

Thorner, A.. “The Kashmir Conflict.” *Middle East Journal,* vol. 3, no. 1, 1949, pp. 17–30.

Tickner, J.A. *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security.* Columbia University Press, 1992.

Zeeshan, S., and Aliefendioğlu, H.. “Kashmiri Women in Conflict: A Feminist Perspective.” *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 11, 2024, article 259.

Debunked: A Reckoning with Zionist Charges in Contemporary Feminist Discourse

By Winnie & Judith Lark

As radical feminists in the imperial core, we have been dismayed by the response of some western feminists to the ongoing genocide in Palestine. From radical feminist writers whose works we read and recommended, to acquaintances in online spaces, we were shocked to see the amount of women defending israel in the name of feminism. It can be difficult to have productive conversations about this both online and in person, and it's too easy to flounder in the moment and realize what we should have said later. To help, we decided to gather common questions that were asked of anti-zionist feminists and document our answers, not just to sway the opinions of other women, but also to arm anti-zionist feminists with a useful toolkit of information.

Our goal is *not* to engage with bad faith arguments in such a way that lends credibility to the zionist premises underlying them, but to expose how such questions serve imperialist narratives and rationalize systems of control that structurally harm the very women they claim to defend. While it is important to discuss misogyny *everywhere*, we recognize and denounce the rhetorical weaponization of women's rights to legitimize military action, all while the systemic violence of checkpoints, sieges, land theft, and resource deprivation robs Palestinian women of healthcare, education, mobility, and sovereignty. Explicitly supporting Palestinian decolonization is not only a matter of solidarity, it is incumbent on us as feminists to educate ourselves and others in order to combat our vulnerability to co-optation. But how can feminists in the west navigate this fine line between inadvertently providing fodder for imperialist narratives, and at the other extreme, speaking over indigenous women struggling for women's liberation within their own communities?

We can disrupt co-optation attempts by first and foremost centering Palestinian women's analysis of their own liberation grounded in their specific and political conditions, and secondly, by re-focusing on the *material conditions* of women. It is critical that we keep in mind at all times that the reason we stand against imperialist weaponization of "feminist" narratives is primarily to assist the struggle of women on the ground. Therefore, we should never arrogantly speak over or silence these women when they describe their conditions and make political demands of their governments and societies. We also see how these women's struggle is set back by the association of feminism with western external interference. We urge western feminists to learn from indigenous Palestinian women, such as—for example—the woman organizers involved in the First and Second Intifadas, the *Union of Palestinian Women's Committees*, or the recently founded *Tal'at*, a feminist collective whose slogan "No Free Homeland without Free Women" demonstrates their understanding that women's liberation goes hand-in-hand with national liberation.

While the following questions are not always asked in bad faith, they are often repeated in zionist media with the intent of co-opting and depoliticizing feminism, shifting scrutiny away from israel's femicidal policies, and equating the colonized with their colonizers. Therefore, the primary purpose of the following answers is to demonstrate how such a stance necessarily follows from radical feminist principles, and thus problematize the west's usage of "feminist" rhetoric to justify genocide and regime-change

agendas. These justifications manufacture consent for war and also set back legitimate indigenous women's efforts to secure their safety and self-determination within their societies.

These answers may not sway hardline zionists, but we hope they prove helpful for combatting and exposing zionist rhetoric when it creeps into radical feminist organizations and spaces, and also that they inspire all readers to learn more. **Education is the best protection against atrocity propaganda and co-optation.**

Q: Why do you stand with a society that doesn't guarantee the rights and freedoms of women the way Israel does? Do you really think Palestinian women wouldn't be more free under an Israeli government?

A: We find that this is the number one question asked of anti-zionist feminists. This assumption that Palestinian women would experience more freedom under an israeli regime comes from racist zionist propaganda that is pushed to those of us in the west everywhere we look, from our televisions and churches to our universities. It is our job as radical feminists in the imperial core to deeply examine these claims—radical feminism, after all, was named for the necessity of getting to the root of things.

Palestinian women are *already* living under the boot of israel, so we've seen what it means for Palestinian women to live under israeli rule: rape, displacement, starvation, and death. Under the apartheid system, Palestinian women live under military law without due process or freedom of movement, which has direct impacts on their health. In the West Bank, women die giving birth on roadsides at checkpoints due to deliberate restrictions on mobility that prevent them from reaching hospitals (Aswad 2007). In Gaza, israel deliberately targets Palestinian women with their actions: "Amid the devastation of the war in Gaza, some 1 million women and girls, including an estimated 150,000 pregnant women and new mothers, have been forced to flee their homes and are living in dangerous conditions, without access to even the most basic health services" (United Nations Population Fund 2025). This is no accident; it is foundational to the zionist project. The regime requires the targeted elimination of those who could produce future Palestinian generations—reducing Palestinian women to mere baby-makers.

IOF soldiers are also not opposed to using rape as a weapon of war, weaponizing Palestinian women's fear of sexual abuse to push their families out of their ancestral lands. This tactic has been employed throughout their occupation multiple times: from the Deir Yassin massacre in April 1948, the notorious gang-rape and murder of a teenage girl in the Nirim military outpost in 1949, to the soldiers in 2024 posting photos of themselves wearing the lingerie of Gazan women who fled their homes during a raid in the occupied West Bank. Western feminists weaponize honor culture to dismiss Palestinian liberation, yet stay silent as the IOF turns that same misogyny into a tool of colonial violence.

Again, we ask feminists to remember the origin of "radical" in the term "radical feminism": "of, relating to, or proceeding from a root." It is our job to locate the *root cause* of women's oppression—merely pointing out the symptoms of a sick system is not enough. It is dishonest to ask why Palestinian women don't have liberal freedoms while ignoring the fact that Palestinian feminists are attempting to make change in their own societies, and we're only making it harder for them when we refuse to call out the settler-colonial regime that is attacking them at every turn. We must center colonized women's analysis of their own liberation rather than imposing external frameworks. As history has shown, a politics of external ideological interference only worsens the conditions of these women. We can instead support their power to theorize and lead their own

liberation by focusing on action that will improve their material conditions.

Q: What about gay rights; wouldn't Israel be better on that front? How can you support Palestine as a lesbian woman?

A: This line of thinking is antithetical to radical feminism, as it ignores the *root* of the issues affecting gay people in Palestine. We oppose using any homophobia that our gay brothers and sisters face in Palestine as justification for more deaths, including those of gay Palestinians. There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle. Why should we celebrate limited cultural acceptance of gay people in israel (same-sex marriage is not even legal there) while there are gay Palestinians being killed by the IOF? Furthermore, despite claiming to be more "gay-friendly," the IOF blackmails closeted gay Palestinians in yet another example of how occupying forces weaponize Palestinians' sexualities to ensure they capitulate to their orders. When israel funds pride parades in Tel Aviv while bombing gay Palestinians in Gaza, we must recognize this as a colonial tool.

This is a common strategy that israel employs to convince westerners that israel is more "gay-friendly," called *pinkwashing*: "a deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians' human rights behind an image of modernity signified by israeli gay life." (Schulman 2011). After Jewish radical feminist Andrea Dworkin visited israel for the first time in 1988, she warned other lesbian feminists about falling for pinkwashing: "It's almost always a mistake to take tokenism as real movement. When I was there I found that there was only one lesbian who was prepared to come out." (The Guardian 2000)

Homosexuality was criminalized in Palestine by anti-sodomy laws imposed by Britain, which were later repealed in the West Bank in 1951. Of course, this does not mean that gay Palestinians do not still face unique oppression. This led gay Palestinians to create

"How can feminists in the west navigate this fine line between inadvertently providing fodder for imperialist narratives, and at the other extreme, speaking over indigenous women struggling for women's liberation within their own communities?"

organizations like *alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society* and *Aswat* that advocate for gays and lesbians. We stand behind our gay brothers and sisters fighting for their freedom in Palestine, which *requires* freedom from occupation.

Q: If feminism supports bodily autonomy, how do you reconcile that with supporting a culture that imposes modesty on women?

A: Here we should exercise strategic caution—feminism is particularly vulnerable to co-optation when it's reduced to rhetoric detached from material analysis. Bodily autonomy also requires material security: clean water, healthcare, access to food sources, and safety from militaristic violence. Colonial power strips autonomy at the structural level. To be clear, radical feminists do not support the imposition of modesty and honor culture on women. But to avoid participation in American and israeli instrumentalization of feminism as a veneer of moral legitimacy, our understanding of Palestinian women's needs should flow from their analysis of their own conditions. Palestinian women are *already* fighting against patriarchy, and the best thing we can do to support them in the imperial core is disrupt and destabilize systems of colonial violence so they can focus on feminist aims instead of the bombs raining over their heads.

We've seen in the past how religiosity increases when societies are exposed to war (Henrich et al. 2019). This increased religiosity can manifest as an increasingly strict culturally imposed modesty culture. Also, in times of conflict women may adopt hijab as a symbol of cultural identity. According to a study authored by Palestinian women from the West Bank and Jerusalem, "the Israeli occupation and the political oppression it provides has a direct impact on the way women justify wearing the hijab. Based on our interviews, we find that women see the hijab not only as a religious symbol but a symbolic political act of resilience and resistance to reality in the territories." The women in this study expressed the following motivations for wearing hijab, in order of highest to lowest contribution to motivation: political resistance, religion, and social pressure (Alayan and Shehadeh 2021). The first is a direct consequence of occupation. The other two have been exacerbated by occupation. It seems that if we are truly concerned about bodily autonomy and modesty culture, we should *oppose* occupation, not support it.

Israel is upheld by zionists as a place where women can be free from modesty culture, but we would like to point out that modern sexual liberalism is just another trap for women—radical feminists know this. Are israeli women enjoying any real "rights" when they star in israeli mens' porn? This is not the liberation Palestinian women are calling for. It is also not true that israeli women don't deal with their own versions of modesty culture: Dworkin mentioned how in Jerusalem, she saw Jewish Orthodox men throwing stones at women who didn't have their arms covered: "Palestinian boys who throw stones at Israeli soldiers are shot with bullets, rubber-coated or not. Stone throwing at women by Orthodox men is considered trivial, not real assault. Somehow, it's their right. Well, what isn't?" (1990). We witnessed an extreme instance of this presumption of sexual control in the summer of 2024 when israeli men protested for the "right" to rape prisoners with legal impunity. This is not a culture that values bodily autonomy.

Ash Hayes, 2022

Q: Are you okay with supporting movements where female voices are often pushed aside in favor of male political leaders and fighters?

A: Implicit in this question is a false binary: either withhold support until a sufficiently egalitarian movement appears, or uncritically endorse male dominance and betray feminist principles. The first option abandons women to genocide—unquestionably a greater material threat to women than lack of representation. The second option is premised on the same colonial logic that demanded enslaved people fight their oppressors "nicely" or lose their solidarity (see the contemporary white abolitionist response to Nat Turner's Rebellion). When people are facing violent colonialism and ethnic cleansing, we on the periphery should not deny the political imperatives of struggle by policing the structure of their resistance. We demand an end to the violence *forcing* resistance. South Africa's ANC was male-dominated too—did that justify a neutral stance toward apartheid?

In *Captive Revolution: Palestinian Women's Anti-Colonial Struggle Within the Israeli Prison System*, Arab feminist activist Nahla Abdo discusses some of the factors that contribute to the invisibility of women's role in anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle, including how the IOF

uses threats of rape and sexual abuse to push Palestinian women away from resistance fronts and into the home. This text is valuable for anyone who wishes to learn about the history of women's role in the armed resistance as recounted by Palestinian women fighters and former political prisoners. Women have always been involved in the militant formations of the resistance, and not only in secretarial roles. Most famously, Leila Khaled of the PFLP was part of a team that hijacked TWA Flight 840 on its way from Rome to Tel Aviv in 1969.

We oppose the pinkwashing that brands israeli women snipers as "empowered" while they shoot children. National self-determination is not a competing priority with political representation and visibility for women—the two are constitutively linked. Social progress cannot meaningfully occur under survival conditions, and more importantly, **the self-determination of women is a necessary component of the self-determination of a nation.**

Q: Do you apply the same feminist scrutiny to Palestinian society that you do to Israel?

A: Patriarchy must be critiqued in all societies, but it would be impossible to apply the *same* feminist scrutiny to Palestinian society as we do israeli society. Radical feminists must apply *structural analysis* everywhere. This means that we must keep in mind that israel is an occupying power receiving funding and arms from imperialist countries, and Palestine is an occupied nation under siege—this power imbalance matters when considering the condition of women in Palestine versus israel. To pretend these contexts are comparable is a liberal obfuscation of settler colonialism.

Israel co-opts feminism to market apartheid as "liberation," touting female IOF soldiers as "girlboss" icons. In Palestine, patriarchy is distorted and weaponized as a tool by the occupiers. Israeli checkpoints and economic suffocation traps women in their dependency on men, notably preventing women from being able to safely leave abusive homes. Mass displacement dismantles social infrastructures that would otherwise serve women. Community support networks are destroyed when communities are wiped out.

We must listen to and support the Palestinian feminists that are working to change patriarchal culture within their homeland while fighting against the israeli occupation that not only intensifies societal misogyny, but threatens their lives. When radical feminists allow our rage to be weaponized by zionists, we are complicit in israel's genocide.

Q: How can you justify supporting a cause that uses violence and terror instead of peaceful protest?

A: Palestinians have a long and rich history of peaceful protest. In the 80s and 90s, they employed many nonviolent tactics against israel such as mass boycotts, general strikes, and refusal to pay taxes. In the 00s, West Bank villages organized weekly unarmed protests against the israeli separation wall. Residents protested evictions with sit-ins (famously replicated by Rachel Corrie, an American activist who was crushed to death by an israeli bulldozer in 2003 while trying to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian family's home in Rafah). The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was launched in 2005 by Palestinian groups, inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The BDS movement has been popularized across the world as a response to israeli attacks on Gaza. In 2018-19, non-violent protests occurred each Friday next to the Gaza-israel border called the Great March of Return, where Palestinian refugees demanded that they must be allowed to return to the land they were displaced from. Each of these methods of peaceful protest was met with snide mockery at best and live fire at worst—during the Great March of Return alone, 214 Palestinians were killed and over 36,100 were injured (United Nations 2020).

You might instead recommend a turn to international legal channels, but this has also failed to end the genocide in Palestine: South Africa's genocide case against israel, Nicaragua's case against Germany for supplying military support to israel, and the United Nations' "Responsibility to Protect" have only resulted in more bombs, more famine, and more deaths.

Who are we, citizens of countries funding the bombs dropped on Palestinian homes, to tell Palestinians to consider being nicer to those who occupy their homelands while murdering their families? *Who benefits* when we portray all resistance as terrorism? Even international law, as woefully inadequate as it may be, legitimizes "the struggle of peoples for their independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle" (UNGA 1983). Violence in this context is not an expression of chaos or hatred, but of political clarity: a confrontation with a system that refuses negotiation except on terms that perpetuate subjugation.

Q: Why do you support a Hamas-controlled government for Palestine?

A: This question misrepresents anti-zionism and imposes a false choice. Our solidarity is with the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and resistance to occupation. Hamas gained political traction *because* of israel's decades-long targeted destruction of secular Palestinian freedom movements, instead choosing to support Hamas' Islamic vision of Palestine within the 1967 borders (roughly 21% of Palestine). We must understand that Palestinian women are not facing a choice between supporting Hamas or experiencing liberal feminist utopia—it is between resistance under siege or submission to colonization and death.

Contrary to the claims often repeated in zionist media, not even *Hamas* wants a Hamas-controlled government for Palestine. A national unity government would weaken the zionist pretext for targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, including civilian government officials and civil police. It would also allow them to focus more time and energy on armed resistance. On July 23, 2024, Hamas signed an agreement with thirteen other Palestinian political parties (including Fatah, the party in control of the Palestinian Authority and a longtime rival of Hamas) in Beijing to work towards setting up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern Gaza. On March 30, 2025, Khalil al-Hayya (one of five members of the temporary leadership committee of Hamas) stated in an address that Hamas accepted a proposal forwarded by Qatari and Egyptian mediators to establish a national unity government composed of independent national figures. That is not to say the many regional resistance groups would give up the armed struggle—as stated by al-Hayya, "As for the weapons of resistance, it is a red line and it is linked to the existence of the occupation" (Press TV 2025). On June 5, 2025, al-Hayya stated again that Hamas was ready to immediately hand over governance in Gaza to any competent, nationally agreed-upon Palestinian body. (Watan News 2025)

In fact, it is israel which purposefully perpetuates a "Hamas-controlled government" in Gaza for what it considers the greater cause of preventing the formation of a Palestinian state. In 2018, the Palestinian Authority "stopped transferring money to Gaza completely, leaving Hamas on the brink of collapse. Instead of letting the PA return to Gaza … Netanyahu saved Hamas by allowing in suitcases full of cash from Qatar." Qatar had been transferring small amounts of money to Hamas since 2012, but in 2018, "Netanyahu persuaded his cabinet to approve bigger transfers and change the mechanism of transfer to cash" (Reiff 2024). Netanyahu defended this policy in a Likud faction meeting in 2019, reportedly stating that, "'Whoever is against a Palestinian state should be for' transferring the

funds to Gaza, because maintaining a separation between the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza helps prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state" (Harkov 2019). As stated in an article published in The Times of Israel on October 8, 2023, israeli policy was to treat Hamas as an asset (Schneider 2023).

One need only listen to a few minutes of any israeli spokesperson on western media to see how heavily zionist apologia relies on the endurance of Hamas as a pretext. Claims that it would be best for israel to take over the Gaza Strip "so women don't have to live under Hamas's rule" are similarly misrepresentative of the documented stances of Hamas and the israeli government. If israel would agree to and abide by a negotiated settlement with Hamas and the other resistance groups in Gaza, Hamas would hand over governance of the Gaza Strip to an appropriate Palestinian body (just as it attempted to do in 2014) because it is obviously in Hamas's interest to do so. The issue is that the israeli government and negotiators believe it is in their interest to prevent the formation of a government *they* might be pressured to engage with diplomatically.

As radical feminists, we unequivocally oppose the patriarchal and theocratic elements within Hamas that harm Palestinian women. We also reject the racist implication that Palestinian women's liberation can only be achieved through imposed western-approved governments and denial of their national liberation. Nawal El Saadawi discussed how strengthening ties with the west undermines progressive movements in *The Hidden Face of Eve*: "Our past experience has always shown that any strengthening of the links that bind the Arab peoples to Western interests inevitably leads to a retreat in all spheres of thought and action. Social progress is arrested and the most reactionary and traditionalist circles in society begin to clamour for a return to orthodoxy and dogma" (1977). Our position is clear: end the occupation, support Palestinian self-determination, and struggle against the patriarchy everywhere.

Q: Why do you ignore the sexual violence that occurred on October 7?

A: Radical feminists do not ignore any form of sexual violence. However, we reject the weaponization of allegations of sexual violence to garner support for israel's bombardment of Gaza—a tactic that is both deeply misogynistic and genocidal. Our outrage must extend equally to all victims.

Feminists cannot pick and choose when victims of sexual violence are worth caring about. We take allegations of rape and sexual assault seriously, and scrutinize how they're used politically. Israel's weaponization of sexual violence for their gain not only dehumanizes Palestinians, it dehumanizes *all* survivors of sexual violence, turning women into assets of war rather than individuals. Furthermore, it leaves intact the root causes of violence. We reject the idea that in our refusal to let outrage be manipulated into endorsing occupation and genocide, we leave any israeli victims of sexual violence behind.

Q: Isn't anti-zionism just antisemitism?

A: Conflating solidarity with Palestine to antisemitism is a tactic to silence opposition to the ongoing occupation and genocide. We make clear distinctions and condemn all hate: Palestinian liberation and Jewish safety are not mutually exclusive. In contrast, zionism is a movement that aims to "establish a home" for Jewish people by colonizing Palestine. It necessitates the ethnic cleansing of the local Arab population in order to establish this Jewish state. Radical feminists do not support genocidal settler colonialist movements.

There is also a stereotype that all Jewish people must be zionists, and there are many Jewish anti-zionist groups pushing against this idea: *Jewish Voice for Peace* (US), *Na'amod* (UK), the *International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network,* and *Women in Black* and *Torat Tzedek* in israel are all notable anti-zionist groups led by Jewish people.

On the FAQ page of their website, *Jewish Voice for Peace* answers the question "What is anti-Zionism?":

> **As long as Zionism has existed, there were Jews standing in opposition to it. From the Jewish Labor Bund, to Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt … Not only did these Jews oppose Zionism because of its required dispossession of Palestinian people, they saw Zionism as a false promise. They rejected the idea that Jewish freedom from antisemitism must be confined to finding power in a militarized state. Seeking refuge from oppression through militarism while subjugating others closes all avenues of safety through solidarity.** (Jewish Voice for Peace)

For further reading on the history of zionism, we recommend the works of israeli Jewish historian Ilan Pappé, who argues that zionism perpetuates antisemitism. Tying Jewish identity to zionism only serves empire—it erases over a century of Jewish anti-zionism and punishes solidarity with the colonized people of Palestine.

EG, "Calendari Lunari 1", 2025

References

Abdo, Nahla. *Captive Revolution: Palestinian Women's Anti-Colonial Struggle Within the Israeli Prison System*. London: Pluto Press, 2014.

Alayan, Samira, and Lana Shehadeh. 2021. "Religious Symbolism and Politics: Hijab and Resistance in Palestine." Ethnic and Racial Studies 44 (6): 1051–67. doi:10.1080/01419870.2021.1883699.

Aswad, Henrietta. "Checkpoints Compound the Risks of Childbirth for Palestinian Women." United Nations Population Fund, May 15, 2007.

Dworkin, Andrea. "Israel: Whose Country Is It Anyway?" Ms. Magazine 1, no. 2, 1990.

"Hamas Agrees to Proposal on National Unity Government; Vows Weapons Are Resistance's 'Redline.'" PressTV, March 30, 2025.

Harkov, Lahav. "Netanyahu: Money to Hamas Part of Strategy to Keep Palestinians Divided: The Jerusalem Post." The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com, March 12, 2019.

Henrich, Joseph, Michal Bauer, Alessandra Cassar, Julie Chytilová, and Benjamin Grant Purzycki. "War Increases Religiosity." Nature News, January 28, 2019.

Jewish Voice for Peace. "FAQ." Jewish Voice for Peace.

"Occupied Palestinian Territory." United Nations Population Fund, May 12, 2025.

Reiff, Ben. "The Not-so-Secret History of Netanyahu's Support for Hamas." +972 Magazine, November 19, 2024.

Saadawi, Nawal El. *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Translated by Sherif Hetata. London: Zed Books, 2015.

Schneider, Tal. "For Years, Netanyahu Propped up Hamas. Now It's Blown up in Our Faces | The Times of Israel." The Times of Israel, October 8, 2023.

Schulman, Sarah. "Israel and 'Pinkwashing.'" The New York Times. November 22, 2011.

"Take No Prisoners." The Guardian, May 13, 2000.

"Two Years On: People Injured and Traumatized During the 'Great March of Return' Are Still Struggling." United Nations, June 4, 2020.

United Nations General Assembly. "Importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights." A/RES/38/17, 38th Sess., November 22, 1983.

Watan News. "Hamas: We Didn't Reject U.S. Proposal, We Seek Permanent Ceasefire and National Unity." Watan, June 5, 2025.

Further Reading

I Am a Daughter of the Dispossessed

And Their Children After Them, Dale Maharidge
Trash, Dorothy Allison
"An Invitation to Desertion", Bellamy Fitzpatrick

The Dichotomy of Land and Female Liberation

The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience, Wangari Muta Maathai
Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil in the Niger Delta, Okonta, Ike, and Oronto Douglas
Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development, Vandana Shiva

Land, Labor, and Liberation: A Sudanese Woman's Story

The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in the Sudan
When Peace Kills Politics, International Intervention and Unending Wars in Sudan, Sharath Srinivasan
Speak Out, Black Sisters, Awa Thiam

The Feminist Struggle for New Afrikan Liberation

Within the Plantation Household, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Harriet Jacobs
All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave, Akasha Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith
A Fighting Dream: The Political Writings of Claudia Jones
Ar'n't I A Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South, Deborah Gray White

Under Our Noses: The Genocide of Native American Women

Torn From Our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing Indigenous Women Conference, 2008
Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide, Andrea Smith

Land Bloodied and a Lady's Labours

Pornography: Men Possessing Women, Andrea Dworkin
Ecofeminism, Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva

The Colonization of Indigenous American Land

Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmerer
The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth, Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor
Silent Spring, Rachel Carson

Javeria and the Bulbul Brigade

Sampat Pal: Warrior in a Pink Sari, Anne Berthod

Empirical Study of the Chinese Socialist Strategy for Women's Emancipation

The German Ideology, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels
Capital, vol 1, Karl Marx
The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, Friedrich Engels
Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale, Maria Mies

Isabel Coe: The Woman Who Shaped Aboriginal Resistance

Talkin' Up to the White Woman, Aileen Moreton-Robinson
Another Day in the Colony, Chelsea Watego

Are Black Women Racists for Wanting to be Free?

Hidden Figures, Margot Lee Shetterly
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Rebecca Skloot
A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story, Elaine Brown

How South Asian Women's Feminized and Racialized Labor Spins the Wheels of Global Capitalism

Women Reclaim Our Seeds, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific, 2013
Exodus And Reconstruction: Working-Class Women at the Heart Of Globalization, Bromma

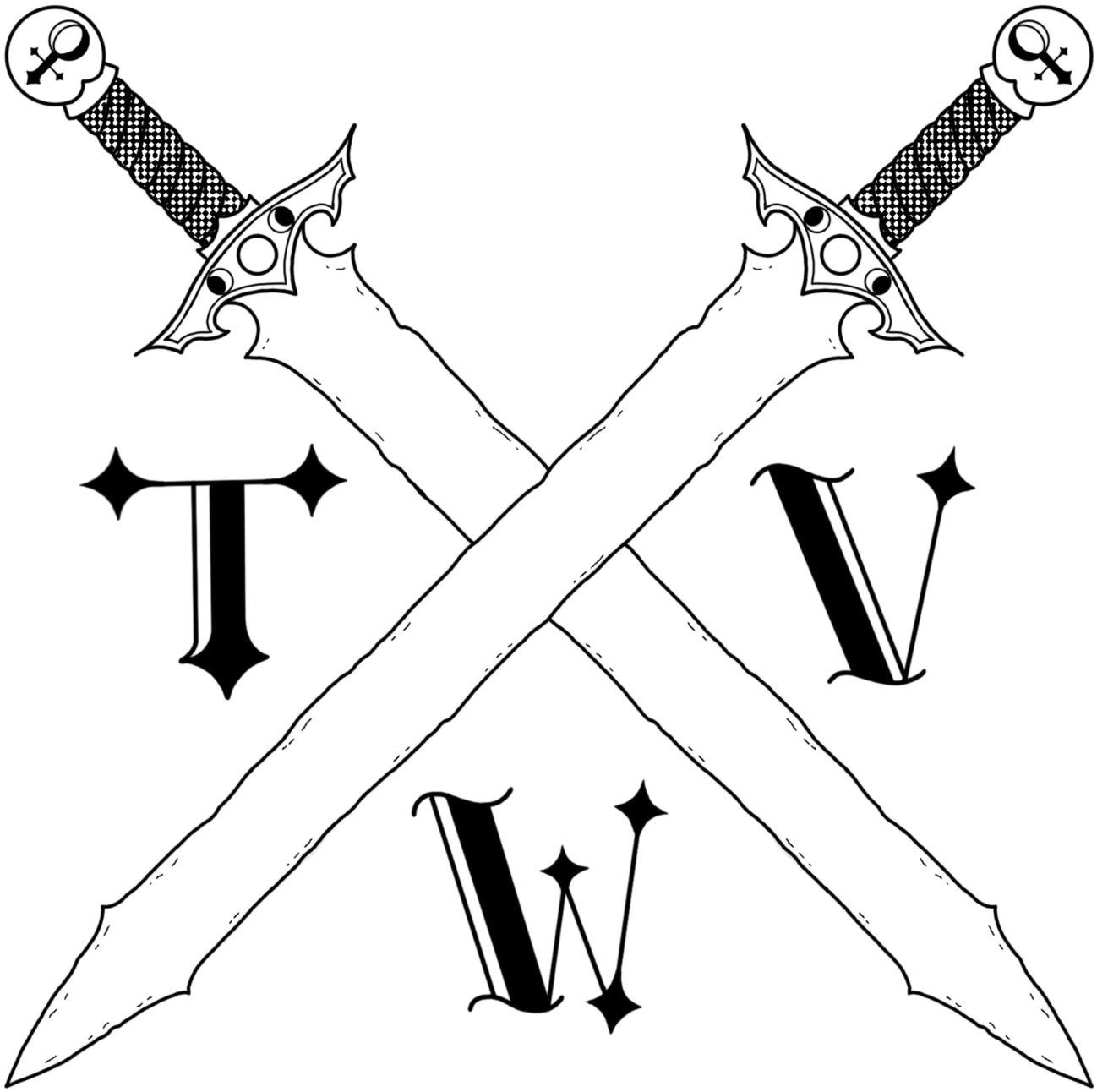
Struggle and Security: Women and Resistance in Occupied Kashmir

Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security, J. Ann Tickner
Kashmir: The Case for Freedom, Tariq Ali, Hilal Bhat, Angana P. Chatterji, Habbah Khatun, Pankaj Mishra and Arundhati Roy
Colonizing Kashmir: State-building under Indian Occupation, Hafsa Kanjwal

Debunked: A Reckoning with Zionist Charges in Contemporary Feminist Discourse

Captive Revolution: Palestinian Women's Anti-Colonial Struggle Within the Israeli Prison System, Nahla Abdo
Third World, Second Sex vol. 2, Miranda Davies
The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World, Nawal El Saadawi

Index


T
V
W