

Latin American feminism: a collective movement of hope and utopia

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My hope in life has been rescued from militancy in the feminist movement.

I don't believe in feminism as a way of life that exclusively dictates how I relate to the world and to other people. Feminism is a collective compromise.

"I am not free while another woman is a prisoner, even if her chains are different from mine," said Audre Lorde.

In the experience within the feminist movement I understand hope as collective action. In the Articulation of Brazilian Women, the social movement where I organize myself, we have a motto: Transform ourselves and the world through feminism.

In recent years, we have seen hope flourish in Latin America through the protagonism of women's struggles and popular movements.

In Chile, a feminist mobilization erupted in 2017 starting with high school and university students, and popular leaders, tensioning questions about gender violence and broadening the debate about militarization caused by neoliberalism. In 2019 the Chilean popular uprising was led by students, indigenous peoples' and women's organizations. It is impossible not to be moved by the occupation of the streets and the movement's political art actions, such as the "Éi violador eres tú" action, which has been reproduced in hundreds of places around the world.

This popular uprising in Chile has achieved the goal of forging a new constitution. This will be the first constitution to be written in a gender-equal way in the world. The constituent assembly has the participation of 17 indigenous leaders, representing 10 native peoples of Chile, and will be presided over by Mapuche intellectual Elisa Loncón, in an unprecedented election for the Latin American progressive left.

In Argentina, the hermanas have been building a solid movement of confrontation against violence with popular roots and dialogue with other sectors of struggle. In 2020 the Argentinean movement had the historic conquest of the legalization of abortion. Christian conservatism in Latin America causes abortion to be forbidden in most countries, leading many women to desperate measures that mutilate their bodies and lead many to death. Those who survive are persecuted and criminalized by the courts and judged by society. More recently, the Argentine feminist movement has won the right to retirement for care workers, that is, women who have stepped away from paid employment in the market to dedicate themselves to family care and social reproduction work. With the slogan "what you call love, I call unpaid work," the Argentine women inspire us in the fight for rights and for the recognition of women's work in the maintenance of life.

In Brazil we are living a desolating moment, with the advance of conservative policies anchored in the right wing government that has in the women organized in the feminist movement one of its main enemies. In Brazil, 10 women die daily of violence due to gender reasons. Every 11 minutes, a girl or woman is raped in Brazil. Even so, the Bolsonaro government, since 2018, has spent only 2.5% of the budget that is destined to women's policies.

Nevertheless, we are fighting. In 2019 we held two major events. The first was the Festival for the legalization of abortion, which brought together thousands of women activists in Brasilia for an event of political advocacy, artistic action, and promoting alliances. At the same time that the festival took place, an Argument of Noncompliance with a Fundamental Precept was being presented, that is a popular hearing where interest parts share concerns. The ADPF was requesting the Federal Superior Court to decriminalize abortion up to 3 months of gestation. That is exactly what you heard, a popular action of dialogue with the Judiciary asking for women not to be arrested when they decide to have an abortion.

The street and popular action promoted by the festival, allied to the legal action in the STF, allowed the debate to be amplified and took the abortion issue to the daily conversations. This way of doing politics, integrating different actions, is a feminist way of doing politics that brings concreteness to the oppressions suffered by women through the power of the State and other patriarchal institutions, such as the family.

Also in 2019, we organized the 6th Marcha das Margaridas, which brought together more than one hundred thousand women in Brasilia. The name may not do justice to the movement, because the gathering of one hundred thousand women in camps organized by different feminist movements is what translates the political power of this action. There are three days of activities, seminars, debates, workshops and artistic-political actions that culminate in a great march that occupies the streets of Brasília, demanding public policies for women and confronting the violence suffered especially by rural women. In 2019, the March was special because it was followed by the Indigenous Women's March, the first to be spearheaded by women from different native peoples of Brazil.

In 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, we continued mobilizing, we launched the feminist uprising against femicide, and we increased the #ForaBolsonaro campaign.

The extreme right, the conservatives and the reactionaries fear organized women and our political work.

I believe that one of the reasons is precisely the theme we are dealing with in this meeting: hope. Bolsonaro and his gang promote fear. The fear of the future, the fear of the other, the fear of scarcity. Fear is the opposite of hope. Fear shrinks us, hope expands us. Feminism is a movement of hope. Of shared dreams and solidary action.

Betânia Ávila, a Brazilian feminist, argues that there is a dialectical relationship between collective processes of transformative political action and alternative experiences, such as the "micro-revolts," the acquisitions of rights, and the struggle within institutions that forge new experiences, such as the ones I have shared here.

We must recover utopia as a permanent fracture, as an opening to transform and not as a representation of a model. We will discover the path as we go, with confidence in our comrades. May the hope of feminist politics inspire our design know-how, so that we can reinvent ourselves and all that we create as designers.