

Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures

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Introduction

Genealogies, Legacies, Movements

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Feminist Genealogies

We began working on this book in 1988, after being introduced at the first and only meeting of the Women of Color Institute for Radical Research and Action. This meeting was an attempt by about a dozen women of color of various nationalities to collaborate on the transformation of feminist politics and to establish an autonomous institution that would serve women committed to social justice and revolutionary praxis. This book flows out of the collective vision we crafted during that summer. And while the path has been neither linear nor easy, it has shaped our shared political and intellectual commitments; we have changed, grown, and learned how to sustain each other during the last seven years. We have challenged each other to be clear; we have become attuned to the pulse of each other's thinking, and we have developed an analytic language which now truly belongs to both of us. This has required each of us to let go of our inherited beliefs about the ownership of knowledge. And, as a consequence, we now know that our best ideas are produced through working and thinking together.

We both came to feminist studies in the U.S. academy through a series of geographical, political, and intellectual dislocations. Our journeys were marked by an educational process in which anticolonial struggle against the British (in Trinidad and Tobago and India) and the founding of the nation-state infused the fabric of everyday life. Our consciousnesses were thus shaped by the burden of persistent colonialisms and the euphoric promise of nationalism and self-determination. We both inherited the belief that education was a key strategy of decolonization, rather than merely a path toward mainstream credentials and upward mobility. In other words, for us, education was always linked to the political practice of service to community and to nation. However, nationalism at this stage had done little to transform

the practices of colonial education, nor had it necessarily imagined us (in Jacqui's case, daughter now lesbian; in Chandra's, woman not mother) as the legitimate heirs of the new nation. Then, as now, nation and citizenship were largely premised within normative parameters of masculinity and heterosexuality.

We both moved to the United States of North America over fifteen years ago. None of the racial, religious, or class/caste fractures we had previously experienced could have prepared us for the painful racial terrain we encountered here. We were not born women of color, but became women of color here. From African American and U.S. women of color, we learned the peculiar brand of U.S. North American racism and its constricted boundaries of race. Psychic residues of different colonialisms made it necessary for us to grapple with the nuances of the interconnectedness of struggles for decolonization. Racism against African American people was distinct, although connected to racism against Chicano, Native, or Asian peoples. The challenge of negotiating these politics of racial fragmentation has brought us to this moment. Through a politics of decolonization, we have learned that racial solidarity is necessary, even if that means grappling with the differences between oppositional and relational consciousness. Our own experiences of the multiple sites of racism in the U.S. have also convinced us that we must understand the local as well as the global manifestations of power.

The institutionalization of a particular definition of Women's Studies in the U.S. academy exposed another set of contradictions in our own lives as feminist activists, scholars, and teachers. By "contradictions," we mean the sense of alienation, dislocation, and marginalization that often accompanies a racialized location within white institutions. As "immigrant" women of color, we were neither the "right" color, gender, or nationality in terms of the self-definition of the U.S. academy, or by extension, of the Women's Studies establishment. In Women's Studies contexts, the color of our gender mattered. The citizenship machinery deployed by the state which positioned us as resident aliens ("deviant" non-citizen; "legal" immigrants) operates similarly within Women's Studies: it codifies an outsider status which is different from the outsider status of women of color born in the United States.¹ For instance, our racialization as Caribbean and Indian women was assimilated into a U.S. narrative of racialization, naturalized between African Americans and Euro-Americans. Our experiences could be recognized and acknowledged only to the extent that they resembled those of African American women.

However, the specificities of our national and cultural genealogies—being Black and Brown women—and our statuses as immigrants were constantly being used to position us as foreign, thus muting the legitimacy of our claims to the experiences of different racisms.² Working in solidarity with different women of color was at times insufficient to entirely subvert acts of racial

fragmentation aimed at separating women of color from each other. We remained (differently) less threatening than African American women to white women, who often preferred to deal with our "foreignness" rather than our racialization in the U.S. This, in turn, sometimes created divisive relations between us and African American feminists. On many occasions we experienced the contradictory ironies of invisibility and hypervisibility which Evelyn Hammonds describes in her essay in this collection. In fact, the experience of these contradictions is partly responsible for our particular reading of injustice and our vision of social transformation. Out of a strong intellectual and political commitment to feminism, we remain committed to the creation of feminist communities, founded on different grounds than those we have experienced in many liberal academic circles.

The feminist genealogies that lie behind this project can be charted on various levels. Besides our own individual and collective genealogies, we want to consider 1) the contours of feminist intellectual and political practice as it is institutionalized within Women's Studies programs in U.S. colleges and universities; 2) the effects of postmodernist theory on the theorization of the experience, consciousness, and social identities of women of color, especially in terms of the formulation of international or global feminisms; and 3) the significance of self-examination and reflection on the genealogies of feminist organizations. In the last case, we want to offer here a comparative, relational way of thinking about feminist praxis that is grounded in the concrete analysis and visionings of the authors/communities in this collection.

The very title of this volume has a history. Over the past seven years, the collection has been renamed twice. Originally titled *Third World Feminism: A Reader*, then *Movements, Histories, Identities: Genealogies of Third World Feminism*, it is now called *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Despite clear continuities in the intellectual and political project of the book, the changes in the title reflect subtle shifts in the discursive and material terrain and in the organizational practices of feminist communities around the world. One of the effects of globalization over the last two decades has been a new visibility of women's issues on the world stage. Witness the large numbers of international conferences on topics like violence against women, women's health, reproductive politics, and "population control." At the same time, feminism has been quantified for consumption within the global marketplace of ideas (we call this "freemarket feminism"). We take issue with this freemarket feminism in crafting our vision of democratic futures. The experiences, histories, and self-reflections of feminists of color and Third-World feminists remain at the center of the anthology, but geopolitical shifts and the particular forms of globalization over the last decade necessitate an active, deliberate focus on questions of

genealogies, legacies, and futures in comparative feminist praxis. We have, therefore, deliberately chosen to map these specific paths by which feminist communities, organizations, and movements call up and reflect upon moments in their own collective histories and struggles for autonomy. Thus, our use of words like "genealogies" or "legacies" is not meant to suggest a frozen or embodied inheritance of domination and resistance, but an interested, conscious thinking and rethinking of history and historicity, a rethinking which has women's autonomy and self-determination at its core.

After more than two decades of struggles around questions of racism and heterosexism, a particular characterization of gender—naturalized through the history and experiences of middle class, urban, Euro-American women—continues to be propagated in Women's Studies and gender studies programs in the U.S. academy. By not challenging the hegemony of whiteness (and of capitalism) within academic institutions, for instance, these Women's Studies programs often end up bolstering inherited regimes of race and Eurocentrism. Although in the 1970s, the formulation of the category of gender and its diffusion throughout a variety of disciplines was one of the most important goals of Women's Studies, in the 1990s new and radically different intellectual challenges have emerged. These challenges compel Women's Studies to face head on some of the more crucial questions of class divisions, racialization, and heterosexualization operating within the U.S. polity and within Women's Studies programs themselves. The recent diffusion of Eurocentric consumer culture in the wake of the further consolidation of multinational capital, for example, foregrounds the need to theorize the ways inequality structures values, desires, and needs for different groups and classes of women. Any understanding of women's experiences based on a narrow conception of gender would simply be incapable of fully addressing the homogenizing and hierarchizing effects of economic and cultural processes which are the result of this consumer culture.

This is why *Genealogies* aims to provide a comparative, relational, and historically based conception of feminism, one that differs markedly from the liberal-pluralist understanding of feminism, an inheritance of the predominantly liberal roots of American feminist praxis.³ Clearly, one of the things being charted here is a convergence between the way gender emerged as a primary category of analysis and the social, demographic, and class composition of those who actually theorized gender in the U.S. academy. In other words, we want to suggest a link between the positions of power held by white women in Women's Studies, the subject of their theorizing, and the kinds of analytic tools they deployed.

In addition, serious intellectual, analytic, and political engagement with the theorizations of women of color has not occurred. Instead, this work has been largely appropriated and often erased, and thus does not figure in the institutional memory or canonical formulations of Women's Studies knowledge. In her detailed analysis of the colonization of the work of

women of color within postmodernist feminist theory, Paula Moya demonstrates that the ritual allusion to Chicana women instantiates a postmodernism whose epistemological underpinnings are interrupted by the very lives and analyses of the women of color who are invoked.

The liberal-pluralist multiculturalism that is often evident in women's studies syllabi, with a week or two on "women of color" and "sexuality," testifies to this appropriation of the work of women of color. Token inclusion of our texts without reconceptualizing the whole white, middle-class, gendered knowledge base effectively absorbs and silences us. This says, in effect, that our theories are plausible and carry explanatory weight only in relation to our *specific* experiences, but that they have no use value in relation to the rest of the world. Moreover, postmodernist theory, in its haste to dissociate itself from all forms of essentialism, has generated a series of epistemological confusions regarding the interconnections between location, identity, and the construction of knowledge. Thus, for instance, localized questions of experience, identity, culture, and history, which enable us to understand specific processes of domination and subordination, are often dismissed by postmodern theories as reiterations of cultural "essence" or unified, stable identity.⁴

Postmodernist discourse attempts to move beyond essentialism by pluralizing and dissolving the stability and analytic utility of the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This strategy often forecloses any valid recuperation of these categories or the social relations through which they are constituted. If we dissolve the category of race, for instance, it becomes difficult to claim the experience of racism. Certainly, racism and the processes of racialization are far more complicated now than when W. E. B. Du Bois predicted that the "problem of the color line is the problem of the twentieth century."⁵ But the relations of domination and subordination that are named and articulated through the processes of racism and racialization still exist, and they still require analytic and political specification and engagement. Global realignments and fluidity of capital have simply led to further consolidation and exacerbation of capitalist relations of domination and exploitation—what we refer to in this collection as "processes of recolonization." Thus, while the current "color line" may suggest more complicated forms of racialized identities, the hierarchical relationships among racial groups and geographies have not disappeared. Yet, race does not figure in most "first world" considerations of postmodernism.⁶ And as Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan persuasively suggest, it is the cultural, political, economic, and social consequences of the historical situations and transformations within (post)modernity that will enable a more sophisticated understanding of transnational, postcolonial, feminist practices.⁷

Understanding the various constructions of self and identity during late capitalism—when transnationalization confounds the postcolonial and women's relationship to it, and when fluid borders permit the mobility of

“free” market capital—is a complicated enterprise that cannot be simply invoked by claiming fluid or fractured identities. What kind of racialized, gendered selves get produced at the conjuncture of the transnational and the postcolonial? Are there selves which are formed outside of the hegemonic heterosexual contract that defy dominant (Western) understandings of identity construction? Are they commensurate with the multiple self constructed under (American) postmodernism? What kinds of transformative practices are needed in order to develop nonhegemonic selves? Are these practices commensurate with feminist organizational struggles for decolonization? These are some of the urgent questions we seek to engage, and which the authors in this collection take up. These questions force us to take seriously the authority and validity of consciousness and the experiences of domination and struggle in the formation of identities that are simultaneously social and political.

The rapid institutionalization of a particular brand of postmodernist theorizing in the U.S. academy is significant for another reason. The knowledge base of a discipline has a profound effect on both pedagogic strategies and the kinds of knowledges that are developed within the classroom. This is one of the central questions that Leslie Roman examines when she argues that “relativist postmodernism” (which rejects “realist epistemologies” that would “weigh a person’s or group’s subjective claims against and in relation to adequate structural analyses of their objective social locations”) has led to a certain kind of racial relativism or white defensiveness in the classroom. By “white defensiveness,” Roman means “the relativistic assertion that whites, like ‘people of color,’ are history’s oppressed subjects of racism.” It is this sort of defensiveness that prevents teachers from taking critical antiracist pedagogical positions that would adjudicate between “the epistemic standpoints of fundamentally oppressed groups and those in more privileged positions.”⁸ We cannot overestimate the need for conscious self-reflexivity about the complicity of intellectual frameworks in politics, in the fact that something is at stake, in the very process of reauthorizing and mediating inequalities or regressive politics of different kinds.⁹

Another intellectual and political movement that draws upon earlier formulations of a global sisterhood has taken root in the academy in the 1990s through discussions about international feminism.¹⁰ Beyond the fact that these claims about an international feminism almost always originate in the West, there are some common themes which unite them. Drawing from an often unspecified liberal episteme, they tend to invoke a difference-as-pluralism model in which women in the Third World bear the disproportionate burden of difference. “International” feminism embraces an approach of the articulation of many voices to specify an inclusive feminism—calls for “global sisterhood” are often premised on a center/periphery model where women of color or Third World women constitute the periphery. Race is invariably

erased from any conception of the international (based on nation, devoid of race), all the more so because of a strict separation between the international and the domestic, or an understanding of the ways in which they are mutually constituted. To a large extent, underlying the conception of the international is a notion of universal patriarchy operating in a transhistorical way to subordinate all women. The only plausible methodological strategy here, then, is to make visible and intelligible (to the West) the organizational practices and writings of Third-World women through a discrete case-study approach. “International,” moreover, has come to be collapsed into the culture and values of capitalism.

Missing from these definitions of “international” (what we refer to as “transnational” from now on) are at least three elements: 1) a way of thinking about women in similar contexts across the world, in *different* geographical spaces, rather than as *all* women across the world; 2) an understanding of a set of unequal relationships among and between peoples, rather than a set of traits embodied in all non-U.S. citizens (particularly because U.S. citizenship continues to be premised within a white, Eurocentric, masculinist, heterosexist regime); and 3) a consideration of the term “international” in relation to an analysis of economic, political, and ideological processes which foreground the operations of race and capitalism (for instance, those which would therefore require taking critical antiracist, anti-capitalist positions that would make feminist solidarity work possible).

To talk about feminist praxis in global contexts would involve shifting the unit of analysis from local, regional, and national culture to relations and processes across cultures. Grounding analyses in particular, local feminist praxis is necessary, but we also need to understand the local in relation to larger, cross-national processes. This would require a corresponding shift in the conception of political organizing and mobilization across borders. The practices of democracy, justice, and equality, for example, would not be subsumed within the white, masculinist definition of the U.S. Ideas about justice would apply across cultural and national borders. The ideologies of “immigrants,” “refugees,” “guestworkers,” and “citizens” would need to be reconceived within new definitions of justice. Our very understanding of democracy and its practices would have to become cross-cultural. In place of relativism, this critical application of feminist praxis in global contexts would substitute responsibility, accountability, engagement, and solidarity. In this collection, therefore, we foreground a paradigm of decolonization which stresses power, history, memory, relational analysis, justice (not just representation), and ethics as the issues central to our analysis of globalization.

Practices of globalization are crucial to the conceptual mapping of genealogies of organizing. The essays in this collection provide sustained analyses of post-Cold War capitalist processes and the contradictory spaces they have opened up for different kinds of feminist mobilization. Thus, the

essayists included here challenge the means by which racialization, heterosexualization, class polarization, and the creation of poverty serve to organize capitalism. In contrast to a transhistorical international feminism, they demonstrate that oppositional communities have their own histories of struggles, modes of theorization, and forms of organizing which shape and transform feminist practices. Our framework challenges the still firmly embedded notion of the originary status of Western feminism. It does not simply position Third-World feminism as a reaction to gaps in Western feminism; it does not summon Third-World feminism in the service of (white) Western feminism's intellectual and political projects. Instead, it provides a position from which to argue for a comparative, relational feminist praxis that is transnational in its response to and engagement with global processes of colonization.

Central to our theorization of feminism is a comparative analysis of feminist organizing, criticism, and self-reflection; also crucial is deep contextual knowledge about the nature and contours of the present political economic crisis. Individual analyses are grounded in the contemporary crisis of global capitalism, suggesting that these particular contexts are the ones which throw up very specific analytic and political challenges for organizations. Here, no false dichotomy exists between theory and practice. We literally have to think ourselves out of these crises through collective praxis and particular kinds of theorizing. Crises are what provoke the opportunity for change within organizations. Similarly, certain authors in the text read their own circumstances in relation to processes of globalization in order to consider feminist commitment and organizing within their own contexts. While we would not claim that effects within the academy are necessarily the same as those within other political structures, the critical methodologies used to analyze them are similar.

Over the years, we have worked very closely with each of the authors in this collection, attempting to do so in the spirit of community that we imagined at our initial meeting. Thus, even though this book consists of individually authored essays, the sustained and collective work that has gone into producing it is itself a reflection of a way of doing politics, a mode of organizing that interrupts the more pervasive "professionalized" production of scholarship. The fact that individual authors locate themselves within particular communities of women creates the specific context for each of these analyses. In other words, all the authors connect their work to feminist communities in struggle—their work flows from this connection. Thus, we hope that this volume not only sets in motion certain intellectual projects and dialogues but also establishes the foundation for a much wider discussion among women's communities and organizations throughout the world.

Colonial Legacies: The State, Capitalism, and Processes of Colonization

We use the formulation "colonial legacies" to evoke the imagery of an inheritance and to map continuities and discontinuities between contemporary and inherited practices within state and capital formations. We wish to mark in particular the accelerated processes of recolonization typical of this contemporary moment. At the outset, then, we want to foreground an understanding of the historicity of state and capital in the organization and deployment of sexual politics. Robert Connell defines historicity as "this sense that things 'can never be the same again,' that new possibilities have opened up and old patterns closed off." This, he says, "is exactly what the historicity of gender relations is about."¹¹ For us, this dialectic relationship between the old and the new provides theoretical and political cues in understanding contemporary relations and hierarchies—what we call an archaeology of state practices—at this juncture in history.

The historicity of the state enables an analysis of contemporary relations and hierarchies and positions the state as a focal point of analysis for feminists. We examine the form and operation of the American state in advanced capitalism (which is different from the advanced capitalist state) as a way to analyze the simultaneous processes that advanced capital has generated in relation to capitalism and to advanced colonialism. M. A. Jaimes Guerrero has argued that the U.S. state manages a set of advanced capitalist relations at the same time that it mediates colonial relations both within its borders (Native peoples and communities of color in the U.S.) as well as outside (in Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, and the Pacific these operations are masked by an ideology of statehood and commonwealth status). We focus on the American state because of our own location here and because of its post-Cold War status as the new imperial power in, for example, the Caribbean and India. The intertwining of the global and the local, which is so crucial to our analysis, is also central to Ella Shohat's discussion of post-Third-Worldist aesthetic practices. "In a world of transnational communications," Shohat writes, "the central problem becomes one of tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization, in which hegemonic tendencies are simultaneously 'indigenized' within a complex disjunctive global cultural economy." Thus, there is an ongoing theoretical challenge to uncover the cultural, political, and economic interplay between the very categories of the global and the local.

One of the central organizing principles of this collection is the imbrication of contemporary practices of postcolonial and advanced colonial states with capitalist processes of recolonization. The theoretical anchor for a number of the essays is precisely the continuities and fractures between the

historical and newly emergent forms of colonization. Amina Mama discusses the transformation of forms of violence against women in West Africa, while Honor Ford-Smith shows how aesthetic colonization (the term is Paula Gunn Allen's) by international funding agencies has established a disjuncture between earlier British colonization and contemporary Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) in Jamaica. Capitalism is analyzed consistently as a set of processes mediated through the simultaneous operation of gendered, sexualized, and racialized hierarchies. Chandra Talpade Mohanty demonstrates, for example, that these hierarchies operate through different gendered ideologies of women's work. The essays understand capitalism in its global, local, and territorial manifestations and in its intersections with feminist analyses and struggles; they recognize that Eurocentrism and territorial colonization are being transformed and refigured across the globe. Clearly the impulse toward recolonization derives from crises within capitalism which then prompt its reconfiguration. Thus, while particular essays in the collection chart the failures of anticolonial nationalisms, the cumulative effect of such movements for self-determination have also helped to provoke the very crises within capitalism that this collection charts.

Since we use specific essays in this collection to ground feminist historical practice and more contemporary modes of organizing, we also mean by "historicity" the use of specific inheritances around counterhegemonic histories that interrupt state and capitalist dominance. The different modes of feminist practice—what Geraldine Heng calls "the varieties of feminism"—assume their particular trajectories from a complicated overlapping of historical matrices of left liberation struggles, contemporary nationalisms (in spite of feminism's contestatory relationship to nationalism), and the very presence and intervention of the state itself. There are no fixed prescriptions by which one might determine in advance the specific counterhegemonic histories which will be most useful. In fact, Heng shows that a feminism under threat might strategically assume "the nationalist mantle" or seek "legitimation and ideological support in local cultural history, by finding feminist or proto-feminist myths, laws, customs, characters, narratives and origins in the national or communal past." What feminism remembers (or can risk remembering), what it records and narrativizes, its resourcefulness in codifying struggle—in terms that are unintelligible to the state (Ford-Smith) or seemingly recognizable and therefore subversive (Panjabi)—and what forms it gives its different political mobilizations are all paradoxically contingent, yet grounded and strategic. The importance of oppositional historical records cannot be mistaken. As Patricia J. Williams has argued, "To be without documentation is too unsustaining, too spontaneously ahistorical, too dangerously malleable in the hands of those who would rewrite not merely the past but [my] future as well."¹² Even memory is not an unmediated category here, for insinuated within counterhegemonic inheritances are the inheritances of violence and trauma, what Elizabeth Alexander has

called "traumatized memory." Such memories must be scrutinized and sifted. For feminism, then, the structuring of new modes of consciousness through praxis is both politically and psychically necessary.

Because no variety of feminism—particularly feminism in the Third World—has escaped state intervention, control, discipline, and surveillance; and because the state (particularly the postcolonial state) facilitates the transnational movement of capital within national borders and is, therefore, instrumental in the reconfiguring of global relationships; and because capitalism and these processes of recolonization structure the contemporary practices of postcolonial and advanced capitalist/colonial states, the state figures centrally in any analytic attempt to grapple with colonial legacies. Thus, a focus on the state seems especially crucial at a time when many of the attempts to manage the global crisis in capitalism are enacted by the state apparatus. Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP), the most recent unequal realignments among multinational capital, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, are a case in point. In her essay, Ayesha Imam points to the specific instance of complicity between the militarized, postcolonial Nigerian state and the institutionalization of SAP. Moreover, unlike other institutions, the state engages in an almost microscopic surveillance of women's bodies and continues to bring more and more areas of daily life under its jurisdiction, even when it lacks the capacity or authority to do so successfully.

We are not suggesting, however, that the imperatives of the postcolonial state and those of advanced capitalist/colonial states are identical. Admittedly, they share these important characteristics: 1) they own the means of organized violence which most often get deployed in the service of "national security"; 2) they are both militarized—in other words, masculinized; 3) they invent and solidify practices of racialization and sexualization of the population; and 4) they discipline and mobilize the bodies of women—in particular Third-World women—in order to consolidate patriarchal and colonizing processes. Women's bodies are disciplined in different ways: within discourses of profit maximization, as global workers and sexual laborers; within religious fundamentalisms, as repositories of sin and transgression; within specifically nationalist discourses, as guardians of culture and respectability or criminalized as prostitutes and lesbians; and within state discourses of the originary nuclear family, as wives and mothers. Both postcolonial and advanced capitalist/colonial states organize and reinforce a cathectic structure based in sexual difference (i.e., heterosexuality), which they enforce through a variety of means, including legislation. In almost all instances, however, these states conflate heterosexuality with citizenship and organize a "citizenship machinery" in order to produce a class of loyal heterosexual citizens and a subordinated class of sexualized, nonprocreative, noncitizens, disloyal to the nation, and, therefore, suspect.¹³

Yet, there are important differences. In the global reconsolidation of capitalism, for instance, postcolonial states are subordinated to advanced capitalist/colonial states, although both mediate capital accumulation. In postcolonial contexts, state managers facilitate the entry and diffusion of international capital within national boundaries and help to produce an exploited feminized workforce in export-processing zones. The U.S. state is similar to a postcolonial state in its ideological approach toward the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Caribbean Basin Initiative. It utilizes the dictates of the U.S. economy to set the terms by which capital functions across national boundaries. In advanced capitalist/colonial contexts, transnationalization provides the rationale for hypernationalist intervention into the economies of the Third World, undermining power and legitimacy in far more significant ways than in the U.S. state, for example. This raises the charge that the postcolonial state has forfeited its claim to sovereignty (the central nationalist promise) through complicity in its own recolonization. As early as 1972, Hamza Alavi argued that the relative autonomy of the postcolonial state from indigenous and metropolitan class interests seemed to be almost entirely supplanted; in the contemporary period, the more pervasive practice was the postcolonial state as an instrument of global ruling-class interests.¹⁴

Larger processes of globalization make it both difficult and necessary to talk about the nation-state, to talk specifically about nationalism and, for our purposes, the problematical relationship of Third-World women to it. Anticolonial nationalism has always mobilized women's labor in order to help consolidate popular nationalism, without which state nationalism would never have been able to solidify itself. It is not accidental, therefore, that feminism often emerged within anticolonial movements. But the state mobilization of the feminine is contradictorily inflected. While, as Heng has argued, "women, the feminine, and figures of gender have traditionally anchored the nationalist imaginary," certain women, prostitutes, and lesbians are now being disciplined and written out of the nation's script; they have been invested with the power to corrupt otherwise loyal heterosexual citizens, positioned as hostile to the procreative imperative of nation-building, and, therefore, invested with the ability and desire to destroy it. It is not only around questions of sexuality and gender that nation-states have structured their exclusions, however, but also in relationship to race and class hierarchies. It is these exclusions, as well the state's ambivalent and conflictual relationship to sovereignty, that help to explain the failures of anticolonial nationalism, a central topic for many of the essays in this collection. If, as Ella Shohat has argued, "affiliation with the nation state becomes highly partial and contingent" in the postcolonial context, women's relationship to it is even more so. In very specific ways, the processes of recolonization (which this collection charts) draw material and ideological force from

women and women's collectivities in order to reanchor patriarchal and heterosexist imperatives.

The fact that religious fundamentalist movements now occupy center stage in a number of postcolonial and advanced capitalist/colonial states is yet another indication of the contradictory effects of nationalist mobilizations of men and women. Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval Davis link the global rise of religious fundamentalism to the failure of both capitalism and communism to provide for people's material, spiritual, and emotional needs.¹⁵ They suggest that in postcolonial societies, and among people of color in the West, religious fundamentalism is also linked to the failure of nationalist and socialist movements to bring about liberation from oppression. Fundamentalist movements are deeply heteropatriarchal in suggesting the control and regulation of women's sexuality as the panacea for all these failures.

Analyzing the nexus of state, capital, and patriarchy in the consolidation of religious fundamentalism in India, Amrita Chhachhi shows that state-supported fundamentalism reinforces the shift of control over women from kinsmen to any man of the "religious" community—the public is profoundly patriarchal. Within religious fundamentalist discourses and state practices, women's bodies and minds, as well as the domestic and public spaces they occupy, become the primary ground for the regulation of morality and inscriptions of patriarchal control. This is another crucial arena for mapping the gendered processes of recolonization at the end of the twentieth century.¹⁶

No understanding of these post-Cold War processes would be complete, however, without an analysis of the strategic function of militarized masculinity in the reproduction of colonization. An official designation of "post-Cold War" does not automatically erase the effects of colonization. In addition to the dislocations and dispersals of Third-World women whose lives were previously tied to militarization, the concept of soldiering (which has historically been linked to masculinity) is also undergoing profound transformation. As the analyses of Alexander and Wekker demonstrate, both state and capitalist processes underscore an existing crisis in heteromascularity which must be ideologically veiled in order to mask the processes of normalization which both states undertake. In neocolonial contexts, the crisis becomes evident in the legal (re)production of heterosexuality through state moves to contain desire between women. In "(de)militarized" contexts such as the United States, the figure of the hypermasculinized soldier, previously embodied in the image of whiteness, is diffused globally as the agent of U.S. might, the symbol of white manliness, and the naturalization of Third-World women's sexual labor organized primarily through prostitution. The work of Thanh-dam Truong and Kamala Kempadoo is most useful here in demystifying the extent to which prostitutes' labor contributes to the processes of private capital accumulation and

the state's reliance on it as a way to continue the heterosexualization of defense, military productivity, and the like.¹⁷ New kinds of racial and sexual reconfigurations occur in this era of demilitarization and Cold War politics, when white masculinity can no longer figure itself around particular definitions of soldiering. Because of shifts in the U.S. economy, for instance, the job of state policing now draws disproportionately on the labor and bodies of people of color, both women and men. The state, no doubt, has to work harder ideologically to resituate white masculinity as its presence, at least in the lower echelons of the military, is being erased.

One of the most dramatic examples of the crisis in heteromascularity was the recent state-generated discourse in the United States on "gays" in the military. Ostensibly, the purpose of this debate was to determine whether "effeminate" masculinity (practiced, but not spoken) could be relied upon to undertake one of the most important tasks of citizenship: that of loyalty to and defense of one's country. The central preoccupation was whether such feminized masculinity (which was deemed neither masculine nor citizen at all) would jeopardize manly masculinity (heteromascularity) as it undertook its job: defense of the imperial nation. After months of contestation (including a predictable state lament over its own threatened identity in the context of a reduced military), heteromascularity reasserted itself, rendered "gay" sexuality present yet silent, and erased lesbian sexuality almost entirely. Further, this conclusion premised homosexuality in whiteness, making it possible for "invisible" lesbian and gay soldiers to intervene in the Third World and within communities of color at home.

At this point, the central analytic formulation about the state and capital's activity in the processes of recolonization poses a fundamental challenge to the ways in which dominant liberal feminism has organized itself. There are many feminist critiques of the failures of liberalism and its epistemic claims around individual rights and liberties, freedom of individual choice, and the mythology of equal access.¹⁸ In spite of these critiques and their very clear understanding of the operations of state power, however, the sanctity of individual right and choice protected by and bolstered through capitalism still constitute its core premises and practices. The writings of Aida Hurtado, Brenda Joyner, Rosalind Petchesky and the experiences of women struggling against U.S. colonization of Puerto Rico and the American state's role in the use of the bodies of Third-World women as instruments of development and "progress" all point to the pitfalls of the ideology about an individual's right to choose.¹⁹ Our analyses have foregrounded questions of colonization, economic imperialism, and territorial sovereignty as central to feminism. In this regard, they part company with liberal formulations of a disinterested state, as well as with the state's representation of itself as national and democratic. We suggest that taking seriously state intervention within and across nations might, at the very least, make it possible to imag-

ine and create solidarity struggles across the artificial borders which both state and capital construct.

Democratic Futures: Feminist Consciousness, Organizing Visions

Sistren help bring about the awareness of women in me definitely. For the first time even if me go out a street and hear people, whether man or woman, talk tings fi downgrade woman me wouldn't know how to address it. Now me find meself, if me hear anybody say anything to downgrade woman, me can address it. It give me courage to deal wid anybody, no care who you maybe.

Becky (Ford-Smith 1989) ²⁰

I start with bodies because political states always have an interest in them; because politics usually derive from such interests; and because, as we move increasingly toward new technologies that redefine female bodies, we must recognize these interests as utterly political. Feminists can insist on using our bodies to push out the boundaries of democratic theory.

Zillah Eisenstein (Eisenstein 1993, 171) ²¹

Taken together, the statements of Becky, a member of the Caribbean feminist collective Sistren, and of Zillah Eisenstein, a U.S. feminist political theorist, capture the contradictions and the challenges involved in thinking beyond the various colonizations of our minds and bodies. Becky states that her experience within the Sistren collective was the basis for the transformation of her consciousness, her "awareness as woman," which then enabled her to have the "courage to deal wid anybody." Eisenstein, on the other hand, focuses on the political processes involved in the disciplining of the female body, and on the need for feminists to take these masculinist interests of the state into account in reimagining democracy.

Given the limitations of Western, liberal conceptions of democracy, we want to conceptualize what might be called "feminist democracy" in relation to the project of decolonization—in other words, to think through an anticolonialist, anticapitalist vision of feminist practice. Further, we want to craft a working definition of feminist democracy that is anchored in the analyses and visions provided by the activist-scholars in this collection. Such a vision necessarily involves acknowledging the objectifying, dehumanizing effects of colonization (e.g., imitation of the colonizer, horizontal violence, self-deprecation due to internalized oppression, self-distrust, psychic and material dependency, desire to assimilate)—and building actively anticolonialist relationships and cultures as a crucial part of the project of feminist democracy.²²

What is our working definition of feminist democracy? First, sexual politics are central to the processes and practices of governance, which means not only the effects of governance on women or “what happens to women” under state rule but also the way the entire apparatus of government treats women.

Secondly, feminist democracy suggests a different order of relationships among people. It suggests understanding socioeconomic, ideological, cultural, and psychic hierarchies of rule (like those of class, gender, race, sexuality, and nation), their interconnectedness, and their effects on disenfranchised peoples *within* the context of transformative collective or organizational practice. Thus, the transformation of relationships, selves, communities, and the practices of daily life leading to self-determination and autonomy for all peoples is crucial in crafting a different order of relationships. Thirdly, in formulations of feminist democracy, agency is theorized differently. Women do not imagine themselves as *victims* or *dependents* of governing structures but as agents of their own lives. Agency is understood here as the conscious and ongoing reproduction of the terms of one’s existence while taking responsibility for this process. And agency is anchored in the practice of thinking of oneself as a part of feminist collectivities and organizations. This is not the liberal, pluralist individual self under capitalism. For precisely this reason, decolonization is central to the definition and vision of feminist democracy.

New modes of governance are not possible until the profound effects of hierarchies of colonization are taken into account. What is needed, the essays in this volume suggest, is a *new political culture*. Decolonization involves thinking oneself out of the spaces of domination, but always *within* the context of a collective or communal process (the distinction between identification as a woman and gender consciousness—the former refers to a social designation, the latter to a critical awareness of the implications of this designation). This thinking “out of” colonization happens only through action and reflection, through praxis. After all, social transformation cannot remain at the level of ideas, it must engage practice. In this anthology, it is the concrete analyses of collective and organizational practices within feminist communities that offer provisional strategies for dismantling the psychic and social constellations put in place by colonization. Some essays draw attention to the too-quick transition of Third-World countries from colonized nations, to anticolonial struggles, to nationalist governing bodies which remain stubbornly patriarchal and heterosexist. In other words, these essays chart the failures of anticolonial nationalism and decolonization movements to take seriously the psychic and pedagogical aspects of decolonization, especially in relation to sexual politics. Decolonization has a fundamentally pedagogical dimension—an imperative to understand, to reflect on, and to transform relations of objectification and dehumanization, and to

pass this knowledge along to future generations. Our formulation of feminist democratic practice seeks to address the pedagogic failure of inherited nationalism.

Fourthly, our notion of feminist democracy draws on socialist principles to address hierarchies of rule and to craft an alternative vision for change. In spirit, if not always in words, all the contributors to this volume take anti-capitalist positions. However, while the contributors provide cartographies of transformational feminist practice, they are very conscious of the limits of these practices. Material forces, relationships, and forms of governance have not changed very much at the end of the twentieth century. In fact, because of the historical resilience of capitalism, we have not had the benefit of socialist practice for any substantial period of time. The truncated script of socialism and the failures of anticolonial nationalism combine to form the backdrop of our working definition of feminist democracy.

Finally, our definition of feminist democracy has specifically transnational dimensions. At this time, global processes clearly require global alliances. Decolonization, in fact, becomes an urgent project precisely because of the homogenization and cross-border domination effected by global capitalist processes. We suggest that feminist democracy needs to include some theorization of transborder participatory democracy which is outside the purview of the imperial. It is transnational feminism, not global sisterhood (defined as a “center/periphery” or “first-world/Third-World” model), that the collection points toward. And since questions of practice are central to this collection, another aspect of our version of feminist democracy involves reimagining the (often artificial) divide between feminist activism and scholarship. The authors here believe that scholarship and analysis are produced through an active dialogic engagement with feminist collectives and movements. This theorization begins from a different space—that of feminist struggle. It is the practice within movements that anchors the theory, the analysis is undertaken to improve the practice.

In what follows, we begin with a brief critique of freemarket/capitalist and procedural notions of democracy, move on to a discussion of some useful feminist theorizations of democracy, and finally arrive at our elaboration of the meaning of feminist democracy, based on the above sketch. In this analysis, we use “Democracy” with a capital *d* (to suggest its congealed, commonsensical usage) when referring to institutionalized, hegemonic (often repressive), freemarket-based uses of the term, and “democracy” (with a small *d* suggesting collective structures, and practices in process) to refer to the feminist rethinking of the idea and promise of this concept. While, on the one hand, a hegemonic rhetoric of Democracy (a disguise for western, liberal capitalist processes) has been constitutive of the very processes of capitalist recolonization, many unjust imperialist practices have, after all, been scanted in the name of preserving Democracy, a

different conception of democracy that guarantees liberation as a permanent condition for all peoples has also provided the material and ideological ground for feminist mobilization.

The term "Democracy" has often been utilized in the service of repressive national and international state practices. However, the analytic and political importance of thinking about the egalitarian and emancipatory aspects of democracy at this time in history cannot be underestimated—after all, democracy does have to be made and remade by each generation.²³ If democracy is to be government by the people, or self-government requiring the people's participation, on the basis of merit not inherited status, then the question of how "the people" is defined becomes fundamental. Thus, one of our major tasks is foregrounding the racialized, gendered, and heterosexualized relations of rule typified under hegemonic Democracy, and analyzing the myth of the "universal citizen." Another task is formulating a working definition of feminist democracy which is anticapitalist and centered on the project of decolonization. In other words, our goal is to elaborate the ways a feminist democracy must interpret the hierarchies of governance, their interconnectedness and effects, while moving from an individual to a collective feminist practice.

We have argued that sexual politics are constitutive of all social relations and that colonizing processes are formulated and practiced through the disciplining of Third-World women's bodies. Ella Shohat's essay on post-Third-Worldist feminist film and video examines the ways in which representations of the racialized female body figure in processes of repression and resistance, while Kavita Panjabi's essay situates the disciplining of the female body (and mind, heart and soul) within the prison narratives of Indian and Argentinian women. This framing of the collection, with analytic centrality given to the experiences, consciousness, and histories of Third-World women, is crucial to our conception of a feminist democratic project. Conceptualizing "the people" and citizenship within the framework of a specifically anticolonialist, feminist understanding of democracy, in this instance, requires theorizing from the epistemological location and experiences of Third-World women. Few Third-World and impoverished women have been the beneficiaries of so-called Democracies around the world, and the key elements of feminist democracy defined above can be usefully clarified within the framework of the histories and experiences of these constituencies.²⁴

Hegemonic Democracy, Citizenship, and Capitalist Patriarchies

Our location in the United States, and the dominant position it occupies as *the* Democratic nation par excellence necessitate a clarification of the use of the rhetoric of Democracy by the U.S. state. This section grapples with the hierarchies of rule that we have identified as a crucial aspect of the

process of dismantling, decolonizing, and transforming capitalism in order to clear the ground for an anticapitalist, anticolonialist feminist democracy. Earlier discussions of colonialism, capitalism, and state practices suggest that colonial, imperial, sexist, and racist practices of rule by the U.S. state are obfuscated by the rhetoric and ideology of Democracy. The ideology of freedom and Democracy works in such a way that the discourse of human rights is often invoked only when U.S. economic and political interests are at stake. Thus, the U.S. state appears to be Democratic while sanctioning imperialist invasions (e.g., Panama, Grenada, Nicaragua, etc.) in the name of preserving Democracy elsewhere in the world. This imperial aspect of the state is often ignored by U.S. feminists involved in struggles for political change. Liberal feminist demands for equal rights, welfare, and social services, and equal pay for women, while crucial arenas for struggle against the state, address the state as if it were self-evidently Democratic.²⁵ This theorization of the American state as Democratic by U.S. liberal feminists addressing sexism often obscures relationships of colonial domination and, thus, potentially precludes the formation of alliances between Third-World women within colonizing nations or between women in colonizing and colonized/postcolonial nations.

How do we understand the idea of universal citizenship (for us, citizenship which is defined through and across difference), and the way the state mobilizes a citizenship machinery which excludes and marginalizes particular constituencies on the basis of their "difference"? Iris Marion Young argues that "the ideal of universal citizenship carries at least two meanings in addition to the extension of citizenship to everyone: 1) universality defined as general in opposition to particular; what citizens have in common as opposed to how they differ, and 2) universality in the sense of laws and rules that say the same for all and apply to all the same way; laws and rules that are blind to individual and group differences."²⁶ However, in the case of capitalist patriarchies which are also so-called Democracies, the construct of the universal citizen has very particular gender-, race-, class-, and sexually-specific contours. Because, during moments of crises under capitalism, citizenship is defined through the figures of the (white) consumer and the taxpayer, and because this racialized, masculinized figure is the basis of a series of exclusions in relation to citizenship (exclusions of the very constituencies from whose locations we theorize), understanding the deployment of these categories is crucial to rethinking democracy. It is this deployment of exclusionary citizenship that leads us to argue for an explicitly anticolonialist feminist democracy. The essays by Jaimes Guerrero, Alexander, Mama, and Bhattacharjee, for instance, present nuanced discussions of citizenship and its exclusions. Law, in particular, functions to adjudicate "differences." The citizenship machinery is not "blind" to differences; in fact, it uses a legal apparatus to transform difference into inequality. In its efforts to remain

“blind” to differences in the name of equal treatment, the law often perpetuates the naturalization of heterosexuality and the production of psychic economies that conform to the dictates of the ideological superiority of the heterosexual family. One effect is a foreclosing of the possibilities of same-sex desire. Janet Halley’s analysis of U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the late 1980s suggests that legal definitions of the class of homosexuals necessarily involve the less visible constitution of a class of heterosexuals. And Kendall Thomas’s interrogation of the effects of *Bowers v. Hardwick* suggests that on questions of homosexuality the state reneges on its promise to protect *all* citizens from terrorist violence, since it effectively sanctions homophobic violence.²⁷ Difference, in this context, functions to further consolidate and legislate heterosexual desire and citizenship.

Similarly, David T. Evans suggests that the central ideological mechanisms which shape citizenship in advanced capitalism are the roles of consumer and taxpayer: “The history of citizenship is a history of fundamental, formal, heterosexist patriarchal principles and practices ostensibly, progressively ‘liberalized’ towards and through the rhetoric of ‘equality,’ but in practice to effect unequal differentiation.”²⁸ If the (implicitly white) consumer and the taxpayer are now the prototypical modern citizen, the current discourse of welfare dependency of the U.S. state gains great importance for feminist analysis and mobilization. The definition of poor women of color as the paradigmatic welfare recipients (when in fact, white women constitute the largest group on welfare) and the discourses of dependency, cultural deprivation, and psychological personality characteristics that are used to discipline these women indicate that (black) women on welfare are, by definition, neither consumers or taxpayers and, thus, are noncitizens. Tracing the genealogy of “dependency” as a keyword in the U.S. welfare state, Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon show that the definition that once involved relations of power, domination, and subordination has now been replaced by ones that see “dependency” as a synonym for poverty or personality disorders.²⁹ Thus, impoverished, black teenage mothers have acquired the status of welfare dependents par excellence in the U.S. citizenship machinery. Evelyn Hammonds’ study of the representation of African American women and AIDS in both the mass media and the medical establishment illustrates the contradictory, yet highly visible, location of women of color as dependent (and diseased), while simultaneously denying them access to the resources needed for survival and well-being.

Thus, a crucial question for feminists is whether the failure to address welfare rights on the feminist agenda indicates a valorization of wage-labor in ways that prompt a convergence between state racism and racism within the feminist movement. The state machinery which positions women of color as dependents, and, therefore, morally inferior is a script that feminists in organized movements have yet to challenge. This, then, is one of the

most significant ethical, intellectual, and political problems for liberal and socialist feminist movements. It is precisely in theorizing questions of privilege, dependency, and domination from the standpoint of, for instance, women of color as “welfare recipients” or immigrant women as “undocumented workers,” that feminist struggles take on explicitly anticolonial and anticapitalist questions.

A number of critics have analyzed the convergence of capitalist values and liberal Democratic understandings of Democracy. Instead of rehearsing these arguments in detail, we draw on Paulo Freire’s early work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to sketch the ways in which the “myths” utilized by the ruling class to preserve the capitalist status-quo are simultaneously propositions about “Democracy” within a liberal, capitalist culture. Together, these myths constitute a rhetoric of freedom and equality that consolidates the very oppressive practices and values of capitalist domination. Under these conditions freedom and equality function as guaranteed rights under capitalism, foregrounding questions of economic access and choice, of individual freedom, of economic and social mobility, of equality defined as access, opportunity, and choice, and of private property and ownership as constitutive of self-worth). And these myths beg the question of who is the presumed citizen entitled to these rights. They define freedom as access and the choice to work (rather than the material and psychic conditions that make such access and choices possible on an equitable basis), and equality as the same opportunities and rights under the law, without regard to the fact that the implied legitimate citizen is the white, ruling-class, heterosexual, male consumer and taxpayer. The myth of “private property as fundamental to human development,” wherein ownership of land is conflated with the personal value, prestige, and evolution of the owner—in contrast to communal ownership of land or world views which suggest that human beings don’t own land but live in relation to it, all suggest a systematic world view whereby capitalist values infuse ideas about citizenship and liberal Democracy. In fact, it is almost as if democracy has been colonized under capitalism, thus making it impossible to raise the question of democracy in relation to socialist practice. Thus, the project of specifying feminist democracy at this point in history involves uncoupling the collapse of capitalism into Democracy and recasting the ethical and substantive understandings of democratic processes in anticapitalist terms.

Questions of freedom, equality, and ownership are taken up variously by a number of authors in this collection. M. A. Jaimes Guerrero’s essay exposes the contradiction between discourses of private ownership as linked to progress and development and the use of land-allocation policies to disenfranchise native peoples and sever them from their land. In a different way, Anannya Bhattacharjee’s essay on the practices and discourses of immigration, public/private aspects of citizenship, and the sexist, racist, and

heterosexual effects of immigration policies on South Asian women in the U.S. exposes the exclusionary definitions of freedom and equality underlying the construct of the U.S. nation-state. Bhattacharjee analyzes the meanings of citizenship from the location of the South Asian immigrant wife/woman, the immigrant domestic worker, and the "undocumented alien." In this context, notions of equality under the law challenge conventional definitions of the presumed legitimate citizen who has actual access and opportunity.

Brazilian political scientist Evelina Dagnino suggests that the rhetoric of the Democratic world order is, in fact, the cement for a truly undemocratic world order. Here, Democracy is an abstract generalization, reduced to a procedural notion, wherein formal mechanisms of representative Democracy are assumed to be identical to a Democratic regime. In this procedural definition of Democracy (what some others have called the "promissary" aspects of Democracy), representation, policies, and effects stand in for democratic practices and culture. Social and cultural practices based on a deeper understanding of democracy—considering the relational, egalitarian aspect of democracy—are erased.³⁰ This procedural notion of Democracy is challenged by Jaimes Guerrero and Alexander when they raise questions about the meaning of citizenship for women. Writing as outsiders, both take on the state and its exclusions—in relation to native peoples, on the one hand, and lesbians and gay men, on the other. Clearly, representative Democracy, as defined by Dagnino, is an insufficient condition for liberation for both Jaimes Guerrero and Alexander. Taken together with the critique of capitalism and its devastating effects on Third-World, migrant, and immigrant women workers offered by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, these analyses suggest the important challenge for feminists to theorize and practice democracy from an anticapitalist standpoint. Mohanty's essay on the naturalization of capitalist processes through domesticated and heterosexualized definitions of women's work and the hyperexploitation of Third-World women workers in different regions of the globe exposes the exclusionary, masculinist ideology of the "worker" as an important aspect of the social relations of capitalist Democracy and of building solidarities between Third-World women workers across national borders.

The challenge for feminists, then, is to critique and move away from this formulation of the U.S. Democratic state—a formulation that usually leads to the erasure of the centrality of the experiences of colonization in the lives of Third-World women and U.S. women of color. This erasure also allows first-world feminists to polarize "survival" versus "feminist" issues in third- and first-world terms, thus colonizing the experiences of Third-World women and making alliances on materialist terms impossible. Jaimes Guerrero's emphasis on land and territorial rights and political sovereignty

as fundamental to liberation for native women contrasts sharply with a liberal feminist notion of liberation, defined, for instance, in terms of demands made on behalf of women to the presumed Democratic U.S. state. In the latter formulation, there is no language or conceptual framework to imagine territorial sovereignty as a feminist demand—or to theorize decolonization as a fundamental aspect of feminist struggle. Thus, the imperial or colonial actions of the presumably Democratic U.S. remain invisible.

Imagining Feminist Democracy: Anatomies of Selves, Communities, Organizing

The preceding discussion foregrounds the hierarchies of governance and rule that produce the liberal individual self under capitalist Democracy. The analysis of the limits of a procedural, free-market understanding of Democracy draws attention to the precise hierarchies against which feminist collectivities and organizations position themselves in crafting practices of decolonization and envisioning transformative feminist democracy. We begin by briefly mapping the arguments about democracy and citizenship under capitalism offered by some feminist political theorists, so as to clarify and sharpen our collective vision of feminist democracy with decolonization at the center.

Feminist political theorists have addressed a number of interrelated questions in thinking through the project of democracy in contemporary first-world nation-states. Critiques of liberal masculinist models of universal citizenship and rights, and the public/private distinctions upon which these rely, are inflected with discussions of race, class, and sexuality in relation to women's bodily rights and integrity. While Jean Bethke Elshtain suggests "the family" and the activities of mothering as the new locus for defining a non-masculinist citizenship, Carole Pateman argues for a sexually differentiated concept of citizenship, one in which a political definition of motherhood would have equal relevance in defining citizenship, as patriotism does for men. Neither of these theorists conceptualize the different meanings of motherhood or mothering that arise from different racial and sexual locations in the polity.³¹

In contrast, Iris Marion Young addresses race when she explores the concept of a "heterogeneous public" and a group differentiated citizenship, whereby various racial, sexual, gendered constituencies could make claims on the state on the basis of their differences, rather than approximating the universal, white male experience.³² Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, would like us to imagine a radical democracy where sexual difference eventually becomes irrelevant to the relations of liberty and equality for all.³³ Other feminists, like Nancy Fraser, have argued for rethinking the concept of rights in relation to the interpretation as well as the satisfaction of the needs of different marginalized constituencies of women in the U.S. welfare

state.³⁴ Zillah Eisenstein argues persuasively for rethinking the public/private divide from the point of view of women of color, arguing for the need to continually rethink the concept of democratic rights "to require equality of access via an affirmative and non-interventionist state." She anchors her definition of democracy in reenvisioning a radical discourse of privacy rights which is attentive to the reproductive and bodily politics of U.S. women of color.³⁵ Patricia J. Williams claims that the problem of rights discourse has been that it critiques rights assertion, rather than rights commitment. Stating that "rights are to law what conscious commitments are to the psyche," Williams underscores the significance of the conferring of rights for all historically disempowered peoples, as symbolic of "all the denied aspects of their humanity."³⁶

While we find the work of these theorists useful in defining the limits of citizenship and democratic rights for women under capitalism, we want to refocus these concerns to democratic possibilities in the formulation of citizenship drawing on socialist principles. In what follows, we explore what it might mean to a) address decolonization in relation to democracy, and b) to envision critical consciousness and agency outside free-market, procedural conceptions of individual agency. Thus, the question we ask is, how do women conceive of themselves and their communities in the context of this retheorization? The way to think ourselves out of the limitations of the Western liberal formulations of Democracy analyzed earlier is to imagine political mobilization as the practice of active decolonization. Transformation of consciousness and reconceptualizations of identity are, therefore, necessary aspects of democracy conceptualized as the practice of decolonization.

The centrality of collective practice in transformations of the self and reenvisioning organizational democracy anchors feminist thinking. In fact, feminist thinking, here, draws on and endorses socialist principles of collectivized relations of production and organization. It attempts to reenvision socialism as a part of feminist democracy with decolonization at its center. However, while feminist collectives struggle against hegemonic power structures at various levels, they are also marked by these very structures—it is these traces of the hegemonic which the practice of decolonization addresses. Thus, for instance, Geraldine Heng talks about the ways in which feminism takes on the nationalist mantle in Singapore, and Ayesha Imam examines the contradictions of middle-class sexual politics within the organization WIN in Nigeria. Similarly, Honor Ford-Smith explores the negative effect on Sistren's internal dynamics and collective identity of the ideology of the "Lady Bountiful," the "maternalistic patroness of charity who is either asexual, or whose sexual needs could be met by motherhood within the heterosexual family." These analyses offer a certain clarity of thinking by making visible the contradictions that feminist collectives face at this point

in history. These reflections are crucial, coming as they do somewhat early in the life of these organizations. What we learn from them may well point toward new ways of thinking about organizing feminist collectivities—and about crafting decolonizing practices.

The interplay of the hegemonic and the oppositional in thinking about the feminist self is explored in different ways by Gloria Wekker, Paula Moya, and Kavita Panjabi. Wekker's essay on Afro-Surinamese women's critical agency explores what appears to be a different configuration of self, anchored in an "alternative vision of female subjectivity and sexuality, based on West African principles." Her analysis of *Mati* work in terms of alternative female relationships, ones which have simultaneous affectional, cultural, economic, social, spiritual, and obligational components, suggests a decolonized oppositional script for feminist struggle and for practices of governance. Decolonization involves both engagement with the everyday issues in our own lives so that we can make sense of the world in relation to hegemonic power, and engagement with collectivities which are premised on ideas of autonomy and self-determination, in other words democratic practice. For the Creole working-class women Wekker speaks about, this is precisely the process engaged in. It creates what she calls a "psychic economy of female subjectivity, (which) . . . induces working-class women to act individually and collectively in ways that counteract the assault of the hegemonic knowledge regime, which privileges men, the heterosexual contract, inequality and a generally unjust situation." Here, the investment in the self (what Wekker calls "a multiple self") is not necessarily an investment in upward mobility or in the maintenance of a masculinist, heterosexist, middle-class status quo.

Paula Moya's discussion of Chicana feminism and of the work of Cherrie Moraga operates somewhat differently, though it raises similar questions about consciousness, identity, and collectivity in crafting political selves. Moya's essay illustrates the links between experiences of racial, gender, sexual, and class colonization at institutional and psychic levels, and the trajectory and possibilities of emancipatory feminist praxis along the lines of what Freire calls "conscientization." Analyzing the connections between social location, experience, and cultural identity in U.S. lesbian feminist Cherrie Moraga's work, Moya provides a careful and systematic account of the epistemological and political contributions of women of color in theorizing liberatory practice. By exploring the connections between understandings of the self and the social and by positing a cognitive component in theorizing the self-in-community, Moya articulates the stages involved in the transformation of the consciousness of women of color. This is grounded in the physical realities of their lives—what Moraga calls "theory in the flesh." Both Wekker and Moya theorize agency and subjectivity within the context of collective struggle. But while Wekker suggests a new understanding of the multiple self grounded in an alternative psychic and sexual economy, Moya

provides a genealogy of the political self in the context of oppressive, inherited psychic and social structures of governance.

Kavita Panjabi's essay charts a different version of the feminist political self, by asking questions about the meaning of feminist insurgency (of ungovernability) under conditions of extreme deprivation—namely, prison. Claiming that prison testimonios are “narrative reconstructions reflecting upon the prison or concentration camp as a microcosmic embodiment of both the hegemonic or authoritarian and the counterhegemonic or anti-authoritarian relations between the state and the individual,” Panjabi explores the creation of the self in Jaya Mitra's and Alicia Partnoy's texts as a form of resistance and survival under physically and mentally repressive conditions. Unlike Wekker and Moya, Panjabi does not foreground an instance of political engagement in women's movements. However, by exploring the construction of oppositional and collective feminist consciousness through the development of strategies of resistance based precisely on the ideologies of family, motherhood, and nurturing used to torture women, it does examine the links between the development of women's selves and larger political struggles against repression. The codification of the experience of repression and resistance—for instance, sharing food as a collective strategy for physical and psychic survival in the prison—provides clues for the construction of counterhegemonic political consciousness as women. This is a form of mobilization through writing. One form of decolonization, of imagining community differently, is thinking oneself out of this space of extreme repression. In exploring women's agency in actively creating counterhegemonic relations, values, and modes of communication to challenge the colonizing dehumanization of the prison, Panjabi's analysis suggests that these genealogies of the political self are different from the narrative of the coming-into-being of the individual female self of liberal feminism.

In the essays by Wekker, Moya, and Panjabi, history, memory, emotion, and affectional ties are all seen as significant, cognitive elements of the construction of critical, self-reflective, feminist selves. While crafting different notions of the self, each of the essays suggests that decolonization coupled with emancipatory collective practice leads to a rethinking of patriarchal, heterosexual, colonial, racial, and capitalist legacies in the project of feminism and, thus, toward envisioning democracy and democratic collective practice. Each suggests that issues of sexual politics in governance are fundamental to thinking through questions of resistance anchored in the daily lives of women, that these issues are an integral aspect of the epistemology of anticolonial feminist struggle.

Similarly, the essays by Honor Ford-Smith, Ayesha Imam, and Vasanth and Kalpana Kannabiran, which focus on the anatomy of feminist organizations, suggest how women define themselves differently by virtue of

involvement in political movements. They also point to the limitations of the imagination (often linked to the failures of socialism and anticolonial nationalism) that women's movements often inherit. The analyses illuminate contradictory inheritances, particularly of the practices of domination, encode the organization of collective practices, once again foregrounding the need to address decolonization as a fundamental aspect of feminist struggle. These essays also offer hope in the midst of very debilitating circumstances. As the spaces for progressive transformation shrink in the face of transnational capitalist domination, the essays in this collection point to the interstices, the few collective spaces available for envisioning and enacting alternative futures.

Honor Ford-Smith's analysis of the effects of funding on the Jamaican feminist group Sistren provides an insightful, internal critique of a radical feminist organization which draws upon reactionary and conservative ideologies and colonial constructions of womanhood, voluntarism, etc., while working towards the liberation of women. Questions of power, authority, accountability, responsibility, and leadership in the crafting of democratic practice are all addressed head-on in this essay. Thus, issues related to decolonization, feminist collective practice, subjectivity, and agency as inflected by race and class histories and experiences are all part of Honor Ford-Smith's discussion of the possibilities of democratic organizational practice. This essay explores the relation of culture and pedagogy as a strategy of mobilization and self-determination. Here, questions of popular education are simultaneously questions about the reconstruction of political culture; the analysis of Sistren throws up questions of a radically new political and ethical conscience creating a public culture of dissent.

What is also particular to the various analyses of feminist organizations and movements in this collection, however, is the focus on exploring how certain historical disjunctures enable particular issues to emerge within organizations. In the case of Vasanth and Kalpana Kannabiran's analysis of the Indian women's movement in Hyderabad, Ayesha Imam's analysis of WIN in Nigeria, and Geraldine Heng's exploration of the varieties of Third-World feminism under conditions of extreme state repression in Singapore, the connections between international processes (e.g., SAP and IMF policies) and the collusion of the postcolonial state are fundamental to understanding the genealogy of women's organizing. In all three of these cases, the inherited narratives and practices of feminist organizing and the internal divisions they identify must be framed in the context of larger, global as well as more particular, cultural and historical processes.

Postcolonial state practices, including the critique of a socialist government and democratic state, form the political context for Vasanth and Kalpana Kannabiran's analysis of the emergence of the women's movement in Hyderabad. They trace the paternal and patriarchal genealogy of organiz-

ing and the political context in which issues get prioritized within women's groups (SAKHI) as a result of state and religious fundamentalist mobilizations. As in the studies by Honor Ford-Smith and Ayesha Imam, this internal critique of the contradictions of feminist organizing, (particularly the activist/academic divide inherited by SAKHI), is linked to the masculinist politics of left and Communist movements in India. Similarly, Ayesha Imam examines the organizational challenges faced by Women in Nigeria (WIN) given the complicity of the militarized postcolonial Nigerian state with global structural adjustment processes. Reflecting on WIN's internal contradictions, Imam questions its political capacity to intervene in the devastating marginalization of women by SAP and the Nigerian state. Reiterating WIN's ultimate goals, the "democratic transformation of the social relations of gender and class," as the ultimate aim of WIN, Imam maps both the limitations and the successes of feminist organizational practices in the context of profound economic, social, and psychic colonization in Nigeria.

These analyses demonstrate the different demands that must be made on the state, once historical processes—most especially, colonialism—are taken into account. In asking questions about how groups come to formulate the notion of common interests, these essayists agree that women's movements cannot be purely reactive in relation to the state. Certainly, the state is a primary object of organizing, but these essays discourage easy formulations of a linear relationship between repression and resistance whereby critical thinking about experience on the part of oppressed peoples is taken as a given. As Paula Moya puts it, "The simple fact of having been born a person of color [in the United States] or of having suffered the effects of heterosexism or of economic deprivation does not, in and of itself, give someone a better understanding or knowledge of [our] society. The key to claiming epistemic authority for people who have been oppressed in a particular way stems from an acknowledgement that they have experiences—experiences that people who are not oppressed in the same way usually lack—that can provide them with information we all need to understand how hierarchies of race, class, gender and sexuality operate to uphold existing regimes of power in our society." Thus, the experience of repression can be, but is not necessarily, a catalyst for organizing. It is, in fact, the *interpretation* of that experience within a *collective* context that marks the moment of transformation from perceived contradictions and material disenfranchisement to participation in women's movements. Finally, the essays offer collective hope and concrete scripts for rethinking and transforming hierarchies of rule.

The conditions under which feminist movements emerge, the crafting of organizational practices and political agendas, the women who get drawn into the movements, and the visions of new modes of organizational practice are all fundamental issues in thinking about feminist democracy. This thinking includes the question of what it means to imagine oneself as an

agent outside repressive state structures. As mentioned earlier, within the essays, feminists imagine themselves as agents (not victims or dependents) in relation to citizenship. This begs the question of what it would mean for Third-World and poor women to envision and demand democratic space where their histories, agency, autonomy, and self-determination would be at the center.

Within the capitalist patriarchal understanding of Democracy, the acquisition of material property and the fulfilling of consumer needs become the marks of self-worth. Thinking differently about feminist democracy, thus, involves decolonization in these very specific anticapitalist terms. In order for solidarity between Third-World women in the geographical Third World and women of color in the first world to take place, imperialist domination and capitalist attitudes towards acquisition and advancement must become part of a feminist project of liberation. Feminist democratic practice in this context, then, cannot be about self-advancement, upward mobility, or maintenance of the first-world status-quo. It has to be premised on the decolonization of the self and on notions of citizenship defined not just within the boundaries of the nation state but across national and regional borders. We would dare to suggest that in the context of feminist democracy defined in the ways we suggest above, capitalist feminism is a contradiction in terms. Conceptually, feminist democracy which is global in scope needs to be based on anticolonialist, socialist principles.

While the notion of transborder participatory democracy (one in which it is not the state but people themselves who emerge as the chief agents in defining the course of the global economic and political processes that structure their lives) has been low on the agenda of women's movements for democracy, perhaps this is an idea whose time has come.³⁷ Anticolonialist feminist democracy involves thinking transnationally, and, in a world increasingly refigured by global economic and political processes, transnational democracy is as necessary as national democracy. The essays by Shohat, Mohanty, Imam, and Alexander illuminate the effects of international economic and cultural institutions on Third-World women. While it is difficult at this time to conceive of democratic practices of representation, responsibility, and accountability in relation to these institutions (media, tourism, SAP, organization of labor), the need to democratize cannot be ignored. Then, the World Bank, the IMF, and the GATT, organizations that make decisions that affect everyone's lives, can be made more accountable. In fact, decision-making processes in these institutions must be opened up for feminist participation and scrutiny.

In many respects, the central intellectual and political frames of this collection are not coincidental. They have formed the organizing principles of our work and lives over the last decade. Thus, the issues of feminist

democracy—decolonization as central to self- and collective transformation; the fundamentally pedagogic character of feminist praxis; the profoundly anticapitalist, socialist imperative in imagining and enacting global feminist struggles—constitute the fabric of our action, reflection, and vision of the future. Over the years of working against the grain in hegemonic, colonizing institutions, and in feminist and other grassroots communities, we have come to learn that the emotional terror produced by attempts to divest oneself of power and privilege and in the struggle for self-determination needs to be scrutinized very seriously. The challenge lies in an ethical commitment to work to transform terror into engagement based on empathy and a vision of justice for everyone. After all, this is at the heart of building solidarity across otherwise debilitating social, economic, and psychic boundaries. The most profound effects of our organizing and envisioning liberation as a permanent condition for all peoples may not be experienced for at least seven generations. As Frantz Fanon has argued, each generation has a responsibility to produce and transform the terms of struggle and liberation so that succeeding generations can assume the ongoing task in different but more advanced ways.³⁸

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