

preface

GLOBAL FEMINISM IS NOT MERELY expanding feminist knowledge, it is altering feminist theories and reshaping what feminism means around the world. This issue of *Feminist Studies* illustrates the new global scholarship on women and gender, with essays drawing on activism in several regions, including Mexico, Israel, and Colombia. Full of hope regarding the possibilities of women's local and transnational organizing, the essays also confront a gloomy present international picture where, according to Marilyn Porter's review essay on "Transnational Feminisms in a Globalized World," "the global situation for women is changing, mostly for the worse," even as feminist organizations join forces to respond to this deteriorating situation. One of the most significant developments in this effort, Porter claims, is the supplementation of the "individualism of a human rights approach based in Northern liberal philosophy" by the recognition of collective rights and the claims of "culture" espoused more frequently by feminists from the South.

Worsening conditions for women, combined with increased and more specifically targeted women's activism, lead to the complex debates between "cultural" rights and state-based development imperatives described in Kiran Asher's essay, "Black Women's Activism, Development, and Ethnicity in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia." In the wake of constitutional reforms in the region that provided for greater "ethnic" and territorial rights for black communities, Asher explores how Afro-Colombian women's organizations in the early 1990s negotiated racial subjectivity in relation to development imperatives. She shows the various ways that "black women linked their material needs (what they call *tener*—having) to their identities as women and as blacks" (what they refer to as *ser*—being) in the establishment of black women's cooperatives and the Black Women's Network. Arguing against privileging either autonomous organizing or cooptation by the state as the only two modalities within which to view

Afro-Colombian women's activist efforts, Asher claims that "ethnocultural politics . . . and the links between *ser* and *tener* . . . complicate rather than negate black women's relationships with development interventions."

Continuing the discussion of feminists' role with regard to "development" efforts, Porter's review essay highlights the overlapping and synergistic work of two transnational feminist organizations, DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era) and AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development). One of the most important DAWN activists, West Indian feminist Peggy Antrobus, is featured in this issue in an interview by Michelle Rowley. Based on her experience inside both governments and nongovernmental organizations, Antrobus stresses the unequal position of small states in current global frameworks and speaks for those women around the world who challenge neoliberal structural adjustment policies imposed by developed nations. Instead, she speaks on behalf of the "Third Way" of 1970s democratic socialism and the need to balance practical, often slow, and incremental efforts for change with the visions of more utopian feminisms. Her stinging critique of neoliberalism as a kind of "economic fundamentalism" resonates with the viewpoint of many of this issue's essays, including the art essay by Amy Swerdlow. This essay introduces the sculpture of Ella Tulin, who portrayed heroic female figures and whose piece, "Fully Empowered," was featured at the UNIFEM international art exhibit at United Nations headquarters in 2000 at the opening of a special session on "Gender Equality, Development, and Peace in the Twenty-first Century."

Another essay that delineates neoliberalism's impact on individuals' lives is Electra Arenal's essay describing "Women in the Oaxaca Teachers' Strike and Citizens' Uprising." Arenal places the conflict within broader debates about feminism in relation to democracy and anti-neoliberal globalization in the Oaxacan (and Chiapas) regions of Mexico, as well as within the contexts of transnational social organizing across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Her detailed examination of the events, conflicts, and players in the 2006 Oaxaca teacher's strike illustrates women's key roles in articulating the impact of neoliberalism on curtailing human rights.

Finding similar restrictive efforts in the past, Landon Storrs details the ways that cold war anticommunism in the United States collaborated with antifeminism to target women, especially feminists, who entered the government workforce in increasing numbers during the New Deal and World War II eras. Presenting new evidence on the undue attention conservative journalists and members of congress lavished on high-ranking women, Storrs argues that charges of disloyalty against women in government “had antifeminist *sources* as well as antifeminist outcomes.” Storrs uncovers the multifaceted ways in which feminism—and any deviation from female domesticity and the feminine “norm”—were linked to communism during the McCarthy era. At the same time, Storrs also draws parallels between the McCarthy period and the present both in terms of the deeply entrenched gendered ideals and sexism implicit in right-wing attacks and of liberals’ responses to such attacks. The antifeminist intent of that period is made manifest as is its result in marginalizing women’s public voices.

Also focusing on marginalized voices is Sarab Abu-Rabia Queder’s article, which represents the views of some of the most overlooked of women, Arab Bedouin women and girls living in Israeli enforced villages. The Israeli state has eliminated their former pastoral life while promising them education and occupations, but in forms many of the women find unacceptable. Queder describes the significant generational differences among the women, the “grandmother” generation having lost their traditional rural functions, while the schoolgirls and school dropouts attempt to take advantage of new opportunities without sacrificing their group’s respect. Queder wishes to expand definitions of feminism to include the tentative internal questionings of their position by women who are denied cultural validation, showing the potential rifts within apparently unified and traditional communities.

Scholars writing memoirs from Malaysia, France, Cuba, and the United States explore the shaping of their identities with regard to social class as well as ethnicity and gender, according to Margaret Willard-Traub’s review essay on scholarly autobiographies. Such “reflective texts” often describe the writers’ experiences of social class as dependent “upon a multitude of historical and material realities,” thus “challenging an

uncomplicated notion of class as simply socioeconomic status.” The accountability of these authors to their multiple audiences and to their past selves involves their writing against their disciplinary traditions, at times, and also “in the company of painful memory.”

Also crossing national boundaries, present and past, the poems in this issue revision difficult family ties: Adela Najarro’s poems triangulate heterosexual relationships through a daughter’s eyes, a mother’s vertiginous sexuality, an absent father with rhapsodic Spanish speech in a lush Nicaraguan setting. L.K. Holt’s vivid imagery references Frida Kahlo’s, while Jana Harris imagines the harsh lives and intense emotions of pioneering women of the nineteenth-century U.S. American West.

One of the most revered—but now often neglected—pioneers of post-World War II feminist theory is Simone de Beauvoir, and among the most common charges against her are that she alienated the mind from the body and disparaged lesbians. Meryl Altman’s revisionary approach to “Simone de Beauvoir and Lesbian Lived Experience” details her own changing reactions to Beauvoir. Altman now sees Beauvoir’s treatment of the body as a “situation” as central to a reconceptualization of “lesbian existence” that provides a nuanced, anti-essentialist, and anti-normative approach to sexual identity. According to Altman, Beauvoir’s stylistic traits of montage and digression, which early readers found so difficult, now seem fresh and responsive to the complex realities of differing women’s lives.

Judith Kegan Gardiner and Gayatri Reddy,
for the editorial collective