



# International Women's NEWS NOUVELLES Féministes Internationales

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## Rosy Weiss

Rosy Weiss is a French interpreter by education and a retired official in Austria's Ministries for Labour, Social Affairs, Consumer Protection as well as Environment, Youth and Family, where she was responsible for international affairs. Ms. Weiss served as IAW President from 2004 to 2010 and as chairperson of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women from 2006 to 2009. She was involved in the drafting of reports of Austrian NGOs to CEDAW and the Universal Periodic Review. During Austria's EU Presidencies she served as liaison between governments and NGOs during the negotiations at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2006 and as chair of the Regional Preparatory Conference (The Hague Forum) for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+5).



## Lea Börgerding

I am a PhD student and research assistant in Global History at Freie University Berlin, focusing on socialist women's internationalism during the Cold War era in the GDR, Vietnam and Chile. After completing a BA in Politics with International Relations at the University of York (UK) and an MPhil in International Relations at the University of Oxford (UK), I worked in international development and political communications for two years. Whenever I am not at the archive or library, I contribute to a German politics podcast and work as a communications volunteer for the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP).



## Jessica Orban

After completing a BA in Politics with International Relations at the University of York (UK) and an MA in Geography, local land planning and water resource management at the University of Nanterre (France), I currently work on freshwater biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions at the French Water Partnership, an association which serves as a platform for French water stakeholders operating at international level and advocates for the crucial importance of water in sustainable development policies worldwide. Born in Brussels, I grew up in London, Toulouse and Paris in a bilingual and multicultural background and am particularly sensitive to issues surrounding multiculturalism and identity, and its intersections with feminism in today's politics.



## Holly Herbert

Holly Herbert is IAW's Assistant Membership Secretary, assisting Lene Pind with the membership process. Holly is from Sydney, Australia. She is a High School Music Teacher, currently undertaking her Masters in Special Education. She has a passion for education and believes in educational equality as learning and knowledge empower us. Holly volunteers her time for a charity in Australia called 'Share the Dignity' which brings dignity to women who are homeless, at-risk and those experiencing domestic violence through the distribution of sanitary items.



# COVID-19

In the second half of 2020 this virulent pandemic continues to affect us all in so many different ways. I'm sure that I'm echoing the thoughts of everyone throughout the Alliance by sending warm good wishes to all our readers. Please take care and stay safe / Restez en bonne santé. And please take comfort from your involvement with the IAW which, in its 116th year, continues to work and lobby for all women and girls globally.

Many of you will have read with interest the special edition **Newsletter: COVID19 – we are in this together** which brought us stories from members in different parts of the world. *Remember you can always access this and other items on the website [www.womenalliance.org/Publications](http://www.womenalliance.org/Publications).*

One benefit this year has been the massive growth of video contacts around the world: with families and friends, for birthdays, dinners; one of my friends is meeting cousins she didn't know existed. Over the years we thought we were pretty well connected by phone, then by email and Skype but now we've all heard about and many of us are videoconferencing.

## IAW 38th Congress 24th – 28th November 2020

The Alliance has taken up the challenge to have a virtual Congress supported by pre- and post-Congress Board meetings. All this is being planned and organised by a selected taskforce, Congress Bulletins are being circulated regularly and all Registration details are on the IAW website.

The theme selected for Congress - ***A caring economy putting people and the planet over profits*** - reflects the growing awareness by millions of people during the pandemic of the need for support within communities, the growth of national sustainability from industry, home gardens and cooking, improved health with natural exercise and cleaner atmospheres. These glimpses of a better, more caring and healthier world are leading to calls globally for real post-pandemic changes, notably moving away from the major focus over decades by governments of all persuasions on failed neoliberal 'trickle down' economic beliefs and policies which favour big business while allowing massive growth in unreliable part-time and casual work, static wages and rising prices. And alongside, there is too often a growing cry for yet more buckets of money for questionable defence and home security spending at the cost of seriously needed funding to support education, health,

affordable housing, early childhood, our elders – the list goes on. And, overriding everything, the growing dangers and effects of global warming.

## Women and Children

Overall, women and children continue to suffer the most: gains that have improved gender-based inequalities are being lost; domestic violence is growing; casual and part-time jobs are often the first to go. And this does not diminish from the overall losses during the pandemic by all workers of jobs, businesses, livelihoods, homes.

## Climate Change

Constant destruction of the planet's natural resources and wildlife is causing more and more extreme disasters; conflicts and violence continue unabated, indifferent to the untold human suffering and the huge environmental damage caused.

While many national governments are still afraid to speak out and take strong action, now often using the pandemic as a shield, many others are years ahead in tackling what needs to be done. And there is so much amazing growth and exciting research everywhere. While social and other media and some world 'leaders' continue to peddle misinformation, the take-up in solar power and batteries continues to surge and provide more jobs. Countries have closed or are closing dangerous old coal and gas fired plants; local governments, schools, businesses take pride in 'going green'. Traditional owners with cultures going back thousands of years are at last being looked to for advice on land care and sustainability.

Intelligent long term planning, cohesive voices and generous financial support will provide the assurances needed to build and expand on this growth.

## The Future

There is a lot of hope, energy and goodwill being expressed. Alliance members can plan what part to play in ensuring more people have opportunities to have their say in decisions that will affect them and their families, to take on social responsibilities and to plan sustainability for a better, more caring and healthier world. One way this can be achieved is by becoming used to and regularly communicating via videoconferencing as quickly and easily as by phone or email, thus building networks, collaborations and friends throughout the Alliance and like minded organisations.





## NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTIONS

*Charting the future:  
more equal, inclusive  
and sustainable*

**By Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations  
and Executive Director of UN Women,  
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the closing  
of the 64th Session of the Commission  
on the Status of Women  
4 July, 2020 (edited version)**

The Political Declaration that was agreed when we opened the 64th session in March will serve as a powerful tool to help accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Multi-year Programme of Work for 2021-2024 provides strong and well-focused opportunities to tackle critical issues, and for Member States to chart key policy and other measures for action by governments and different critical actors. Again, I thank the Commission for this work, especially Vice-Chair Ms Devita Abraham for her leadership.

But we are now in a new world. We have to reflect on how much the plans that we have will stand up to the future that faces us. The findings of the 25-year review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had already put us on high alert. Our sense of what lies ahead for the women and girls of the world has been further sharpened and made even more urgent by the pandemic.

The impact of COVID-19 has exerted unprecedented pressure on the structural weaknesses in our societies and economies. It has highlighted and heightened inequalities: women's front-line roles as health workers, in service industries and in the care economy have become more visible than ever before. We now all know that women are essential service providers in the world, that they truly hold up half of the sky, and yet they are not as appreciated as they need to be.

We also have seen gender-based violence increasing — at home, online and in public spaces. And we ask all governments to ensure that the services women need at this time and beyond are declared essential services in every country.

We have seen access to justice and the courts often compromised.

We have also seen the ability to reach sexual and reproductive health services being reduced and we urge that this be given attention.

The digital divide is keeping women and girls away from information and education and this is a sure way of leaving them behind. We urge governments to provide and to pay attention to the much-needed infrastructure for digitalization in every part of the world.

Women's unpaid care work has been rising. Millions of girls are out of school, putting them at greater risk of child marriage, FGM, unintended pregnancies and HIV infection. All of this would reverse the gains that we have all worked so hard for in the last 25 years.

These challenges have given new dimensions to our work on gender equality and women's empowerment. That is why it is urgent that we work together to build back better, and that we make sure that our programmes are made to respond to all these problems, including the allocation of resources that is needed for us to rise to this occasion.

While many of our ambitious plans for this 'year of anniversaries' have had to be put on hold, the imperative to put gender perspectives centre-stage is even more important as Member States design and implement COVID-19 responses.

We are urging you to make sure that your fiscal interventions respond to the needs of women in the private sector, in the informal sector and those women who are in family businesses. We also urge you to make sure that your social protection interventions respond to women.

We all need to all work together, to prevent reversal of the gains of 25 years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and to take advantage of the impetus of initiatives like Generation Equality and the Action Coalitions, which are meant to assist us to overcome the challenges that we have all identified.

We must ensure that we use the lessons from past crises and do not simply rebuild the patriarchy. We have to make sure that patriarchy becomes a thing of the past.



The current crisis has shown not only the many essential roles that women play, but just how interconnected our world is. We know that a virus anywhere is a virus everywhere. So, we need the solidarity to make sure that we defeat and we conquer together.

Now, it is 75th year of the UN. Our commitment to multilateralism and collaboration has never been more important and the need for all of us to defend it is obvious to all of us. Gender equality is an essential part of achieving the vision set out in the UN Charter. And of course, it is also a vision that was enshrined in the founding of UN Women on 2 July, 10 years ago. We hope that we will soon have an opportunity to celebrate the 10th birthday of UN Women together.

The last several months have shown the growing momentum of the gender equality community. As we turn our sights now to CSW65, we have the opportunity to address the pressing issues facing women and girls and to chart a way forward that is more equal, more inclusive and more sustainable.



### PRIORITY THEMES for the Commission on the Status of Women

#### 14 July 2020, New York

At the conclusion of the Sixty-fourth CSW session, UN Member States announced the Commission on the Status of Women priority themes:

#### Sixty-fifth session (2021):

- Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

#### Sixty-sixth session (2022):

- Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes

#### Sixty-seventh session (2023):

- Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

#### Sixty-eighth session (2024):

- Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

#### Related Links:

- [Full Political Declaration](#)
- [Press release: Ahead of International Women's Day, new UN Women report warns that progress towards gender equality is lagging and hard-fought gains are under threat](#)
- ["Women's rights in review 25 years after Beijing" report](#)
- [UN SG report](#)

### Vale Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933-2020)



©Photograph: Reuters

We pay tribute to a brilliant woman who stood fearlessly for gender equality, women's civil rights and liberties. A distinguished career led to Ginsburg being appointed the second woman ever to serve on the United States Supreme Court in 1993. Sadly, but not unexpectedly, the appointment of her replacement on the Supreme Court immediately became a political football leading up to the US presidential election on 3 November 2020.

### Women's Suffrage

**“Thailand was the first major nation in the world to let women vote.”** This sentence jumped out from the item on **Gay rights protests in Thailand** under **News and Updates from Feminists around the Globe**. A little bit of research discovered the following:

*Women's suffrage in Thailand can be dated at least as far back as the Ministry of Interior's Local Administrative Act of May 1897. The Ministry of the Interior was created in 1894 at the behest of King Chulalongkorn (r.1868–1919), as part of his far-reaching administrative reforms. Concerned to safeguard the country against colonial advances, the king appointed his half-brother, Prince Damrong Rajanuphab (1862–1943), as Thailand's first Minister of the Interior in 1894.*

*The prince proceeded to establish the framework for Thailand's contemporary administrative division into provinces, districts, sub-districts and villages. Although national, provincial and district levels of government were to be staffed by salaried bureaucrats, villagers were to elect their own village heads. **The 1897 Act defined villagers who were eligible to vote as residents “whose house or houseboat was located in that village,” and specified that residents included both males and females.***

*Note from Editor:* Records show that New Zealand was the first self-governing country in the world in which all women had the right to vote in, but not to stand for, parliamentary elections in 1893. (It took until 1919 before women could stand for election.) In Australia the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 allowed non-Indigenous women in all States to vote and stand as candidates in federal elections. In 1962 Indigenous people were granted the right to vote and this only came into full effect in 1965 when the last State changed its law. But it was not until 1984 that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were finally required to enrol and vote at elections.

# NEWS AND UPDATES FROM FEMINISTS AROUND THE GLOBE

compiled by Lea Börgerding, Jessica Orban and Holly Herbert

## Women in Belarus take protests into their own hands

Thousands of women have marched through the capital of Belarus calling for the resignation of the authoritarian president Aleksander G. Lukashenko. A week after the vote where Aleksander G. Lukashenko claimed to have won 80% of the vote, inflamed protests brought thousands of people to the streets, crowds were estimated at 200,000 people in the capital Minsk. The protests saw gruesome violence inflicted on thousands of Belarusians.



©Photograph: Reuters

This inspired the first female protest which started small with a few hundred women dressed in white and holding flowers. Marches and demonstrations by women have become a frequent feature of the protests. For the first time in the wave of protests supporters of LGBT rights have appeared with rainbow flags in the women's march which indicates that the opponents of President Alexander Lukashenko are becoming bolder.

**For more information about the still ongoing, violent protests in Belarus read**

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-06/thousands-belarus-women-protest-against-alexander-lukashenko/12634102>

©Photograph: Sean Rayford/Getty Images



## Kamala Harris picked as Joe Biden's running mate

California senator Kamala Harris has been named as Joe Biden's vice-presidential running mate. "I have the great honor to announce that I've picked Kamala Harris - a fearless fighter for the little guy, and one of the country's finest public servants - as my running mate," Biden wrote on Twitter. Harris is the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India and is one of America's most prominent female leaders in politics. She is the first woman of colour and first Asian American woman to be nominated for

a major political party. On Twitter Bernie Sanders tweeted, "She understands what it takes to stand up for working people, fight for health care for all, and take down the most corrupt administration in history".

**To learn more:** <https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2020/aug/18/can-kamala-harris-help-joe-biden-win-the-us-presidency-podcast>

**For more information on the history of Black women running for VP read:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/08/12/bass-kamala-first-black-vp/>





## Gay rights protests in Thailand

©Photograph: Apichit Jinakul

In late July 2020, students took to the streets in Thailand to demand from their government greater gender rights and an end to what they called outdated curriculum and discriminatory rules on uniforms and haircuts. According to media reports, it was the first demonstration of its kind in the South East Asian country.

In August, the Thai government then announced that it would shake up this status quo, advancing a law that will allow “civil partnership” between LGBTQ couples.

It would be the first Southeast Asian nation to do so — just as Thailand was the first major nation in the world to let women vote.\*



\*Note from Editor – see IWNews in Brief in this edition

Read up on the events here: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gay-pride-thailand/thai-students-rally-over-gender-rights-uniforms-and-haircut-rules-idUSKCN24U2F>

## New Zealand passed a bill to ensure equal pay

Since 1972, New Zealand has had an existing law that guarantees that women and men are paid equally for the same work. In July this year, the legislation that was passed focused on pay equity ensuring women and men are paid equally for work that is different but has equal value including underpaid female-dominated industries.

Jacinda Ardern posted on Instagram “The bill delivers on our promise to create a more equitable Aotearoa (New Zealand) by making it easier for employees to raise a pay equity claim, and by encouraging collaborative mediation before issues are escalated to the courts.

To everyone who got us to this point, for all the years of hard work, thank you.”



©Photograph: Nick Perry

## Climate crisis and gender-based violence in Africa

As governments across the globe are occupied with tackling the coronavirus pandemic and its detrimental effects on economies as well as on social and political life, the still ongoing, and likely much more life threatening, climate crisis seems to have slipped off the agenda in many places. South African writer, feminist, and Extinction Rebellion activist Orthalia Kunene draws back our attention to the forgotten crisis and reflects on the relationship between climate change, environmental degradation and gender-based violence in Africa. She argues that increased environmental degradation and stress on ecosystems “creates scarcity and stress on people”, and that these factors in turn are linked e.g. to more violence against women, especially for vulnerable groups such as Indigenous communities, even earlier child marriages, as well as rape as a weapon of war in intensified conflicts. In light of these problems, Kunene calls on politicians and activists to “rally behind policies that recognise gender-sensitive impacts, provide women with access to resources, and give them opportunities to participate in mitigation and adaptation processes”.

Read the full article here: <https://theecologist.org/2020/sep/01/climate-breakdown-intensifies-gender-based-violence>



## Coronavirus and Surrogacy

The coronavirus crisis has shed light on the complexities linked to surrogacy and some of the ethical issues surrounding it. As borders closed, many biological parents have been unable to unite with their babies and surrogate mothers have been left having to take care of them and support them financially. This has been the case in Ukraine for example, where a surrogate mother receives at least £10,000 for one surrogacy. Yet, because of travel restrictions and other complications linked to the lockdown, surrogate mothers have not only been stranded with surrogate children with a high risk of developing attachment to them, but have also not always received their payment which they often depend on financially. That's not to mention physical and mental health risks linked to surrogacy as well as risks linked to the transfer of embryos, sometimes resulting in surrogate mothers carrying several babies when the biological parents have only requested one.



Newborn babies born to Ukrainian surrogate mothers at the Hotel Venice in Kyiv  
©Photograph: Sergei Supinsky/AFP via Getty Images/  
The Guardian

The debate around surrogacy is a complicated one, and it ought to be addressed in all of its facets: transnational power dynamics, class and socioeconomic inequality and women's rights to their own agency, to choice and to have control over their own bodies.

**To find out more about surrogacy in Ukraine in the context of COVID-19:** <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/15/the-stranded-babies-of-kyiv-and-the-women-who-give-birth-for-money>

**To read about the Surrogacy Bill (2019) in India, where commercial surrogacy is particularly prominent:**  
<https://feminisminindia.com/2019/08/08/lok-sabha-passes-surrogacy-regulation-bill-2019/>  
<https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/features/the-abolition-of-choice-1568972678261.html>

## Young feminists in the U.S. are continuing their activism despite Covid19

The U.S. has been one of the countries hit hardest by the ongoing coronavirus crisis. With school closures and classes cancelled, for instance, many university students had to move back home and successfully organizing demonstrations has become much more complicated because of safety concerns and hygiene regulations. Yet, young feminist of color have not stopped their activism and advocacy. On the contrary, many of them are leading through the pandemic. TeenVogue has recently documented some of their stories across the United States which are worth checking out!

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/feminist-organizers-womens-equality-day>

## Fighting "Manels" in Ghana

The term "manel" is commonly used to refer to a panel of experts or participants, for example on a TV show or at an academic or political conference, that consists of men only. Manels are commonplace across the globe; yet, in Ghana, and in the midst of the pandemic, women are taking action. "It has been heartbreaking watching Ghanaian media and event organizers repeatedly exclude women from critical conversations at a time that every citizen is grappling with the pandemic," write Fouzia Tua Alhassan and Safa Musah. Despite the adverse effects of the coronavirus crisis on women's lives, for instance due to the dramatic rise in violence against women and children, as well as its adverse economic impacts, women have not been given a voice. Ghana's feminist activists are now taking on this challenge, using cyber activism among others to call out manels, media houses and event organizers through naming and shaming. Another approach is in building allyship with men, especially regular panelists.

**To find out more, check out Alhassan's and Musah's article on** <https://africanfeminism.com/dismantling-manels-the-ghanaian-feminist-agenda/>





### Australia and New Zealand selected as hosts of FIFA Women's World Cup 2023

©Photograph: AsOne

Australia and New Zealand won their bid to host the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. The bid that was fittingly titled 'AsOne', is unique due to it being the first time the tournament will be co-hosted across two confederations, namely the Asian Football Confederation, which Australia is a part of, and the Oceania Football Confederation which New Zealand is part of.

The tournament will also be the first to be held in the Asia-Pacific region and the biggest football event held in Australia. The Football Federation Association foresees this will see a surge in female registrations for football in the coming years in Australia, pushing towards a 50-50 gender split by 2027.

This is an exciting step forward in promoting gender equality and for the visibility and contributions of women in sport in Australia and New Zealand.



### Feminist Film Festival in Central Asia

In August 2020, The FemAgora Central Asia festival commenced online. It featured events that tackled feminism, gender equality, LGBT+ discrimination, and domestic violence with the participation of several activists, lawyers, and academics from across the region through to the end of September. For the past years, the FemAgora festival has acted as a hub, an aggregator of activists and advocates that exchange thoughts on lived experiences and plans for the future.

To find out more, visit: <https://thedi diplomat.com/2020/08/feminist-festival-kicks-off-in-central-asia/>



### Podcast recommendation: Black Feminist Rants

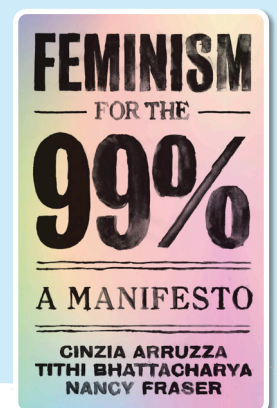
*Black Feminist Rants: Conversations on Reproductive Justice and Activism* is a U.S. based podcast that centers the experiences of Black women and femmes navigating social justice spaces and the world. The podcast emerged recently and will cover topics within the Reproductive Justice framework and beyond. To find out more about the podcast, read the following article with its producers and hosts or listen to the podcast on Apple Music.

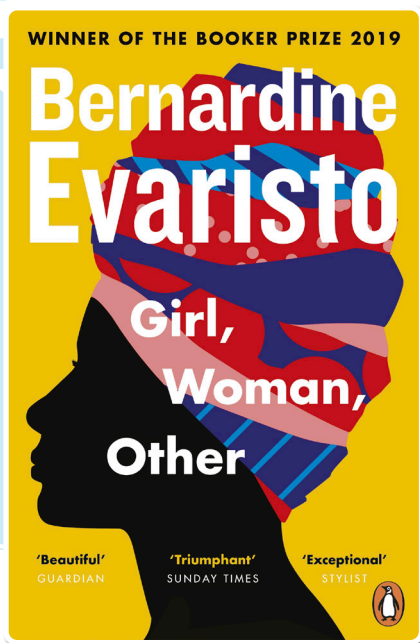
<https://msmagazine.com/2020/09/01/black-feminist-rants-podcast-creates-crucial-space-for-youth-activism-and-reproductive-justice/>

### Book recommendation: Feminism for the 99%

This book by Cinzia Arruza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser (well-known U.S. professors and feminist activists who helped organize the International Women's Strike U.S.) is a political manifesto for those 99% of women across the globe who do not benefit from neoliberal capitalism. Those for whom increasing the minimum wage and implementing universal health and childcare would have a far greater impact on their lives than having more women CEOs.

It argues against liberal feminism and shows why "leaning in" (Sheryl Sandberg's catch phrase) is simply not enough.





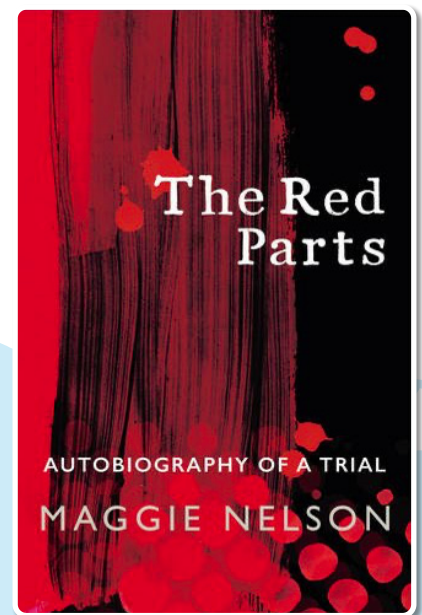
Book recommendation: *Girl, Woman, Other*  
by Bernardine Evaristo

*Girl, Woman, Other* follows 12 very different characters, mostly black British women. Each character has their own chapter; you read about women who are young and old, rich and some poor, some who are bitter while others that are full of hope, women that fall in love, women that rise up against racism and challenge binary structure. Together, the stories of these women present a cross-section of contemporary Britain over the last 100 years.

Book recommendation: *The Red Parts -*  
*Autobiography of a trial (2007)* by Maggie Nelson

TW: violence against women, murder

"For as long as I can remember, this has been one of my favorite feelings. To be alone in public, wandering at night, or lying close to the earth, anonymous, invisible, floating. To be "a man of the crowd," or, conversely, alone with Nature or your God. To make your claim on public space even as you feel yourself disappearing into its largesse, into sublimity. To practice for death by feeling completely empty, but somehow still alive. It's a sensation that people have tried, in various times and places, to keep women from feeling." In *The Red Parts*, Maggie Nelson, also author of *The Argonauts* (2015), takes us through the trial against the suspected murderer of her aunt Jane Mixer - her mother's sister - of which the case reopens 35 years after the murder. *The Red Parts* explores family ghosts and the author's relationship with an aunt she has never met, grief and the idea of narrative closure, the effects of storytelling and our obsession with murder, in particular the murder of women.





# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN FOCUS

## Beijing+25

### Routine and new approaches for the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Personal reflections by Rosy Weiss<sup>1</sup>

In 2000, the fifth anniversary of the 4th and last World Conference on Women, 4WCW, Beijing 1995, prepared by the 44th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), was commemorated at the twenty-third special session of the UN General Assembly (A/S-23/13). This special session came up with

- a short Political Declaration (A/RES/S-23/2) reaffirming governments commitment to overcome obstacles in the implementation of the Beijing and Nairobi (3WCW) outcomes, to strengthen and safeguard an enabling environment, full participation and empowerment of women, and to pledge to undertake further action through the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Governments agreed to a regular assessment of further implementation, *as appropriate*, in ten years, and pledged to ensure the realization of societies in which both women and men work together towards a world where every individual can enjoy equality, development and peace in the 21st century;
- a Resolution (A/RES/S-23/3) in which the GA adopts further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

This was the last special session of UNGA with respect to the Beijing process. Already in 2005, at **Beijing+10** world's women had to accept that further assessments will take place at the level of a functional UN Commission (CSW).

Not surprisingly "Beijing Betrayed" was the title chosen for a worldwide report by Women's Environment & Development Organisation (WEDO) stating that governments have failed to turn the Platform into Action. "Governments worldwide have adopted a piecemeal and incremental approach to implementation that cannot achieve the economic, social and political transformation underlying the promises and visions of Beijing" writes June Zeitlin WEDO'S Director in her introduction. In the same direction argued the New York NGO Committee on the Status of

Women with the title "Ten Years After Beijing: Still more promises than progress" and Equality Now with "Words and Deeds, holding governments accountable in the **Beijing+10** Review Process".

The 49th session of CSW, **Beijing+10**: Only with great difficulty and in the very last minute could the Commission come up with a Declaration, even shorter than GA's Political Declaration five years ago, just reaffirming, welcoming progress, emphasizing the importance of Beijing and the special GA for achieving agreed development goals, recognizing the mutual reinforcement with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with almost identical wording. See the Commission's report E/CN.6/2005/11, ECOSOC Official Records E/2005/27. The report of the SG (E/CS.6/2005/2) on the implementation of the Beijing and 23 special session documents is also worth reading not only for its overview of progress in the Beijing Critical Areas of Concern but because of its work on "other issues", not covered so far: trafficking in women and girls, HIV/AIDS, indigenous women, information and communication technologies, the Millenium Development Goals, and men and boys.

Indeed, there was only little progress, and the climate of negotiations worsened. However, there was still access to the UN building for accredited NGOs including the possibility to listen to deliberations and to personally lobby with government delegates in the corridors.

Five years later – **Beijing+15** – and against the background of the renovation of the UN headquarter due to asbestos, smooth accreditation and access to delegates changed considerably. One week before leaving Vienna for New York, flight tickets and hotel reservation settled, I read with amazement in a communication by the Division that "not all NGO representatives" will be given access to the deliberations. Two days before departure, I read with growing anger that – so sorry – there will be no translations for NGOs of the official documents. Week one of the session was pure chaos, to the extent that Rachel Mayanja,

1. Pre-printing of parts of my Beijing chapter of "Travelling in Politics and Friendship".



Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, tried to calm the frustrations of NGOs in a hitherto unprecedented letter.

Have there been tangible results? From my report: “Due to the failure to strongly reaffirm Beijing and to commit to renewed and concrete actions and resources to implement Beijing, the Declaration 2010 must be considered a backward step. It clearly overstates the progress made and underestimates the degree and types of challenges that remain for women in their multiple identities, including the persistence of violence against them.” The Declaration (E/CN.6/2010/L.1) reaffirmed, welcomed, emphasized, recognized and called upon – as already well known.

Yet, women expected more from the governments of the world. What should be done by the women’s movement in this situation – what would later be called the “shrinking space”? Is there still a chance for the implementation of the far-reaching Beijing commitments? These were the issues in a last minute get-together of NGO representatives, organized by the Alliance under the title “CSW54 – the end of an era? Do we have a future with the UN?”. In an over-crowded room (frustration level!) at the Church Centre these questions and much more were passionately discussed, and organizational requests formulated and sent to the UN Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW), the New York NGO Committee on the Status of Women and CONGO, the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations.

And finally **Beijing+25 with a complete new approach:** Preparations would have included two **Generation Equality Forums** during the first half of 2020, a kick off one in Mexico City, the second in Paris. This presents a new approach to the Beijing process, initiated by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico, in close partnership with civil society. It lays the ground for a conversation in real-time **across the globe** via satellite sessions for urgent action and accountability for gender

equality. “It seeks to celebrate the power of women’s rights activism, feminist solidarity and youth leadership to achieve transformative change”. This change is to be prepared by so-called Action Coalitions on the following themes: Gender-based violence; economic justice and rights; bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; feminist action for climate justice; technology and innovation for gender equality, and feminist movements and leadership. According to the plans of UN Women, these Action Coalitions should be “strong, vibrant and result-driven constituencies of partners”, including member states, women’s organizations, private sector entities, UN agencies and other multilateral organizations, as well as youth-led entities.

Due to COVID-19 which is “exacerbating gender and other inequalities and disproportionately affects women and girls in all countries” the Forums are now scheduled to take place in the first half of 2021. Preparations have continued with the establishment of the Action Coalitions and the selection of their potential leaders.

“The Generation Equality Forum will also launch an innovative **Compact for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action** to drive action and resources towards peace, security and humanitarian action. The Compact will strengthen coordination between existing initiatives and partnerships to ensure that women and youth are at the centre of peace, security and humanitarian action, 20 years after the landmark [UN Security Council resolution 1325](#) on women, peace and security. The development of the CowNewsmpact will be based on a broad stakeholder engagement and consultations with a particular focus on the input of Women, Peace and Security grassroots activists to ensure that existing global and regional processes are harnessed for national and local engagement and action<sup>2</sup>.

Stay informed on <https://ngocsw.org/beijing25>

2. Quotes are taken from the Forum’s website, <https://forum.generationequality.org/forum>



## Women radically transforming a world in crisis A framework for Beijing +25

### **Feminist Declaration on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women**

**Comments by Joanna Manganara**

In this article I will look into two Declarations that have been elaborated by feminist groups and activists from diverse regions and social movements on the occasion of the anniversary of Beijing +25. The aim is to find common issues that are dealt with by both of them.

The first group gathered in Mexico between 22nd and 24th of August 2019 to strategize towards the 25th Anniversary of the 1995 World Conference of Women. The second Declaration was elaborated by the Women's Rights Caucus, a global coalition of over 200 organizations that advocate for gender equality at the UN. The outcome of the deliberations was to be launched in Mexico, in May 2020 and culminate in Paris in July 2020, during the Generation Equality Forum. Due to COVID-19, both meetings have been cancelled and they are planned to take place in the first Semester of 2021. IAW has endorsed the Mexico text.

The reason these feminist groups have proceeded to elaborate those texts is that several member states of the UN lack political will to commit to an ambitious Declaration, as is evident from the Declaration that was adopted by CSW 64 on 9 March 2020.

According to both texts, the world is in a state of profound crisis. Neoliberal capitalism is the key driver of current global crises. Its core positions are free market and profits above people and

the planet. Women have been for a long time at the forefront of struggles against this system, understanding it to be fundamentally incompatible with the liberation and empowerment of women. The neoliberal economic order is a key structural barrier that since 1995 has exacerbated inequalities within and between countries and among genders. Patriarchy and other systems of oppression reinforce this economic system which has allowed a small number of wealthy individuals to gain more power, has compromised democratic systems of governance worldwide and allowed authoritarian, fascist and populist figures to thrive. This economic order that has entrenched authoritarianism and patriarchy has also enabled and prolonged conflicts as the capitalist system profits from increased militarization, securitization, surveillance capitalism, censorship, regulation of information to citizens.

Other important issues on which both Declarations focus: the climate crisis and its impact on women; the corporate capture of the state and multilateral spaces.

Climate crisis is rooted in neoliberal capitalism and exacerbated by an extractive development model and fossil fuel dependence. This system is increasing inequalities and violence within and between states. The impacts of climate crisis are gendered and need the active participation and



leadership of women and girls in all their diversity. Gender justice and human rights should be placed at the core of all climate responses.

Corporate capture of the state and multilateral spaces like the UN is taking place because of the erosion of public resources and infrastructure which has led governments and multilateral institutions to partner with corporations for the delivery of social services and economic projects. There is a call for the prevention of any undue influence by the corporate sector and private funders in agenda setting and policy making processes. There is also support for the development of the Treaty on Transnational Corporations and other business enterprises in line with international human rights law.

Another important issue has to do with the fact that structural issues related to women's oppression have not been seriously addressed by governments. Governments have not addressed the structural inequalities, and the wider social and economic barriers that lie at the root of violence against women and girls. For this reason, violence against women, including women human rights defenders, has been on the increase, including extreme forms of violence, such as disappearances, torture and femicides, which are widespread and happen with alarming impunity.

According to the Mexican text, steps should be taken to address the historically unequal power relations between genders and the marginalization, resulting from intersectional discrimination that heightens the risk of violence for many women, girls and gender non-conforming people.

## *Women Human Rights Defenders*

Governments should ensure that WHRD enjoy safe and enabling environments to exercise their rights. Steps should be taken to combat impunity and those responsible for violations or abuses and threats committed against WHRD by state and non-state or private actors that should be brought to justice through impartial investigations.

## *Labour*

A central element of the neoliberal agenda has been the systematic attack on wages and rights of workers, including the right to organize in unions. Governments should ensure the right to work as well as rights at work and decent work for all women and gender non-conforming people. They should also make sure that labour regulations and

protection extend to those working in the informal and the digital economy and enact laws and policies to prevent gender based discrimination. They should also recognize, reduce, redistribute and democratize unpaid care work.

## *Right to health*

Governments fail to adequately address or cover the health needs of women, in particular of women transgender and gender non-conforming, or exclude people who work in the informal sector, migrants etc. Governments should provide access to comprehensive transformative public health care services, including access to the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health services.

Concerning education, governments are asked among other issues to ensure that curricula are gender responsive.

Another important issue to which emphasis is given is comprehensive sexuality education for all people, to ensure that they can achieve the right to the highest attainable standard of health and enjoy healthy relationships. Sexuality education is comprehensive and based on evidence and not ideology. Sexuality education is grounded in human rights, gender equality and ensures respect for the diversity of bodies, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and characteristics and upholds bodily autonomy and integrity.

## *Bodily autonomy and sexuality*

The human rights of individuals to exercise autonomy over their sexuality is fundamental to their ability to exercise autonomy over other areas in their lives. Yet the human rights of women transgender and gender non-conforming are routinely violated and the targets of intense attacks by religious institutions and authoritarian governments. It is here that the rhetoric of anti-gender proponents has become most potent, mobilizing new opposition to hard won women rights, to comprehensive sexuality education, abortion and contraception, assisted reproductive technologies and marriage equality, among others.

## *Land rights*

While in some countries women are formally denied the right to land ownership and inheritance, in others women with formal rights are losing control over land and other productive resources, due to land grabbing and eviction. Those practices are driven by multinational corporations,





empowered by unregulated extractive agricultural industries and are often undertaken in the name of development.

Governments are asked to halt and reverse land rights by ensuring the free, informed and continuous consent of all communities affected.

## *Migrants and refugees*

Neoliberal policies have intensified inequalities, extractivism, the loss of land and livelihoods, the effects of extreme weather, authoritarian regimes, militarization, war and the growth of criminal gangs. These factors are among those driving migration from rural to urban areas and across borders, entailing mixed movements of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Globally, half of international migrants are women and LGBTQ people. Every stage of women's migration is marked by structural systemic violence. This includes lack of access to social services, legal services and labour protection. Governments should prioritize migrant women's access to public services and guarantee access to justice for them.

## *Economic Empowerment of Women*

The Women's Rights Caucus is giving to the economic empowerment of women a very interesting definition. According to the Caucus, the concept should not be defined with a narrow focus on women's participation in economic markets but rather focus on women's ability to exercise real power over economic, social, political and cultural structures, as well as equally benefit from the advancement and development of society.

## *Concerning Accountability*

The Women Rights Caucus is making an important proposal for the establishment of a Global Independent Women's Structure, created and owned by women, which will serve women of the world in all their diversity, without any barriers, in order to ensure a holistic accountability mechanism for the commitments and responsibilities of state and non-state actors.

It is also asking that civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, are continuously included in national and international accountability mechanisms, for the commitments and responsibilities of state and non-state actors.

## *Methods of work of the CSW*

The Women's Rights Caucus also recommends the reform of CSW methods of work. It addresses, among other issues, the observer status for civil society at all CSW negotiations, reform of CSW to make it tripartite and gives NGOs a recognized official space within the Commission, including a seat in the CSW Bureau.

CSW should include civil society speakers in every panel and dialogue encouraging diverse representation.

## *UNGA High-level Meeting to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Beijing Women's Conference – 1 October 2020*

This high-level virtual meeting of the General Assembly will focus on the overall theme, 'Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls'. As decided by the UNGA in July 2020, this event will take place on 1 October 2020 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), which took place in Beijing, China in September 1995.

UN Member States recommended that the UNGA President conduct consultations to finalize the organizational arrangements for the meeting. The Permanent Representative of New Zealand, Craig John Hawke, and the Permanent Representative of Qatar, Sheikha Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, were appointed to conduct consultations on arrangements for the meeting.

In 1995, by the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, governments adopted a 38-paragraph declaration and the 129-page Beijing Platform for Action. The Platform identifies 12 "critical areas of concern": poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, and the girl child.

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has conducted periodic reviews of the Platform's implementation, in 2000, 2005 and 2010. Its 25-year review and appraisal in March 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Comments from Major Groups and Other Stakeholders following the High-Level Political Forum on SDGs held 7-16 July 2020

Circulated by NGO CSW/NY 4 August 2020

The members of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS), official stakeholders to the United Nations Sustainable Development processes, are concerned and disappointed that governments have failed to deliver a Ministerial Declaration at the end of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The forum was held virtually from 7-16 July 2020.

**Now more than ever, sustainable and liveable futures of all should be at centre, free from violence, oppression and discrimination. We need an ambitious Ministerial Declaration from #HLPF2020. Read, support and share the MGoS' press release with your networks and on social media.**

*Press Release 30 July 2020*

### **Civil society voices demand a strong Ministerial Declaration and a systemic approach to the SDGs**

The members of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, official stakeholders to the United Nations Sustainable Development processes, are concerned and disappointed that governments have failed to deliver a Ministerial Declaration at the end of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The forum was held virtually from 7-16 July 2020.

*"We attended and participated in the HLPF because we wanted to see governments commit to concrete steps, in accordance with the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, to push the world out of the intersecting crises we are facing. But the lack of a ministerial declaration is evidence that governments are utterly failing to take action in the midst of a global pandemic."* Frances Zainoeddin, International Federation on Ageing

At this year's HLPF, a major theme was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health, economies, and wellbeing. Many member states, UN institutions, and civil society representatives discussed how the pandemic has exposed current gaps in the development model and structural global inequalities. However, the HLPF drew to a close without any consensus outcome, and the current draft of the Ministerial Declaration, which went through

several rounds of negotiations, is still not adopted and has disappointed many.

*"As a result of the pandemic 186 countries have closed down all schools and universities. According to UNESCO over 1.2 billion students are affected, lifelong learning opportunities shrink, thus social and economic inequalities are exacerbated, especially for millions of those who couldn't afford online education. This will have a dramatic impact on the achievement of all SDGs. We need a Ministerial Declaration that will show the way out."*

**- Katarina Popovic, International Council for Adult Education.**

*"With a worldwide recession under COVID-19, we have a unique opportunity to rethink and undo exploitative and mutually destructive socio-economic practices that bank on informal, undocumented, unprotected, and unremunerated labour, and care work of women & girls, which we know is on the rise during COVID-19," said Wardarina, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development on behalf of Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism. "To address this, we need a Ministerial Declaration that focuses on systemic barriers. But the draft currently under discussion feeds into the market-based, neoliberal agenda that perpetuates global inequality, and we may not have a Ministerial Declaration at all."*

At the HLPF, it was widely acknowledged that five years after launching the SDGs, the world is off-track to achieving the goals, and that the COVID-19 pandemic will pose further setbacks. Civil society voices from around the world highlighted throughout the forum that the failure to make progress on the SDGs is due to systemic barriers and inequalities. The pandemic has exacerbated the intersecting gendered and racial inequalities experienced by those at the margins: migrants and refugees, LGBTQ people, older persons, farmers, Indigenous Peoples, Black people, non-binary and gender-non-conforming people, people with disabilities, workers in the informal sector, sex workers, domestic workers, and so many more.

*"We will never achieve the SDGs if the current extractive, unequal model of development is followed. What does building back better mean when we are still constructing remedies within a neoliberal development model that is built on profound injustice and inequality?"* **Mabel Bianco, Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, Argentina.**

There were also limitations to civil society inclusion and participation in the forum. This year, while there were more opportunities for representatives of civil society around the world



to participate as speakers virtually in the HLPF, particularly those who would otherwise have not been able to attend the meeting in New York, there were nevertheless many difficulties with internet access. The lack of interpretation made it difficult for speakers to contribute meaningfully to the deliberations of the thematic issues. There were far fewer sessions and each session was shorter and more scripted, which limited meaningful dialogue and debate in an inclusive and participatory manner.

*"The current process of reviewing the SDGs is performative and does not include a space to ask tough questions from governments, leaving little space for the systemic analyses that need to happen in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda. We need the space to participate, and an end to the clustered, siloed approaches to reviewing the goals."* **Valentina Bodrug-Lungu, Gender-Center, Moldova.**

The World needs a Ministerial Declaration from the HLPF 2020 process, a real and ambitious commitment to Agenda 2030, human rights and a just and equal future for all. However, we as Major Groups and other stakeholders do not want just any Ministerial Declaration. To truly recover from the intersecting crises of today, it is incumbent on Member States to agree on a strong Ministerial Declaration that focuses on systemic barriers and commits to dismantling injustice in all its forms. Moreover, all HLPF and sustainable development processes must radically work to uproot all inequalities through a systemic and transformative approach. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290, the HLPF is required to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations.

*"We must move out of siloed approaches and processes. SDGs are interlinked and should not be clustered when implemented and reviewed. To achieve the SDGs we need a transparent and participatory policy making process: governments must adopt the inclusive, transformative thinking of justice-oriented movements and organizing,"* said **Laura Viladevall Corominas of Agenda 2030 Feminista in Catalonia.**

*"The UN and the sustainable development agenda must uproot neoliberal frameworks and must be grounded in global solidarity, decolonialism and intersectional feminism."*

States face a unique opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to Agenda 2030, human rights, and social justice, and to work collectively with all stakeholders, including civil society, to end different crises and achieve a world that leaves no one behind. As members of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders, we will continue to work closely until this occurs, demanding that states change systems

of profound injustice into ones based on care, relationality, equity. Collective responses are the key to a better world for all. If Member States cannot agree on the outcome of HLPF, then it is time to rethink HLPF to make it fit for purpose.

About the MGoS

The Major Groups, the Women's Major Group, the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, the Children and Youth Major Group, the NGO Major Group, Farmers' Major Group, Local Authorities' Major Group, Workers and Trade Unions Major Group, Science & Technology Major Group, Business & Industry Major Group, and the other stakeholders include Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, LGBTI Stakeholder Group, Civil Society Financing for Development Group, Persons with Disabilities Stakeholder Group, Stakeholder Group on Ageing, Education & Academia Stakeholder Group, Volunteers Stakeholder Group, Together 2030, Sendai Engagement Mechanism.

Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) were integral to the development and adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since its adoption, MGoS have been actively working towards its implementation, through projects, initiatives, advocacy, knowledge-sharing, and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. MGoS are self-coordinated and independent from the UN Secretariat. MGoS attend all official meetings of the forum, intervene in official meetings, submit documents and present written and oral contributions, make recommendations, and organize side events and round tables.

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