THE FUTURE IS
Despite all the bullshit we endure, there is always potential to make better of what is... - TNL

We have so much more to learn, let our feminism continue to grow intersectionally, translationally and insurgenously!

Don't become explicit but also take a break. Try Self!

You are never alone. Be yourself and great people will come.

Be aware, Be kind, Learn.

College is never what you expect, but it allows a space to challenge your beliefs constantly. That's what makes it beautiful... a.a.

A better world is possible, one in which equal opportunities are available to all and not just reserved for those in Power. The

Dear Future Kin, we are trying our best.

THROUGH RADICAL SELF-CARE 
& COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
(and day votes BTW)
Marilyn, the Women and Gender Studies Student

by Marilyn Fernando

My piece was inspired by Lynda Barry’s “One! Hundred! Demons!” I thought her illustrations were a highly effective way of storytelling because of their simplicity of text and art. Throughout the different anecdotes, there are subtle arrows that add another dimension of emotion to the various stories; they reminded me of secrets that she allowed the reader to experience with her. I want to portray a similar kind of simplicity of emotion and vulnerability through images. I used photo strips of myself to convey the emotional roller coaster I experienced through my time in the Women and Gender Studies Department. The photostrip in color represents the questions and comments I’ve heard as I’ve tried to explain what Women and Gender Studies encompasses. It also represents the emotional waves that I’ve experienced through my time in the department. The black and white photostrip details the semesters I’ve spent in the department and grades I’ve received. This is an important piece of my experience because it shows how challenging and rewarding my time in the Women and Gender Studies department has been.

Each individual photo represents the emotion I experienced at that moment.
Untitled
by Takia Larkin

I pledge allegiance
amerikkka showed me how they truly felt on November 8th
To the Flag
i cried all night
screamed at the top of my fucking lungs
Of the United States of America
i heard the screams and cries of others too
rage made a lovely appearance that night
And to the Republic
all these people, walking around with their masks on
found myself walking in this labyrinth with an ongoing paranoia
asking,
did you vote for him?
are you a part of that 54%?
For which it stands
you can’t tell me to fight with love
when hate is what got #45 into office
Indivisible
so fuck your opinion
With Liberty
it’s bodies on the line
people’s livelihoods are at stake
And justice for all.

Poem One

the sun woke me up the next morning
Solange’s piano thumped the question “where do we go from here?”
how did they do it?
the ones that marched before us with their fist in the air
with their heads held high
voices muscled with strength
i don’t think there is one right answer
love is not the only answer
neither is hate
both coexist for a reason

Poem Two
A better world is possible, one in which equal opportunities are available to all and not just reserved for those in power. A world in which we tear down institutions that have racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, xenophobia, and transphobia entrenched in their structures. To achieve something better, we must remove institutions that were created during slavery, reconstruction, and segregation. We often think of these institutions as broken, when they are in fact working exactly as designed. Therefore, these institutions are beyond repair and should be removed, new systems and agencies should be collaboratively created with the input of all community stakeholders. As it stands right now, we have an immigration system that is beyond repair and marginalizes people seeking safety and security. The prison industrial complex is set up to only serve economic, bureaucratic and political interests while seeking to further oppress and marginalize our most vulnerable populations. We are using anti-trafficking methods that instead of rescuing often further traumatizes survivors. These issues are just a few that can be changed, if we start to advocate for a better tomorrow. With these issues in mind, the United States should consider the following policy recommendations:

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<td>An immediate move to an open border immigration policy, in which there is a repeal of all laws that were created for the purpose of limiting or restricting immigration. Although it is already illegal to limit immigration on the basis of race, sex, religion, or class, recent events have shown executive orders that illegally aim to ban entry into the United States based solely on religion. This subversion of current immigration laws, along with the inability of undocumented residents to obtain citizenship, makes it clear that our current system needs to be replaced. In addition, to opening borders, pathways to citizenship should be created for those already settled in the United States as well as those in the migration process.</td>
<td>The United States is a nation of immigrants, and it is a basic human right to peacefully migrate to places of safety and security. Long before the invention of nations and the idea that we can restrict access to land, people migrated to areas that they felt were safe and provided the best possible futures for their families. Furthermore, data compiled by the Social Security Administration indicates that on average undocumented immigrants pay around $13 billion in payroll taxes, while only receiving around $1 billion in benefits. This means that immigrants are healthy for the economy and create jobs, therefore an open border policy is both humane and economically sound.</td>
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<td>Abolishment of the current prison industrial complex and criminal justice system, returning policing back to communities. The United States has the largest prison population in the world, and our current system is one that openly practices institutional racism while further oppressing our most marginalized populations. In place of the current system, a restorative justice approach should be considered. This approach gives survivors of crime and communities a voice in holding their members accountable. Restorative justice also allows for the opportunity to repair the harm that has been done.</td>
<td>The current Prison Industrial Complex was created in order to further subvert the rights of African Americans and other minorities after the abolishment of slavery. According to Angela Davis, to this day it is a continuation of the institution of slavery in that minorities are overrepresented and given more severe sentences, while simultaneously stealing their labor for economic gain. In addition, the current prison industrial complex only furthers the stereotypes of marginalized communities as deviant and criminal, making it easier to continue the cycle of incarceration.</td>
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<td>Law enforcement agencies should seek alternatives to the “raid and rescue” anti-trafficking method. Instead of further traumatizing survivors of trafficking by raiding residences and businesses, we should instead be seeking alternatives in which there is increased work place and community monitoring. Once identified, if possible survivors should be approached away from residences and traffickers by trained social workers. This approach minimizes harm to the survivor, while giving the option to leave the situation on his or her terms.</td>
<td>The anti-trafficking practice of “raid and rescue,” often increases the chances that trafficking survivors will experience state violence on top of the interpersonal trafficking violence already experienced. For example, the Independence Police Department in Missouri recently arrested 27 people in a human trafficking operation; however, the charges filed show the majority arrested for prostitution with only the minors being considered trafficking survivors. Arresting adult survivors further traumatizes them and makes it less likely that they will cooperate with law enforcement officers. Furthermore, it pushes trafficking rings further underground making them more difficult to identify.</td>
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Three PM Thoughts
by Casey Lam

11/8/16

9:00 am: I don't wanna get up. I'm so tired. Maybe I'll skip.
9:45 am: It's pretty humid today. A weird kinda humid. Like you can feel it in the air and it's sticking to you. It feels harder to breathe too. This is gross.
10:15 am: It's pretty bright for the morning time. Feels more like i in the afternoon. Maybe two different time zones are happening at once. That'd be pretty cool.
10:45 pm: It's hot today. It's November, why the hell is it hot? It needs to be cold. Global warming sucks. Did someone turn the brightness of the sun down? Why does it look darker outside?
12:30 pm: It feels heavy today. Like something is weighing the sky down. Time doesn't feel right. It's still weirdly dark and sunny. Feels like I'm not really here.
3:00 pm: Cybergoth dance party
4:00 pm: I hate taking the bus with middle schoolers. They're the worst.
5:00 pm: God, this election needs to end already. I'm tired of arguing with people on Facebook over it. People just never learn. This entire year has been exhausting.
6:00 pm: Ok, I didn't mean it should end like this
7:30 pm: Seriously, what's on? This sucks.
9:00 pm: ...
10:00 pm: I think I'll just go to bed

11/9/16

8:00 am: I'm not in the mood for anything.
9:00 am: It feels so dead outside and so unreal. Like we're either waiting to die or waiting to wake up from a nightmare.
10:00 am: I don't wanna write down how I felt about what happened yesterday, it's too depressing. But I have to turn it in so all you're getting is a rant.

10:45 pm: I think I'll just go to bed

8/21/17

10:00 am: Ok I have my eclipse glasses and the clouds aren't covering the sun here so I should have a good view. Radio is on...and it's play-ing Despacito again...great.
10:15 am: Wow, this is pretty weird. It's not even pretty. Why is there are bright line in the middle of the moon? Is it spreading open? The fuck? Something's in it, it looks like me? It's even wearing the same clothes, standing in the same spot, and the radio's playing too. But it's playing a news report instead. President Clinton is standing outside the White House watching the eclipse? Hey, she's looking back at me.

"Can you see me?"
"...yeah."
"Who are you?"
"I think I'm you."
"What's with the news report? Hillary isn't the President, Trump is."

8/22/17

10:30 am: God, the semester starts tomorrow. I don't want summer to be over. I just wanna go on vacations with my friends. Rip in peace my bank account though. Why do we even start on a Wednesday? Why can't we start late September like the UCs do? And more stupid North Korea nuke crap. Oh look, someone on Facebook is being dumb about it. "ThEir nuKEs ProBaBly Can'T eVEn REAch Us." What about other countries, you idiot, do you think about anyone else besides yourself? Time to put this burnt piece of dog crap in his place. Why do I still have him on Facebook?
3:00 pm: Flat Earth theories are fun and all, but how about Flat Sun theories? Someone get on it.

"Yeah she is, she won. Are you an alternate universe me, where Trump won?"
"I think so. Hey, switch lives with me."
"Ew, no. Why would I do that?"
"Cause it sucks in this one."
"Well it's not like it's perfect in this one either."
"Is that an entire pan of instant ramen covered in mozzarella cheese behind you?"
"Yeah, I eat it everyday."
"Then that is the perfect world."
"Just eat that in your universe."
"I can't, I'm becoming lactose intolerant."
"Then buy Lactaid."
"I'm broke, how much money do I have in the bank in that universe?"
"Don't be nosy. Anyway, you shouldn't be trying to run away from your universe just cause it sucks, you should be fighting back."
"You honestly won't believe how much it sucks here and besides I'm too tired to fight back. There's just too much that keeps happening and I'm exhausted."
"Then take a break, no one is expecting you to keep fighting 24/7. Even if you're not fighting, it's not like you're a piece of shit for it and people shouldn't make you feel that way. Just fight in a way that you can and don't become complicit" "Okay"
"Look, the portal is closing up, the eclipse must be ending."
"Awwww, well have fun in that universe for me."
"By the way, I have over 50K in the bank and a 4.0 gpa."
"Damn, even in an alternate universe I can be a real bitch."

Narrative
Casey Lam
As a Muslim Female, growing up in the United States hasn’t been so easy. I had the pressure of upholding values that were passed down to me, but also to uphold the societal norms of Western culture. I had to create my own definition of modesty, and how I wanted to practice it. My faith evolved as I evolved. I believe many young Muslim Americans experience this in their owns ways, that’s the beauty of living in a Western world, at times. Compared to other stricter Muslim countries dominated by patriarchy, Muslim Americans at least have some agency and freedom to create their own image, their own identity. Something other than the stereotype of being Muslim in America. 

Even though Islamophobia is on the rise, Muslim modernity and the recreation of what a Muslim woman looks like, has also been rising. We have created our own counter hegemonic movement, and the three women depicting that are Halima Aden and Marya Ayloush. These women challenge the stereotypes of what a Muslim woman looks like.

Muslim women all across the world have different styles of wrapping their hijabs that signifies the culture they are in. For example, in Turkey women tend to use silk fabric and do not fold the sides of their hijab, compared to someone who might be from Libya or Syria who do fold the sides and wear any type of fabric. When I am on campus and I see Muslim women walking around I see how much diversity of culture is also present, other people outside of the community probably doesn’t notice that. In America we do not have a cultural style of wrapping, women tended to wrap the way their mothers have wrapping their hijabs that signifies the culture they are in. For example, in Turkey women tend to use silk fabric and do not fold the sides of their hijab, compared to someone who might be from Libya or Syria who do fold the sides and wear any type of fabric. 

Some choose to loosely wrap, show some neck, etc. However, now with this current movement of Muslim fashion millennials have started their own cultural movement, and it has allowed them to construct their own way of wrapping which is also a counter hegemonic movement in of itself. Due to the more freedom in style, the patriarchal constraints that coerced women to wrap more ‘by the books’ has faded. Now some can reveal their hair from their hijabs, show some hair, only wrap their head, show some neck, etc. Muslim women challenge the stereotypes of what a Muslim woman looks like.

Marya and Halima have paved the way for this culture to blossom. Marya Ayloush has created an empire! We went to the same high-school together and I remember her stitching hijabs together and asking our friends to take pictures for her website. Seven years later, it has taken over and has paved the way for Muslim Modernity and fashion in America. Her hijabs destroy the old ways of wrapping hijabs. These scarfs and different styles of wrapping, challenges the patriarch within Muslim cultures, and also gives women their own identity. Some choose to loosely wrap, show some hair, not show some hair, only wrap their head, show some neck, etc. Marya and Halima have paved the way for this culture to blossom. Marya Ayloush has created an empire! We went to the same high-school together and I remember her stitching hijabs together and asking our friends to take pictures for her website. Seven years later, it has taken over and has paved the way for Muslim Modernity and fashion in America. Her hijabs destroy the old ways of wrapping hijabs. These scarfs and different styles of wrapping, challenges the patriarch within Muslim cultures, and also gives women their own identity. Some choose to loosely wrap, show some hair, not show some hair, only wrap their head, show some neck, etc. 

Her website has created a platform for creativity, and symbolizes what can be possible. It yields images needed for young muslim women. 

Alina: “If you could explain what inspired you to create austere attire? How has it grown since 2010? What challenges have you faced? and What are you most proud of?”

Marya: “Austere Attire actually started as an accident in 2010. As a new wearer of hijah, I felt self conscious about styles that resembled cultures of countries I’ve never lived in. The only style and trends I know of are American styles and since Islam does not prohibit you from expressing your own cultural style (so long as it does not contradict the requirements of hijab), I decided to pick out my own fabric and sew my own scarves. Additionally, I was in a fashion class that required me to put together a collection for a runway show at the end of the year. I felt it was weird for me to be designing and making short or tight dresses when I myself would adhere to a modest wardrobe. With my fashion teacher’s encouragement, I decided to design a entire line of “couture” scarves that were different from ones I was already making. Ones with embellishments and trimmings. Long story short, after the successful fashion show, I began wearing my pieces and many people who saw my designs wanted to purchase them. Slowly but surely enough demand grew that I had to create a website. The brand blew up quickly because at the time nothing like it existed.

Now one of our main challenges is maintaining consistency with Islamic guidelines while still molding to appeal with an ever-changing Muslim culture. Major organizations and brands pave the way for mainstream Muslims. It’s important to me that Austere Attire is a brand that empowers Muslim women the own their identity, rather than mold it to a hegemonic idea of what Muslim women “should” look like.

In that sense, it is our biggest challenge but also our biggest accomplishment that we stand our ground in preserving the essence of what hijab truly means. 

Images by Austere Attire
Over a year ago an ex-partner of mine had left town without notice for an indiscernible amount of time. This event had marked our break up. Before he had left he stored all of his belongings with me. It wasn’t until months later that he came back to pick up the rest of his belongings in which I was threatening to destroy unless he were to pay me rent that he owed me for storing his things. In the end he only paid me partial rent and at that point I regretted not destroying or selling his expensive music equipment (I might’ve broken even by keeping his tempur-edic mattress and some of his music equipment.)

The months following him leaving me were an emotionally tumultuous time. This break up had resonated with previous experiences I’ve had in my life and set me up for some disappointing relationships following it, recovering from this relationship had not been easy and has been a very long process. The recovery process was not so much about him as a person, but about him using and leaving me; feeling disposable.

This past year I've been disposing of things that remind me of him and our relationship, things, both physical and digital. It had taken me months to change out my curtains and art that had been hanging in a room we had once shared. Periodically getting rid of these things (although they did not solve my abandonment issues) had helped me feel empowered. My relationship with this person was shitty but following it I had grown up. Getting rid of all of his shit felt like some sort of rebirth; I was a completely different person after this. At first, getting rid of his belongings in which I was threatening to destroy unless he were to pay me rent that he owed me for storing his things. In the end he only paid me partial rent and at that point I regretted not destroying or selling his expensive music equipment (I might’ve broken even by keeping his tempur-edic mattress and some of his music equipment.)

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The destruction of relics of abuse that are linked to abuse and oppression can cause a symbolic rebirth. The symbolic rebirth is not just a rebirth of oneself, but can be a rebirth of an energy, a spirit; a valid form of resistance that results in empowerment.

The destruction of relics of abuse is not the end all solution to problems, but it is a valid response and reaction to situations of abuse. Situations in which it is inappropriate can be when it is endangering to those undeserving. The destruction of relics of abuse can be used as a response to violence, oppression and abuse, as it incites empowerment and is an expression of anger.

By relating an anecdote of a past interpersonal relationship of mine to a political climate/violence, my intention is not to undermine anyone of these political and/or historical situations; and I am not attempting to gas myself up for anything. I am emphasizing the connections between state, interpersonal, and corporate violence. I am advocating for a change in perspective by using a relatable anecdote for those who cannot see why the destruction of relics of abuse is a valid form of resistance.
Dear future kin,

I am writing to you because there has been a lot going on in the world today and I wanted to express how I have been feeling lately, maybe you can write back one day and tell me if we did right or wrong.

I was born in 1993 when Bill Clinton became President, how-ever I cannot recall anything about him, not even the Monica Lewinsky scandal. My first recollection of politics was the 2000 presidential election when both George W.Bush and Al Gore ran for president. I did not know about the Democratic Party or the Republican Party or what they both stood for; all I knew was that the color blue seemed like a good color and my mom was going to vote for the blue color. For that election the blue color did not win, the red color won. Shortly after that September 11th happened in 2001, this shaped our country massively to how it is today. Social spaces became extremely policed and Islamophobia rained down our country so fast. I remember wak-ing up at 6am in the west coast getting ready for 2nd Grade when my mom turned on the T.V. to watch the morning news and all you could see was footage of black smoke and the Twin Towers. I was too young to understand how severe the situation was but that was the day that I learned about terrorism, Iraq, and fear for our nation. The news about September 11th continued on for all of Bush’s administration, everyday the news would give you an update on what happened, how it happened, what’s going on in New York City, anything to get people to tune in. Everyday the news terrorised us into thinking we were in danger of another attack while characterising the people “who were responsible” (ex. People dressing in Middle Eastern garments). It made some Americans think we needed to go to war to protect our own future. There was hardly any good news stories, it all became propa-ganda for people to stay alert in their home country. People couldn’t shake the fact that this happened on AMERICAN soil and we wanted justice for it ASAP.

I recall hearing in the news that President George W. Bush wanted to declare a war against Iraq and this shook me because I thought even more bad things were going to happen to us and to those that I loved. But that was not the case, the war did happen but it happened in Iraq and it never surfaced in the U.S. therefore most of us growing up never even realized there was a war happening. If you read the years of how long the Iraq war lasted (2003-2011) that was basically my adolescent years and to tell you the truth I didn’t even realize we were in a war, that’s how desensitized I was to the whole situation, the news would play it off as “oh the president is sending troops to Iraq to find the cul-prit and to protect U.S. citizens” not “HEY GUYS WE ARE IN A WAR”. Because I was young when W. Bush was president I could not see the severity of him and his actions and couldn’t understand why people were shocked that he was re-elected. But looking back I saw he was an incompetent conservative right-wing man who seemed to not know anything about anything. To be honest the only thing I remem-bered about him was that comedians and TV shows used to make fun of him a lot, that he was criticized for not helping out during Hurricane Katrina sooner, and that he basically sent troops to Iraq for “no rea-son”. Well the reason that I can recall was to find Osama Bin Laden & Saddam Hussein, which he did find one of them. But it not mean that many had to go off into war, Bush led them there and left them while Obama brought them back. I just feel that sending the troops to Iraq did a lot more damage to our country than good and there is still a lot of Americans trying to recover from those events. He could have been labeled as the worst president America has had in modern history (not anymore). All of this ran on until the next election in 2008. This election was a defining moment in my life and in American history, Barack Obama became the first African-American president. His election felt monumental because it represented progress for those of us that want-ed to see a positive change. He was an eloquent speaker that made those of us who favored him feel safe. I felt that he represented with my ideals and he legalized gay marriage and repealed Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell which felt like things long overdue. He participated in televised events and really tried to connect with us.

Where there was terror in the world he was there to reassure us that he was doing everything he could to make sure we were going to be safe. Unlike George W. Bush who used fear to get people to support him (which worked well in his favor). My first time voting was during his re-election in 2012 he was up against Mitt Romney who seemed like he was just there to fill up the other slot. At that time it felt right, I came into the poll knowing that Obama was confident to win, who would be against Obama? He was seen as a cool and hip presi-dent by most millennials and anyone who didn’t like him was living in the past, or so I thought. While he was seen as a good president by many, including myself, he actually was doing a lot of non-progressive stuff behind closed doors, for example he actually was the president with the highest deportation rate of immigrants. And just because he was the first black president it didn’t mean that racism went away nor did he really do much about it when he was in office but that all seems like small problems compared to what’s going on now. But I will say this; because he was the first black president it felt like Hillary had a very scrutinize from the republican party that he had to keep his “cool” THE WHOLE TIME during his two terms … which HE DID. He never once let America see any other side of him except his presidential side and EVEN THEN there was so much nonsense spewed about him. I believe he didn’t even get a chance to be president. I call his presidency “The Golden Years” of America, during his time we were safe, we were progressive, we embraced the future. That ideal has changed dramatically ever since the 2016 election.

The 2016-election many would say was just one big joke, which I believe it was. It came down to Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. People were so high off of Obama being the first black president that they wanted a second high of a woman president, she didn’t matter whom and they didn’t take the chance to realize what Hillary actually stood for which was nothing really. She basically thought the election was going to be handed to her because of “Obama’s America” (those who wanted change), she was considered a progressive choice against Donald Trump.

Hillary presented herself as the only candidate who was actually quali-fied for the job and never in modern history had there even been a reality TV star that was President therefore I felt like Hillary had a very high chance in winning due to resume in politics and Trump’s lack in politics. Donald Trump however was someone who was spouting hate all over the country but some people loved it, they wanted their old ways back, “when America used to have a white man as president”. The day of the election was the day most of our worst fears started to come down hill, late at night it was stated that Trump won the election and I was in disbelief that so many wanted him as president because his message was so “an-ti-Obama” and that he was so blatantly arrogant and hypocritical. The day after everyone was saddened by the news and everyone was in disbe-lief, it was like half of the world was grieving while the other side was cele-brating, which was sickening. Since then there have been way too many negative events that by now I’m desensitized. Basically Donald Trump is trying to erase all the progressiveness that Obama facilitated. For ex—ample banning Transgender Americans from serving out country after DADT was repealed, attempting to get rid of Obamacare even though it helps millions, including me. This has only been not even a year of his presidency and everyday it feels like everyone’s rights are being taken away and everyone is feeling nervous about the future. Now the county is starting to divide itself between the conservative and the liberal, those who believe in white supremacy and those who are trying to dismantle it. I’m not sure what is going to happen next but the future looks bleak right now and the end seems slower than before. Trump’s presidency does not feel secure, does not feel progressive, it feels regressive and our past was not a good one to begin with.

So who knows what will happen? Will we get nuked by Korea? Will there be a second Civil War? Will women’s and LGBTQ rights be taken away? Will the poor all die? All of these seem pretty possible under Trump’s presidency. I can’t help to think that we were purposely destroying your fu-ture world, I am trying to save it but it all seems so hopeless at this point because half of the world isn’t taking the world seriously. I am sorry for any damage we might of caused.

Sincerely, Jennifer
Here we are, sitting in a world that through the internet has become smaller and smaller. Here I am, a woman born in the United States to Chilean parents who found feminism in an ever complicated global context.

In the summer of 2017, I participated in a political delegation to Venezuela. There, I met many many women who through their determination and vision, have taken on the work of building a society under socialism that they can thrive in. I had never visited a socialist country before. In fact, besides a few trips to Chile to visit family and Mexico to visit colleagues of my father, this trip to Venezuela was my first time visiting Latin America under the supervision of political activists, journalists and fellow organizers. The experience itself was new and the short time I spent in Venezuela opened my mind in so many ways.

In Venezuela, I had the pleasure of meeting María Helena Ramírez Hernandez (MaHe). She is 26-years-old, Chavista, a feminist and a lesbian. She came to co-coordinate our delegation from the state of Táchira, a state that borders Colombia and has seen plenty of violence from both Colombian para-military soldiers and opposition terrorists. Táchira, a state that has seen plenty of violence. These questions opened a rich conversation between two queer feminists living on opposite sides of the world.

MaHe explained to me that in 2009, the revolution had been around for about 10 years. Young people who were children during the first declarations of Chavez were now becoming old enough to want to participate and create and contribute to the vision of a socialist and liberated Venezuela. However, as a profoundly religious country, the visibility of non-straight people was disappointing and practically non-existent. The particular youth who would go on to found ASGDRe were themselves involved in social movements centering housing, gender equality, class-struggle, racism, education etc., but though they were deeply invested in those angles of the revolution, they also felt that their own identities were being ignored and sacrificed.

And thus, ASGDRe was born in a park in Caracas. MaHe tells me that the membership of the group has fluctuated through the years but the membership has always been diverse. She says that within the group, there have always been academics, poets, painters, working class folks and ethnically diverse people. Similarly, the group has had straight people, gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals, transgender and asexual people. She says this diversity is what has allowed them to en-gage in their main goal; to show how non-straight issues are directly intertwined with all the facets of the Bolivarian process. That non-straight people not only exist, but that they are working for the same goals as the rest of the country, and thus deserve to be recognized and protected.

I asked MaHe to explain to me for what purpose and under what national context ASGDRe was founded, and for who this organization was for. These questions opened a rich conversation between two queer feminists living on opposite sides of the world.

Every year, on the anniversary of the revolution, Chavistas (those who align themselves with the Bolivarian Revolution and Hugo Chavez’s leadership) march in the city of Caracas. Unofficially, the event is meant to bring the various social movements together to network, collaborate and build. A few years ago, the group (ASGDRe) opened up a massive rainbow flag right there, in the middle of the march. MaHe tells me that they heard a few negative remarks but in general, many groups came to them and asked what the flag was about and who they were. As a group, they opened up conversations with other groups who had maybe never considered non-straight people as rev-olutionaries. This flag unveiling opened up a lot of opportunities for solidarity for the group with other revolutionary groups. They began being invited to give talks and workshops in spaces originally not built to include non-straight people. She makes it clear though, that it’s not that non-straight people weren’t already on the front line battling issues of racial injustice, housing for all, and economic inequality, but that now, they were becoming visible. That ASGDRe was one of many groups shedding light on the entanglement of non-straight liberation and Venezuelan liberation.

MaHe also shared with me the ways she has grown as being apart of ASGDRe. Through the group, she has gained access to the perspective of other non-straight people. Transgender people, Gay men, asexual people. People who have had different experiences than her. And, in being in a collective with people different from her, she has become a better revolutionary.

I asked her what the future holds for ASGDRe and her answer surprised me a little. She explained to me that the most heartbreaking reality between non-straight people in the feminist movement is the way straight women disengage from the needs of lesbian women or trans women. She says that ASGDRe has participated very heavily in the right to abortion in Venezuela. They have collaborated in campaigns for contraceptives in Venezuela (both things, she emphasizes, are not things a Lesbian needs but that she recognizes is a human need for many of her Venezuelan sisters).

They participated in the feminists’ conferences that only up until recently occurred every year. And yet, she still doesn’t feel like straight, cisgender women (especially wealthy and white women) are committed to the liberation of non-white, working class, non-straight women. She says this needs to be addressed. They wont get anywhere as womxn without each others support. This made me reflect personally on feminism in the United States and the ways WOC feminism must expend so much energy on interventions that interrupt white feminist ideals.

By the end of our conversation, MaHe and I were laughing and making jokes and promising to send each other articles and videos and songs. Needless to say, I made a forever friend. As it grew late for both of us, MaHe began saying her goodbyes (a process that if you’re a Latina person, you understand can take many many tries and go on for a very long time). By the time we had reached our final goodbye, MaHe said to me; “Buenas noches comarada. La lucha sigue. Hablaremos pronto”. Which means “Goodnight comrade, the struggle continues. Let’s connect soon”. And that’s it. Feminist in California and Feminist in Venezuela, going to sleep in different countries, living different experiences in the global political sphere, ready to wake up tomorrow as comrades towards liberation.

Sofía Cárdenias

A Conversation between Womxn
by Sofía Cárdenias

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Sofía Cárdenias Narrative
She started her first year in college knowing who she was. Writing was her passion, it's what she'd gone there for. She had a purpose. Her days were filled with happiness, love and excitement. Everyone loved her. Her friends motivated her to do better; to be the best she can be. She rose to her feet every morning, every step filled with enthusiasm never doubting where her next step would lead her. She was always looking forward to what the day would bring, for she felt the thrill that school had brought her the past 12 years. There was a unique spring to her step, as she finally arrived at the institution that she persevered to get into. She was always eager to learn but, shortly after love became her main focus. She met a boy. Late nights spent studying turned into late nights spent infatuated with the boy. Her motivation to stay up late studying and worrying about her grades was overwhelmed with her infatuation with desire.
He made her feel important. She spent all her free time with him and forgot about her focus. She picked up some bad habits and let them become her life. Days she would've spent in class became more hours spent with him. Late nights studying turned into late nights watching movies and going out recklessly. Soon, those around her began to disappear, as she distanced herself from everything that motivated her. He became the only thing she had. The only thing she worried about. She didn't care about her responsibilities or thought everything would be fine. She knew what she was doing, but remained ignorant of the consequences. Time passed.

Soon she started to realize how toxic it all began to feel. She missed her friends and began to feel insecure. His passionate love she believed they once shared was being replaced by his nasty words and actions. She thought it was okay. She blamed herself. She let those words get to her. She started to feel stupid, ugly, and not worth her value. It further affected her education and willingness to thrive. She felt unmotivated and alone. Isolated. She had driven away everyone around her and had no one to turn to. Her grades dropped and her interest in school fell with them. She didn't care much about everything around her, she was trapped and wanted more. She remained alone, nostalgic of a time when life didn't feel this hard.
She started her last year without him. She regrets those years spent stuck in the past. They had prevented her from growing as she let it consume her. She left the past and began to move on, spinning forward while making up for lost time. Some days she hurts but remembers she cannot go back. She found happiness in her journey as she meets new people, visits new places and focuses on school. Education has become the most powerful aspect of her life. She values the power in knowledge and hopes she can one day help those around her. She looks forward and seeks that the grass really is greener on the other side.
Contributors

Alina Ahmed:
"Flow like water running down into a river, roar like a smashing waterfall, and grow like the endless ocean. Be an very lasting drop in this infinite world of matter."

Julia Díaz:
"Usually uncomfortable, always gay."

Ines Diet:
"I am a woman and gender studies major, I plan to focus on women and human rights."

Toni Elly:
"As a woman and gender studies major, I am focused on women and human rights with a particular interest in the way gender and race affect homelessness."

Marilyn Fernández:
"Women and gender Studies has sharpened my ability to recognize the intersectional oppressions marginalized communities face. I have a particularly strong interest in queer arts and culture and hope to use my knowledge in Women and Gender studies to influence the field."
As a Women and Gender Studies major, you see everything in a different and new perspective. Sometimes they’re scary, but it’s something we need to know.

My name is Takiyah Larkin and I am currently in 4th year studying both Women and Gender Studies and Liberal Studies. No, I do not want to become a teacher, however, I do know that I want my career path to encompass me working with Black and Brown kids.

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