



FEMINIST VOICES:

Dialogues from pacifism and antimilitarism



Issue No. 1 - February 2022



LIGA INTERNACIONAL DE MUJERES POR
LA PAZ Y LA LIBERTAD
LIMPAL COLOMBIA

Feminist Voices: Dialogues from Pacifism and Antimilitarism

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - WILPF Colombia
Issue No. 1 - February 2022. Annual publication

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Caring for Caregivers Meeting. Restrepo, Meta 2021

ISSN: 2954-5404

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PREFACE

For the Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad LIMPAL (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom WILPF) in Colombia, it is a pleasure to present this collective effort that shows some of the paths that we, as a collective, have been building in order to situate our political commitment to antimilitarist feminism. This issue, our first issue of the journal *Feminist Voices: dialogues from pacifism and antimilitarism*, has been an effort to narrate experiences, positions and dialogues that we have woven among us, as a team that commits to the construction of peace and the transformation of the world, which has been nourished, in our case, from the 104 years of history of our WILPF sisters in the world, from the voices and experiences of the women in the territories where we worked 23 years ago after the beginning of LIMPAL's action in Colombia, and of course from the trajectories of those of us who make up this political, feminist and pacifist commitment.

Feminisms have been traveling this world, advancing in the understanding of inequalities, injustices and oppressions on which power relations have been built, and with this journey they have nurtured multiple frameworks of interpretation of the systems that sustain societies. Their approaches and practices have confronted us, even within each of those of us who call ourselves feminists.

One of these paths has laid the foundations of antimilitarist feminisms, of that fringe of thought that invites us to oppose wars, the use of weapons, militarization patterns, war budgets, the logic of defence and security from that hegemonic, militaristic and patriarchal point of view, which ultimately invites us to oppose the dehumanization that war thinking has produced. Another world has been pos-

sible from these feminist paths, a world that vindicates the dignity of peoples, the wisdom and political action of women and oppressed subjects, a world where a good life is possible.

This issue seeks to be a proposal for dialogue, which focuses on conversations on the part of the system of domination that for centuries has impacted the lives of women and men: the militarist and patriarchal system. Therefore, we are ready to deliver our discussions, practices and feelings about the enormous challenges that feminist antimilitarist thought and action imply, as well as the many possibilities that we have opened from different actors to confront the oppressive systems of war. Our minds have been colonized by war, but our practices scream resistance and transformation.

We choose to grow in the paradigm of feminist and intersectional human security, we choose the work of unlearning everything that the mechanisms of oppression have installed in our cultural practices, and we choose to endorse peace, dialogue and the construction of collective practices of peaceful and nonviolent resistance.

In the following pages, you will find unfinished reflections, which border the margins of academia to put into practice the feminist work of our action. Thus, the multiple voices weave, what we wish to be, an input to promote the analysis to demilitarize and contribute to the emancipation of violent practices, militarization and militarism.

A first voice is represented in the narrative of Cynthia Enloe, whose valuable contribution, not only in this article but also in her years of political and discursive action, has made many of the reflections of antimilitarist feminisms possible. On this occasion, she highlights the mutations that the he-

gemonic patriarchy has had to undergo in order to adapt to the tremendous challenges that have been provoked by the non-stop advance of feminist movements in the world and that, undoubtedly, gives a major impulse for feminists to confront these violent practices, also rooted in other systems of oppression every day.

The second group of voices reflects on a collective journey that evidences the binomial construction between patriarchy and militarism, its impact on everyday life and the use of weapons as tools to deepen one of the most stable oppressions of the last centuries, which is the oppression against women. Talking about everyday life implies reflecting on the impact of the permanence of this system, which has led us to militarize everything, even our personal relationships, basing our bonds on distrust, on the enemy, on the search for reasons to point out the inferiority of the other, on the argumentation to justify the invasion of privacy, and on the naturalization of situations of violence. This section is a clear example of how a system of domination, which coexists and is nourished by others, provokes multiple impacts and oppressions that deepen inequalities, showing that all structural injustices are aligned to powerful entities such as the weapon industry, and that are placed at the service of this system of oppression and its allies.

A third group of voices echoes the wanderings of two territories in Colombia: Meta and Bolivar; territories where control and security have been prioritized through the installation of military structures, the normalization of armed forces and the control of resources. In these territories, through LIMPAL's accompaniment, collective processes that confront violent and warlike practices have been strengthened, placing non-violence, such as intersectional and situated positions as tools for collective action.

Finally, this issue gathers diverse women's narratives on peace, security and nonviolence as a way of confronting the militarized system, and highlighting ancestral practices as a way of weaving, spinning and promoting new paths that allow us to advance in the search for a better world. Antimilitarist feminisms must generate dialogues with other forms of resistance, because only then can we think of the possibility of a political stand that manages to remove one of the oldest businesses in history, whose lives have been claimed in an inclement manner: war.

We invite you to read these pages, mostly written by women, whose stories have also bordered the margins of inequalities, and who today build from their own place of enunciation a new matrix in which life and dignity are at the center. Let us recognize in their words the crossings that emerge from our bodies and experiences, in order to deepen them and advance in our common purpose: the demilitarization of life.

Diana María Salcedo López
Director of LIMPAL Colombia.

VOICE

From around
the world



UPDATED PATRIARCHY IS NOT INVINCIBLE¹

Cynthia Enloe

Professor / researcher / feminist activist. She lives in Boston, Massachusetts and is a professor at Clark University. Her work explores the social, economic and political lives of women, especially during armed conflict and the difficult years that follow as they attempt to build peace after war. Her most recent book is "The Big Push". Its Spanish edition is entitled "Empujando al Patriarcado". Member of WILPF's International Academic Network.

¹ This text is the conclusion part of the book "The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging Patriarchy, London: Myriad; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017" by the author Cynthia Enloe, who has generously allowed us to publish it in this journal as a contribution to the reflections we have been elaborating on antimilitarist feminisms.

Women marched through Bogota, drumming in the rain, to remember the women killed in Colombia's long civil war and to demand that the new peace agreement's promise of gender equity be fulfilled. In Istanbul, they defied state oppression to write "Stronger Together" on posters in nineteen languages. They held a London vigil at the foot of Edith Cavell's statue to express solidarity with refugee women. In the center of Gothenburg, Swedish women sang a rousing version of the new women's anthem "I Won't Keep Quiet," as snow fell on a sea of pink pussy hats.

This was International Women's Day, March 8, 2017.

Together, women and their male and transgender allies around the world were tilting some of the key pillars designed to sustain patriarchy:

- The belief that a lasting peace can be built without guaranteeing women's rights;
- The pressure exerted on women and girls to stay silent— about their experiences of harassment, assault, marginalization, and humiliation; the practice of shrinking the space for civil society, where so much of women's political life is lived;
- The dynamic that keeps women divided from each other— by race, by nationality, by sexuality, or by level of security.

Patriarchy may have succeeded in perpetuating itself, but it is not invincible. In fact, one of the questionable beliefs that has sustained patriarchy over generations is precisely the notion that it is immune to challenge, that it will "always be with us." Sometimes that belief is dressed up in stylishly sophisticated garb: it is a sign of supposed worldly maturity to accept that privileging assorted masculinities is an inevitable element of the human condition. The sustaining cor-

ollary: thinking that patriarchy can be effectively uprooted is naive. And, of course, to be naive is to be feminized.

The feminist beliefs that have informed this book are quite different: that patriarchy is human-made, therefore is vulnerable to challenge. If patriarchy demands constant work of renewal, then patriarchy-sustaining work can be resisted. Absorbing these feminist beliefs enables one to reject resignation in the face of patriarchy's continuing inequities.

To realize that patriarchy requires perpetual restyling and relegitimizing is downright energizing. It fires each of us up to be on the lookout constantly for these patriarchal updating efforts. This attentive feminist stance can make us immune to the patriarchal assumption that the new is always liberating.

The beneficiaries of patriarchy have had to repeatedly update, restyle, and modernize its web of distinctive beliefs, values, and relationships because that web has been so often shredded by feminists and their allies. When New Zealand women first won the right to vote, when British women won the right to keep control of their property after marriage, when Chinese women won the right to divorce, when Iraqi women won the right to keep custody of their children after divorce, when Palestinian, Egyptian, and Algerian feminists declared that anti-colonial nationalism could not justify the re-entrenchment of men's domination of family or public affairs, when Icelandic women called a nationwide strike for gender equality, when Rwandan women won the right to inherit their husband's property, when Turkish women persuaded judges that a woman beaten by her husband was the victim of a crime, when Indian women convinced reporters and editors to treat rape as an outrage, not a cause for shame, when American women successfully demanded that workplace sexual

abuse be recognized as a violation of an employee's labor rights, when a transnational alliance of domestic workers successfully lobbied the International Labour Organization to declare that paid domestic workers had labor rights, when South African anti-apartheid women activists compelled their fellow anti-racists to acknowledge the self-serving dynamic between racism and sexism, when a transnational network of feminist environmentalists revealed the ways that distorted notions of masculinity were among the significant causes of climate change, when Liberian women mobilized to force male war lords to negotiate a peace agreement, when Korean women educated us all to replace the misleading term "comfort women" with the more accurate term "sex slaves," when Bosnian women and their allies persuaded treaty-writers to define systematic rape as an internationally prosecutable war crime—when every one of these activist successes was achieved, relationships between women and men and the state had to be restructured. Each achievement compelled not just elites but ordinary people to rethink their established assumptions about how societies function. Each accomplishment upset dominant gendered values.

No single one of these notable successes alone has toppled patriarchy. Even all together, these achievements have not pushed Humpty Dumpty permanently off his patriarchal wall. Individually and collectively, however, these feminist-driven transformations have forced the beneficiaries of patriarchy—and these are diverse, multiple, and often each other's rivals—to devise new strategies, often more fragile, for sustaining that complex system of masculinizing privilege. For instance, some of patriarchy's admirers have promoted women to be television news anchors, but reduced the role to more of a mouthpiece/presenter than a journalist, and insisted that those women squeeze into a narrow mould of feminized "beauty". Others have claimed

to be promoting “girl power” by encouraging young women to aspire to be senior corporate executives. Still others have responded to women’s workplace strikes by acknowledging women’s labor rights, but have then proceeded to craft new employment contracts that require workplace discrimination charges to be settled through out-of-court arbitration—a legal process that favors employers. Still other beneficiaries of patriarchy have opened the doors of science a crack to admit a trickle of girls and women, but have simultaneously modeled the new and most profitable high-tech scientific enterprises as newly hip boys’ clubs.

Patriarchy’s fans in the political sphere, meanwhile, have not been able to prevent more women from running for elective office, but they have held them to standards of parenting and appearance that no male candidate has had to meet. Or they have accepted that more women will win seats in national legislatures, but then moved real decision-making power into the executive branch, especially into the secrecy-shrouded national security agencies. They have characterized “social safety net” policy areas—policy areas they used to control—as “soft” and thus “unmanly” and feminized, in order that these now-marginalized ministerial posts may be the ones awarded to newly ascendant political women.

Internationally, patriarchy’s perpetuators have responded to the organizing of exploited women workers by moving their operations to neighboring countries whose patriarchal governments welcome them with open arms. They have accepted innovative gender advisors into their international agencies, but underfunded them and conveniently left them out of the decision-making loop. They have not been able to stop the passage of the historic UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, but they have gone about trying to shrink its actual imple-

mentation to simply adding more women to international military peacekeeping forces and acknowledging women as victims of wartime sexual assault, without increasing women’s influence on peace agreements or post-peace reconstruction. They have promoted a handful of women to prominent international positions while intensely socializing them in the system’s patriarchal norms so that they are less likely to rock the masculinity-privileging boat.

In local, national, and international arenas, patriarchy’s diverse beneficiaries have portrayed the contemporary world as fraught with imminent dangers. To meet those alleged dangers—from amorphous terrorism, from global waves of immigrants fleeing wars, oppression, and natural disasters—patriarchy’s contemporary modernizers propose hyper-militarization. The fact that militarizing modernization equips local police forces with heavy weaponry and gives license to border officials to turn back immigrants on the flimsiest of grounds makes the defense establishment the center of a government’s foreign policy. Each of these moves depends on masculinization—of police, of border officials, of national security decision-making. That multistranded contemporary masculinization depends—as masculinization always does—on multiple processes of feminization. Victimized immigrant men must be feminized (while also being portrayed as threats). Community policing that engages in building trust through daily interactions with local citizens must be feminized, even if the majority of the officers doing this work are men. Diplomats and entire ministries of foreign affairs must be portrayed as relatively unmanly.

Through old means and new, patriarchy’s beneficiaries hold out enticing carrots that have caused many of the people who do not share in its chief rewards to be complicit in its perpetuation. Recognizing patriarchy’s old and

updated allures is one of the first steps toward challenging this perpetuation.

Patriarchal complicity is not the same as patriarchal power. Patriarchal complicity can be engaged in by women, men, and transgender people. It can be engaged in by people who think of themselves as living far from the centers of privilege. Patriarchal complicity can take the form, for instance, of gaining emotional solace when vicariously grieving as one walks across a now serene battlefield. It can lure one into being satisfied with—even proud of—only one side’s narrative of a past conflict. Patriarchal complicity can boost one’s self-esteem when accepting a promotion over other talented women and racially marginalized people. Such complicity can generate personal excitement at being associated with the winning team, company, party, or nation, without delving too deeply into the formula for that group’s success. Patriarchal complicity can take the form of being reassured in one’s own personal security when accepting the legitimacy of new exclusionary laws and practices.

The fodder for patriarchal complicity is inattentiveness and lack of a feminist curiosity. One is likely to slide into such complicity if one imagines that one’s own condition is representative of others’ conditions. Paying serious attention to—seeking out, listening carefully to, becoming informed about—the daily experiences of women and men and transgender people in other ethnic, racial, class, sexual, religious, and national groups can guard against becoming complicit in the perpetuation of patriarchy. This attentiveness can be practiced in one’s own family, in one’s own workplace. The dismissive raised eyebrow, the flick of the skirt, the scornful smirk—being attentive requires watching for the unspoken, rarely recorded gestures that serve to perpetuate the sexist norm. Resisting the minute gestures

that serve to sustain patriarchy requires not just recording them but naming them, speaking out against them.

This noticing can be hard to do. It proves hardest when one is left isolated in noting it and challenging it. Reversing inattentiveness is most effective when the one person who names out loud the patriarchal smirk is backed up by someone else who may not have noticed that smirk but now realizes its significance.

A lack of feminist curiosity is closely aligned with inattentiveness. Sustaining patriarchy relies on most people being lazy. Patriarchy is most easily perpetuated when most people take what is happening—the familiar and the new—as unproblematic and thus unworthy of being seriously investigated. More manly SUVs on the road? Oh, that’s just the market at work. More middle-class households hiring nannies so that the adult woman can hold down a full-time paying job? That’s just social change. More and more clothes and electronic devices being assembled in factories overseas? That’s just the workings of profit-maximizing capitalism, and has nothing to do with the cheapening of women’s labor. The rise of far-right nationalist political parties? Alarming, but it is only about racism, requiring no feminist-informed investigation.

Furthermore, those extremist movements only underscore the rationality of the center’s male establishment. Today, and in any current moment, there may arise a particularly virulent or blatant form of patriarchy—a blustering misogynist leader, an extreme form of fundamentalism, an outrageously xenophobic political party. Each of these catches our attention. Each of these allows us to express vocal dismay. Insofar as all of these manifestations of patriarchy are abusive and retrograde, they certainly deserve attention and condemnation. These, however, are not the chief

engines of sustainable patriarchy. Together, they make ordinary updated patriarchy look tame, and thus unworthy of serious resistance. Perhaps even more helpful to the beneficiaries of patriarchy, when we are prioritizing the most outrageous (and photogenic) forms of today's patriarchy, we slip into imagining that the ordinary patriarchs are the "rational men" who will protect us and do all the serious thinking on our behalf.

The antidote to a patriarchally complicit lack of curiosity is asking new feminist-informed questions. Lots of questions. Conducting deep and ongoing feminist investigations of the Institutions apparently at the forefront of modern life is a crucial form of resistance. It is dismaying how little we all know about how patriarchal beliefs, values, and relationships shape the operations of the Bank of England, the New York Stock Exchange, Hilton Hotels, Microsoft, Facebook, Shell Oil, Samsung, NATO, the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo, the Russian Orthodox Church, the BBC, 21st Century Fox, the Ministry of Defense, the Pentagon, the US National Security Council. Every one of these Organizations can be investigated. None of them should be immune to feminist curiosity. Yes, each of these investigations will take a collective effort of feminist-informed investigators with diverse skills. Still, it is possible. Just because an organization wields exceptional influence does not mean it is off-limits for curious feminists.

Just because an institution exercises vast power does not mean it is ungendered. Stopping in their tracks the efforts to sustain patriarchy needs organized, cross-race, inter-generational, transnational resistance. Yet that mobilization—energizing at the most local level but infused with a global consciousness—needs to be coupled with fresh thinking. One of the elements of past and current feminist activism that has been crucial to tilting and shredding pa-

trarchy has been crafting new feminist concepts. When it works, a concept enables us to see past the allegedly new, to see what gendered unfairness and inequities are being perpetuated, and gives us a language to speak about them with one another.

Here are just some of the concepts that have proved illuminating:

- women's suffrage
- women's rights
- equal pay
- comparable worth
- domestic violence
- reproductive rights
- militarized masculinities
- date rape
- sexual harassment
- the glass ceiling
- everyday sexism
- systematic wartime rape
- gender-based violence

Any useful fresh feminist concept should make even the most alluring operations of updated patriarchy newly transparent for what they are. And patriarchy made transparent is patriarchy made vulnerable. Paying feminist attention, asking feminist questions, conducting feminist investigations, crafting gender-revealing concepts, creating diversely welcoming broad alliances, and acting with care and creativity—patriarchy doesn't stand a chance.



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Encuentro con Mujeres Defensoras. Mesetas, Meta 2021

Reflective VOICES

*Photo: WILPF Colombia. Encuentro Cuidando
a las Cuidadoras. Restrepo, Meta 2021*



DEMILITARIZING EVERYDAY LIFE: A FEMINIST COMMITMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims to promote a conceptual approach to militarism and militarization, recognising these elements as key starting points for a feminist anti-militarist struggle. In order to fulfil this purpose, the concept of militarism will be explored in depth, understanding it as a social phenomenon that comes to life in institutional spheres, in everyday practices and that, in addition, is rooted in people's common sense as a culture from which it is often difficult to escape. Likewise, understanding the praxis of militarism as a system requires a conceptual approach to militarization, since it is through militarization that the state and society organise themselves around violence, security, repression, the construction of enemies, among other militaristic values. For this reason, one of the focuses of this article is to make militarist ideology and its practical effects visible, inviting us to reflect on the impact of militarism on everyday life and the construction of subjectivities.

Conceptualising militarism and militarization allows us to understand that the patriarchal system that feminism rejects does not exist autonomously, but is part of a power scheme made up of colonialism, on the one hand, capitalism and - the focus of this text - militarism, on the other. In short, patriarchy would not survive without militarism, as they are irrevocably imbricated in a system that day by day violates the body of anyone that exists outside patriarchal, capitalist, colonial and militarist parameters. In a militarized country like Colombia, gender is absolutely affected by these aforementioned aspects, as it is impossible to think about it without understanding that militarism is a tentacular system that traps all kinds of socio-political and cultural constructions, such as masculinity or femininity, for instance. Thus, approaching militarism and militarization conceptually implies constructing the bases for the

feminist anti-militarist commitment, in order to go beyond the formations and patterns that Colombian culture has engendered in the name of patriarchy.

UNDERSTANDING MILITARISM

Militarism is a social phenomenon through which military power invades other spheres of society (economic, political and cultural), thus having an effect on civilian life and people's behaviour. As an ideology, it is expressed in values that permeate society such as the use of violence as a resource, discipline, hierarchization, uniformity, submission, machismo and xenophobia. (Peralta, 2005, p. 2 and 3)

Likewise, Gabriela Castellanos (2007) takes up the definition proposed by the World Council of Churches and Brukem, who define militarism as a tendency by which the ideological schemes, values and patterns of conduct of military forces manage to establish themselves in society and governments, influencing the political, social, economic and foreign policy affairs of a state.

To understand this concept, the Dictionary of War, Peace and Disarmament of the Center for Peace Studies-Delàs Center states that:

Militarism is the ideology that underpins the processes of militarization of societies, with an impact on the public, economic and social spheres, and which justifies the military route and, therefore, the use of armed force when confronting a conflict, both nationally and internationally. Militarism implies a high level of warmongering, defined as the ideology of the use of armed violence. The existence of armed forces makes the option of using militarism as a political strategy more plausible. (Calvo & Pozo, 2015, p. 202, as cited in Peñuela, 2018)

In this regard, Castellanos (2007) states that militarism promotes violence, coercion and force and is characterized by the dissemination of a nationalist discourse in which enemies are constructed and a dichotomous ethical division is made between good and bad, supporters and adversaries. This ideology tends to justify relations of subordination-domination as necessary conditions for establishing social order and as a privileged strategy for dealing with conflicts. Furthermore, it promotes the hierarchization of many types of relations, including gender relations.

In this way, a society's militarism is reflected in its beliefs, values and imaginaries, and is therefore not only related to the authority granted to the military, but is also evident in the support that citizens give to militaristic measures and actions (MOC-Paraguay, 2004). Through militarism, military norms, values, logics and practices are transferred to everyday life, being reproduced and often accepted and legitimized by civil society. In this regard, Yuste (2000), quoted by the Working Group "Mujer y Conflicto armado" (Women and Armed Conflict (2009)), states that militarism in Colombia has implied the introjection and imposition of values such as solving conflicts through the exercise of violence; the identification of conflict with people and not with the objective fact that causes it; the perception of danger in plurality and the tendency towards homogenization, or the adoption of a vertical and hierarchical organization based on the principle of due obedience, order and discipline. (p. 10)

Militarism is expressed in Colombian culture in various ways, for example, in the disproportionate support for the military forces, despite having been involved in various crimes against humanity and human rights violations, as well as the degree of public acceptance of the measure of paying taxes to finance the war. In this regard, Castellanos

(2007) argues that militarism in Colombian culture can also be reflected in the justification and naturalization of assassinations and extrajudicial executions, under the argument that “the end justifies the means”, which legitimizes the use of all kinds of mechanisms to fight the insurgency.

In the same sense, Duarte (2021) states that a significant expression of militarism in Colombia is that many people claim the need for ever larger military forces, and the involvement of men in armed groups is positively valued, as they acquire greater social recognition and status. This is how militarism permeates societies, ensuring that the masculinity that is recognized and legitimized is that which is willing to kill or die for the sake of honour, respect for military hierarchies and the “defence” of the homeland and national security. (Cockburn, 2007)

At the same time, from the militarist logic, dichotomies and hierarchies are constructed, even justifying gender-based inequalities, as Stasa Zajovic (1992) quoted by Fernando Hernández (2005, p. 1) puts it:

On the ideological level, militarization manifests itself, above all, in the imposition of militaristic values, militaristic symbols and language; in necrophilia as forms of social and spiritual contamination (...); in the authoritarian political spirit that rejects to the point of eliminating the other, the different, be it in ideological, ethnic, sexual, etc. terms; in the glorification that goes as far as the adoration of the figure of the collective father of the nation, personified by the president of the state or head of the armed forces; in the rigid separation of male and female roles: woman/mother, man/warrior; in the political marginalization of women. For instance, in Serbia’s 250-member parliament, there are only four women.

Additionally, militarism positions an idea of security associated with violence, control and surveillance. In this regard, Reardon (2010) argues that militarized security systems limit the guarantee of human rights, do not protect land and privilege military spending, instead of responding to people’s needs, as contemplated from a human security perspective.

This militarist culture is learned and legitimized through various socialization mechanisms and practices that seek disciplining and obedience: in schools, the family, advertising, social networks, the media and other cultural devices that transmit militarist values, such as the predominance of security, the use of violence, the construction of hierarchies, discipline, and the logic of friends-enemies, among others. Through various mechanisms, what Cynthia Enloe (2000) calls “militarized subjectivities” are constructed, incorporating these values into their ways of thinking and their conception of the world.

As Espitia (2018) argues, militarism builds a passive citizenship, in that people lose agency and capacity to decide and adopt values such as belief in hierarchy, obedience, the need for the use of force, the justification of military intervention, repression and authoritarianism, with which they are ceding part of their freedom and autonomy, legitimising arbitrary decisions and measures. According to this author, there are basically four predominant aspects of militarist culture:

- a. Friend-enemy logic: A hierarchy is established based on a friend-enemy logic, in which it is established that a given group is a threat and must be controlled and even exterminated, which is a product of the separation between good and bad. The first militaristic characteristic par excellence is then

the adoption of a conception of the modern world constituted by Us and Them, where Them are perceived as a physical threat, they are configured as an enemy. (p. 48)

- b. Fear: The world is conceived as an unsafe and dangerous place, so that citizens require protection, control, surveillance, discipline and stricter security measures, such as curfews and repression of social protest. These conceptions have also legitimized practices such as “social cleansing”, which are selective assassinations carried out by armed groups in various municipalities and cities.
- c. Violent conflict management: From the militarist culture, violence is legitimized to eliminate threats, risks and even enemies. Nonviolent conflict management and negotiation mechanisms are considered childish or even question the courage, determination and decisiveness of hegemonic masculinity.
- d. Dispossession and capitalism: militaristic measures usually mask capitalist interests. Militarism provokes both direct violence (assassinations, disappearances, feminicides, forced displacements, etc.) and structural violence, as it is a mechanism for controlling populations for the benefit of neo-liberal economic policies, for the establishment of mega-investment projects and for the increased presence of transnational companies. (Londoño and Cacho, 2014 p.18, cited by Espitia, 2018)

MILITARIZATION: VIOLENCE, POWER AND CONTROL

The values that militarism positions are materialized in various practices that make up what is known as militarization. Militarization and militarism are concepts that are held simultaneously and operate hand in hand. As has

been shown, militarism is a phenomenon that consists of the preponderance of military power over civilian power in political terms, and also has to do with the influence of the military sphere and logics in state decision-making, beyond the security and defence sector. (Arana and Anaya, 2020, p. 1)

Militarization, according to Hall and Coyne, can occur directly or indirectly. The former refers to when the government deploys and uses its military forces domestically for the control and repression of the citizenry. The indirect form occurs when police forces acquire militaristic characteristics over time, i.e. military strategies, tactics and even weaponry (2013, p. 487). Militarization comprises the practices that militarism exerts to position itself in the social imaginary and in everyday lives, for example, when we talk about militarization we talk about military investment (weapons, equipment, soldiers, etc.) and we also talk about other practices such as conscription, compulsory military service, police training with military guidelines and the criminalization of protests.

Militarization is not only deployed with the intention of domination over the citizenry, but also as an expression of power itself, of state power, of its superiority, sovereignty and monopoly of the use of force. This expression of power and control has different aspects through which it materializes in Colombia. On the one hand, compulsory military service (servicio militar obligatorio: SMO), which also promotes militarist ideas of patriotic heroism and reproduces stages of inequality, insofar as there are men who, having to define their military status, can use their economic privileges to avoid having to fulfil this obligation, while there is another group of men who, based on militarist ideas, do their service not only out of necessity, but also because of the status and recognition that such an act promises.

Likewise, another expression of militarization are the so-called raids or arbitrary detentions for recruitment purposes, which have been a widespread practice in the national territory to force young people to perform military service and which have been declared unconstitutional, through the Constitutional Court's rulings C-879 of 2011 and T-455 of 2014.

Various practices that shape militarization are ensured through state military spending, and Colombia is one of the countries with the highest military investment in the region, specifically in Latin America it is the country with the second highest military spending. In 2019, Colombia invested USD 10.168 billion while in 2020 it invested USD 9.216 billion in military spending, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2020). This is nothing new, as Colombia has historically been a highly militarized country, and furthermore suffers from one of the world's longest-running armed conflicts. Colombia equates democracy, its development and stability with the security and defence of the state, that is, with the militarization of our lives. For the Colombian state, militarization is not only an expression of power and sovereignty, but also a guarantee of the state per se.

Through militarization, public spaces are controlled, and thus social life as well; as with militarism, militarization filters into all aspects of life. Therefore, we can speak of militarized masculinities, militarized bodies, militarized lives, because these expressions have become established in our cultural DNA, normalizing practices such as seeing highly armed police on the streets or hypervigilance. Even this hypervigilance, this need to control and dominate, begins to materialize in other spaces, given that militarization is highly contagious, so it does not only exist within the institutions that promulgate the security and defence of the

nation; it is also expressed in spaces such as social protest, social movements and collective resistance, which can become militarized by adopting military structures in their internal organization and in the way they interact with other bodies.

Militarization accentuates violence as a legitimate and normalized means of managing social life. If militarization is an expression of power and the state seeks to highlight and reproduce that power, then militaristic mechanisms and practices are the means to achieve it. It is no coincidence that police violence is so latent in our territories. According to the Bolillo, Dios y Patria report by the NGO Temblores,

the security forces are one of the most visible faces of the state. Through the presence of police and military forces in the geographic territory, the state demonstrates possession and territorial dominion and, in so doing, reinforces its sovereignty. The presence of the armed state forces in public space is, above all, allegorical and performative, as it triggers a series of effects and emotions on the citizenry and thus ends up being one of the main producers of the social experience of public space: the surveillance function of a patrol car surrounding a city block, for example, can awaken feelings of security in a group of the population, but, at the same time, represent one of the greatest fears for the identities that are commonly persecuted by the police. (2020, p. 18)

Militarization and the violence perpetuated by the security forces are not separate, but rather irreparably overlapping. In Colombia we cannot ignore the effects of this interconnection between security and militarization. According to the NGO Temblores, between 2017 and 2019, the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences recorded

639 homicides committed by the security forces nationwide, of which 328 were committed by the military, 289 by the police and 22 by intelligence services (in percentages this equates to 51.3% of cases attributed to the military, 45.2% to the police and 3% to the intelligence services). (Temblores, 2020, p. 26)

In attempting to analyse this picture from a feminist perspective, Cynthia Cockburn (2010) makes clear that militarization and war are constructed by three dimensions of power that influence and signify their existence and development. The first dimension is economic power, the second is national power embodied in community, religious or state structures, and the third is gendered power (p. 150). These dimensions of power are what allow and enable the fertile ground for militarization and war to make sense, to take shape, to be achieved and to be reproduced, and we must remember that power does not operate autonomously, but depends on other dimensions to achieve its potential. In this sense, power with respect to militarization operates as a machine driven by these three dimensions: they need each other. For this reason, both Cockburn (2010) and Enloe (2000) remind us that it is essential to study, understand and ground the concept of militarization with a gendered approach insofar as patriarchal power relations are necessarily subject to a gendered dimension that places each gendered person at a different link in the militarization process.

With this in mind, it is essential to understand how militarization operates in the gender dimension. For Enloe (2010), understanding militarization implies moving beyond the imaginary that war only affects men and that men are the only ones who participate directly or indirectly in militaristic systems. While militarization seeks men to be soldiers, to construct the doctrines of war, to support leg-

islation for the approval of military spending, men's participation would not be possible without women also embracing militarization. Enloe and Cockburn illustrate how the control and power implied by militarization is not only exerted over masculinized bodies, but also over ideas of femininity, gender roles, female sexuality, female skills, among others, are the targets of decisions that must be made to sustain militarism (2010). Without all this, militarization would simply not be possible and this is why we speak of the militarization of lives specifically, as this process must affect, co-opt, absorb all spheres of the lives of both men and women for it to be an effective strategy.

MILITARIZATION OF WOMEN'S BODIES

Since militarization is an expression of power and since power is one of those responsible for violence against women's bodies, it is essential to understand the violent effects of militarization on women's lives. According to the NGO Temblores:

In the logic of war, national sovereignty is protected through the imposition of male domination in which the dominated subject is domesticated through penetration or elimination: the former to appropriate what has not already been dominated and the latter to kill what cannot be dominated. Women's bodies have been the historical embodiment of this domination and sexual violence the crudest weapon of war to domesticate them. This logic seems to permeate the actions of the National Police, as sexual violence takes precedence over female and feminized bodies and seems to group them all together in a single destiny: for women, an encounter with the police always harbours the possibility of rape. (2020, p. 48)

In this sense, according to the same report by ONG Temblores, during 2017, 2018 and 2019, Medicina Legal registered 241 cases of sexual violence committed by the security forces. 139 of them were committed by the Military Forces and 102 by the National Police. It should also be taken into account that under-reporting is a phenomenon that is even more accentuated when it comes to gender-based violence due to the intimidation, harassment, stigmatization and re-victimization that have historically existed when it comes to women denouncing violence that has been perpetrated against their bodies - without forgetting that the fact that this violence has been perpetrated by members of the security forces deepens this phenomenon, as they are a reference of authority and power. This is also how militarization operates, as obedience under this logic is achieved by instilling fear of authority, of the state itself.

Thus, it can be understood that militarization is also a way of exercising power over women's bodies, in different ways. If militarism can be understood as domination, militarization indicates that this domination requires specific strategies and manoeuvres in order to be exercised. In this case, from a feminist perspective, it is understood that militarization uses tactics of domination over lives through military deployment, high expenditure on strategies, instruments and military personnel, and that all of this has a silencing, repressive and actively violent effect on women's lives. The weapons, the uniform, the authority carried by soldiers are symbols of power and domination, that is, anyone who faces the presence of one of them knows that they are facing power itself. Historically, women have been at a disadvantage in regard to these types of symbols (weapons, uniforms, authority) and even more so when talking about power itself, as it is this that has led to patriarchy, militarism and militarization enduring over time and jeopardising the safety and integrity of women.

FINAL REFLECTIONS: THE COMMITMENT OF ANTIMILITARIST FEMINISMS

In reflecting on militarism and militarization, its connection to patriarchal gender relations is evident, in that war - or a predisposition to it - accentuates the divisions already existing in these relations. In this regard, Cynthia Cockburn argues that the possibility or existence of war within a society emphasizes men as perpetrators of violence and women as victims, as well as legitimising sexual violence and widening the gap between femininity and masculinity as both recipients and perpetrators of authority and violence (2010). This militarization-patriarchy link is the basis for understanding the need for the construction of an antimilitarist approach within feminisms.

From this perspective, it is understood that the structures of patriarchal domination that have historically subordinated women have been configured in conjunction with matrices of power such as militarism. Feminisms have been responsible for dismantling these structures through critical thinking and social mobilization, pointing out and dismantling the molecular and macro-structural patriarchal practices that violate women's lives. Feminisms have been built from different perspectives that reaffirm the multidimensional diversity of women with an intersectional approach that aims to unveil oppressions based on gender, race, class, sexuality, among others.

Without losing sight of intersectionality, feminisms are concerned with identifying and de-configuring the colonialist practices and matrices that have hierarchized racialized and feminized bodies in Latin American societies. From there, we recognise that one of the most potent edges is militarism and proceed to identify how this matrix of power has not only traversed Latin American societies in

their socio-political composition, but also profoundly constrained women's existence. For this reason, anti-militarist feminisms are absolutely necessary and use the intersectional prism to analyse, understand, criticise and dismantle the militarized structures that ultimately end up making the lives of Latin American women more precarious.

In the current Colombian context, militarism has been further exacerbated through police violence, war and the use of weapons. From this arises the need to amplify feminist voices that evoke antimilitarism as an alternative. In this scenario, antimilitarist feminisms are a historical and material necessity, questioning the power matrices that enable the militarization of life and militarism as an ethos of Latin American societies.

Feminist antimilitarism in praxis, as a thought and movement, recognizes that in reflecting on war and peace it is necessary to review the deep connection between gender constructions and militarism. Thus, the feminist anti-militarist perspective argues that gender socialization significantly influences the construction of militarist masculinities and configures a scenario that legitimizes all types of violence against women.

From this same approach, the relationship between militarism and patriarchy has been made visible through the category of Milipatriarchy, which recognizes that confronting war can reconfigure gender relations and at the same time put an end to sexism and the subordination of women, which is a necessary component in the construction of a culture of peace.

Limpal Colombia, as an anti-militarist feminist organization, has recognized that the demilitarization of everyday life must be central to peacebuilding and from this perspective

recognizes the disproportionate and specific impacts that women face in contexts of war, which is why it has made visible how in armed confrontation, women's bodies are "spoils of war" and sexual violence is systematically exercised as a practice that vindicates male power and control over women's bodies and lives.

Demilitarizing everyday life is one of the commitments of antimilitarist feminisms and this means eradicating all types of violence against women and achieving the adoption of structural measures, such as reducing military spending in order to invest in guaranteeing fundamental rights, promoting disarmament and control of the arms trade, promoting the elimination of compulsory military service and guaranteeing conscientious objection and questioning police brutality and all types of institutional violence against citizens, among other actions. Likewise, the demilitarization of everyday life requires transforming imaginaries and values that legitimise obedience, hierarchies, violence, the construction of enemies, social polarization, militaristic security, control and surveillance, which is also a way of deconstructing patriarchy.

With this in mind, Limpal Colombia's commitment to feminism and antimilitarism embarks on the search for a dignified life for all women, without ignoring the intersections that make their life experiences unique and attending to their needs due to the shortcomings left by patriarchy. Demilitarization is not only a current political commitment in the militarized context of Colombia, but also a proposal that, if adopted, could guarantee the integrity and human security of women and all those who have been violated by the socio-political system of militarism. To demilitarize society is to commit to the dignity of all lives and all bodies.



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Más vidas menos armas. Bogotá D.C., 2021

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INSUBORDINATION AND FEMINIST DISOBEDIENCE, IN THE FACE OF A MILITARIZED AND OPPRESSIVE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

This article presents some of the reflections that, from the lens of antimilitarist feminisms, construct paths to confront the strategies of war promoted and perpetrated by the patriarchal system as a prism of reinforcement of systems of oppression.

The very idea of confronting and transgressing implies situating oneself in a political line of opposition, in this case to war, to militarization, and to the ways in which masculine subjectivities have been shaped as the axis of the traditional and androcentric model. From this place of enunciation, positions are woven between the contributions of other feminists and these own reflection of an antimilitarist feminist.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to promote contextualized reflections, from a feminist perspective that confronts these oppressive systems and generates evidence of the multiple impacts on the bodies and lives of men and women. Provoking this reflection is urgent, not only to empower the voice of those who have been on the side of unarmed resistance, but also to change the course of the story that is told and educated.

This article, although it reflects the analysis of antimilitarist feminisms, does not seek to identify women as a homogeneous group, nor naturalize women's practices of care, kindness and pacifism, nor stigmatize those who chose arms as a tool to fight against oppressions. Instead, it seeks to question the impacts of these systems on the minds of human beings who are led to decide for war in the face of profound inequalities.

Demilitarizing, decolonizing and confronting war is an emancipatory feminist approach to stop not only patriarchy, but colonialism, racism, capitalism and the heterosexual system, from a place of insubordination.

1. THE PATRIARCHY-MILITARIZATION BINOMIAL, CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ANTIMILITARIST FEMINISMS

For some decades now, the feminist movement, from different theoretical currents, has been addressing the meaning of militarization. Some approaches have come from pacifist and nonviolent currents, and others from the broad structure of human rights advocacy and peace studies. All have contributed to the analysis for a critical understanding of how militarization is at the base of the patriarchal structure of domination, which, together with other systems of oppression, make up the system that causes and supports inequalities.

Just as patriarchy has mutated, the feminist agenda in the search to respond to the ultimate goal of guaranteeing full rights for women in their diversities, has been strengthening its discourse around different issues, some of them associated with militarization, which, in countries traversed by war and conflict, have become a constitutive element of everyday life.

Just as there is no single way of being a feminist, nor a single feminist way of thinking, neither is it possible to establish a single dialogue in the face of antimilitarism. The thin line between militarism and militarization generates bridges that speak for and give meaning to the discursive practice that emerges from there, for the situated reading of militarized contexts. However, the common elements insist on pointing out that militarization can be conceived as:

(...) the process by which the military establishment participates and influences society, politics, economy and education. Militarization is, therefore, the process by which militarism is promoted and expanded, as well as an essential mechanism to naturalize violence in the society in which it is present (Calvo Rufanges, 2016, p.14).

Thus militarism can be understood as:

(...) the ideology that sustains the processes of militarization of societies, with political, economic and social incidences and that justify the military way and, therefore, the use of armed force when facing a conflict, both at national and international level. Also militarism implies a high level of warmongering, this being defined as the ideology of the use of armed violence (Calvo Rufanges, 2016, p.14), which complements and enables one of the clearest expressions of hegemonic masculinity.

Patriarchy as an ideological, political, economic and cultural vehicle that allows re-creating and reproducing power asymmetries, sustains coercive structures of domination and exploitation between subjects, imposing a certain way of constructing masculinity and femininity, and determining relations of domination between the sexes, in which women are subordinated to the power of men, but in which strict masculine identities that men must follow are also imposed (Campos-Febrer, 2016, p.23).

Much has been written about the construction of patriarchy, that is, about the reading of gender as inequality (Segato, 2016, p. 92) in societies. This has allowed us to see how the historical process of masculinity is the DNA of the state and how its masculine genealogy is revealed on

a daily basis (Segato, 2016, p. 94). This patriarchal system has used a sexist, racist, warmongering and militaristic language that promotes a stereotype of the heroic masculine subject that generally assumes these identity postures as a focus in order to manage and to maintain its strategy of revitalization and legitimacy in social practices.

Some studies have indicated, for example, that weapons have been a vehicle through which patriarchy has positioned itself, and that in addition to being an instrument of power in itself, it has been used as an instrument of extension of violent masculinity, which exacerbates the dominance of the bearer against those considered powerless (Marion Young, 2000), often women and racialized populations, among others. Given that the patriarchal system has been established from the center of postcolonial societies, the predominance of the masculine, an expression associated with the son of colonial seizure (white or white-washed, property-based, notion of the “head of the family”) (Segato, 2016, p. 94), has been associated with the force, strength and forming of the structure that Segato calls expropriating and violent in relation to gender.

Of course, it is not being affirmed that these masculine traits are constitutive of the nature of being born a man. What is being referred to here is the masculine construction that has been made from the traits exalted by the system, which many men have appropriated and on which they have built their masculinity. Of course, the correlation is also the deconstruction that has been taking place in recent years, by critical reflection from groups that address transformative masculinities, new masculinities or non-hegemonic masculinities. Despite these significant advances, the issue of the violent construction of masculinity continues to demonstrate the superiority of men through violence against the others, the women.

Cisnormative masculinity, in coexistence with militarization, operates as a system of values that imposes itself on territorial and corporal geographies, establishing a “must be”, a single possible or desirable destiny. Of course, militarism and militarization are evidenced in multiple forms in democratic and modern states. As analysed in the following sections, this duo, traversed by the heroic imaginary, is immersed in each of the stages of daily and social life, generating reproductive practices of its values and violent expressions that generally generate disproportionate impacts for women.

Antimilitarisms must not only dialogue with the multiple feminisms, but must also dialogue with all forms of resistance, and thereby remember what damage has been done by arms and the military structure that frames the bases of budgets and public policies of the countries, thus promoting a removal of the structures that enable the dynamics of behaviours and subjectivities that reproduce these patterns.

2. MANIFESTATIONS OF MILITARIZATION AND MILITARISM

Understanding the multiple manifestations of militarization and militarism involves highlighting the main ideological, political, economic and cultural structures that serve to channel military ideals. Our contemporary societies have been built mostly based on war, as a colonizing strategy used for the appropriation of territories, resources, bodies and lives of ancestral subjects. This war, which decades before meant conquest for some, also marked the beginning of a series of oppressions for others.

The frame of the use of force to occupy relieves the exaltation of values that subsist to this day and that have been implanted in the minds of people, seeking sympathy for

their cause through imposition. War, undoubtedly accompanied by the use of weapons, occupation of territories, violence and superiority, have devastated political, community and individual projects, leaving, as is now common, an uncountable wave of death and rights violations.

The military project on which many countries and societies were built, has been based on values associated with what the patriarchal system has exalted in the need to remain attached to the hegemonic ideal of the male-white-middle class. Thus, the use of force, the imposing tone, the dehumanization accompanied by lack of sensitivity or empathy, the notion of honour as the primary source of compliance for the homeland, instilled as a virtue, seek to be a force so great that the individual is able to overcome physical endurance. There are many cases in which a soldier has been physically too exhausted to continue a march and for honour he continues as far as necessary (Ministry of Defense, 2015), and in turn, enhances the notion of character which comprises qualities such as nobility, energy, integrity, constancy, fortitude, severity, austerity. If there is something unthinkable, it is a military man without character, that is, without his own personality, without an intimate awareness of the different situations in which he is placed by vicissitudes (Ministry of Defense, 2015). These, among others, are installed in the cultural imaginary as the magnification of security and protection, and of course, as the way to build the virility of men.

This system of “virtues”, as they are called in the Colombian case, is a scheme of values that crosses culture, economics, politics and ideology, permeating each of the social strata, with severe impacts for women and also for some subjects who, from diversity, dissociate themselves from the cisnorm.

Culturally, for example, the militaristic and patriarchal hegemony also turns into a classist and racist hegemony that subordinates some to others. The imaginary of the hero soldier of the homeland, whose mother and family should be proud of his role in defending the entire population, is transmitted to society in small particles that build militarised minds. One of the most effective machines for building public opinion on a given issue is the media. In militarised contexts these machines allow the transmission of military ideology to be easily installed in the discourse and practices of societies. An example for this is the transmission of the heroic imaginary of the military through media campaigns that highlight their strength, dedication and honour, and whose mechanisms are reinforced at times of crisis of legitimacy of military institutions.

For some years now, it has been common to see the construction of television series featuring military personnel in which, in addition to showing their humanity, the values of the military system are reinforced. In these series, women are generally subjected to invisible violence and daily machismo which, coming from the hierarchy of uniformed power, become part of the soundtrack of a story which, like many events in history, reflects the truth of the strongest.

In the Colombian case, the screens and the media have served as a channel for the voices of high-ranking military commanders to activate discourses of defence, justification and vindication of the place that heroes occupy in the homeland. It is now commonplace that in the face of human rights violations, including sexual violence and extrajudicial executions, senior military commanders go to the media with speeches of “bad apples” (Ricarte González, 2020), “a few”, “we will not tolerate”. However, what the most recent events involving the military have shown is that it is not just a few, and that behind these acts there are

ideological artefacts that ignite male virility, exalted by the use of a uniform and weapons, favouring the elaboration of premeditated plans to commit crimes such as the mass rape of minors.¹

Within these cultural manifestations of militarization, the installation of messages through verbal and visual language plays a very important role. Thus, militarism contributes to the formation and reproduction of the hegemonic power of the traditional male model, which has been built from the patriarchal system through its media (Perejuan, 2016, p. 68).

Visually, the identification of military codes has positioned the use of military-like clothing, camouflage, boots, belts, among others, which place the wearer in a place of vindication of strength and superiority through this symbolism that generates social prestige and power. Militarised masculinity allows the fusion of certain practices and images of virility with the use of weapons, the exercise of violence and the performance of an aggressive and often misogynistic masculinity (Theidon, 2009, p. 4), which in contexts of war and violence allows the construction of unequal and asymmetrical power to be enhanced. This adds, among others, to the romanticization of the stability given by having sex-affective relationships with subjects, generally men, who have this social status.

Of course, this cultural construction of the subject, in Butler's terms, is not static. On the contrary, it is imbricated by subjectification and along these lines, this whole scaffolding of ideas and tokens constructs the subject who receives the interlocution of the voice that enunciates. Thus, the militarization of masculinity, far from being naturalized, is

constructed through the process of culturalization that is implanted in bodies from the very moment of birth and which is reinforced by stereotypes of virility in the different stages of life, introducing them to practices of superiority, competitiveness, physical strength, aggressiveness and honour.

In the territories far from the major cities and population centers, militarization through culture is reflected not only in the concentration of state military force, but also in the presence of illegal armed groups which, in the Colombian case, occupy a broad spectrum of the country's geography. The cultural mechanisms in this case act in a similar way, only that they are transmitted through forced coexistence with armed groups, which resort to the same elements of superiority and power that have already been mentioned. In these territories, where structural inequalities are overwhelming, where opportunities are scarce and the state response is based, in the best of cases, on the supply of the national army, the normalization of men in uniform, making use of public space, occupying places of socialization, showing their power through symbolic means, becomes the best alternative to escape poverty.

Culture is only one link in the chain of instruments through which militarization is installed in the minds of society. Ideology, i.e. the ideas that construct individual and collective thinking, occupies a place in the militarization-patriarchy that deepens the elements of oppression and domination. Military ideology, in this case, is understood as the set of ideas that position, on the one hand, the imaginary of security provided through arms and armed forces, and on the other, the symbolic and sometimes real construction of the figure of the enemy.

The military ideology sells to the collective imagination the premise of security through the permanence of military bodies - legal and illegal - that protect the civilian population at any cost. Its consecration to the military spirit, the enthusiasm and pride of wearing the uniform, the affection for the military forces in whose arms rests the honour, tranquillity and greatness of the homeland (Ministry of Defence, 2015), and the constant call for discipline, as a condition that counteracts the dissolving effects of divergences, creates intimate cohesion and allows the superior to demand and obtain from the subordinate that orders are executed with accuracy and without hesitation (Ministry of Defence, 2015). This would seem to make them worthy of social support and perks that, in the case of Colombia, other public officials do not have.²

Likewise, the normalization of defence as something mundane and habitual is installed in life by favouring the mobility of uniformed and armed people in cities and populated centers, by promoting the production of television and film series and reports with military figures as protagonists. This favouring is also accomplished in governmental discourses that exalt heroism and that grant privileged voices to military personnel in the television media, by encouraging young people to pursue military careers, through the installation of military schools where these indoctrination processes begin, and by promoting the support of military museums to convey the image of protection and securi-

² According to Law 1861 of 2017, those who are considered fit and who present the military service, receive: a monthly bonus of up to 30% of the current legal monthly minimum wage; a place in the SENA if they serve for 18 months; first class reservists may access any technical or technological training program and may study during military service or after finishing it; the time of military service will be computed for pensions in public and private funds, attention to their basic needs and access to health services, accommodation, food and clothing, among other advantages; access to scholarships for admission to military training schools (Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Professional Soldiers); special credit line with the ICETEX; prioritization in programs and policies for employment generation and job placement; an annual leave paid with a legal minimum wage in force and also the recognition of another legal minimum wage effective at the time of their discharge; they will obtain tickets and travel expenses for their relocation to the place of incorporation, and the return to their home once their time of military service is over.

ty, even in territories where it is the only cultural space, among others.

Militarization, therefore, translates into the provision of human and physical resources for military exercise, such as: manpower, geographical location of military and police forces, use and carrying of weapons and ammunition, planes, trucks, explosives, uniforms, and all those objects of war that are available for military purposes in specific territories. In this sense, militarization is expressed in the material disposition of the military in a given place. This creation of subjects at the service of this conception of militarization produces warlike masculinities, which can be conceptualized as:

(...) the result of a variety of practices of manhood linked to demonstrations of power and exercises of domination such as threats and the use of physical and armed force that become institutionalized and embodied in a social field (Muñoz, 2011, p. 75).

Authors such as Theidon (2009) associate these warlike masculinities with social prestige. In this regard, she mentions that dominant masculinity is affirmed by the access to symbols of prestige such as those provided by education, work, a decent salary or decent housing. Therefore, the absence of these resources, in contexts of violence and militarization, makes access to weapons a symbol of power and high reputation.

The symbols (uniform, weapons, and force) are the available capital which some male subjects use to exercise relations of power and domination, seeking to occupy a position of hierarchy and superiority, and which become prostheses of hegemonic masculinity, accompanied by the dehumanization produced by military training.

¹ This refers to a scandal that has become public in recent years and is about systematic mass rape of minor indigenous girls by members of the Colombian military.

FINAL THOUGHTS: NON-MILITARIZED SECURITY

From various sides of the feminist movement, security in its most hegemonic conception has been questioned as a paradigm that does not solve the structural problems of prevention and protection of humanity, and especially because for women it is a factor that deepens the risks.

In Colombia, women have made progress in questioning and demanding a non-militarized response that guarantees dignified living conditions and the free exercise of their rights, thus promoting what can be considered a feminist approach to the concept of human security. At the individual level, security for women is reflected in their confidence and personal wellbeing when exercising their citizenship and decision-making as well as carrying out actions without a sense of fear or dread, particularly when speaking in public or walking in the street. This subjective confidence combines directly with the importance of integrality between the access to good health care and the need for jobs in dignity.

While states disseminate the idea of militarization as an indispensable strategy to guarantee the life and security of societies - women project transgressive proposals that place humanity and women at the center of the action, proposals that advocate the eradication of all forms of violence against them as part of the guarantee of their rights to a free and dignified life, proposals that move away from the colonialist view of security based on arms, proposals that divert resources from military spending to other sectors in order to reduce the gaps in social inequality that mainly affect the lives of girls and adult women, and finally, proposals that consider peace not only as the opposite of war, but that question the deepening of militarization in order to pacify territories and communities.

This perspective, not only rejects the maximum exponent of militarization - the security and defence structures of states -, but also everything that points to obedience, hierarchy, discipline and the acceptance of violence as a means of conflict resolution (Camps - Febrer, 2016).

From insubordination to war and from the rebelliousness of antimilitarist feminisms, there have been histories and narratives rewritten about war and violence, in order to position other strategies to confront militarisms and violent practices, coming from emancipatory practices, and to position other politics against war that focuses on the dispossessed. This generates new vocabularies and new actions (Butler, 2007) as well as another sphere where a dignified life is possible for all human beings.



Photo: WILPF Colombia
 Más vidas menos armas. Bogotá D.C., 2021



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres Limpal Young,
en el Día de Acción Global por un Aborto Legal,
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ARMS AS SUSTENANCE TO THE PATRIARCHAL CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The militarization of life is one of the antimilitarist feminism concerns from which LIMPAL Colombia manifests its position. The implications of militarist structures fall disproportionately on women and feminized bodies, especially in terms of the violence exercised. For this reason, it is essential that a feminist and antimilitarist approach focuses on the analysis of these patriarchal structures that violate women, as well as all the elements that compose women and allow them to keep standing.

One of these elements are weapons, which in addition to propagating the militarization of life, also support the violent hegemonic masculinities that feminism criticises and resists to. Weapons are the sustenance of violence insofar as they allow the reaffirmation of power relations that subject women to the most vulnerable links, where their bodies and lives are under constant threat. The patriarchal system and the continuum of violence are the focus of this analysis, which argues for a life free of violence and, therefore, free of guns.

Thus, in this analysis, feminist concern about arms focuses on three key moments: on the one hand, the proliferation of arms and their relationship with the exercise of violence and the reproduction of militarization. On the other hand, the material, physical and tangible impacts of arms on women and society in general will be examined in depth. And finally, it will address the effects that the proliferation of arms has on women's lives. This will contribute to the analysis from the antimilitarist approach of resistance to violence and weapons, considering these two aspects as activators of subjugation, oppression and elimination of women on a social, cultural and political level.

1. PROLIFERATION OF ARMS: VIOLENCE AND MILITARIZATION

In Colombia, militarization and violence are factors that have influenced the construction of the social, institutional, economic, political and cultural fabric, in different dimensions and with changing actors. From a socio-political perspective, this multifaceted, complex and constant history of violence has had a particular impact on the women and girls who inhabit the territories. Women's bodies and the violence exercised against them have been configured as links in the maintenance and reproduction of patriarchal and militarist systems which, in turn, are inextricably intertwined.

Historically, the concern of feminist movements and organizations about the integrity and safety of women, girls and diverse gender identities has been built on several triggers of gender-based violence. Hegemonic masculinities, militarization and power relations are enhanced by colonial and military violence that expanded armed violence and control through weapons as a regularized practice of territorial domination, and which in Colombia, despite being a country that signed a peace agreement, has failed to achieve a sustainable process in which guarantees are provided for the life and dignity of people.

The circulation of arms and the disproportionate impact they have on women's lives facilitates gender-based violence, sexual violence, violence in the context of families and intimate and ex-partners, massacres, human trafficking and armed conflict (Limpal Colombia, 2018, p. 20). In Colombia, these forms of violence are facilitated by the process of illicit and licit acquisition of arms, which performance and circulation are enabled by key factors such as price, access and impunity. The lack of regulation and the illegal trade of arms are problems that exceed the capac-

ities of the state, and this incapacity makes it impossible to prosecute cases of gender-based violence with arms. In response to this, Small Arms Survey (2020) clarifies that,

the financial value of reported small arms exports in 2017 was 6.5 billion USD. While this represents a slight decrease compared to 2016, the reported trade remains at a high level compared to the previous 15 years (p.17).

In the case of the context after the signing of the Peace Agreement, the parties committed to the disarmament of illegal armed actors. Also, women's movements and organizations collectively focused their attention on this process, especially considering that women and girls experienced the conflict in a differential and profound way, affecting their bodies and lives, because of their gender. LIMPAL Colombia monitored the implementation of this Agreement and found that, in 2016, there were 340 cases of violence against women (homicides and femicides) with firearms and 16 with explosive devices. Armed violence since the signing of the Agreement has not faded, but rather continues to be latent in our society, with fluctuations and a very low number of reports to the authorities.

The threat to women's lives due to threats to their security and integrity continues to be one of the greatest concerns of LIMPAL's work in Colombia. Over the years and with the approach to cases of gender-based violence and violence against women, it has been concluded that as long as the proliferation of weapons, the lack of regulation and control by the state and the lack of prevention mechanisms continue, women will continue to be at constant risk and under threat.

2. THE ARMS PROBLEM

Colombia is a country that has normalized violence and security based on the use of arms. The historical remnants of colonial violence and all the conflict scenarios that have resulted since then have provided fertile ground for the proliferation of arms, making access to weapons an increasingly less difficult manoeuvre to exercise. According to the Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP henceforth), the number of weapons in the hands of Colombians - legal and illegal - is practically the same as it was 24 years ago: 9,497 weapons per 100,000 inhabitants in 1994 versus 10,091 in 2017 (FIP, 2020, p. 9). According to the same source, in 2017 there were 4,971,000 firearms in the hands of civilians in Colombia, 706,210 of which were registered, while 4,264,790 were illegal (IFP, 2020).

Part of the arms problem in Colombia is the possession of weapons by state forces. This is not a minor fact, as it is essential to understand that arms in the hands of any actor - state or non-state actor-, are a problem in themselves. In this sense, the FIP (2020) confirmed that the Colombian police, INPEC, the Prosecutor's Office and other state security and defence institutions other than the military forces, possessed 283,000 weapons by 2017(p. 9). The civilian population and state agencies possess a large number of weapons, and there is a large difference in the amount that each of these two groups obtains.

The Colombian state has failed to regulate the trade and transfer of arms, as exemplified by the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), to which Colombia is a signatory, but which has not been duly ratified. It also has agreements with countries such as Israel for the transfer of different types of weapons. In this case, both states have a Free Trade Agreement that has allowed the lucrative Israeli military

industry to penetrate the Colombian military complex and provide armaments that are currently being used against the civilian population. In *El Militarismo Israelí en América Latina* presented by the BDS Movement in Latin America (n/a), it is made clear that,

In Colombia, the use of Israeli weaponry and technology continues to be a strong component of the repression exercised by the government. This was exemplified by the use of war vehicles called Sandcat during the mobilization days of the 21 and 22 November 2019 in the framework of a National Strike. This is not the first time that these vehicles have been seen repressing protests in Colombia. They have already been used in Cauca to repress indigenous demonstrations and farmers in the east of the country. However, it was shocking to see these war transports on the streets of Colombia's main cities. The implications of the use of this type of weaponry are more fully understood when we consider that it was created for the rapid mobilization of troops, thanks to which the Israeli army assaults Palestinian villages in the early hours of the morning and illegally detains even children (n/a).

This type of agreement with countries such as Israel, which have a mega-military industry with global reach, has allowed the proliferation of arms in territories of the Global South such as Colombia to continue to be a lucrative aspect and, moreover, deeply rooted in the conceptualization and execution of the country's security and defence. Likewise, we see how Colombia has positioned itself as fertile ground for the promotion and acquisition of high-calibre weaponry at the global level. This is the case with the most important military fair in Latin America, *Expodefensa*, based in Bogotá. Events such as this promote alliances with global military-industrial complexes that reproduce the

conditions for Colombia to remain at the forefront of arms commercialization and transfer.

In the Colombian territory, various ways have been found to ensure that access to civilian possession of arms is possible. For example, according to the FIP (2020), although the military industry in Colombia has the sole authorization to produce and market firearms, there is a type of weapon that has similar characteristics to the firearms that supposedly form part of the state monopoly on production and marketing (p. 26). These types of weapons are called fire-and airguns, and

they do not require a special permit for commercialization, sale or carrying by any special entity attached to the Ministry of Defence. It is important to highlight here that, although these weapons are not produced for conventional ammunition, some can be found that were originally fire guns but have been transformed so that they can fire this type of [conventional] ammunition, as well as others whose parts can be used to build makeshift weapons (p. 26).

According to the same source, these types of weapons, which do not require special permits, have accounted for 80% of arms imports since 2014 (FIP, 2020). It is no coincidence that this is the case, as access to arms possession by civil society has been a subject of public debate, but has always been subject to certain limits. However, the existence of weapons that can be modified to receive conventional ammunition trivialises this debate for those in favour of civilians being able to carry weapons freely, as there are, in fact, other ways to make this possible without having to win a public debate or legislate in their favour.

3. WEAPONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN'S LIVES

When analysing the proliferation of arms from a feminist perspective, the focus is on how the problem categorized above has differential, disproportionate, violent and precarious effects on women's lives. Weapons are the basis of the militarization of Colombian lives. Whether through intimidation, threats or direct physical violence, they can be used to maintain and reproduce the militarist system that has historically been established in our territories. The militarization of life has led to the normalization of violence in its different expressions and to the equating of physical security and the defence of property and life with its use. This also has an individualising component, where a person's life and property is worth more than any other life, and arms are the tools to guarantee that this individualism remains at the core of Colombia's socio-political composition.

According to the report by *Limpal Colombia Mujeres por el desarme, + vida - armas* (2018),

A review of the mechanisms used to commit these homicides/femicides against women shows that firearms occupy first place with 527 cases and 7 by explosive mechanism. Concerning interpersonal violence, in 2016 there were 340 cases against women and 16 by explosive mechanism. There were also 54 cases of stray bullets against women (p. 21).

The correlation between the circulation of arms and the threat against women, their lives and their integrity, stems from patriarchal patterns that have historically allowed women to be placed as the most vulnerable links in the face of violence. Militarism is also nourished by the socialization and reproduction of patriarchy, where women's bodies are

used as war riots, for example, or constantly objectified and subjugated within relationships, community relations and socio-political relations. The threat to women's integrity and wellbeing is constant and is expressed in different ways, from symbolic violence to physical and explicit violence, and for the patriarchal system to be maintained and embraced, different instruments are needed for this to be achieved. These instruments, in the context of militarization, are the weapons that have been used at all levels and in all social spheres to subjugate women and keep them in the place that patriarchy has assigned to them. It is not fortuitous that violence against women is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men, as there is also a connection between the expression of masculinity, violence and weapons. From a feminist analysis, what are weapons if not instrumental extensions of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy?

LIMPAL Colombia has an long record of tracking, monitoring and denouncing the proliferation of arms because it understands that the feminist struggle for women's dignity must have an anti-militarist and anti-arms focus. The implications and consequences of arms, from their production to their commercialization - legal or illegal - on the lives of women carry a human cost far greater than any economic loss that the Colombian state may incur by disassociating itself from the production, transfer and commercialization of arms. The violent cycles of patriarchy have always taken a disproportionate toll on women's lives and wellbeing. It is time that this cycle is broken and new ways of guaranteeing our security as a society can be thought of.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Thus, the commitment to a life of dignity and freedom from violence, from a feminist anti-militarist perspective, implies structural changes in the governmental and social sphere. These changes are necessary to guarantee the full enjoyment of women's rights, bearing in mind that historically they have been oppressed and violated by these structures, which are nourished by militarism. Furthermore, this political commitment to life implies identifying and recognising all the factors that influence the operation and development of patriarchy, as has been done throughout this article.

'Weapons are the sustenance of the patriarchal cycle of violence' is both an affirmation and feminist resistance, since it is not possible to rethink relations of power and domination without first addressing and dismantling the factors that allow this cycle to exist, namely militarism, the colonial system of which it is a part, and the weapons that support it. It is therefore key to denounce and demand, in the first instance, the regulation of the trade and carrying of arms, and in the second instance, the total transformation of this industry that threatens the integrity and wellbeing of women and all those who have been placed as the most vulnerable links of the patriarchal system. LIMPAL Colombia has actively worked for both and will continue to do so, understanding that it is feminist and antimilitarist work to ensure human security and the construction of a feminist peace that firmly rejects the use and circulation of arms.

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MUJERES
LIBRES,
ESPACIOS
SEGUROS,
TERRITORIOS EN PAZ



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Mural Feminista Antimilitarista Encuentro Cuidando
a las Cuidadoras. Restrepo, Meta 2021

Wandering VOICES

Photo: WILPF Colombia. Encuentro Cuidando a las Cuidadoras. Restrepo, Meta 2021



A COMMITMENT TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PACIFIST FEMINISM FROM THE TERRITORY

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SUMMARY

The following article presents part of the stakes and discussions established in the construction of feminism in the department of Bolívar, Colombia. The work of Black, peripheral and neighbourhood women leaders will be analysed from a socio-political perspective, shedding light on the discourse production these women leaders of social organizations have enabled.

In addition, it also looks at some conceptual tools from the frameworks of collective action and resources from Afro feminist theories, which contribute and respond to forms of emerging struggles. Afro-feminism responds to various dynamics and intersections that problematize women's racialized experiences. Finally, some reflections are presented on the stakes and responses of some Black women to concepts such as Afro-feminism and pacifism, interlocutions based on their work experiences from social organizations of racialized Black women in the department of Bolívar.

1. PERSPECTIVE ON FEMINISMS

Talking about feminisms currently brings with it a number of concepts associated with women's struggles for the recovery of our history, the search for social and gender justice, equity, emancipation, the abolition of systems of oppression structured through patriarchy, and the great social and political struggle for all people to have guarantees for the exercise of our human rights, which, as a whole, allows all perspectives of feminisms to converge within a social and political movement.

Taking into account the great cultural, ethnic, religious, socio-economic and linguistic diversity of the peoples of Latin

America, the Latin American feminist movement has been advancing in terms of spaces, agendas, stakes and questions that involve all of these diverse forms of interculturality of its peoples. The hegemonic practices of feminism are being questioned from their own places, struggles and resistances, as it is the case of the commitment to Afro-feminism, which is born from the consciousness of struggle of Black women activists, who, based on the realities they experience, and from their own structures of oppression and exploitation, politicise questions of sex and race.

In this case, the claim occurs due to the need to include the situation of Black women, addressing the category of woman as a subject of multiple experience. The demands of the struggles have been nourished from different spheres, which contributed to the construction of feminisms, as theoretical currents, and as social movements. The feminisms embrace different conceptual orientations, which start from proposals of community and pacifist feminism and continue with a decolonial viewpoint, which in turn is anti-racist in its basic understanding, but can turn into a radical version or be built around a libertarian feminism. All these different feminisms have in common the final objective, which is the recognition of women as full subjects of rights, in any of their contexts of life.

It is necessary to recognise that historical premises of feminist struggles have contributed to the definitions of today's struggles from collective action and encounter. Their actions involve a process of construction of political identity of women, who unite to denounce injustices and social oppressions around them.

In peripheral contexts, the situation is no different; according to reflections and contributions of Afro-Latin American Black feminism, and as mentioned above, Black and Afro

women have seen the need to transversalize their political identity of struggle, inquiring into the experiences that in the lives of women produce the intersections between **race, class and gender** (Lamus, D, 2009, p.11, translated from Spanish), categories that turn the discussion on its head. In the same vein, the forms of construction of feminisms, in this case instituted from struggles, ancestral practices and for the defence of territory, emerge as a response to the critique and analysis of the multiple oppressive structures of power that act on the bodies of Black women.

2. DEMANDS IN THE TERRITORY

Women's organizations and social movements in the territory, specifically in Bolívar, Colombia, are the result of the articulation of subjects in defence of positions of equity and justice, through pacifist, **anti-racist, anti-class and anti-militarist** actions with a gender focus. In addition, processes of coming together have been strengthened for the co-construction of new symbolic forms of protest, which create alliances of solidarity for and on behalf of Black women and their capacity for peaceful resistance.

2.1 WOMEN'S SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN BOLÍVAR

Some of the organizations that have been working for the defence of women's rights in Bolívar include: La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Paz, La Mesa del Movimiento Social de Mujeres, Asociación Santa Rita Para La Educación y Promoción Funsarep, Movimiento Por La Paz, Red de Empoderamiento de Mujeres, Unión de Trabajadoras Afrocolombianas del Servicio Doméstico UTRASD, Artícúlate Mujeres Construyendo Paz en el Territorio, Fundación Grupo Social, among others, who affirm their commitment through the leadership of processes of resistance and vindication of rights against the state and other actors, as Leidy Andrea

Castillo (2021), an activist from Cartagena, points out:

Collective actions and political participation carried out by social organizations in Cartagena are historically and socially positioned, and contribute to new ways of narrating Afro feminisms, feminisms from the neighbourhood contexts of Black, impoverished and racialized women, who have been contributing to the struggle from their own realities.

It is therefore important to recognise that women's organizations carry out transcendental social and political work at local and regional level, through collective actions, training processes and social mobilizations, through symbolic practices, political proposals, public denunciations, protest and commemoration events, which are nourished by: tasks of accompaniment, monitoring and implementation of plans and projects that contribute to autonomy, freedom and recognition of women's rights, and at the same time oppose all forms of violent action in defence of their communities and territories.

3. MAIN REPERTOIRES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

The collective action carried out by the women's social movement in the territory of Bolívar persists and works to strengthen processes developed by the communities of Afro, Black and mestizo women. Through these processes its protagonists seek to take a critical position on the effects of violence against women's bodies and demand a dignified life in conditions of equality to guarantee their rights to truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition.

These processes are recognized for their demands, their rethinking, their new ways of narrating, protecting knowledge, and for their transgressive actions that are reconfig-

ured in multiple responses to add voices to the discourse of a feminist peace.

3.1 WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONAL ALLIANCES

To speak of alliances between Black women from their own experiences is to recognise their differentiated historical struggles, their survival strategies that are developed through community gatherings and their own practices, their autonomy, and the positive social impacts of their actions, which are interwoven in a shared discourse based on the capacity for peaceful resistance and the political commitment to a life free of violence.

Women's organizations in Bolívar have been generating great social impact. Their meetings and struggles are advancing in terms of reorganization, resistance, exchange of knowledge, and increasing their participation, and at the same time, they are acquiring greater political visibility through what Gramsci would call "the collective will". The collective will is based on collaborative work between organizations, seeks to articulate actions linked to the strengthening of their joint agendas, in which they propose:

- Promotion and defence of women's human rights
- Peace building
- Accompaniment, denunciation and legal enforceability for women
- Attention and accompaniment in cases of gender-based violence
- Social and institutional advocacy to strengthen territorial processes on grassroots level
- Monitoring and citizen control of plans and public policies on gender
- Alliance and articulation of strategies with a gender focus

- Pedagogies and methodologies through feminist popular education
- Strengthening the leadership of social and community actors
- Consolidation of networks and alliances for the strengthening of pacifist, anti-racist and anti-militarist actions that recognise the ancestral legacy of Afro-Caribbean women's cultures and new approaches based on their demands

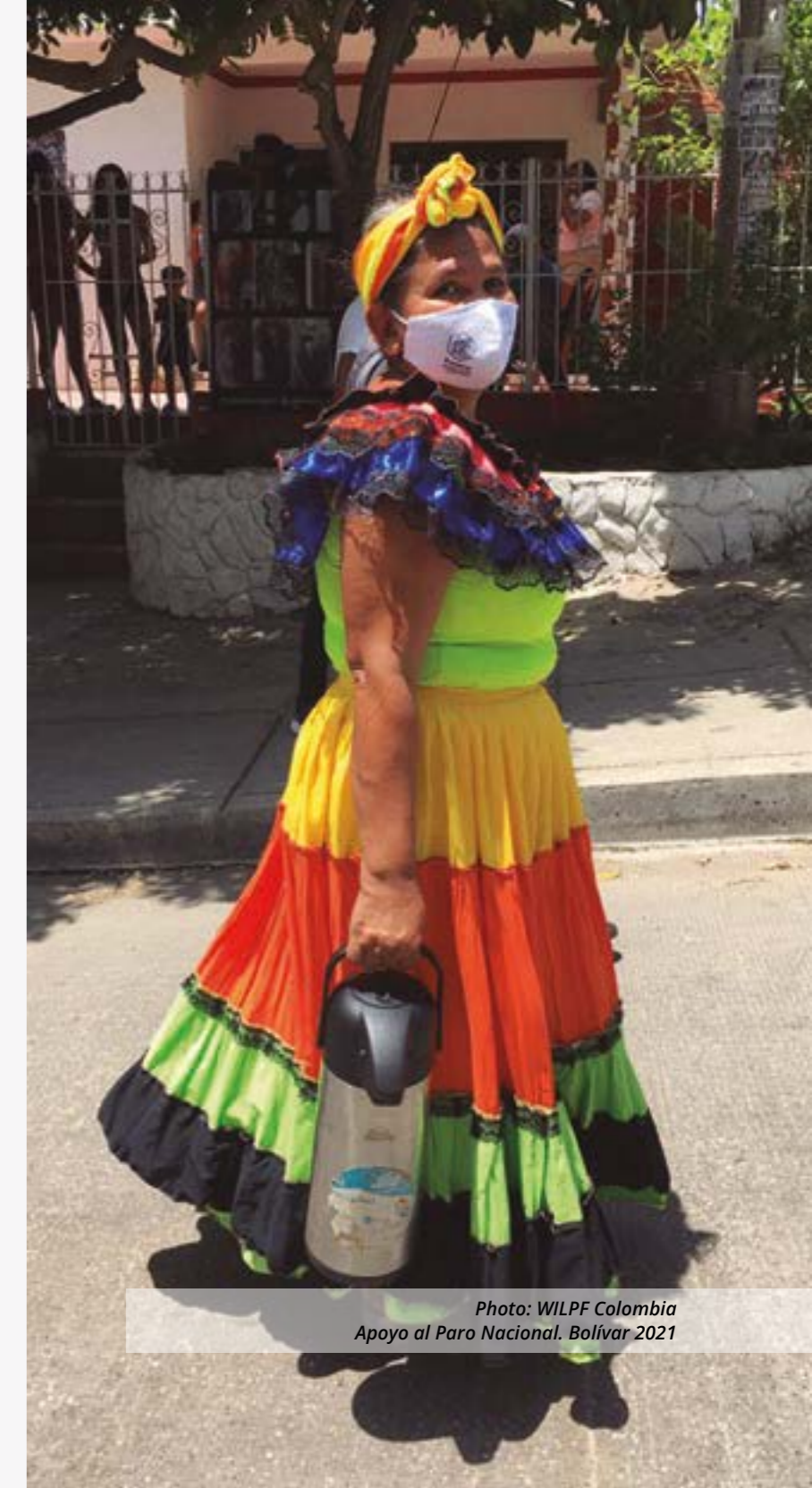


Photo: WILPF Colombia
Apoyo al Paro Nacional. Bolívar 2021

4. BLACK - AFRO-CARIBBEAN FEMINISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN IN THE TERRITORY

Andrea Sañudo Taborda: Afrofeminism for me is a theoretical position, a narrative, an experience that has to do with the experience of being a woman in the world, and of being a Black woman in a country like Colombia and in a city like Medellín. I came to feminism because I was a woman who was being subjected to a certain amount of violence that I needed to understand, and basically it saved my life. (Navarro, C. 2019)

Betty Rut Lozano: Black Afro-Colombian women have been building, from the legacy of our Cimarronas and Palenquero ancestors, a feminism that questions the universalist approaches of Eurocentric and Andean-centric feminism, transforming and enriching it. (Muñoz, G. 2021)

In my role as a journalist, I sought to get closer to some of the Afro-Caribbean feminist and pacifist proposals, from the perspective of women from organizations in the Caribbean, in the department of Bolívar. To this end, I interviewed two Afro-Caribbean women leaders, activists, pacifists and feminists.

One of them is Juana Franzual Matute, a social leader from the village of Bayunca, Bolívar, and president of the union “Unión de Trabajadoras Afrocolombianas del Servicio Doméstico” UTRASD, made up of women from the Bicentenario neighbourhood in Cartagena, and the villages of Pasacaballos, Bayunca and Tierra Bomba in Bolívar. The other woman is Estela Marugo, a social leader, Afro-feminist, activist from the village of Bayunca, Bolívar, and representative of the Afro Women’s Network of Bayunca, Asoremabay.

Lorena: *How did the organization to which you belong emerge?*

Juana: *The organization emerged in 2013, when some women domestic workers got together to share their stories, almost all of them experiences of abuse and mistreatment in the midst of domestic work. It was born out of the need to demand recognition of the labour rights of women domestic workers, for the formalization of domestic work, for the right to demand dignified treatment by employers, legal working hours and payment of social benefits, and in turn, to stop exploitative labour practices, sexual harassment and psychological abuse, which not only Afro women have historically and systematically received, but which has contributed in a particular way to their marginalization and dehumanization.*

As Black women, we have historically suffered discrimination because of the racism and lack of social and economic opportunities that have been present in our communities. It is very important for us to give new meaning to Afro culture, which is why we fight and unite in a union; even so, our organization is made up of Afro, raizal, mestizo, indigenous and migrant women.

I did this work for many years and I left empty-handed, I never received a bonus or compensation, let alone a decent salary, my work was never formalized, but through it I experienced discrimination, verbal and physical humiliation, harassment and sexual abuse...

According to statistics from the University of Cartagena, most of the women who do domestic work are victims of the armed conflict who had no other employment option. It is worrying that they continue to be exploited, mistreated, discriminated against and have their rights violated at work, which is why we have joined together as a trade union to reclaim and recognise our rights: as Afro-feminists vindicating women’s rights!

85.7% of contracts for domestic workers are verbal, a situation that puts women workers at a disadvantage, because some of us think that because we do not have a contract, most of the time of this type, we do not have the right to claim our rights before the institutions responsible for protecting our rights. (UTRASD 2007)

Estela: *My organization arose from the need for our rights not to continue to be violated, therefore, the association Red de Mujeres Afro de Bayunca was born out of the organizational process of the organization Red de Mujeres Afro del Caribe REMA, from Atlántico, with the aim of working for rights, equality and gender equity. We organized ourselves as Afro women, initially 28 women, with the aim of demanding the rights of Afro-descendant Black women and we finally managed to consolidate as Asoremabay in 2012.*

Lorena: *What is the organization’s line of work?*

Juana: *As a trade union, we make visible the precarious conditions in which some of the women work, with the aim of making employers understand that domestic work is a job that is worthy of remuneration, and that like any other job, we have rights that should not be violated. Because of our work as domestic workers, our employers also generate resources that they would not be able to have without us. Through our work, we become nurses, carers of children and the elderly, educators, cooks, counsellors, confidants, etc... all for the same salary, without receiving employment benefits, the right to paid holidays, bonuses or severance pay.*

Basically, our work consists of training women domestic workers on issues such as: labour rights, domestic work, trade unionism and the vindication of rights through the effort to institute new laws that protect domestic workers and provide them with more access to justice.

As Afro-unionist feminists, we have achieved major advances such as ILO (International Labour Organization) Convention 189, which recognizes domestic work as a job with rights. Furthermore, we advance in new strategies to reduce its informality.

On the other hand, the enactment of the long-awaited premium law (Law 1788 of 2016), the women of UTRASD are proud to say that we were at the forefront of the whole process... Today, thanks to this work, we can say that there is a law that protects the premium for domestic workers. (UTRASD 2007)

The pandemic did not limit us, despite everything we were able to achieve our work objectives, we communicated constantly among ourselves, and we took advantage of the time to train ourselves in workshops, diploma courses and courses, which we would later share with women.

Estela: *Our vision is to create social impact in the community through the enforceability of Afro women's rights, through the recognition of women who have contributed to the development of the municipality, also with education on issues such as rights, historical reconstruction, values, human rights, gender equality, self-care, ICTs, intervention in public spaces, and in general training for Black communities that contribute to the visibility of women's struggles. On the other hand, we work with Afro girls to strengthen their identity and history, we talk about where we come from and who we are. We also focus on women's issues such as gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights, social rights, environmental and labour rights, self-care, housing, education and health.*

Our task is to organise and train women and young people in processes of demanding rights. Another part of our job is to influence places that are restricted for Black women, to open those places up so that their voices are heard and their rights are recognized. We work in the departments of Atlántico, San Andrés, Bolívar, Cesar and Sucre.

Lorena: *What is Afro-feminism about?*

Juana: *It's about working for the rights of Black, Afro, mestizo and indigenous women and all kinds of women whose labour rights have been violated. It is about feminism or activism for women for whom no one fights, in defence of territory and the recovery of the customs of our Afro ancestors.*

We Afro women have historically had our rights unknown, violated and made vulnerable because of our hair and skin colour. Through Afro-feminism - and this is a giant step forward - we are beginning to be recognized in some public spaces, such as in large department stores and chains, through images that represent Black people like us. For these achievements we thank our feminist and Black predecessors, who were mistreated, imprisoned, and even killed for going out to demonstrate. Today we follow in their footsteps, we continue their struggle.

I have always been a feminist, pacifist, activist woman, because I have always liked and been motivated to fight for the rights of other people, but above all for the rights of women.

I believe that approaching Black feminism has helped me not to repeat the same history of pain. When we don't know

the laws, we are condemned to repeat ourselves, but when we know that by taking our mission to the streets we can be heard, and our rights begin to be respected and guaranteed, nothing limits us to take action. We are present, showing others the laws, saying: enough violence, enough femicides, and enough abuses that society has committed against women!

Estela: *I must say that our organization is made up only of Afro women, because we realized that our territories are inhabited mostly by Afro women, so those rights that have been violated for 500 years in history had to be vindicated. We had to find an organization that represented us in rights and duties, that made us visible, that the law that we have been winning in space and rights was lived from the Afro body. This is what Afro-feminism is all about. We have come so far that now we are a network that has reached international spheres.*

I recognise myself as an Afro-feminist and pacifist woman, because I built from the community, that is what Afro-feminism means to me, to live feminism from an Afro body.

Lorena: *What is pacifist feminism?*

Juana: *From my own life experience and through the scenarios in which I have been, such as networks, social movements, community councils and women's groups, my training has been focused on working for and with women. The focus lays on the defence of the right to territory, to our culture and customs. I choose a path of training and struggle through the construction and recognition of rights,*



Illustration made for the course Mujeres Constructoras de Paz de la Escuela Feminista Ángela Salazar, 2020 - 2021

without destroying or mistreating, but to make visible and open the way for the young people who come after us to have another quality of life, and to have another vision.

Peace is built by all of us, each of us doing our bit, and that is precisely what organizations like UTRASD do, building feminist peace.

Estela: *To advance and make inroads into rights and spaces for women's participation and advocacy, to fight for collective rights from the perspective of peacebuilding, is what we have been doing as organizations.*

Lorena: *From your experience, how do you think peace can be built?*

Juana: *Before the peace agreement was signed, we were doing very in-depth work, opening up spaces in our homes, to educate people in values such as respect, the right to life, respect for women, equal conditions in care work, which must be shared between men, women, sons*

and daughters, and equality and equal rights for all people.

Thus, from a political and social commitment that fights to teach women the value of their own lives, without accepting mistreatment from their partners or other people, maintaining a feminist stance, winning spaces to raise awareness and eradicate injustice, from community security, without the need for militarization of our lands:

dialogue may be the best way to gain respect and peace with others.

We as leaders have to do a lot of advocacy so that social decomposition does not increase, our task is to manage resources so that our children and grandchildren are not lost. We women are the ones who make peace.

Estela: *Through conciliation and advocacy from a gender and differential approach, it is built from within ourselves, from the self, through the family and finally towards society from grassroots organizations. We are dedicated to peace and I know that we are going to achieve it, I know that we are going to build it and we are going to leave it to the new generations.*



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Vigilia. Bolívar 2021

5. LEARNING FROM WOMEN'S SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN BOLÍVAR

The contribution made by the organizational processes of Black women in Bolívar, built from their political struggles and community alliances, begins to make sense when racialization and other intersections in the context such as gender and class are problematized. Racialization, gender and class are categories that are politically questioned although being grounded in the realities of women's lives, their diverse experiences and places of occupation.

The social movements of Black, pacifist, anti-racist women and their struggles are characterized by practices that care, accompany, respect, teach, listen, claim, stimulate, and show solidarity with the pain and similar experiences of oppression that women in their communities have had to endure over their bodies. Meanwhile, they make alliances to claim for others, teach others, and fight for others. Their forms of reclaiming are centered on lines of community thinking, and pacifist resistance, through the co-construction of strategies in favour of community care and the future of their families.

For Black women's organizations, their ancestral community practices, their imaginaries, the occupation of spaces, and the reflections from their organizational work have contributed to their collective struggle, which has meant a great advance and positive impact for the recognition of their rights as women. Through positions of criticism, defence, and political positions that challenge the respect and guarantee for the lives of Black people, the women's organizations have contributed to avoid reproducing dominant ideological models and structures. Even so, according to the perceptions of Afro women leaders in Bolívar, the implementation of efficient public policies that improve the

situation of Black communities in the Colombian Caribbean is not achieved.

In conclusion, I believe it is necessary to highlight the great contribution of Black women's social movements to contemporary feminism, the subversive ways in which Black women have socially transformed their contexts to reconfirm themselves as peoples in resistance, reaffirming their anti-racist positions, and transforming traditional aspects that have long made them victims of oppression and discrimination. Their ideals are to rethink the relations of hierarchy, domination and historical construction, which they intend to dismantle from their roles as ancestral peacemakers who draw narrative lines to make their current claims and struggles visible.

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ANTIMILITARIST FEMINISM IN META

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All wars, including wars of «liberation» and «humanitarian military intervention», are used to serve some political power or economic interest. All war leads to suffering, destruction and new structures of domination.¹

INTRODUCTION

This article sets out reflections arising from the experiences and work that the Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad has been carrying out in the department of Meta.

It begins by contextualising how **antimilitarist feminism** has been approached in the context of the internal armed conflict in Colombia, and how LIMPAL as a pacifist and anti-militarist organization carries out exercises of non-violence in the territory with the participation of women human rights defenders. It also makes an urgent call to address the security situations faced by these women in the territory.

Subsequently the article describes the actions that the organization carries out through **art as a means of reflecting on peace**, the role of women, historical memory and social transformation. These artistic actions take place at meeting spaces that generate collective security for women and are a call for citizen awareness.

It continues with peace in the **reincorporation process**, from the actions carried out by LIMPAL with reincorporated² women, and the commitments of the population with the National Agency for Reincorporation, the offer of different services from the Colombian state and international cooperation, the achievements and difficulties in this regard,

and the alarming situation due to the growing recruitment of minors in rural areas of Meta.

The document ends by reflecting on pacifist feminism and LIMPAL's anti-militarist political commitment as perspectives for action in Meta. Special consideration is given to women as political subjects and peace builders, many of whom have suffered directly from the violence of the armed conflict, and whose activism seeks non-repetition and the acceptance of peace as a mechanism for the transformation of the realities of the department.

ANTI-MILITARIST FEMINISM

Colombia, a country that has lived through an internal armed conflict for more than 70 years and that continues to suffer from the indignities of war, is a territory that cries out for peace, a lasting, stable, just and democratic peace.

Thus, as an international organization, LIMPAL seeks to work from the perspective of pacifist and antimilitarist feminism, promoting actions in the territories where it is present - such as Meta - based on the participation and involvement of women human rights defenders in different processes that seek to overcome violence.

According to Carmen Magollón (2016), antimilitarist feminism seeks to disarm society, because it knows that weapons and the violence, they entail are not conducive to a democratic society. This feminism is antimilitarist because it professes for universal disarmament, against weapons and against the overall ideology of militarism, which means trusting that conflict resolution can be carried out through the use of weapons, of violence, of force.

Antimilitarism questions and generates critical reflections on the use of weapons as well as war in the pursuit of power. Based on the above, the women who are part of LIMPAL and all those women from Meta who are part of the processes carried out by the organization, are women committed to peace and justice. They recognise a antimilitarist and pacifist feminism, promote reconciliation exercises and the use of tools that legitimise non-violence and dialogue as resolution mechanisms. This is how an idea of power beyond weapons emerges, a power seen from the development of leadership capacities and skills that lead to reconciliation processes from the diverse realities of the territories where they live.

This way of thinking, exemplified in actions of non-violence and the vindication of women's rights, of redefining the territory one inhabits and the territory one has as a body, leaves behind the notion of women's bodies as military targets or as spoils of war, instead assigns attributes to them like respect, diversity, worth and autonomy.

These actions and changes are intended to promote pacifist and antimilitarist activism based on the different realities of life of the women of Meta. Mechanisms of solidarity, recognition of otherness and coming together, promote debates of reflective criticism based on the different perspectives, notions, positions and ideas that the women of the territory have in order to carry out stable and lasting peace processes.

In a coherent manner, antimilitarism aims to understand the territory from the perspective of post-conflict and the peace process in Colombia, calling for urgent attention to women and the mechanisms that need to be used to eradicate the gender violence that still exists in the country, specifically and in this case, in the territories of Meta.

¹ Red Internacional de Resistentes a la Guerra (IRG) (2021)

² "Re-incorporation" in the Colombian context refers to the demobilization of the FARC-EP members.

It is necessary to generate a process of reflection and recognition of the meaning of war and its damages, mainly those related to the multiple forms of violence against women, many of whom are protagonists of the war from different points of view, but all of whom are ultimately scourged by it. Therefore, LIMPAL, from its actions in the territory, maintains a commitment to all women who want to be part of this change, for all those who dream of a life free of violence and with a territory that recognises them from their voices, experiences, skills and abilities as subjects of rights, free and equal, builders of alternatives and peace-generating processes.

On the other hand, in these processes of non-violence it is important to maintain a permanent work with the young people of the territory:

The youth of the world are encouraged to accept the army and military values as normal and worthy of their uncritical support. Militarization is a process that goes beyond overt conscription. It includes the presence and influence of the military in education and public military events such as parades and military-themed video games. (War Resisters' International, 2021)

This is another of LIMPAL's aims in Meta, to promote actions, activities and spaces where young people can be agents of coexistence, resolution and commitment to non-violence, based on popular feminist education, pacifism and anti-militarism.

It is worth mentioning that it is necessary to understand the dynamics of the territories and the changes that constantly occur there, along with the lack of security for women and young human rights defenders. It is imminent to generate real protection mechanisms, where the state is

an effective guarantor when it comes to providing protection and reparation to victims:

Despite the 2016 peace agreements between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP, the recruitment of minors by guerrilla, paramilitary and other armed groups not only continues, but after a minor period of reduction this number is currently increasing again. However, UN figures indicate that the phenomenon continues with less intensity than before. (War Resisters' International, 2021)

ART AS A MEANS TO REFLECT ON PEACE

The department of Meta, like others in the area called Llanos Orientales such as Guaviare, Casanare and Arauca, has been a place where male hegemony has been present since the invasion and colonization of Latin America, which oppressed native peoples, who, as Rivera (1992) mentions, are oppressed but not defeated.

In the case of Meta, colonization and the subsequent violence shaped the municipalities that constitute the department today, which have sought in different ways to survive in the midst of the Colombian armed conflict perpetuated by actors such as paramilitaries and guerrillas. At present, the Havana agreements weave possibilities for peace to prevail in their territories, despite a lot of pressure and actions that seek to delegitimize the process and prevent the achievement of a true environment of peace.

In this department we have perceived that patriarchy still continues to exert oppression and violence against women, and is naturalized in the institutional inoperability to guarantee rights, including security and justice. Processes developed with women from the arts in expres-

sions such as photography, dance, story-telling, theater and painting, have enabled the approach and the work with women victims of the armed conflict, social leaders, human rights defenders, women in the process of reincorporation and women of civil society, recognizing non-violence as a way to accompany the processes of citizen resistance, placing life and security at the center, coming from community action.

In this process, through artistic expressions, LIMPAL Colombia has been making it possible for women, in political actions and popular feminist education, to generate togetherness and solidarity, to recognise and reflect on common affectations and oppressions and to propose and develop creative actions from their realities to solve situations that affect them. For instance, the lack of attention for gender-based violence and other forms of violence in the context of the armed conflict is met by making concrete proposals that break with the logic of the friend/enemy war and that invite to the common and to the care of the common (water, land and diversity).

These actions are mobilized on the basis of feminist pacifist and antimilitarist thinking, which strengthens women's peaceful resistance and the creation of links between those who participate in them. Through art, women are able to express that there are other forms of interaction with human kind to overcome the situations and affectations that violence has left in their lives and in the lives of those who have been affected by it.

This has led to awareness and recognition of the work that many of the participants in LIMPALs actions have been doing in the search for peace, spaces for training, complicity and transformation of women and among women. All of these deep transformations compromise their subjectivi-

ties, their identities, their commitments as political subjects, giving daily relevance to the feminist commitment: "the personal is political".

Furthermore, LIMPAL's combination of psychosocial work and artistic workshops enable participants to reflect on and reconstruct their conflict related memory. Memory as resistance prevents the women from forgetting what has happened and can be used in their search for truth and justice. Meanwhile resistance as memory is manifested – not in the consciousness of the women – but in and on their bodies, her feelings and emotions. Those exercises of memory and reconstructions of stories traditionally have their origins in oppressed communities, where they are being used to resist, to communicate, to share worldviews, experiences, memories and reasons.

This exercise of citizenship that invites women to be protagonists of their own lives and to defend their thinking gains so much moral force that, although oppressed, it frees itself to tell other realities hidden from the masses, with strength and ethical forcefulness, overcoming stigmatization and the role they have played in history to safeguard life in one way or another, avoiding the passage to invisibility throughout time which functions as another manifestation of violence and extinction.

Women speaking from their diversities claim the right to be participants of a social construction gained from other logics that differ from the patriarchal hegemonic power, and that act in harmony with nature, taking care of it and taking care of the ways of life different from the progressive extractivist one. It is about another vision of the world, in which life is at the center, the life that they have preserved and continue to protect coming from the perspective of the

daily life of the work of farmers, which connects them with the land, traditions and respect for their rights.

LIMPAL's actions, through the arts, sensitize women for reflection and continuous action in the search for social justice, coming from a human rights perspective and promoting the inclusion of women in the economy and in spaces of decision-making.

PEACE IN THE REINCORPORATION PROCESS

From the reincorporation process, key commitments were established with the people involved, regarding their participation in training, psychosocial, educational, community and productive processes.

National government and international cooperation agencies participate in these processes, which means that there is a wide range of services available in the reincorporation areas. In this sense, programmes or activities often tend to be repetitive, which is why there is a lack of coordination between the different cooperation partners.

One of the crucial difficulties in terms of productive projects and training for employment is that the territorial spaces are rented, so the reincorporated population does not have real and effective access to land, which limits the sustainability over time of their livestock, agricultural, manufacturing or any other productive projects that may be generated.

These reincorporation actions are characterized by the active and constant participation of women, who, despite the fact that they are mainly responsible for care work in their homes and for productive activities and education, are linked to exercises to strengthen their empowerment,

self-esteem and the development of internal and external networks.

Peace continues to be a commitment in reincorporation spaces, an ideal that is latent but which brings with it several challenges for its broad and adequate fulfilment, even more so in a territory such as Meta, where situations of recruitment of minors are once again occurring, as in the case of some rural areas in Vistahermosa, for example the Cooperativa and Santo Domingo villages. (Ombudsman's Office, 2021)

REFLECTIONS

1. The ideal of a true and stable peace may be possible if there are processes that guarantee non-repetition and the establishment of mechanisms for non-violent action, where the importance of territory and the diversity that converges therein is redefined. Peace is also a gradual process that can be achieved through small social changes, for example, by eliminating imaginaries and labels that underestimate women and legitimise violence against them.

Antimilitarism and pacifism are fundamental commitments of LIMPAL to achieve a life free of violence for the women of Meta through empowerment, the vindication of their rights and political activism. These are necessary components to guarantee real and timely access for women to opportunities that have often been limited for reasons of class, race or origin.

2. The actions of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Colombian section, in the department of Meta, have led women survivors of the Colombian armed conflict to carry out exercises of memory

as resistance and resistance of memory, which are two different processes, and which in populations oppressed by the war, as it is this case for many women of municipalities such as Mesetas, Puerto Rico and Vistahermosa, have managed to make visible what happened to them, the reasons why it happened, how it happened and what happens to life after the events.

These processes have succeeded in deconstructing the stereotypes that were imposed on women by the manifestations of armed hegemonic power, such as victim blaming. Collectively, through women encounters and art projects, survivors were able to question and reflect on what happened. In doing so they achieved to redefine the role they played without blaming themselves, to find strength again, taking their lives into their own hands and becoming active citizens of their community. Without forgetting who they are these actions have helped them to find their voices to demand justice in a peaceful manner as well as calling for no repetition of violence in their territories.

3. Since the reincorporation process, many women reconfigure their leadership by breaking patriarchal patterns, constantly fighting against imaginaries, labels and norms that are assumed to be natural for women. The return to civilian life should be an opportunity that generates possibilities for growth and expansion of personal, social, economic and community learning for women in territorial spaces.

It is important that psychosocial and political action can strengthen hope in the implementation of the peace agreements so that those who are part of the process persist in dialogue and in non-violent mechanisms for the achievement of a lasting and stable peace that



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Cuidando a las cuidadoras. Villavicencio, Meta 2021

guarantees a minimum standard of living for their families and communities.

4. From the exercise being carried out in the department of Meta by LIMPAL, it is considered important, from the antimilitarist political opposition, to advance the process towards the transformation and decolonial practices of the communities, to contribute elements to the awareness of the systems of oppression, including militarism. Moreover, from popular feminist education and advocacy, it is necessary to position in the national political agenda the reflection on a collective vision of peace, justice and security, beyond weapons and coercion in the resolution of conflicts and their replacement in all cases by negotiation and conciliation. (WILPF, 2018)

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THE MILITARIZATION OF MASCULINITIES, AN INAUDIBLE ALARM BELL

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INTRODUCTION

This article presents some aspects related to the development of the project “Confronting Militarised Masculinities” implemented in Colombia by Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad (LIMPAL) with the support of WILPF. This project, also implemented in three other countries with high rates of militarization: Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Afghanistan, seeks to strengthen the critical analysis of the relationship between patriarchy, militarism and gender-based violence. Therefore, the process of militarization of masculinities and the consequences associated with it are being reviewed. It is crucial to identify possibilities of transformation that can be opened through pedagogical, research, communication and advocacy work carried out by organizations or communities that lead processes of resistance to patriarchy and peacebuilding.

In addition to informing about the advances, reflections and concerns underlying the project and the issues it addresses, this document also aims to serve as a contribution to the analysis of militarization in Colombia. Due to the complexity of the issues involved, it would be better to describe it as a provocative text, focused on the relevance and urgency for our country to take concrete actions and undertake nationwide processes aimed at reducing the level of militarization and the impact that militarism has on the construction of masculinities.

1. MILITARISM AND MILITARIZATION, THE DANGEROUS NURTURING GROUND IN WHICH COLOMBIAN MASCULINITY DEVELOPS

To begin with, it is essential to start with the important distinction between the concepts of militarism and militarization. Militarism is a cultural system that establishes a social dynamic centered on the promotion, worship and

reproduction of values associated with the military, such as the imposition of discipline, the hierarchization of gender roles, violence as a regulating principle, absolute obedience, the exaltation of patriotic symbols, the strengthening of the status of the warrior and other aspects. In other words, militarism can be understood as:

The invasion by military power into other spheres of society with the intention of controlling people's lives and behaviour. From a broader perspective, it is considered as a social phenomenon present in economic, political and ideological relations that has its origin in the application of the military to civilian life as a whole (Peralta, 2005, p. 33)

A society can also be considered militaristic if it prioritises armed solutions to social, territorial or border conflicts, that is, a society that prioritises the use of violence over dialogue, mediation, negotiation, civilian trial or alternative justice. Colombia has a long tradition of waging wars and settling various types of conflicts through this costly, counterproductive and limited method. One need only review the timeline and corroborate that in the 19th century Colombia went through nine national civil wars and at least fourteen regional wars, without counting the numerous armed uprisings or revolts that ended in massacres.

All these wars stagnated the social, economic and cultural development of the country, which reached the year 1900 with an illiteracy rate of 66% (the highest in Latin America) and an economic system with almost feudal features, expressed by a high level of concentration of land in a few hands. In the 20th century this issue of unjust land distribution unleashed an odyssey of violence and the emergence of at least eight subversive organizations such as the EPL, ELN, M19 and FARC-EP. The latter is internationally rec-

ognised for its size, greater territorial presence and duration, as it is considered one of the oldest guerrilla groups in the world.

The militarist tradition of waging and perpetuating war has continued to the present day. Only 13 years have passed since Colombia registered the historic and shameful record of being the only Latin American country to have bombed another country in the last 50 years. “Operation Phoenix” in 2008, through which military actions were deployed in Ecuadorian territory, caused a serious diplomatic crisis that required the mediation of the IACHR.¹

For this reason, the initiation of a peace process with the FARC-EP in 2012 was considered a historic event, as such initiatives to seek negotiated solutions to armed, social and political conflicts are rare in Colombian history. But attempting to negotiate peace in the midst of the country's high level of militarization was a huge risk with multiple implications that we will not go into details here.

Militarization is a state dynamic, which generally occurs as a consequence of a government programme or as part of a multilateral agreement. This dynamic is evidenced in concrete and quantifiable actions such as the increase in the number of military personnel and military spending, the expansion of powers for the security forces, the use of military personnel for social, medical or infrastructure tasks, the establishment of military cooperation treaties and other similar actions.

Since 2001, as a result of the implementation of Plan Colombia, a bilateral military-technical cooperation agreement between Colombia and the US, an unprecedented

¹ Retrieved from: https://www.bbc.com/mundo/america_latina/2010/03/100319_1734_colombia_ecuador_cidh

militarization process has begun. Militarization has currently turned this country into the third highest military expenditure in Latin America, with the second largest army in South America. This waste of resources has hindered the social, economic, technological and cultural development of the country. The numbers illustrate that since in the last decade (2010 - 2020) 220 trillion pesos have been wasted on war.²

The Colombian militarization process becomes more complex when we review the strategies implemented by the state in its logic of winning the war at any cost and the consequences unleashed by these actions. In addition to the public forces, in the last 20 years the number of paramilitary structures, criminal groups and private security companies has also increased significantly, which has meant that at present, approximately one and a half million men and women, including thousands of children and adolescents, are involved in the dynamics of militarization, increasing the scale of the problem:

It translates into the militarization of society, understood as the proliferation of legal and illegal, public and private armed organizations, and of the ideology of militarism, as well as the rise of counter-insurgent propaganda, which seeks to influence the population by different means, such as the media or certain forms of social control. (Cruz, 2016, p. 25)

Next, we will delve into some of the militarization strategies and their direct relationship with patriarchal dynamics that contribute to the formation of militarized masculinities in Colombia. We will also review some of the pedagogical

actions proposed by the project to make visible and problematise this dangerous social, institutional and cultural dynamic of militarization.

2. THE MILITARIZATION OF MASCULINITIES AS AN INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT

“Do the military and civilians confront each other in political life as two separate and hostile camps, the first of which defends progress and freedoms that the second has the sole and perverse vocation to trample underfoot?” (Rouquie, 1994, p. 28)

One of the main challenges we faced at the beginning of the project was to find a bridge of dialogue that would allow us to address this issue with young people from schools, professionals who have worked on the issue, communities that have been affected by these dynamics and organizations or collectives that are developing processes of resistance and transformation in the face of the militarization of masculinities.

From the outset, we wanted the pedagogical approach to allow us to collectively explore a historical dynamic which, as was observed in the previous section, is complex and which includes key aspects that are unknown to a large part of the civilian population. For this reason, we proposed meeting spaces that would invite the exchange of ideas of anyone interested in participating, breaking with the format of workshops or academic talks where participation is concentrated in a group of experts who provide information. This gave rise to the idea of the “Solidarity Dialogues” in which activities were proposed to motivate participation, such as diagnostic exercises, designed in simple language, to locate a common context based on those aspects that the working groups recognized. From there the next step

was to initiate an exchange in which we could complement and deepen the information we were seeking to analyse. In the end we would review the initiatives and processes to alter militarization strategies that the participants have articulated.

Among the first diagnostic/characterization activities was an interactive exercise based on the question “Through what practices is masculinity militarized in childhood, adolescence and adulthood? In this way, a list was drawn up with the following actions or dynamics: 1. War advertising, 2. Civil-military campaigns, 3. Military circuses, 4. Use of costumes and war toys, 5. Military service, 6. Involvement in armed groups, 7. Involvement in micro-trafficking networks, 8. Direct involvement with the police, 9. Increased likelihood of being a victim of ESMAD (Mobile Anti-Riot Squad), 10. Increased likelihood of being killed in a fight, 11. Increased likelihood of voting for authoritarian governments, 12. Paying taxes for war, 13. Buying video games produced by companies associated with the war, 14. Participation in citizen surveillance groups, 15. Legal purchase of firearms or “non-lethal” weapons. The group of participants was then asked to associate each of these practices with a stage in the formation of masculinity.

One of the first striking results of this exercise, after having carried it out with more than 50 people from three regions of the country, was that a high percentage of participants located most of the actions in adolescence and adulthood, assuming that children are not usually the object of this type of practice; later, the feedback from the exercise generated surprise when we reported that a good part of the civic-military campaigns and war publicity are focused on the child population.

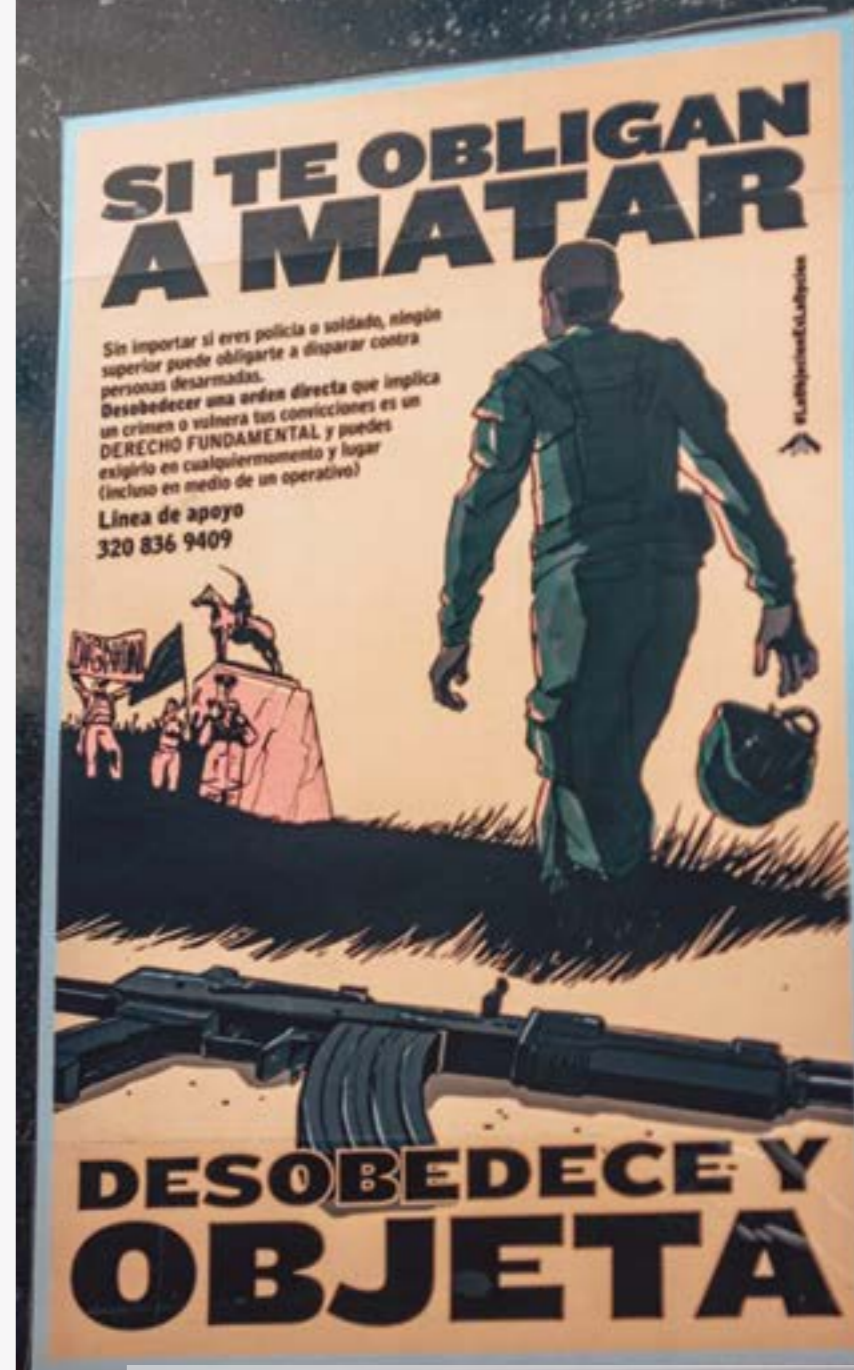


Photo: WILPF Colombia
Más vidas menos armas. Bogotá D.C., 2021

The exercise also generated the room for dialogue about the militarization of masculinities as an institutional project, that we were looking for. Subsequently to the first exercise we posed the question what other types of institutional or cultural militarization practices the participants knew about. One of the most frequent answers was “the Independence Day military parade”, which is held every 20 July and has a massive participation of the civilian population, who often go with their children dressed as soldiers or policemen to see the “heroes of the fatherland” parade.

The military parade is an excellent example of how the militarization of the civilian population, and more specifically of Colombian masculinities, is a result of an institutional decision. According to historical records, the first military parade on 20 July was held in 1907³, the same year in which the Military Cadet School was opened and compulsory military service was restructured as a national policy. From the outset, the aim was to create a new narrative as a country, linking our identity as Colombians with the struggle of the “heroes” of the country for independence, in such a way as to make the association between the military forces and the commemoration of independence a reference point for national identity.

This association lacks sense and historical validity, since it completely ignores two things: 1. it was not a national army that fought the battles that according to the hegemonic narrative (focused on wars and not on cultural transformations) led to independence from the Spanish crown; on the contrary, it was a regional, partisan army, which did not represent national diversity, that banded together to accompany Simón Bolívar in the independence campaign. 2. It is not possible to speak of independence without recog-

nising the diverse processes of resistance that took place in various regions of the country and which were decisive for the later uprisings that took on an armed expression. The militaristic commemoration omits the history of the palenques, including some as important as San Basilio, recognised in 1713 as the first free town in America⁴ and which still retains its autonomy to the point of rejecting police presence, for which it relies on the Cimarrona Guard.⁵

The militarist narrative also omits indigenous resistance to colonialism and the genocide that accompanied it. For this reason, we have never heard or will never hear any representative of the army’s leadership talk about the possibility of demanding that Spain apologise for the ethnocide, spoliation and archaeological plunder perpetrated against the more than 300 indigenous communities that inhabited these lands; since for them that part of history has no connection with independence, much less with our roots or our identity.

The military parade, as well as the compulsory military service and the limitations on the exercise of fundamental rights imposed on those who do not conscript, are some of the institutional measures implemented for six generations, not only to construct and perpetuate a hegemonic narrative around the figure of the soldier as hero, but also so that millions of young men, impoverished and without opportunities to access higher education, assume joining the military forces as the only option for social advancement. Once inside the military, many accept the discourse that is repeated to them daily about war as an event of fulfilment, as an absolute expression of masculinity:

⁴ Retrieved from: <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/258630-san-basilio-palencue-pueblo-colombiano-africano>

⁵ Cimarrona Guard is a community led self-protection initiative that seeks to protect the territory autonomously in the face of threats from foreign interests and to guarantee the integrity of the Afro-Colombians, Raizal, and Palenquero communities.

(...) the prospect of war is exciting. Many young men, indoctrinated into the notion that war is the ultimate definition of manhood, that only in war are they truly affirmed, assume that they can discover their worth as human beings on the battlefield. (Hedges, 2003, p. 46)

However, war and military training, in Colombia or in any other country, far from being the ode to heroism sold by war advertising, is an exercise of degradation of the autonomy, empathy, dignity and rights of men in uniform and, on many occasions, of their families as well. Practices of torture, machismo, bullying, homophobia, racism, class discrimination, animal mistreatment and sexual abuse are common within the battalions and military units to which between 45,000 and 60,000 young men are sent each year in this country. This would explain why an average of 51 soldiers take their own lives each year, which results to more young men committing suicide than those killed in combat actions.

Another aspect that emerged frequently in the workshops, focus groups and interviews is that a large part of the civilian population in the country does not openly express its rejection of militarization actions or crimes committed by members of the security forces. This is partly due to the hero-worship that has been reinforced in the media in recent decades, but also to the fact that many of these actions have become normalized, as a consequence of the way militarism is embedded in our culture and the narrative that has been spread for decades about the idea of the “internal enemy”.

This may occur for a variety of reasons, ranging from misinformation to the systematic persecution, criminalization and repression of the few young people who protest

against militarization. However, at least in terms of public opinion, the absence of mass messages rejecting militarism or demanding justice for the perpetrators of violence and institutional changes that would guarantee the non-repetition of such events is worrying. By looking at two examples from other countries with high levels of militarization, we can detail the sensitivity of this situation in Colombia:

1. The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 unleashed a massive wave of protests in 50 US cities against racism and police brutality, these were held for 4 months passing through marches, looting, sit-ins and memorial actions. Although the police reform requested by the Black Lives Matter movement has not yet been achieved, the police officer who murdered G. Floyd. Floyd was sentenced to 22 years in prison in what was considered a historic ruling against the racism with which the police operate in that country.
2. In November 2020 Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado were killed by the police in the midst of protests against the proclamation of Manuel Merino as president of Peru. The murder of the two young men sparked a nationwide wave of protests that escalated until Merino resigned a week after the events; five months later the prosecutor’s office, under pressure from the public, charged eleven police officers with murder⁶.

Nicolás Neira was 15 years old when he was killed by a police officer from the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) in 2005 in Bogotá. Since then, according to data from the League Against Silence, the ESMAD has killed 43 more peo-

⁶ Retrieved from: <https://www.notimerica.com/politica/noticia-peru-fiscalia-peruana-imputa-homicidio-once-policias-muerte-dos-jovenes-protestas-2020-20211006195523.html>

³ Retrieved from: <https://www.radionacional.co/cultura/historia-colombiana/desfile-militar-del-20-de-julio-cual-es-su-historia>

ple⁷, including the young Dilan Cruz, who was shot in the head during the national strike protests in 2019. In the first case it took 16 years before a conviction was issued against the perpetrator, in the second case it has been 2 years of impunity. For the 43 homicides, the military criminal justice system opened 5 investigations against 9 ESMAD agents, of which only three have been captured.

In both Peru and the United States, the response to the protests was the militarization of cities, with the army being deployed in Lima and the National Guard in six states in the United States. In both countries, the exceptional presence of soldiers on the streets generated massive rejection and the use of squads formed for war to “control” a civil conflict was questioned. In Colombia, between 28 April and 28 September 2021, the security forces have been involved in 87 homicides and during the two weeks following the protests that began on 28 April, 13 cities in the country were militarized, to the point that in Bogotá a school was arbitrarily used to mobilise troops and ammunition with army aircraft. The school rector emphatically rejected the act and reminded the country that such action was a violation of International Humanitarian Law, but his claim did not find much echo in public opinion.

It seems that in Colombia, what Elsa María Blair calls “ritualization of violence” or what Rita Segato calls “Pedagogy of cruelty” prevails, since both perspectives allude to the enormous risk involved in a society becoming accustomed to militarist violence and therefore normalising or learning to live with practices such as homicide on a daily basis. The repetition of violence produces an enormous risk that a society becomes accustomed to militarist violence and therefore normalises or learns to live with practices such as ho-

micide, rape, lynchings, massacres, the presence of heavily armed soldiers in the streets, forced recruitment and many other cruel and degrading dynamics. With rising militarization and pressure to support this phenomenon, fewer and fewer people openly rejecting these acts, in which the male in his archetype of the warrior is the main protagonist. The repetition of violence produces an effect of normalization of a landscape of cruelty and, with this, promotes in people the low thresholds of empathy indispensable for the predatory enterprise (Segato, 2018, p. 13).

3. FINAL REFLECTIONS: IS IT POSSIBLE TO REDUCE MILITARIZATION AND UNLEARN MILITARISM?

The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected of him, that he is capable of doing what is infinitely improbable (Arendt, 1995, p. 158).

From the panorama described above, one could conclude that we are in bad shape, but in the short and medium term we could be significantly worse off. Poverty, which according to official records affects 28 million people in Colombia, the destruction of the social networks that affects the families and communities of the 220,000 victims of the armed conflict and the 84,900 children that the pandemic has affected. 900 children orphaned by the Covid pandemic, and the multiple catastrophic impacts projected as a result of climate change, are cross-cutting issues that raise the level of complexity of any social phenomenon analyzed so far, and therefore also demand that the initiatives undertaken to transform the current situation take these factors into account, so that the actions or processes developed are designed from the perspective of action without harm, making them available to the entire population and strengthen-

ing the capacity to respond collectively to the magnitude of the challenges that lie ahead.

For this reason, as final reflections, I believe it is essential to include two ideas that recurred both in the Solidarity Dialogues and in some of the interviews carried out. The first is that the initiatives that we as individuals, communities, social organizations and academic groups are developing must consider education as the main arena for action and dispute, since cultural transformation is a key aspect in the possibilities of advancing towards feminist peace, the demilitarization of society and the fall of patriarchy as a hegemonic system of power.

Many of the changes that have taken place in recent decades in favour of women’s rights are the result of a process of cultural transformation that is still unfolding, and not of normative provisions that seem to frame the historical significance of what is assumed to be a change that has taken place. In other words, using a simple example, it is of little use for the final peace agreement document signed by the government and the FARC-EP to be recognized as the first peace agreement in the world with a gender perspective, if this perspective remains only on paper, while in everyday life the narratives of the warrior, the ritualization of violence, the mandates of hegemonic masculinity and the impositions of patriarchy continue to be reproduced in every sphere of social interaction.

In the same way, it is of little use for schools to have the normative obligation to have a peace and human rights chair, while in every classroom stereotypes continue to be nurtured in the construction of gender roles, pacts of silence and daily practices that reproduce and normalise gender-based violence.



Photo: WILPF Colombia
Más vidas menos armas. Bogotá D.C., 2021

The transformation of culture is crucial to break the mandate of silence and make the sound emitted by all the alarm signals that are ignored today become deafening, to the point where this society has to sit down and talk about those things that for decades have been kept in the private sphere, and begin to consider the need to question and change those patriarchal norms that for centuries have been considered the very basis of culture.

The first underlying contribution of the interactions achieved in the framework of this project is the need to offer exercises of collective resistance. The goal is to unite these diversities, perspectives, intersectionalities and purposes to heal and transform the current fractures and power conflicts that facilitate the reproduction of the hegemonic premise “divide and rule”.

The second is how to formulate a theory and practice of the commons that is not a new mode of exclusion of others in the name of community. The question is how the practice of the common can be an opening, which produces the foundation for another way of living, of producing, of relating. Formulating the common from a feminist point of view is crucial because women are currently the ones who have invested the most in the defence of common resources and in the construction of broader forms of social cooperations (Federici, 2010, p. 403).

Our pedagogical, communicative, psychosocial and advocacy efforts should contemplate what we consider to be common, as a horizon and an engine of change, as an end and a means of transformation. Regardless of gender, ethnicity or level of schooling, as communities deeply affected by patriarchy, we must understand that a society that does not worship war or privilege warriors will most likely

be a more peaceful society, less violent and above all, less closed to change, less resistant to the recovery and development of its wonderful diversity of knowledge, territories, cultures, beliefs and realisable dreams.

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Diverse NARRATIVES

Photo: WILPF Colombia. Encuentro Cuidando
a las Cuidadoras. Restrepo, Meta 2021



+Vidas
-Armas



Foto: Limpal Colombia
Paro Nacional. Bogotá, 2021



2. Memory goes hand in hand with the joys and sorrows they capture in the embroidery of the mochilas (traditional Colombian cloth bags). They learned to find themselves in the terraces and rooms full of the noises of animals and street vendors. It is as if between the thread and the needle, the words came together and allowed them to narrate the events that for many years they were denied to tell, because it could have cost them their lives.



4. During the rise of the armed conflict in the Montes de María, both men and women were unable to travel to their plots of land. In response, women discovered in handicrafts a productive activity to meet the economic needs of their families and children.

"I am weaving, I am healing"

Adriana Ortega Martínez, Trabajadora Social, Feminista, Promotora de Limpal Colombia.



5. "At the beginning it wasn't easy, many wanted to learn and didn't even know how to pick up the thread. We were neighbours and we all helped each other to make the stitches, if one of us didn't know how, someone helped her and now we weave quickly, we make a mochila in two days" Rosmery Moreno.



6. They are no longer afraid, nothing deserves their silence - they say - they are a living museum and the ancestral knowledge that arms could not erase, they only hope that those who visit their territories will be multipliers of their messages in the places where they come from and invite young people to preserve the tradition, learn about their culture and learn about weaving.



7. The productive initiative is legally constituted in the municipality of San Jacinto since 2009 as: Asociación Comunitaria de Mujeres Desplazadas. Its purpose is to produce and commercialize artisanal agricultural products for the social and economic development of its members.

3. There are still heart-breaking stories, they tell them with their heads down without letting go of the needle. They take the time to make and release stitches as many times as necessary, for them, leaving this art would mean feeling anguish, impatience and pausing the construction of their true story.



BULLERENGUERA THERAPY

It is one of the processes that the women of San José del Playón have led to re-signify the wounds of war and position their place as women defenders through the traditional singing of Bullerengue Cancionero: Terapia Bullerenguera de San José del Playón, which through its lyrics, highlights the participation of women as builders of peace and security in the territories.



RESOLUCIÓN 1325 - TERAPIA BULLERENGUERA

*Con la resolución 1325,
todas vamos a ganar,
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
el camino este derecho, (Bis)
derecho hacia la paz,
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
no queremos más violencia (Bis)
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
nosotras somos la voz (Bis)
de aquellas que están calla',
y nunca han dicho na',
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
no queremos más violencia (Bis)
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
el camino este derecho, (Bis)
derecho hacia la paz,
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
no queremos más violencia (Bis)
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad (Bis)
nosotras somos la voz (Bis)
de aquellas que están calla',
y nunca han dicho na',
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad
hoy las invito a hablar,
hoy las invito a hablar, (Bis)
la paz y seguridad,*

*la paz y seguridad (Bis)
y las invito a denunciar, (Bis)
a aquellas que están calla',
que nunca han dicho na',
la paz y seguridad,
la paz y seguridad
nosotras somos la voz,
de aquellas que están calla'.*

TERAPIA BULLERENGUERA - TERAPIA BULLERENGUERA

*Terapia bullerenguera, (Bis)
bullerengue pa' el que quiera, (Bis)
terapia bullerenguera, bullerengue,
terapia bullerenguera, bullerengue
bullerengue pa' sana, bullerengue,
las heridas del pasado, bullerengue,
bullerengue pa' bailar, bullerengue,
bullerengue pa' sana',
bullerengue, bullerengue pa' bailar
Terapia bullerenguera, (Bis)
bullerengue pa' el que quiera, (Bis)
terapia bullerenguera, bullerengue,
terapia bullerenguera, bullerengue
bullerengue pa' sana', bullerengue,
las heridas del pasado, bullerengue,
bullerengue pa' bailar, bullerengue,
bullerengue pa' sana',
bullerengue, bullerengue pa' bailar.*

FEMINIST ANTI-MILITARIST TAROT

The Tarot, historically and colloquially known as a set of cards that are used to mediate clairvoyance or divination on one or more topics, is part of another diverse narrative practiced mostly by women with mystical and spiritual knowledge, by many pointed out as profane or mundane. Today we want to give another meaning to the Tarot, not only from the vidence of an uncertain future, but from the present and the practices that as anti-militarist feminists we carry out on a daily basis, which discomfort and question unequal, violent and unjust realities. We want this Tarot to be a source of inspiration when you want to consult it, to give you strength and courage for the present. It's not just magic, it's action!

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SAFETY

Do I feel at ease walking down the streets? Do I feel comfortable and protected with the people around me? The answers are more than an individual perception. Women feel and experience security differently, and we seek comprehensive guarantees for the exercise of our rights.

Militarization isn't freedom!



SELF-PROTECTION

It's time to find the best ally within me, that woman full of conviction and wisdom to identify, assess and evaluate risks, ready for the unexpected while recognizing and setting boundaries to put her well-being at the center.

I love myself, I take care of myself, I protect myself!



JUNTANZA (TOGETHERNESS)

Women coming together are more powerful. Recognizing that we are diverse allows us to grow collectively and to build projects in which we all have room for our differences. Thinking and feeling together gives us the possibility to share ideas, to listen and to enter into conflict when necessary.

Coming together strengthens us!



CARE

It is time to open doors to let go of what binds us, to allow ourselves to empty ourselves in order to renew our energies, and to recognize the power of interactions with ourselves and with what sets us free.

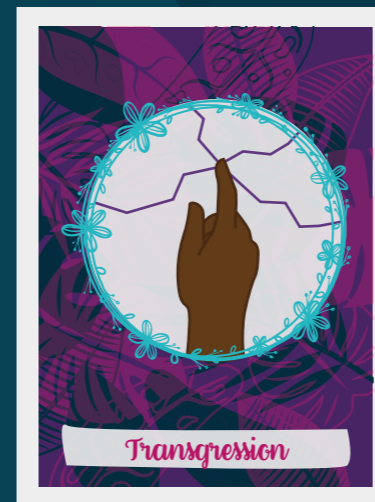
Caring is a political act of love!



RESISTANCE

These are times to generate collective actions that allow us to advance towards the enforceability of our rights and to resist the practices of war that have done us so much harm. To resist is not to endure, it is to open paths towards new critical spaces where women and life are at the center.

Come on, it is time to move forward in resistance!



TRANSGRESSION

We transgress when the rules go against our freedoms and rights. Dare to transgress when any practice or action around you goes against life and the care of life. We transgress when we are against war and we demonstrate against it.

Transgressing opens paths to change!



TRANSFORMATION

The power of ideas and decisions drives us to change and evolve continuously. The shared knowledge of women is now part of me and all of us, being the support that keeps our desire alive and makes us move in body, soul and spirit.

Reflection promotes individual and collective transformation!



PACIFISM






Pacifism is a practice that invites us to think and act through Nonviolence as a political act. It does not imply being passive, on the contrary, it invites us to join activism from another possible place where weapons, violence and wars are not the alternative to world problems.

We pacifist women are antimilitarists!





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