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Macarena Gómez-Barris
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Pedagogies of Anarco-Indigenous Feminist Critique

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ernments backtracked on their protection of Indigenous territories and actually expanded infrastructures for extractive capitalism. In my mind the Feminist Constitution is the single most important contemporary anarchist-feminist Indigenous critical document.[12] Born from consultation through assemblies within the nexus of recent sex positive rights discussions as well as 'push back' against the morality of colonial Catholicism and the rhetoric of tradition and family, the Feminist Constitution is, by turns, surprisingly poetic, raging, collaborative, and performative. It represents a parallel constitutional compliment to its more well-known counterpart on Earth Rights. And it inserts reproductive rights; feminist, queer and trans rights; and protections for sex workers as well as women and children working in economies of social reproduction; as key to the project of decolonization.

As one of the *graffitis* reads, "*No se puede decolonizar sín depatriarcalizar*" ("You cannot decolonize without dealing with patriarchy"). This anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal 'triple threat' analysis encapsulates the significance of the Indigenous Feminist Anarchist critique. This slogan addresses the heart of land-based and resource concerns in Bolivia: they are intimately connected with the structures of colonial capitalism and their gendered and sexed histories of exclusion.

[12] Because of its importance, we translated Maria Galindo's "Political, Feminist Constitution of the State: The Impossible Country We Build as Women Feminist Constitution," a document by Mujeres Creando that revises the Plurinational Constitution to include gender/sex difference and perspectives as a manifesto. We translated the document from Spanish into English for the Decolonial Gesture issue of E-mísferica: See, https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-11-1-de-colonial-gesture/11-1-dossier/constitucion-politica-feminista-del-estado-el-pais-imposible-que-construimos-las-mujeres.html, accessed March 1, 2021.

Biography

Macarena Gómez-Barris is a scholar and writer who works at the intersections of art, environment, feminist-cuir politics, and decolonial theory and praxis. She is the author of four books, *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile* (2009), *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (2017), *Beyond the Pink Tide: Art and Political Undercurrents in the Américas* (2018), and *Towards a Sociology of a Trace* (2010, with Herman Gray). She is completing a new book on the colonial Anthropocene, *At the Sea's Edge: Liquidity Beyond Colonial Extinction* (Forthcoming Duke University Press 2022). She is Founding Director of the Global South Center (see globalsouthcenter.org), and Chairperson of Department of Social Science and Cultural Studies at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. Macarena was a Fulbright fellow in 2014–2015 at the Sociology and Gender Department in FLACSO Ecuador, Quito. She is co-editor with Diana Taylor of *Dissident Acts*, a Duke University Press series.

Start

How might we approach the relationship between anarchism and feminism as a response to the continuing structures of racialized gendered violence central to the horizon of our radical imaginaries?[1] How might we re-envision anarchisms in creative and generative ways, as an experience that thwarts the project of intimate, state, and corporate violence that

[1] For a longer and more detailed discussion of Anarco-Indigenous Feminisms, see Chapter Five of my book The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. See Theresa Warburton, "Coming to Terms: Rethinking Popular Approaches to Anarchism and Feminism" (January 13, 2017): https://anarchiststudies.org/coming-to-terms-rethinking-popular-approaches-to-anarchism-and-feminism-by-theresa-warburton/.

depends upon the extraction of the racialized female/sexed body for its expansion?[2] Learning from the work of U.S. Native feminisms, Black feminisms and women of color feminist theories in the Global North, as well as anarcho-Indigenous feminisms and praxis from the Américas allows us to address longstanding issues of how to historicize gendered violence within the matrix of coloniality and the modern nation state.[3]

In this essay I frame 'anarchisms otherwise'[4] — modes of relationality that step across the masculine archive of anarchistic activity towards experiential, embodied, and phenomenological modes of organizing below and against the activities of the state. These anarchisms otherwise, as I discuss elsewhere, challenge genealogies of anarchistic activity that do not consider the essential role of social reproduction and invisible work within the matrix of colonial power or the routinized condition of violence that extends from the intimate to the nation-state and beyond.[5] More directly, they forget how the Indigenous female body and embodiment is a site of ongoing war by the state, and how anarco-Indigenous feminists use their bodies as a site of counter-attack.

The 'otherwise' here points to disruptive, anti-normative, and decolonial activities that makes for individual and collective action, dissident acts that accrue meaning across time and space after colonialism. By attending to modes of organizing from within the Américas that address authoritarianism, het-

[2] Here I draw on an analytic about this relation from my book The Extractive Zone.

[3] On Native and Indigenous feminisms, see especially work by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Mishuana Goeman and Jennifer Nez Denetale (2008), and Joanne Barker (2017). For intersections with queer theory, see Jodi Byrd (2017) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2018).

[4] This is an investigation as part of work with a reading group involving Saidiya Hartman, Jayna Brown, Jack Halberstam and myself. We began our study together in July 2018.

[5] On the matrix of colonial power see Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," in Nepantla 2000, pp. 533–580.

stead the promise of "Mujeres Creando" (Women Creating) as an open invitation to the viewer.

I visited and engaged with *Mujeres Creando Comunidad* over the course of several visits between 2011 and 2015, and I first visited the site of Maria Galindo's radio program, and the café run by local Aymara and Quechua women, in 2013. When I walked into the crowded two-story colonial house, where lunch patrons were tucked into their wooden tables busy eating steaming bowls of Andean potato quinoa soup, I was visually overwhelmed by an enormous, gorgeous photographic image plastered onto the adobe wall of an indigenous woman with braids. Below her was a question — "What does racism look like to you?" — and a statement — "End Racism." Having worked within the field of Latin American culture and Ethnic Studies for over twenty years, this was the first time that I was literally silenced by a powerful image that outed Anti-Indigenous racism in a public venue.

Maria Galindo's radio shows, video work, performances, and ongoing writing on decolonization all carry a decidedly direct critique of Andean patriarchy, Catholic morality, Morales' extractivist politics and neoliberal agenda, and what I can only describe as a 'punk anarchist' "fuck you" attitude. Unlike my interviews with Paredes, who was somewhat more tempered in her analysis of Morales' government, Maria Galindo was much more critical, calling his politics liberal-multicultural, paternalistic, and regressive, and showing visible contempt for the "Aymara path to Andean socialist" rhetoric. In this regard, Maria Galindo's efforts, alongside *Mujeres Creando*, include an important critique of the 2011 Plurinational Constitution that Morales ratified through a series of regional and, later, national assemblies.

As I discuss in Beyond the *Pink Tide: Artistic and Political Undercurrents* (2018), at the level of legal infrastructure, the Plurinational Constitution made important gains, namely for multi-lingualism and Earth-centered rights. However, Left gov-

ability, Paredes discusses how, in practice, *chachawarmi* represents a vertical gender model that can only be broken down through new horizontal networks. As a way to grasp the multivalent criticalities at work here, anarchic feminisms challenge Indigenous traditions, while Aymara cosmologies help decolonize and rearrange the meaning of feminisms.[11]

During the 1990s graffitis, or las pintadas — signature political quotes written in distinctive cursive writings on city walls — became an important format that illustrated how *Mujeres Creando* perforated the dominant visual field. As visual disobedience, the *graffitis* painted an Indigenous anarchist feminist imaginary onto the urban landscape by marking terrain not through any capitalist indication, such as real estate speculation or the building of new infrastructure or signs of gentrification, but instead through the embodied political improvisation of the written word.

My favorite message among many memorable *graffitis* is: "*Ní Dios, ní amo, ní marido, ní partido, Mujeres Creando*," "Not God, nor boss, nor husband, nor Party, Women Creating," with the sign for female crossed through with an "A for Anarchy" at the end of the script. This graffiti strikes through the cityscape with its simultaneously insistent refusal of heteronormativity; Indigenous nationalism; and national party politics, offering in-

[11] In what I find to be a somewhat problematic discussion of the politics of charchawarmi in the gender equality debates in Bolivia, Anders Burman analyzes the issues of Aymara silence as an oft-found trait of Aymara Indigenous women (2014). While their line of inquiry is not dissimilar to my own concerns around coloniality, tradition, and decolonization, we come to different conclusions about the impact of feminist radical histories in Bolivia. In part, this difference is the product of Burman's over-reliance on political narratives and ethnographic observations that position Aymara feminisms within and against a frame of Western feminisms that cannot identify the arc of a utopic horizon. Feminist-Indigenous-anarchic critique has its own regional genealogies that need not be compared to other forms of gender analysis or liberal feminism. They are, first and foremost, an intersectional project of decolonization.

eropatriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism, we begin to imagine what a politics of liberation looks like that stretches far beyond one horizon of activity. And, by focusing on the figures of female laborers and social movement leaders dating from the colonial period into modernity, we extend the largely male anarchist archive that imprisons stories of Indigenous and Black women's experiences as well as forms of denouncement and insurgent solidarities that do not always show up within the social movement archive.

Though Andean history has been described as a permanent space of insurrection by Steven Sándor John and others,[6] anarchism itself is often code for Occidental and Western European forms of social organization. Narratives of uprisings and horizontal activity often run through genealogies of male anarchist events that occlude female participation. What anarchisms otherwise emerge to delink from European historiography? To frame this question in this way allows us to enter into the anarchisms from the Indigenous Global South. In particular, I draw from figures within Andean history in the Américas that have been the touchstones for twentieth and twenty first-century feminist anarchist organizing efforts.

I briefly turn to how research and activisms have built upon a decolonial feminist history towards new social formations. Mujeres Creando Comunidad was founded by Julieta Paredes, Maria Galindo and Monica Mendoza in 1985 during the "transition to democracy" period in Bolivia and at a time of hyperinflation in the nation during the onset of privatization and deregulation: the period described as neoliberalism.[7] Though this group split into two different feminist groups

[6] See S. Sándor John's book, Bolivia's Radical Tradition: Permanent Revolution in the Andes, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005.

[7] Bolivia experienced a series of false democratic transitions in the late 1970s and early 1980s that resulted in a military dictatorship (1980–1982) and culminated with the second Hernán Siles Zuazo presidency. This tumultuous time of hyperinflation, increased urban and rural labor radicalization,

after the co-founders went their own ways in 2002, the feminist anarchic vision and trans-feminist perspective poses a meaningful challenge to patriarchy, coloniality, and to the many forms that nationalism takes. During the neoliberal period when corporate restructuring influences political agendas in unprecedented ways,[8] and the coercive power of intimidation and violence has intensified dispossession and lack of freedoms, looking to anarchist, feminist, Indigenous activisms from the Global South offers us a window into important practices of refusal.

My invitation, then, is for an expansive critical perspective that, through Indigenous-anarchist-feminist critique, places the histories of colonialism and capitalism within the epistemic disobedience of decolonization. In these imaginaries of anarchistic sociality, submerged feminist and queer perspectives become the organizing nodes of horizontal relation. These modes of activity provide a dual track that at once denounces colonial modes of governance and authority, and also imagines and makes new worlds outside of the intimate, public, and state logics of coercion.

Figures of Decolonial History: From *Cholas* to *Pailliris*

During the early part of the twentieth century, as in many other Latin American nations, Bolivian middle-class and elite women formed cultural groups and pushed for educational rights that were the first to create public visibility around gender concerns, such as the educational work of Adela Zamudio, a female anarchist who taught in many formats.

and state violence made the formation of Mujeres Creando that much more necessary.

[8] See Fernando Leiva on his concept of "the 'new spirit' of capital in Latin America" (2015).

for visibility and a discursive terrain of struggle into otherwise masculine geographies.

Anarco Feminism Now

Mujeres Creando Comunidad has worked to push back on archival erasure by building upon these activist inheritances. Victoria Aldunate Morales describes what it means to do the daily work of anarchist feminisms: grounded in particular traditions and genealogies of female struggle, the work is done through the making of "collective experiences, reasoning through the body, and elaborating an never ending flow of ideas, concepts, categories, proposals, images, that gives a new vision to feminists and other women … [This requires an] opening one's eyes in ways that cannot be closed again, either from oneself or in relation to the female eye."[10] These references to the realm of vision are not just about seeing coloniality directly, but about how to sense and live the future through a communal solidarity of the now. Besides this shift in the colonial gaze, another significance of *Mujeres Creando Comunidad* has been its ability to build from the *ayullu* horizontal structures to create *feminismo communitario*, or communal feminisms that emerge out of feminist-anarchist pasts and organize the imaginary of future affinities.

As Julieta Paredes advocates, Indigenous women must also find new sources of relation with other women through a communal feminism that works outside of the ideology of *chachawarmi*. Though gender complementarity was often rhetorically invoked by Evo Morales as a discernible and positive model of gender equality, wherein masculine and feminine roles have separate but parallel spheres of account-

[10] Mujeres Creando Comunidad Blog Site, http://memoriafeminista.blogspot. com/2010/04/3-edicion-del-libro-hilando-fino-desde.html, accessed January 12, 2019.

wherein the Andes serves as an idealized space for the abstractions of the "multitude," once again writing out Indigenous anarco-feminist presences.

Female miners also regularly engaged in horizontal and anti-state tactics against the post-revolutionary authoritarian state, thus playing a profound role in the opening of democracy in Bolivia. During the late 1960s and 1970s, when a series of nationalist and authoritarian regimes took power, Indigenous female miners emerged as protagonists combating new extreme political and economic conditions — this culminated in a hunger strike in 1978 accompanied by global shows of solidarity. The lesser-known story of mining is the degree to which women and children have bolstered the work of the "mining family" at home, while laboring in the slag piles, recycling the toxic materials of mining extraction. Thousands of women and children have historically worked as slag pile workers of the mining industry, living with the toxicity of million ton heaps of contaminated waste that this extractive industry produces. Mining surplus, then, depends upon the Indigenous heterosexual mining family, something female activists realized when they shifted their attention from seeing themselves as serving a perfunctory role toward understanding their centrality in the reproduction of the mining economy.

In June Nash's classic We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us, she interviews the Aymara leader Domitla Chungara about how female laborers began to understand the emergence of a feminist anarchist consciousness around issues of labor. While organizing began as Housewives Committee work, it evolved into understanding female laborer's place in the global economy. Hunger strikes in this context became an important tactic against rendering women's social reproductive labor invisible and also against their colonial condition. To sum up this genealogy then, like the *chola* anarchist women before them, the poorly paid *palliris*, or slag pile workers, opened up spaces

Through organizations such as "El Ateneo Feminino," these groups facilitated dialogues within national public spaces about the existence of gender inequality, the fight for suffrage rights, and resistance against discrimination.

Elite women often focused on literary salons and suffrage rights following European models. As working class *mestizas* and Indigenous women entered the labor market in vast numbers during industrialization, they initially organized themselves to improve their material and labor conditions. As Lourdes Zabala details in *Mineras, Cholas, and Feministas/ Miners, Cholas, and Feminists* (1976–1991), during the twentieth century anarchism became the route for many kinds of Indigenous labor activism (1993). As women organized with men to achieve the eight-hour workday, to liberate prisoners, and to improve wages, they also developed a specifically anti-state and feminist agenda (Zabala 29). Indeed, the story of female Indigenous political visibility during Bolivian modernity is one that emerges in fits and starts and has to be uncovered through the history of powerful Indigenous female figures and working class *mestizas* on the one hand, and the more hidden histories of anarchism, on the other.

During capitalist expansion, rural to urban migration produced dramatic racial and labor segmentation within La Paz's social fabric. The *Chola* market woman, an Indigenous and *mestiza* figure, increasingly participated in spheres of commercial exchange as a powerful and visible presence that organized, sold, and bartered through systems that were not always legible to capitalism. Of Aymara descent, and to a certain extent urbanized, the *chola* accrued representational visibility as a mediator of cultures, and, within literature and imagery, as an icon of the Bolivian nation (Poole 1997). Yet, the *chola* was also the target of anti-Indigenous racism by the European elite that wanted to construct their own modernity. Importantly, these women managed to retain many of the social and economic features of Indig-nous Andean societies, such as the horizontal

kinship structure of the Incan system, the *ayullu* that was the mainstay of Indigenous society, even after the onset of colonialism. For example, as scholars have rightly noted, these rhizomatic structures supported flexible and mobile tactics that were used during the anti-state gas and water wars in the early 2000s. Yet what has been underplayed is the degree to which *chola* market women maintained horizontal structures of decision making and bartering in ways that predate Western anarchist formations. For instance, as powerful brokers of market spaces, *Chola* women control the substrates and localized economic spaces that have not been fully colonized by neoliberal privatization and deregulation.

During the early part of the 20th century until the present day, Indigenous women continue to wear traditional *polleras* (Indigenous skirts and petticoats), often facing workplace discrimination for cultural practices that included wearing Indigenous clothing in public. Since the 1920s, *cholas* have impressively intertwined labor concerns with anti-racist work, anti-state politics, market organizing, and anti-discrimination efforts through an embodied practice and reinvention of Indigenous cultural forms. As Lourdes Zabala details, *Chola* market women challenged upper-class women on issues such as "couple violence and the need for a new morality, the defense of free love, absolute divorce, and the rejection of civil marriage," pushing towards a new feminist agenda. An important early marker of feminist difference in Bolivia, then, was the separation between oligarchical feminist movements and *chola* anarchist organizing, a fissure that cracked open during the first Feminist Convention in 1929 that aimed to bring together female constituencies to address gender inequity and suffrage issues. Following the convention, the presence of female leadership all but disappeared from the national scene. In part, the disappearance of female public visibility was due to splits in feminist alignments. But more importantly, during the next several decades of national politics, as revolutionary forces increasingly consolidated around a Marxist hegemony, feminist anarchist figures all but disappeared.

For instance, the 1952 Socialist revolution led by the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR) that nationalized Bolivia's resource wealth, did little to register significant levels of female membership. Aymara sociologist and activist Sylvia Rivera Cusicanqui has threaded together how the history of anarchism was contained and obscured by both a leftist Marxist hegemony and a statist revolutionary process. As she explains:

> What happened in Bolivia is that there have been two official histories: The official history written by the [Revolutionary] Nationalist Party–MNR–that basically denies all the agency of both workers and peasants and Indigenous peoples; and the official history of the Left that forgets about anything that was not Marxist, thus eclipsing or distorting the autonomous history of anarchist unions. It's the links between the anarchists and the Indigenous people that gave them another nuance, because their communities are self-sustained entities and they basically are places where anti-authoritarian type of organization can take roots.[9]

Indeed, anarchist feminisms were essentially written out of Leftist official history. As Cusicanqui emphasizes, this erased "Anarcho-Indianism-Feminism because the *chola* figure, the women, the female fighter, the female organizer, are all part of Bolivian daily life" (ibid). These femininities function as the less noted genealogies of what is otherwise touted in decolonial scholarship as the region's permanent insurrection,

[9] http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/silvia-rivera-cusicanqui-andalusia-knoll-indigenous-anarchism-in-bolivia,