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International Women's Day: New challenges ahead

Women are bound together by what they share, and also often "pulled apart by their differences", writes Eisenstein.

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Although many women have more choices today than their mothers did, there are also "greater economic inequalities and therefore greater burdens to bear

On this International Women's Day let women embrace themselves in multiple identities and complexities. Each of us embodies many realities all at the same time. The same woman who may be raped is also a mother, a professional worker, a migrant labourer, or.... None of our issues should be singularised although there are times they need priority.

This said, it is time in 2013 to recognize us as a sexual class across the globe. Women as a sexual class inhabit the diverse politics of living in a female body with its many colours, races, genders and classes. As such this sexual class is not unitary, but rather poly-versally united.

International Women's Day started in the early 1900s - mostly by Socialist Parties to recognise the paid "work" of women. The Soviet Union was famous for its rhetoric of "sexual equality", while demanding triple days of labor from its women. Today, women across the globe work for wages as teachers, soldiers, civilians, warriors, doctors, nurses, medical-aides, lawyers, paralegals, domestic labourers, cooks, sex-workers, chefs, janitors, migrants and more.

These women are also daughters mothers, sisters, wives, partners, single, gay, straight, trans, rich, poor, middle class, slum-dwellers and homeless - while struggling and achieving - with cancer and without cancer; with AIDS and without AIDS; disabled or fully abled; in war zones and not. They come in all colours and design. No woman is ever simply/singularly female, but it is always of consequence that she is.

Common struggles

Women - in all their cacophonous variety have enormous potential power as labourers, child-bearers and child-rearers, and sustainers of everyday life. Patriarchy and misogyny struggle to control and contain this power.

If women were not as powerful as they also are sometimes powerless, we would simply be ignored. Instead, we are wrapped in blue cloth from head to toe, we are kept away from education, we are controlled to use right to divorce and right to control our bodies - abortion and contraception - only because those who dominate us fear our potential power and creativity; glass and cement ceilings keep us curtailed. You do not bother oppressing those who do little and are only capable of less.

Women are bound together by what they share, and also often pulled apart by their differences. Yet, there are common struggles: against sexual violence, for daycare and child-care supports; against unequal pay and for an end to sexual ghettos. Commonality does not require sameness.

In other words, women, in all their intersectional diversity and individuality, must be recognised as a sexual class across racial and economic divides, with shared interests in order to be treated with full humanity. The women in Tahrir Square and in the streets of Tunisia demanded their human rights for themselves and all Egyptians and Tunisians alike. Their female bodies spoke of their sexual status, while they claimed their poly and universal rights to occupy the public streets. They chose not to be defined simply by their sexual status, but to claim that women's rights are

human rights.

On this Day, let us reject the idea of "unity" as "oneness" and rather understand that women's power lies in her diverse unity. Feminists of all sorts have written of "diverse commonality" and "common differences" for years. And it may also be the case that women are now more diverse than they have ever been given newly formed economic disparities across the globe.

The reason that singular identities - women's rights, gay rights, the rights of the poor - have been amassed into popular uprisings and movements throughout North Africa as well as Europe is a stand against the extremes of austerity programmes that aid the rich and punish the poor. The women of Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Chile, Jordan South Africa and Palestine, to name a few, lead some of these **inclusive struggles**.

However, a radical embrace of women's rights collides with the cruel excess of global capitalism. There has been much attention paid to the way that global capital disregards national boundaries and reconstructs new global economic formation. Global capital now also ignores and undermines the pre-existing borders of race and gender in new form. Gender and its races are destabilised by the hunt for girls and women's labour. This search pulls women into the paid labour force and public workspace while realigning established power relations.

New global assaults

The clear-cut divide between home and work is undermined by these new global assaults. As women traverse both realms - sometimes freely; other times enforced - the borderlines of established patriarchal gender change. As such, gender bending is part of the newest globe and some women occupy new sites. This does not mean that greater equality exists for women and girls, but it means that there is more gender malleability for a few; and greater exploitation for the many.

Although many women have more choices today than their mothers did, there are also greater economic inequalities and therefore greater burdens to bear. Because class divisions increasingly differentiate women's possibilities it appears that women of all colours have more freedom of choice - but do not confuse this with them having more equality.

In sum: countries are more racially diverse and mixed than they used to be during colonialism, when the mother country often remained white. Today, a country like the US is racially diverse with people from all over the globe. As well, gender today is also more economically differentiated and complex. All this said, the incredible pluralism of choice that challenges the glass ceilings remains possible for a precious few. For too many people, especially the poor across the globe, white privilege and **misogynist hierarchy** remain in place.

The invisibility of misogyny and its patriarchal global and national structures seem to be uncovered more readily now. Maybe, just maybe, we are in a new moment of possibility - where the visibility is seen, and shared, and challenged by billions of women rising together, against sexual violence, for economic justice, and saving the planet.

Post a tweet for International Women's Day. Embrace women and girls - their bodies, their labour, their love, their "civilian" suffering in war, their hauling of water, their gathering of wood, their amazing creativity, their planting of trees, their protection of the environment, their stand against fracking, their fight to maintain abortion rights and other reproductive freedoms, their bravery in public and private spaces - anywhere and everywhere across this globe.