



**THE FEMINIST GENERAL STRIKE IS ON!**

**STORIES OF AN ONGOING PROCESS**

# **LA HUELGA GENERAL FEMINISTA ¡VA!**

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**HISTORIAS DE UN  
PROCESO EN CURSO**

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## **The Feminist General Strike Is On! Stories Of An Ongoing Process**

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# PLOTTING FUTURE MEMORIES

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But above all, it is an invitation to complete the fragments, an invitation to unlock the memory, an invitation to look with different eyes at what we did, what we were and what we are today.

Edda Gaviola, Eliana Largo, Sandra Palestro  
A necessary history: Women in Chile 1973 - 1989

The first time we set out to write our story was on March 9, 2019, the day after the first Feminist General Strike. We began to imagine it in the midst of catharsis and celebrations: “We have to make a book about this process and we can’t wait for others to write it for us.” As a movement, we took a step forward by striking. It was a signal that we were ready to push our demands to the forefront and profoundly transform our lives by leading the fight against the precarization of life. Our experiences, our voices and our struggles could not be delegated and neither could the documentation of this process. Those of us who harbored a desire for this project did not know exactly what form it would take, how much time it would require or even how it could be financed, but we knew that the path we had chosen for ourselves came with responsibilities that bound us to the women’s strikes taking place around the world. We wanted to share how, together, we had realized the largest mobilization of the post-dictatorship period, what tactics, strategies and alliances we employed and what trust, bonds, affection and positioning emerged from this experience. We had organized a strike in a country where there is no legal right to strike. Moreover, our strike was both general and feminist. Its first iteration was joined by more than 800,000 women, lesbians, transgender people, drag queens and non-binary people throughout the country, brought together by a common program against the precarization of life.

Since then, the book has accompanied us as a promise that we reaffirmed in the midst of assemblies, marches and rallies, over coffee, cups of mate, beer and french fries. Comrades joined us in the process of imagining the forms, images and milestones that would

10 need to be included in the writing. We made a few attempts at bringing the project to the next stage, but the situation-at-hand was always more pressing. There was always some new crisis that demanded our involvement, and during those days we kept promising ourselves that the day would eventually come for this book. In the meantime, we were building an archive and a process of mobilization that was rapidly growing in scope. Once our comrades from Tiempo Robado Editors joined the project, we returned to discussing the possibilities, sharing the material we had collected and revisiting some notes on its forms and meanings. But even more time would have to pass before we could turn our wish for book that would be tool, tapestry and barricade into a reality.

In October 2018, the moment we had been waiting for all our lives finally arrived: the revolt broke out all over Chile, filling the streets, squares and subway stations. It interrupted the problematic status quo and opened the possibility of replacing it with a life worth living. When the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation offered their support, we knew that the book, conceived after a strike, in the midst of a revolt and in the ruins of a country that would never be the same again, was ready to be born.

We drew up an initial calendar and proposal to develop, in one year, a book written in many voices, in first person and plural. We discussed it with our comrades in assemblies and then in open meetings. Interest grew and we formed a team - Alondra, Claudia, Fernanda, Gloria, Javiera M., Karina and Cynthia - that would meet every week to develop and support the work contained in these pages. Marcela, Javiera C., Monica, Paula, Javiera N., Katralla and Pilar conducted the interviews with the intention of listening to and sharing the experiences of comrades from different cities. Ameba, Daniela, Lily, Fernanda, Javiera D. and Valentina transcribed these conversations. Ivana and Paula took on the task of designing the book with the same dedication they had shown when creating posters and pamphlets for the strike, with special attention paid to highlighting the work of other women regarding the typography and details.

### Threads, voices and meanings

This book is a call to action and a bonfire; it is woven from memories and experiences that resonate with genealogies of struggle and futures in revolt. Above all, it is an instrument for action in the present. This book is not a definitive roadmap, but rather a toolbox to employ as we traverse the paths that, thanks to our struggle, continue to open before us. Our journey has taken us into a period marked by a global pandemic, the global re-mobilization of the extreme right and expanding popular uprisings.

Its pages contain the collective and manifold path of the Feminist General Strike from the perspective of its development, its disruptive arrival and the ongoing



struggles that continue to intersect it. This is a book for us to read together, with the comrades, near and far, who have accompanied us from the other side of the Andes, and from further north and south as well. We have assumed the task of writing and publishing as the continuation of a policy that seizes the spoken and written word. This is also a task of the international feminist movement that has burst forth in solidarity all over the world. We hope the book will resonate in more meetings and debates full of historic memory and dreams for the future.

This book compiles voices, documents and testimonies of the open process through which we raised the Feminist General Strikes of 2019 and 2020. It begins with a prologue written by the comrades of the Argentinian Ni Una Menos Collective, our sisters in a feminist tide that cannot be contained by legal or geographic boundaries. Together, we have generated a feminist power that challenges the precarization and violence that run through our bodies and brings us together in a deep, shared desire for another way of living. Next is an introduction in which we take the floor as the Santiago branch of the March 8 Feminist Coordinating Committee (CF8M) in order to tell the particularities of our story and how they are woven into the open and sprawling process of the Feminist General Strike.

The next section includes interviews with comrades from organizations that laid the groundwork for the strike in different cities around the country: Paula and Catherine from the Women's Meeting of Antofagasta, Lilian and Ana María from CF8M - Atacama, Pamela from CF8M - Valparaíso and Andrea, Natalia and Elisa from CF8M - Punta Arenas. We also interviewed Emilia from SINDUCAP, Mafalda from ANAMURI, Natalia from the Coordinating Committee of Ocular Trauma Victims, Paola from Negrocéntricas and Lina and Consuelo from CONFEDERUS. These interviewees are women from different generations and parts of the country, members of feminist and sexual dissident organizations, trade unionists, rural and indigenous women, political collectives, pobladoras (residents of communities resulting from historic land takeovers) and migrants, who, in turn, are part of a dense web of diverse relationships and connections. Despite the critical distance that many of them initially took, the strike was reclaimed and successfully transformed into a political instrument capable of transcending the narrow limits of traditional union spaces, highlighting the essential role of women in the economic model and affirming their own rights and the transformation of society as a whole. Their stories show how the use of this power was also the prelude to the revolt and, later, a key factor in its continuity. The feminist movement prefigured this uprising, in some cases planting and cultivating the seeds of popular power through the occupation of public spaces, collective child-rearing, solidarity economies or breaking the siege of privatization. According to those who lived these experiences, all this was possible thanks to the synergy and overflow of energy and creativity that happens when we are together.

12 The book also contains fifteen interconnected texts from multiple struggles and territories. They combine the need and desire for the strike, the difficulties, questions and discussions arising from our material experiences, with an eye on a present that is constantly transforming and defining new horizons. These contributions were authored by writers from the Mapuche Women's Network, Ariel (a transgender activist), Danae, María José and Midora on Feminist May (a transformative wave of feminist university occupations in 2018), Ann from the Manos Libres Cooperative on anti-prison struggles, Ayelén and Isidora from the Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students (ACES) on the role of students, Constanza on the intersection between the strike and struggle of sex and gender dissidents, Emilia and Rosario on non-sexist education, Daniela on the feminist struggle for housing, Katherine, Ameba and Lily on feminist memory and rebellions, the Laura Rodig Brigade on activism and propaganda, Lucia and Francisca from the Socioenvironmental Committee, Pamela and Vesna from the Committee of Women Workers and Trade Unionists, Karina and Andrea from the International Committee and Catalina and Katherine from the Communications Commission.

The process of making this book has led us to build our own archive. We have organized our papers, drafts, open documents and social media posts where dozens of statements, assessments and public speeches have been recorded. Early on, we undertook the task of writing and communicating each of our steps, wielding megaphones and keyboards to respond to the events unfolding around us. This book compiles most of the texts outlined within this process from March 8, 2018 to March 8, 2020, reflecting the balance between our personal and public desire to transform our streets, homes and beds. Our struggles and writings constantly overflow the boundaries between public and private. When compiling, we realized how much we had written and how, little by little, our own voice and collective way of writing had begun to emerge. We found ourselves in this sensitive exercise that was as political as it was aesthetic and as personal as it was collective.

We sought to include the greatest diversity of organizations possible in the pages of this book to reflect a heterogeneous and collective experience, a perspective that we developed in the process of introducing and expanding feminism within social movements. We have no doubt that a single, omniscient voice would never have been enough to fully describe this fire captured within a book.

### The ways of making this book

In order to make this book, we had to continuously ask ourselves which editorial practices embodied an ethic of care in line with the feminist politics held within its pages. How do we implement feminist politics in the context of a book? How do we practice caregiving in an editorial process? Which aspects of the work are visible

and which are invisible? How do we build a collective voice? We did not arrive at any definitive answers, but we maintained our commitment to returning to these and many other questions throughout the process.

It was fundamental to think of this book as a path that we had traveled together, one with many starting points and diverse positionalities. Part of our feminist work was to conceptualize it beyond the scope of any one particular organization. It also needed to reflect how this process was marked by pain, breaks and separations and how, despite those challenges, it was ultimately one we could all take part in while acknowledging our differences. We do not intend this to be an exhaustive account, but rather a first exercise in situated reconstruction. We trust it will not be the only one. This book helped us recognize the importance of having more feminist voices and writings, that they multiply in all their forms, modes and styles. We want the feminist editorial exercise to be, above all, an invitation to take up the pen and awaken the desire, the sense and the pleasure of writing, so that we are the ones who write our histories and document our rebellions along the future paths we take as individuals and organizations. Our greatest hope for this book is that it leaves the reader with a feeling that something is missing, that there is much more to be said, so this story and many others like it can be told, lifting more voices in the process.

We have tried to shine a light on the work that is usually ignored in research and writing, highlighting both interviewees and authors, as well as those who conducted the interviews, those who transcribed, compiled, edited and coordinated each appointment, meeting and deadline reminder. As feminists, we seek to reveal the work that takes place behind the scenes and this book is no exception. We were sensitive to this in every aspect of development and production, including the design. The graphics taken from strike posters, meetings and reflection documents are just a few fragments of an immense body of work generated for and around demonstrations, marches, rallies, commemorations, denunciations and interventions in the public space. Many of these pieces express an ongoing search for a language or tone and were created by many hands, often under difficult time constraints, and sometimes by comrades who had only just met. The poster that accompanies this book is both a small material expression of this process and an iconic tool of the call to strike that has and continues to mobilize us. Another great challenge was the process of selecting the photographs included in the book. We sought to represent a process that encompasses countless activities across time and distance. Undoubtedly some records are missing, but as a whole it gives an idea of the massive scale, radicalism and creativity of the actions that brought us together.

Finally, an effort was made to ensure that the production, editing and design work was carried out by women. The pages of this book are flooded with feminist

14 typographies such as Gotta for the main text (designed by Marcela Aguilera from Chile) and Montserrat for the titles (designed by Julieta Ulanovsky from Argentina). The only exception was the process of printing the book itself, though plans are already in motion to ensure that going forward, we can claim that space for ourselves as well. In this way, we hope to make a small difference in the masculinized work of production in the publishing industry.

### Shake after reading

We hope that this book resonates and its readers go on to highlight and underline its pages, fold the corners and scribble notes in the margins, that it is transformed through personal and shared reading. It is not a book to be read linearly, but rather one that can be skipped through with detours and re-readings, a book that will be a different experience for each person who holds it in their hands. We hope, above all, that it will remind us of our power, our belief in what we can achieve together, the urgency of what is still left undone, and the desires that always accompany us in this open process that is the Feminist General Strike for a life worth living.

Up with those who struggle!  
Editorial Team





# STRIKE, COMRADES!

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## NOTES ON AN ONGOING PROCESS

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Our journey and the memory of what we have done is built on the stance of collectively disobeying what for so long was known as “to the extent possible.” Through the ups and downs of this journey, we have been building confidence in ourselves and in what we can do together. It has not been easy, but we are driven by the desire to transform everything, from each space and territory, from the many lives now banding together to strengthen our past, present and future struggles. Over time, we have joined the sound of our many voices to the rhythm of our steps and, through it, to our collective strength, our stubbornness and our political imagination. We cannot conceive of a process detached from our experiences or the bodies and places from which we speak, think, feel, rage and weave a common plot to build this path and a horizon of ever-expanding transformations.

In this introduction, we seek to present a set of images, knots and experiences from which we reconstruct a path greater than what any single narrative can contain. It is a story in plural and in first person, of one voice belonging to many. We hope that each episode, through its details and context, can provide clues to our participation in the process of building the Feminist General Strike in Chile, and how we want to continue writing this story: with many hands and everywhere. This remains an unfinished exercise, a story in progress.

### Voices against the precarization of life

The march on March 8, 2018, International Working Women’s Day, mobilized millions of women, lesbians, drag queens and transgender people around the world, following the call for an International Women’s Strike that was joined in dozens of countries. In Bilbao, Spain, over 100,000 demonstrators chanted “A la Huelga diez, a la Huelga cien” (Strike with ten, strike with a hundred) to cheers and applause from windows and in the street, while in Buenos Aires, abortion was one of the central demands in massive marches. In Santiago, over 100,000 of us marched in a historic day of protest. As in previous years, preparations for the demonstration were assumed by

16 a March 8 coordinating committee, which in January began meeting in assemblies to plan the day, agree on the slogan, elect the spokeswomen and determine the next protest actions. It was in the midst of these preparations that the slogan that would guide our struggles from then on was conceived: “Women workers to the streets against the precarization of life.” In the days leading up to March 8, we brought the nature of the call to the forefront through leafleting, interventions in Metro stations, a street blockade in the Alameda and the seizure of a Transantiago bus during rush hour. No more flowers or congratulations. March 8 would be a day of protest once again, as it was throughout history.

Reclaiming our place as workers and our place in the streets, and denouncing the precarization that runs through our lives was a vector of transformation and expansion of the struggle against patriarchal violence. We were certain that the only way to end violence against women and girls was to transform everything and not to focus on one specific area of conflict. It was not a “women’s issue,” but the struggle for a structural transformation of the way society and life as a whole are organized. We were standing up to a system propped up by the State, big business, the establishment political parties, the churches and their gentlemen’s agreements that attack our bodies, communities and territories, and that only allow for ongoing, escalating patriarchal violence. We raised our fists and said that we were ready to confront all that and more.

The multitudinous and radical character of our mobilization on March 8 led us to affirm the need to maintain the level of coordination we had achieved at an assembly later that month. It was then we established ourselves as the March 8 Feminist Coordinating Committee (CF8M), with three goals: 1) to transversalize a feminist perspective in social movements, 2) to be a dynamic agent of articulation between different organizations, and 3) to pursue the creation of a common agenda for mobilizations against the precarization of life. To that end, the main tasks were working towards the Feminist General Strike of 2019 and the National Meeting of Women Who Struggle, where we would define the program for the strike by building our own voice.

Feminist May, with its transformative struggle carried out by university and high school students in their educational spaces, filled us with strength as we called for an open assembly at the Law School of the University of Chile. Just as a sign outside the occupied Main Building of the Catholic University read: “The Chicago Boys are shaking in their boots, up with the feminist movement!”, we resolved to begin organizing the strike. It was in the midst of these occupations we came face to face with the powerful image of hundreds of women and dissidents converging from different territories, struggles and backgrounds, forming a feminist wave that flooded the streets with red hoods and demands against sexual harassment and for a non-sexist education, in the struggle against all forms of capitalist,

patriarchal, heteronormative, colonial and racist oppression. Every word spoken, every note added to the flip charts in the center of the assembly shed more light on the understated, intimate, general and specific ways in which the precarization of our lives and the violence against our bodies is administered. We would face this together and set it on fire, an act that would gather all of us together and bring the issue of our lives as a political problem to the forefront. The Feminist General Strike was to be that fire. The Strike as a certainty, as a process to strengthen us, as the general direction for a multiple and multiplying act of our power.

### We raised our voices from the start

One of the agreements made at that May 2018 assembly was to raise our voices in a Popular and Feminist Public Address for June 1, as a counterpoint to the first public address of the newly elected president Sebastián Piñera. His government had announced a Women's Agenda that included increasing the cost of healthcare plans for men as a means of equalizing healthcare costs between the sexes, increasing labor flexibility so that women could raise children "with greater freedom" as well as a number of other precaritizing and opportunistic measures. We created our own public address as a response, in opposition to the so-called "Women's" neoliberal agenda. We called to promote the Women and Pensions Meetings and demanded the end of militarization in the Wallmapu, the end of sexual political violence, the recognition of care work, decent work for all and a new public healthcare system that would guarantee our sexual, reproductive and non-reproductive rights. That day we raised our voices and took to the streets for a day of mobilization, together with different social organizations throughout the country. That was our first strike rehearsal.

Since then, the Feminist Popular Address has become a milestone in highlighting our collective voice, our journey, our struggles and the means we would employ to bring them to the forefront. A year later, in an open assembly in May 2019, the idea emerged to create our own newspaper, where we could make a record of our words. We called it La Primera, following in the footsteps of the feminist workers who published La Palanca and La Alborada. The design, layout and distribution were undertaken by the March 8 Art and Propaganda Brigade (now the Laura Rodig Brigade). For the first time, we would be the ones to set the paper's editorial line. Eight thousand copies were printed and delivered the next day at Metro stations by over sixty comrades arriving before 7 AM. We all shouted proudly: "Here it is: the feminist newspaper La Primera. We raised our voices from the start."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since June 1, La Primera has been published on the 8th of each month. Eight issues and over 15,000 physical and virtual copies (due to the pandemic) have been distributed.

Every step we take leads to the discovery and creation of new ways to make ourselves seen. One of the signature moments during the buildup to the strike was the action on Feminist Super Monday, March 4, 2019, when we changed the names of over 50 Santiago Metro stations: many, everywhere, at the same time. What is the significance of changing the names of Metro stations? Which territories and maps are ours? Who is named in the patriarchal cities through which we move daily? Only eight metro stations out of 136 are named after women, most of them religious figures. Over the course of dozens of meetings, we mapped out the city with the names of those who fought before us and who stand with us in the struggle today. Each name was chosen in collaboration with the neighbors of the surrounding area, the collective, the assembly, the union, the student federation, the mother, the friends and all those who follow in their footsteps. We did it without asking permission, without outside financing, without ever thinking that we would not be able to do it. On that insubordinate morning, we took over the city. The Escuela Militar (Military School) station was renamed Commander Tamara, in remembrance of Cecilia Magni who was murdered during the dictatorship.

Other names included iconic drag activist Hija de Perra, socio-environmental fighter Macarena Valdés, Nicole Saavedra (murdered in Quillota for being a lesbian), the beloved Julieta Kirkwood, the incomparable writer Pedro Lemebel, Joane Florvil (a Haitian migrant murdered by the Chilean State) and Javiera Neira, the 6-year-old girl whose death at the hands of her father now marks December 19 as the National Day Against Femicide. Our coordinated bodies, with each comrade standing on the shoulders of another, was the iconic image of that day on which we commemorated our predecessors while claiming our right to the city.

The same momentum and disobedience were seen all over the country through various demonstrations, some of which are recounted in interviews included in this book. From north to south, these experiences were multiplied through strength and creativity, passion and desire, making way for artistic performances, paintathons (in what some called “artivism”), tinku (an Aymara ritual), drumlines, the flags of the peasant feminists of ANAMURI, solidarity economy cordons, the takeover of SERNAMEG and the permanent occupation of the walkway on Brazil Avenue in Antofagasta, a space that has become known to all as the “feminist walkway.”

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the persistent work of comrades from the December 19 Coordinating Committee and the decades-long struggle by feminists to denounce and bring public attention to femicide.



The Plurinational Meeting of Those Who Struggle is an initiative that feeds into the work that builds towards the Feminist General Strike. This is also what we are referring to by the process, the journey that defines this path of struggle. The first step was to define a thematic and methodological proposal for the pre-meetings. These spaces of debate were self-convened by feminist comrades in their neighborhoods, schools, unions, organizations, remembrance spaces and collectives. The resulting reflection documents, developed using an open methodology, were then submitted by email. Ultimately, over 70 pre-meetings were held in 14 regions throughout the country. Once systematized, they became the basis for discussions at the Plurinational Meeting of Women Who Struggle<sup>3</sup> in December 2018. The character of the mobilization that we would raise on March 8 was decided then: a Feminist General Strike with marches all over the country as its centerpiece. Acknowledging dissenting positions, we agreed by a large majority that we would not call for it to be separatist (meaning only women and sexual dissidents could participate), but that the march would have an exclusive section for those who preferred or needed it. We also defined our program: an exercise in systematization with 10 axes of struggle<sup>4</sup> that formed the content and guidance of a feminist movement intent on talking about everything, about the totality of our lives and our desire to profoundly transform them.

The second plurinational meeting, renamed the Plurinational Meeting of Those Who Struggle<sup>5</sup>, was held in January 2020, in the midst of a revolt that transformed

<sup>3</sup> It was initially called the National Meeting of Women Who Struggle. The term for it became 'plurinational' once it was joined by Mapuche and migrant women.

<sup>4</sup> The axes developed were: (1) Patriarchal violence, (2) Right to the city and decent housing, (3) Feminist remembrance and human rights, (4) Work and social security, (5) Fight for abortion and sexual and reproductive rights, (6) Racism and migration, (7) Art, culture and communications, (8) Land defense, food sovereignty, life and indigenous territory, (9) Sexual dissidence and (10) Non-sexist education.

<sup>5</sup> The organizations that called for this meeting were: CF8M (Santiago, Valparaíso, Rancagua, Los Ángeles, San Antonio, Osorno and Maule), Chilean Network Against Violence towards Women and Girls, Secretariat of Immigrant Women, Mapuche Women's Network, Negrocéntricas community lab for Black women, Chrisalis - Transfeminine Organization, December 19 Coordinating Committee, Breaking the Silence Lesbian Group, Clandestina Las Violetas Pichidegua Feminist Collective, Rengo Feminist Collective, Curicó Feminist Assembly, Self-Convened Women of Curicó Coordinating Committee, No More Gender Violence Coordinating Committee - Puerto Montt, Women's Network for the Defense of their Rights - La Ligua, Quinta de Tilcoco Feminist Collective.

20 our lives and in the context of State terrorism. This reaffirmed our path and our commitment to sustaining this recent tradition, created to cultivate feminist political debate and deliberation. We spent three days in the classrooms of the School of Arts and Crafts of the University of Santiago, Chile (USACH), analyzing the context of the revolt and the ongoing constitutional process. We took stock of feminist mobilizations since the last meeting and reviewed the Program Against the Precarization of Life, expanding it to 16 axes of struggle.<sup>6</sup> Among the main agreements was the mandate not to accept or allow pacts made behind the backs of the social movements to divide us in our common goals: the challenge of raising a feminist program towards a feminist, popular and plurinational constituent process, to be the front line against State terrorism and not to abandon the fight to bring an end to a government that had declared war on its peoples.

For us, planning the plurinational meetings means politicizing our pain, fears and precarity, but also our confidence, strength and collective joy. The strenuous organizing of childcare, food and transportation, the methodological challenge and the effort involved in carrying it all out, were accompanied by the surprising realization that there were thousands of us: mobilized, self-convened, articulated, attentive. Day after day, comrades from all over were signing up, more than 1,500 at the first meeting and over 3,000 at the second. Participants came from organizations that we, as CF8M, did not necessarily know, to propose issues that we had not addressed, forming a diverse, heterogeneous and powerful space. We began early in the morning with a Mapuche prayer to prepare for a good day, and as the workshops, round tables and plenary sessions went on, this very true and increasingly tangible phrase materialized: The Feminist General Strike Is On!

The plurinational meetings have been spaces for debate, for the construction of agreements and also for the recognition of disagreements within the feminist movement. We are a very diverse movement and so are our positions, but the shared effort and knowledge that we are part of a common struggle against the precarization of life and the violence we have experienced reminds us that we are part of a broad process that, while not free from conflict, is full of an urgent desire for radical change.

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<sup>6</sup> The following axes were added: (11) Internet and feminist digital technologies, (12) Precarization and structural/institutional violence against children and young people, (13) Health and good living, (14) Anti-prison struggles. Axes 6 and 8 were divided, respectively. Axis 6 became (i) Migration and refuge, and (ii) Anti-racism. Axis 8 became (i) Water, land and food sovereignty, and (ii) Indigenous women in resistance in urban and rural territories.

General? Feminist? Strike? These words seemed to contradict each other. “The strike is a masculine tool, not a feminist one.” “Those who are not paid for their work cannot strike.” “We must call for a women’s strike on March 8.” “There’s no such thing as a strike in Chile.” “We must all go on strike, that’s why it has to be general.” Multiple thoughts and proposals came into conflict at the time of defining this strategy, thousands of words spoken at assemblies and meetings to agree on common paths.

What is a strike? The first thing we should point out is that there is no right to strike in Chile. In this country, a strike is only legal for a limited period of time in the framework of a collective bargaining process in which workers, organized in unions, confront their employers to improve working conditions. The companies can replace the striking personnel if they so desire. As a traditional tool of trade unionism, it had a masculine connotation detached from feminism for many of us. Our challenge was reclaiming a historical instrument of working-class struggle at the moment we recognized ourselves as workers. Workers are the ones who provide care and raise children; they are also street vendors, sex workers, unemployed workers, teachers, domestic workers, secretaries, pensioners, administrative workers, professionals, informal workers, those who are paid for their work and those who are not. Child rearing, washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking and caregiving are also work. It is not an act of love, it is a mandate to do the work that is not recognized as work, despite its central role in capitalist accumulation and in the precarization of our lives. That is why we, workers all, call for a strike as the saltpeter miners once did, as the comrades who work in healthcare and education have done, as the department store and call center workers do today. We claim that which has been denied us, that which is illegal. We are ready and determined to exercise our right to strike for each and every one of us, for those who have fought before and for those who will come.

The migrant comrades and street vendors brought up a major point: not everyone can afford to stop working. They asked if the strike was a privilege and we considered the question deeply. Workers with high levels of job instability and those who live hand to mouth cannot consider missing work for even one day. How do we mobilize these precarious workers to strike? Domestic workers, farmers, seasonal workers, caretakers and so many others. It was clear that, going by what had traditionally been defined as a strike, not all of us would be able to participate. We had to find a way to untie this inescapable knot between our desires and realities that proved much more precarious for some of us than for others. Our solution was to promote multiple types of strike: productive, reproductive, consumer, educational, territorial, public and intimate strikes. We came up with more than a hundred forms that were illustrated by comrades from all over the country. These

22 included changing street names, carrying out stoppages at hospitals and schools, wearing a purple ribbon on our wrists at work, posting photos on social media of us not working (as the domestic workers did), waving banners, occupying schools, hanging bras from balconies, blocking off streets with barricades at dawn, talking about feminism at breakfast, organizing ollas comunes (popular soup kitchens) for lunch and marching together in the afternoon. We drew attention to our participation in the strike through these actions and in many other ways. The strike needed to be many things in order to be truly general and feminist. There is more than one way to participate and to stop working. Striking means interrupting everyday life, the status quo that we have always known was the problem.

Some said, "That is not a general strike." "General strikes have not existed in Chile for decades. A general strike is the effective stoppage of the workers in the productive sector of the economy." Our response was that nobody was going to tell us what to do or how to do it. No formal declaration, legal definition or productive framework. Though hesitant at first, various sectors joined the process of building towards the General Feminist Strike on March 8, 2018 with growing confidence: primary healthcare and hospital workers, teachers' associations, university and secondary student federations, public sector employees, construction and other trade unions. We will continue to question, pressure and call on all workers' organizations to recognize that March 8 is and will continue to be a day on which we strike, the first of the year's major demonstrations and, undoubtedly, one of the most important dates in their union calendars.

General and feminist? Yes, general and feminist, we said to ourselves. It is general because we include all forms of work, productive and reproductive, because we call on all peoples to rise up and strike in support of a feminist program against the precarization of life. Here we strike together, we organize the ollas comunes as a neighborhood, we organize the tasks of the strike as unions and some male comrades will have to take care of the children while their partners debate and activate. It is feminist because we were the ones who built a program that frames the lives of women and dissidents as a political problem, because we were the ones who came up with the activities, because we are the people and we are the bearers of a voice that calls us to never be sidelined or silenced again.

In the words of Julieta Kirkwood, each knot in the process of feminist political thought and action has been a part of this path. These discussions, which are far from over, have energized our creativity and mobilizations. In this cloth we are all weaving, the threads become entangled as they create new shapes. At times they seem to fray and it is as if they will never come together, but then they begin to approach each other, tighten, and expand. With every passing moment, the threads continue to multiply and spread an open cloth in crochet cords, in woven textiles, in new knots and patterns.



After the First Plurinational Meeting of Those Who Struggle, CF8M began to organize the next steps along the journey, forming strike committees and brigades that would allow us to amplify the feminist program against the precarization of life and the call for a Feminist General Strike that would take place throughout the country. In 2019, we formed the Committee of Women Workers and Trade Unionists, the Education Committee, the Socio-Environmental Committee, the Memory and Human Rights Committee,<sup>7</sup> territorial committees, the Art and Propaganda Brigade and the Program Dissemination Brigade.<sup>8</sup> In the process of building the 2020 Strike, the Childhood Committee, the Internationalist Committee and assemblies from all over the country were added. Two days of activities were planned for March 8 and 9. Since then, more committees and spaces have been created within CF8M as part of an organic process in permanent reformulation and expansion, such as the Migrant Committee, the Health Committee and a growing number of work groups. The communication framework we had been building since March 2018 was crucial in widely promoting the strike, the plurinational meetings and the feminist program. The work of many comrades on social media made it clear, through campaigns such as #EstoAmeritaHuelga as well as iconic posters and slogans (which are still with us today), that our power was huge and inescapable, even to the point that mainstream media gave March 8 unprecedented coverage. What the press tried to show was already being said in videos made by the audiovisual team, our posters shouted it from the walls and it was echoed everywhere else through the slogan that would define the coming days: The Feminist General Strike IS ON! Every year, we meet in a general assembly to select spokeswomen whose records of struggle best embody the different axes of the program, so as not to delegate our voice in the struggle.<sup>9</sup> Activities for the first strike began a month earlier with

<sup>7</sup> This space was initially created in September 2018 to mark September as a month of Remembrance and Feminist Rebellions. It was used to promote a campaign to bring attention to the struggles of women and dissidents during the military dictatorship. The group that built this space is now an autonomous collective that continues organizing around denouncing impunity in cases of sexual political violence and the preservation of past and present rebellious memories.

<sup>8</sup> This space has been created and dissolved according to the needs of the strike process.

<sup>9</sup> Spokeswomen for the 2019 Feminist General Strike: Daniela Sáez from the struggle for housing rights, Beatriz Bataszew from the struggle for human rights, Rosario Olivares from the educational struggles, Moreen Ramos from the struggle of workers and trade unionists and Alondra Carrillo from CF8M.

24 a list of demands that we hung from the bridges of Santiago. We commemorated the first ever February 14 celebrating self-love and love between women, lesbians, transgender people and drag queens, while repairing the memorial to women victims of political repression during the dictatorship. We then promoted Feminist Super Monday, bike rallies, days of mural painting, the traveling banner that toured the whole country, handmade signs promoting the strike shown on national TV at the Viña del Mar Festival, press conferences, flash mobs at shopping malls, street blockades and the calling out of historical denialism. With each step we were finding one another and becoming stronger, more confident and visible - even to the press, the government and all those who denied us.

On the morning of March 8, 2019, the Art and Propaganda Brigade was busy tying green bandanas around the necks of monuments in downtown Santiago when we met with municipal cleaning workers who asked us what we were doing. When we told them about the strike, at first they looked at us in disbelief and then, smiling, they called over the rest of their comrades who were just starting their shift. They decided to join the strike on account of their pending bonuses, their mistreatment and the precarization of subcontracting. They asked us for our green bandanas so they could take a picture with their fists in the air. The trade unionist comrades who had received flowers at their workplaces last March 8 called for an effective work stoppage in hospitals and health centers. Many public schools woke up to feminist occupations. Others had the names of their classrooms changed to commemorate the women whose names we once pasted up throughout the Metro system.

The 2019 march in Santiago was the largest of its kind since the end of the dictatorship, with more than 400,000 people participating and as many as one million mobilized throughout the country. Comrades from neighborhood assemblies and pobladoras (residents of working-class communities resulting from historical land takeovers), transgender and lesbo-feminist comrades, Mapuche and anti-extractivist comrades, informal caregivers and women on the autism spectrum all marched. The number of locations where marches took place went from 25 in 2018 to 72 in 2019. We felt their presence, including those who were deprived of their freedom, who took part in the Santiago march through a letter they wrote to be read at the demonstration. In Antofagasta, feminists demonstrated outside the women's prison, calling out: "We are not all here, the prisoners are missing!" This is how we have been weaving together stories that fit the tale of the strike and its desires, which compel us to persist in our efforts to enter every house and every room, to be inescapable.

In October 2019, we rose up. The popular revolt platformed a series of demands that we had been building up to for years. We saw that much of the program outlined at the plurinational meetings manifested as banner slogans, chants and



graffiti, but it was hard for us to find the feminism in it. It seemed to us that, at the beginning of the uprising, feminists and their essential contribution were overlooked in the streets and in the media. However, in some cities, feminists played a significant part in keeping the revolt alive. The public performance and political intervention introduced by the feminist collective LasTesis exploded with viral potency and soon our coordination drowned out the whole world with shouts of “the rapist is YOU!” Once again, we found ourselves at the forefront of the struggle, demonstrating our transformative power. We could no longer talk about the uprising without talking about feminism.

In 2019 we called for the first Feminist General Strike, following the international call made by comrades from Argentina, Italy and Poland. By 2020, we had become a feminist power capable of crossing borders. Along with comrades from different parts of the world, we began discussing how to formulate a strike in the middle of a revolt in Chile, and how to frame it when March 8 happened to fall on a Sunday. Sunday has never been a day of rest; we all work on Sundays, even if it is only to deal with the domestic chores that accumulate during the week. But a Sunday strike was not enough. Our call to stop all work and to disrupt the normal capitalist and patriarchal state of affairs had to take place in the middle of the productive and reproductive daily routine. That is why we decided to extend the strike to Monday, March 9.

On March 8, 2020, three million of us marched all over Chile, with over two million taking the streets in Santiago alone, shouting, singing, shoulder-to-shoulder in the center of a city we took over without asking permission. There was no beginning and no end as comrades from different places left their homes early to converge at the heart of the uprising, Plaza Dignidad. Calls to join the main march went out across the country between March 8 and 9, making the strike the focal point of both days. In all major cities, and even in small towns, the mobilizations were growing year by year, reaching their climax in 2020. In Punta Arenas, the southernmost city in Chile, the change was very clear: in 2018, 50 women showed up to march, whereas in 2019, there were 500. Finally, in 2020, more than five thousand participated, as the feminists interviewed in this book tell us.

In Santiago, the March 9 demonstration was carried out mainly by unionized women workers as well as secondary and university students. A worker-student march set out early in the morning through the streets of Santiago in a marathon second day which, while falling short of achieving a mass work stoppage, was nevertheless a milestone: the expression of our collective decision to disrupt the course of that Monday and begin the week by reaffirming the will to protest, which we hoped could relaunch the massive power of the uprising.

26 On March 8 and 9 there were 12 spokeswomen for the strike;<sup>10</sup> reflecting how our voices continued to multiply, with women of African descent, migrants, transgender people, teachers, trade unionists, victims of ocular trauma, Mapuche women and socio-environmental fighters. Our massive, radical feminist movement had shown its immeasurable strength once more, as we drew on the accumulated power of the university occupations of May 2018, the green tide for free, legal and safe abortion, all the streets we walked because Ni Una Menos (Not one woman less) and Vivas Nos Queremos (We want to live)!!!, the October revolt and how we rose up to strike against the precarization of life. Yes, we were HISTORICAL, as was painted on the pavement at Plaza Dignidad.

We know the words of the many voices of this narration are neither final nor unique. On the contrary, they are part of a story that continues to expand, one that we continue and will continue to write in the midst of joy and hope, but also through the suffering that accompanies us. These lines can hardly contain the tensions and misunderstandings, the tears and smiles, the hugs, the words shouted in the streets and the jeers shouted at the cops. The masks shielding us from tear gas and the ones protecting us from COVID-19. The tons of printed bandanas and the dozens of lost banners. The posters stored away and the ones yet to be printed, the ones put up in streets and in bedrooms. The cut lemons shared in the middle of a protest. The speeches written minutes before being read aloud. The speculation around the numbers coming out to march. The jitters before showing up to a press conference. The potato chips, cheese pops, beers and sodas at brainstorming meetings. The three minutes of speaking time at each assembly. The feeling as we set up the classrooms at the School of Arts and Crafts at USACH before each Plurinational Meeting. The ideas that came together as we prepared a debate methodology. The tears shed behind bulletproof goggles, caused by the police violence we face in the streets. The tired feet and sore backs. The hope that lies only in knowing that, even as we make mistakes, we are building something bigger than any one of us alone. We are building the “us” that breaks through in the first person and in plural, seeking to recover the life that we are owed, one which we will transform to the deepest level. Until dignity becomes the norm for each and every one of us.

Coordinadora Feminista 8M

<sup>10</sup> The spokeswomen for the 2020 Feminist General Strike were: Paola Palacios, Ariel Balboa, Macarena Huichaman, Yanka V. Millapan, Nicole Kramm, Natalia Aravena, Daniela Sáez, Nuriluz Hermosilla, Vesna Madariaga, Francisca Fernández, Javiera Manzi and Alondra Carrillo.

# **WOMEN WORKERS AND THE FEMINIST GENERAL STRIKE, A LOG OF THE THREAD THAT INTERTWINES OUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE STRUGGLES**

Two years ago, on a cold morning on May 12, around 100 women workers met at the School of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Chile to debate and establish programmatic points regarding pensions and social security from a gender perspective. The Meeting of Women and Pensions was jointly convened and organized by comrades from the Metropolitan Region Branch of the No+AFP movement and the March 8 Feminist Coordinating Committee (CF8M). This landmark event served as the starting point for a story of intertwined struggles, visibility, appreciation, dialogue and recognition of the trajectory of feminist and women workers in our country and Latin America as a whole. As we have so often discussed, we came to that meeting to debate pensions and we left talking about the need for a labor and social security program with a plurinational system of care. We were determined to move towards a meeting of all women in the struggle. That same day, as we marched towards the University of Chile Law School - then under feminist occupation - we reflected on the need for a space for women workers and trade unionists to come together and form a social force.

During that first meeting, our sense of hope was revived as new strands were added to the red thread that binds the historical struggles of women workers to those of the present. In the following weeks, the Network of Women Workers and Trade Unionists was formed, already linked to CF8M, which was also in its early stages of formation. The Network became the first space where women workers and union leaders coming from different sectors and

28 experiences could discuss the agenda that has been permanently sidelined in the world of labor, the one that addresses gender violence and harassment, gender gaps in labor and social security, care and unpaid work, informal jobs and the right to decent work.

These conversations led us to hold the Pre-Meeting of Labor and Social Security in anticipation of the first Plurinational Meeting of Those Who Struggle which took place in December 2018. We came out of that experience with three programmatic points: a comprehensive social security system that would provide for a single, plurinational, feminist and community-based system of care; the right to decent, stable and secure work for all; and a call to all women workers, whether formally employed, precariously employed, or not paid at all, to organize for a fighting feminism against the offensive of neoliberal capitalism. Together, we would call for and build the instrument of struggle that we had begun imagining as early as the first Meeting of Women and Pensions: the Feminist General Strike of March 8, 2019. For this purpose, we organized ourselves in the Labor Committee, which was mobilized by bringing together organizations of both formal and informal workers. The space was joined by women from the private sector, primary and secondary public health, education, the public sector, finance, and banking as well as state contractors, domestic workers, street vendors, journalists, and artists. Starting in January, the strike was announced and promoted in the assemblies of worker associations and unions, rallies were held outside the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity, and posters were put up in the streets and on the walls of our workplaces calling on everyone to participate in the feminist strike in more than 100 different ways, transcending all limits and spaces.

This activity generated an excitement beyond what we expected; the word strike, associated with something that was not strictly a classic demand of regulated union bargaining, together with the word feminist, inspired hallway conversations as well as open questioning during assemblies. Our message was received and healthcare workers in primary care and hospitals joined the call for a feminist strike: CONFUSAM, CONFEDEPRUS and FENPRUSS, the main confederations of public health workers, all signed on. The Teachers' Association also joined the strike, and in many schools the academic communities held days of reflection or student occupations of the premises, which were also replicated at several universities. The comrades from the Assembly of Women Workers of the University of Chile occupied their main campus building and hosted activities throughout the day in the hours leading up to the big march.

<sup>1</sup> CONFUSAM: National Confederation of Municipal Health Employees; CONFEDEPRUS: Democratic Confederation of University Health Professionals; FENPRUSS: National Federation of University Health Service Professionals.



The impact of that first Feminist General Strike is something that we have not yet fully grasped. To be sure, it was felt within the traditional spaces of trade unionism, especially in terms of the introduction of a program that did not specifically align itself with what Chilean labor legislation has defined as a 'legal strike.' The word strike spoken by women and sexual dissidents in labor spaces, framed as a totalizing instrument of struggle capable of escaping the atomization and narrow margins to which it had previously been restricted, the strike as a cumulative process and itinerary of struggle, the general strike as an objective and a process that encompasses all jobs, paid or unpaid, and all women workers, care workers, informal workers, and sex workers, had the immediate effect of reactivating the debate on the role of gender commissions in trade unionism and on how relevant or heard proposals arising from those spaces were. The Feminist General Strike was what finally put the agenda of women workers on the trade union table. 29

### The aftermath of our first strike and the birth of the Committee of Women Workers and Trade Unionists

The evaluation of the first strike took place in the meeting room of the Confederation of Banking and Allied Trade Unions. We were excited. On March 8, our expectations had been exceeded as banners of participation and support were deployed in the streets and thousands of workplaces throughout the country. The process of building the strike showed us that we could mobilize in a transversal way, that the strike was not only a specific moment, but also an exercise of struggle and accumulation of forces in which we had to persist. However, we also felt that we had lacked coordination with our comrades in unpaid and informal work. We knew we had to deepen our labor and social security program in terms of a plan of action, precisely so that our understanding that we are all workers was fully reflected in our political activity. All these objectives led to our decision to form the Committee of Women Workers and Trade Unionists within CF8M.

As a Committee we proposed two initial tasks. First, to promote a feminist commemoration of May 1 as a day of outreach, protest and propaganda, and second, to host the Feminism, Work and Social Security Meeting, which took place in June 2019. These two instances were relevant to fostering our coordination with comrades participating in organizations of caregivers, migrant workers, sex workers and street vendors. We needed a program and plan of action with an analysis of the moment that reflects our understanding that, in order to end the precarization of labor, the neoliberal employment model must be replaced by one that integrates all the work of the reproduction and social production of life. These insights, the product of the debate of hundreds of organized voices, were amplified by the disruptive power of the revolt of October 2019. In the second Plurinational Meeting of Those Who Struggle, our program grew in content and scope by

30 defining a list of urgent short-term measures, as well as others of a structural and constituent nature. This eagerness to deepen the program and plan of action is the result of a major realization of the first Feminist General Strike of 2019: if we unite, we can build the strike and install our program in the workers' organizations and the streets, challenging the minority that abuses and precaritizes us through the power of money and the State.

The Committee has been a relevant political actor in the labor space, supporting the struggles against mass firings and labor violence at the Ministry of Women, the public policies that further precaritize women, and the firing of two spokeswomen of women's centers that deal with violence. This was in addition to denouncing the invisibilization of the political and sexual violence carried out against women and sexual dissidents in the context of the revolt. Isabel Plá, then Minister of Women, failed to recognize or act on this violence, which caused the movement to put forward a transversal demand for her resignation (not to mention a parliamentary inquiry), with the slogan "Plá, Resign!". This demand was met four short days after the feminist march and general strike of March 8 and 9, 2020, the largest mobilization of the post-dictatorship period. In response to this feminist victory and as an attempt at provocation, the grandniece of the dictator Augusto Pinochet was appointed as the new minister. This move was consistent with the long-standing government tradition of impunity and punishing dissent, even in the face of the alarming state of patriarchal, femicidal violence in the context of quarantine confinement, unemployment and the crisis of care. The transversal feminist response was not long in coming and the campaign "We have no minister," headed by ANFUMMEG<sup>2</sup>, CF8M and a number of other significant feminist organizations, was launched, which resulted in her resignation less than thirty days after her disastrous appointment.

In the midst of the health crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, the criminal measures adopted by the government of Sebastián Piñera have further precaritized the labor situation in general and the conditions of women workers in particular, considering their concentration in informal and unstable positions as contractors, sex workers, and caregivers, among others. The Committee made a point of highlighting and denouncing these conditions, offering community support, participating in programs through social media, and organizing with caregivers around their demands for recognition of their rights. Through SINDUCAP<sup>3</sup> and the campaign "Take care of the one who takes care of you," organized by the Domestic

<sup>2</sup> ANFUMMEG: National Association of Employees of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity.

<sup>3</sup> SINDUCAP: United Union of Private Household Workers.

Workers Coordinating Committee (CTCP) and comprised of all the historical unions, the Committee supported this sector's long-standing demands for equal labor rights and access to unemployment insurance which were made more urgent by the pandemic.

In light of the harsh reality faced by women workers, we decided as a Committee to represent ourselves in the parliamentary debate to defend the constitutionality of the Emergency Postnatal Care bill. More than 30 trade union organizations and workers' centers, all members of the Committee, defended the bill in the name of health and life. We went to Congress to tell our uncomfortable and invisible truths; we said that those who attempt to speak in our name do not represent us, that as the most precarious workers, the ones who sustain life, we will speak for ourselves. We will never delegate that representation again.

On Feminist May Day 2020, we took a step further and called for the formation of a plurinational Feminist Organization of Women Workers, which would bring us together in all our diversity. Our work is formal, informal, productive, reproductive and even unrecognized. We are all workers and understand that caretaking and raising children is work as well.

### Some observations

As we previously observed, it is not always possible to immediately measure the impact of a living process of struggle. That said, certain achievements of the Feminist General Strike bear mentioning. We are sure that for the labor movement, it renewed the character and value of the strike as a means of political struggle. This was evident shortly after March 8, 2019 when, in June, an extensive teachers' strike began. The strike would go on for nearly two months. Likewise, after the initial explosion of the October revolt, two calls were made for general strikes, both of which transformed the political moment. The first had high levels of participation and took place on October 23 and 24, while the second took place on November 12 and can be credited with forcing the country's political and economic leaders to begin considering such basic measures as raising the minimum monthly wage to 500,000 CLP for the first time in decades. The Feminist General Strike opened and then widened the path to increasing the strength of workers in our pursuit of a life with dignity.

As mentioned above, for the workers' organizations, the feminist strike highlighted the relevance of incorporating gender analysis into the trade union movement - though not for the first time. However, the scope of this activity will depend on the level of resistance to such a debate. For example, the comrades of CONFEDERUS and of the National Union of Public Workers have incorporated feminism into their principles and primary health care organizations have incorporated the recurring March 8 Feminist General Strike into their work and mobilization plan.

32 For other organizations, it has meant the creation of strike committees and gender committees, the reformulation of statutes and the development of collective bargaining that incorporates gender analysis. For the first time in decades, the strike allowed women workers to have spokeswomen who share our experiences and are willing to question the political and business classes and speak out about our programmatic agenda that had been previously rendered invisible. In the 2019 strike, the first Committee spokeswoman was a CONFUSAM union leader in charge of municipal healthcare for Pírcue. In 2020, the spokeswomen were leaders from the domestic workers' movement and ANFUMMEG.<sup>4</sup> In that way, the strike made us powerful. It allowed our agenda to finally exit the bureaucratic cycle of "we'll deal with it later" and turned us out into the streets, assemblies, talks, schools and meetings, full of transformative power. It was on this road that we understood that an organization of the workers, in the words of Rosa Luxemburg, "cannot permanently maintain itself in any other way than by struggle."<sup>5</sup> It must be forged in the heat of the strike, understood as political protest, and developed meeting after meeting to become a conscious movement, one full of creativity and political reflection, capable of putting an end to this system that has precaritized our lives and lands and replacing it with a new one where life is worth living.

Pamela Valenzuela, Vesna Madariaga.  
September 27, 2020

<sup>4</sup> The spokeswomen are: Moreen Ramos, leader of CONFUSAM, Emilia Solís, leader of SINDUCAP and Vesna Madariaga of ANFUMMEG, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> "On the other hand the trade-unions, like all fighting organisations of the proletariat, cannot permanently maintain themselves in any other way than by struggle, and that not struggles of the same kind as the war between the frogs and the mice in the stagnant waters of the bourgeois parliamentary period, but struggle in the troubled revolutionary periods of the mass strike." Rosa Luxemburg, *The mass strike, the political party, and the trade unions*, 1906.

# SOCIOENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLES

## IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A PEOPLES' TERRITORIAL FEMINISM THAT

As the CF8M Socioenvironmental Committee, we stand for a territorial feminism of all peoples and have, accordingly, adopted an anti-extractivist position. Extractivism, which is the unlimited and relentless exploitation of community goods for sale in global markets, is based on the exploitation and precarization of nature and the bodies of women, children and dissidents. It creates male-centric economies and spaces in which patriarchal violence is normalized and perpetuated.

In the framework of several pre-meetings and the first Plurinational Meeting of Women Who Struggle, ending extractivism (and repealing some of its tools, such as IIRSA, Plan Impulso Araucanía and TPP11)<sup>1</sup> was one of the main demands included in our call for a feminist strike. We argued emphatically for the repeal of the 1981 Water Code and to put an end to the practice of “sacrifice zones”. We also demanded the demilitarization and scaling back of police presence throughout the country as well as justice for Macarena Valdés, Camilo Catrillanca and all those who struggle.

<sup>1</sup> IIRSA: the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America promotes various infrastructure and interconnectivity projects such as highways, railways, dams, waterways and power lines, which signal an intensification of extractivism at the Inter-American level.

The Impulso Araucanía Plan is a strategic program that entails an 8-year public investment process in the Araucanía Region through a Peace and Development Agreement that has encouraged the criminalization of the Mapuche people.

TPP11: the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, signed by 11 countries, including Chile. Several organizations and social movements have mobilized for its rejection, as it is seen as a free trade agreement that will increase the dispossession and commodification of communal goods.

34 In August 2019, we held the Macarena Valdés Feminist Socioenvironmental Meeting in La Ligua. Around 100 women and sex and gender dissidents representing diverse territories and peoples helped us define a common feminist socioenvironmental agenda and affirm the need to share stories of struggle and resistance in order to consolidate territorial economies. This experience also highlighted the importance of using cartographies and body mapping to identify the effects of extractivism on our bodies and territories, as well as the possibilities for building alternatives.

In the context of the pandemic, we have seen a five-fold increase in the number of extractive projects, especially mining activities, submitted for environmental impact assessment. This is based on the government's pro-investment agenda and a part of the COVID-19 economic plan<sup>2</sup> that protects profits over communities and territories.

We have also taken part in the effort to address hunger, since the public health crisis has led to food instability for many families. We have brought a feminist and socioenvironmental perspective to new spaces, such as *ollas comunes* (popular soup kitchens), community supply networks and *comprando juntos*.<sup>3</sup> We are building spaces for the urban practice of food sovereignty from the bottom up, breaking with supermarket chains and the agribusiness sector, promoting connections with farmers in support of local economies and establishing new networks of commercial circulation based on respect and solidarity. Feminist collectives have supported and trained others in territorial projects such as urban vegetable gardens using traditional seeds free of patents, pesticides and GMOs.

But extractivism has not been put under quarantine. In fact, it has intensified. Glaciers have been destroyed, seasonal workers have been forced to continue working in agribusiness, and all within the framework of an ongoing process of privatization and commodification of public natural resources. There have also been attempts (unsuccessful to date) to approve genetically modified crops for the domestic market, an initiative led by the Agriculture and Livestock Service (SAG). As socioenvironmental organizations, we have worked to block these efforts in every way available to us.

We are concerned about growing racism and the militarization of Wallmapu, which are both informed by a long history of violence through which Mapuche

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the plan, see the note from the Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts (OLCA) available at: <http://olca.cl/articulo/nota.php?id=108078>.

<sup>3</sup> A type of popular supply cooperative with a strong presence during the military dictatorship (1973-1990), which endured in some capacity in the intervening years and re-emerged with force in the wake of the October 2019 revolt.



community members are criminalized, persecuted, imprisoned and murdered for their opposition to extractive projects.

The lack of food and water, the many structural problems of public healthcare and the rise in violence against women, children, the elderly and gender dissidents during quarantine, all add to the challenge of consolidating food and health sovereignty, community water management and cooperative actions against violence for diverse community networks and also the articulation with women who struggle in Abya Yala.

We call for further promotion and strengthening of local territorial economies through agroecology, the preservation of native seeds, urban vegetable gardens, popular supply networks and ollas comunes. But above all, we believe it is fundamental to continue building diverse paths for an ecological transition beyond (eco)capitalism and extractivism, through a restorative justice of ecosystems and the recognition of the rights of nature, as a sustaining political subject and source of all life and biodiversity (itrofill mongen in Mapudungun).

Francisca Fernández, Lucía Sepúlveda,  
CF8M Socioenvironmental Committee



# THE CROSS-BORDER ASPECT OF

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## FEMINISMS

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Feminist struggles - and struggles led by women and sex and gender dissidents in general - have historically questioned the barriers imposed on our bodies and territories. That is why we say that the power of feminist insurgency lies not only in its proportional ratio of mass-participation to radical character, but also in its cross-border nature.

The cross-border aspect of feminisms, derived from constantly inhabiting and subverting borders, has allowed us to reestablish the links between women, dissidents, collectives, communities and experiences in struggle from different territories that had, until now, been denied by the forms imposed by patriarchal, colonial and capitalist intervention.

As a movement, building a cross-border feminism has been our desire as well as a necessity, especially in the context of CF8M. It has been a necessity because, faced with a global crisis, we have been forced to weave connections, come to agreements and coordinate our actions with subjects of struggle representing different nationalities, corporalities and territories. It has also been a desire, because we have seen, while practicing cross-border feminism and particularly in the act of reestablishing connections, a growing potential expressed through anger and rage, but also through the will to build a dignified life beyond borders, free from patriarchal and colonial violence, racism and exploitation, mindful of the interdependence of all forms of life.

38 The cross-border nature of the feminist struggle, specifically the feminist strike, arises from action, is sustained by the struggle and acts as a mobilizing force whose content and direction make sense to millions of people. It has led different feminisms to come together and form a global disruptive force, challenging not only the classical notions of work stoppage and strike, but also the existing notions of internationalism.

Classical internationalism conceives of peoples, communities and transformative projects as immobile entities bound to nation-states. To us, internationalism (or cross-border networking) is woven from a wide range of common experiences, deeply anchored in their local, sectoral and body-territorial realities. This allows for a non-universalist global interpretation and a form of common action that is both heterogeneous and powerful. Conceived of and self-organized as coordinating committees, roundtables and spaces beyond borders, but still anchored in actual territories, our southern feminisms have achieved a large-scale potential for disruptive action based on the link between local realities that are, in effect, the many settings of a vision for how to organize life on a global scale.

Along with what we call cross-border feminism, we are also learning about plurinationality and pluri-territoriality, since the articulation between organizations and collectives is not limited to the relationship between organizations from different countries or between collectives from different nations. We believe that this thread also binds bodies and territories divided by borders, even within the boundaries of the same country, territory or ecosystem. In that sense, this feminism incorporates (or at least attempts to incorporate) all these dimensions while understanding and affirming its practice as it emerges from diverse experiences and ways of life.

We cannot address the cross-border aspect of feminism without mentioning that our recent experience has been strongly influenced by other struggles. The resistance led by women and dissidents against the rise of the far right in Brazil through the “Ele Não” campaign, the fight for the legalization of abortion in Argentina, the women’s strike in Spain as well as other feminist strike experiences, the struggles of migrant collectives and Mapuche women, along with anti-racist struggles, are just a few of the processes that have been occurring and impacting each other in recent years, challenging the analyses, positions and objectives of feminist organizations and collectives around the world on a daily basis.

Our strike experience (which informed the popular revolt against the precarization of life that took place in October), the revolt itself and the escalation in State

terrorism also set off the feminist alert throughout the continent. Quickly and 39  
in a variety of ways, we received the transnational feminist solidarity that we had  
slowly been forging. This was yet another reason to reinforce the links we had been  
building, as we called on feminists across the continent to create a space for cross-  
border articulation in Latin America, one which would allow us to confront the  
political moment through our shared experiences, but also through transnational  
cooperative action. Feminist creativity, with its radically transformative mission, is  
capable of transcending borders and drawing on women's shared experiences of  
State-sponsored patriarchal violence to activate feminist solidarity. This conviction  
became a rallying cry heard around the world and in many languages: el Estado  
opresor es un macho violador (the oppressive State is a macho rapist) here and  
everywhere, and our bodies know it.

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Andrea Salazar, Karina Nohales.  
CF8M Internationalist Committee





# MANIFESTO FEMINIST GENERAL

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## STRIKE 2020

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Today is the first day of our Feminist General Strike, an action that unites us with all the women, lesbians, bisexuals, pansexuals, travestis, non-binary and transgender people of the world as we collectively rise up to make history. We are the indigenous women defending our territories against racist colonialism, we are the women in Brazil challenging the fascist barbarism that threatens Latin America, we are the women rising up in Mexico against the feminicidal narco-state, we are the women standing up to the industries that prey on our natural resources, we are the women leaders resisting persecution and murder in Colombia, we are the women they wish to imprison in Turkey, we are the guerrillas against fundamentalism in Rojava and we are here, in Chile, on the front line of the battle against State terrorism, patriarchal and pre-patriarchal violence, and the precarity of life.

The feminist strike is a process. A year ago we called on ourselves to come to the front, to make the invisible visible, to come together in all our diversity and to open a process of growing struggle. We called for feminism to burst forth as a transformative social force, to oppose the precarity of life and all those who have administered it over the last 30 years. This call came to be felt by millions.

In that moment, we called for a disruption of normality and today we affirm that normality was always the problem and we will never return to the neoliberal status quo. Because it's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years since the arrival of "democracy". It's 47 years since the military coup that deposed the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. It's 500 years since the Spanish went to war against this territory's indigenous peoples. The October uprising was cooked over a slow and bitter fire; it is made of history and stories, of the path traced by

42 rebellions, of the red thread we continue to hold, and of our intersecting desires. That is what allows us to recognize ourselves in past generations. Thanks to our past selves and those of us struggling today, we know we will continue to be here tomorrow.

This revolt is made of stories as countless as the biographies that have given it life, stories that speak of humiliations and violence that do not fit in any formal registry, but also of resistance, disobedience, and disputes woven with invisible threads for the powerful and sometimes even for ourselves. Rage and impatience have simmered until today the fire, at long last, belongs to us and so does history.

We represent the revolt within the revolt. We are the ones who have finally taken our position in the front, because our lives are a political problem at the heart of injustice and we will never step back again. We have come to transform everything: the streets, the public squares, our neighborhoods, our homes and the walls. We have come to remind ourselves that it was never our fault - not where we were, nor how we dressed.

To those who are marching for the first time, welcome, we have been waiting for you. We have organized ourselves to make this meeting possible. To be here, we have all overcome fear. And if there are any listening to us from home who would like to be here but are too afraid to join in, we say: come and share with us the confidence of being together. We do not need to ask permission to change history.

But we know that not all could come and be present with us today. The women who have been imprisoned by this terrorist regime are not here. We cannot say that we are all here when the prisoners are absent. We are also missing many women who work as caregivers and those whose jobs don't allow for a day off. Finally, we feel the absence of those who have been taken from us by feminicidal violence and those murdered by this criminal State, past and present. Though they are not here, they are among us. We make them present in our cries and in our struggle. It is also for each one of them that we are demonstrating.

Today is the Feminist General Strike, and our strike is not just any strike. It is one where our struggles take precedence, one that calls on all peoples to defend the feminist program against the precarity of life. What the Feminist General Strike

has shown is that if a strike is to be real and effective, it cannot be just one thing. This is a strike that defies expectations of what is possible and deploys our creative and rebellious power to be anywhere and everywhere, all at once and in force.

This revolt, our revolt, has presented us with the possibility of imagining another life and making it real. Today we step forward as immigrants, Black women, Afro-Chilean women, trans women, travestis, indigenous women, Mapuche women, peasant women, girls, retired women, indebted women, and women who have lost their sight due to State violence. We are the workers who raise the children of others, the homeless housewives, the girls who jump the turnstiles, the caretakers, the eternally displaced, the have-nots and the left-behinds. Together, we are everything they do not want us to be. We are the protagonists of our present and of our destiny.

Today we strike because we are on the front line against State terrorism: we demand an end to human rights violations, that they never again try to silence us with maiming, disappearances, torture, abuse, rape, kidnappings, beatings or persecution. We demand the resignation of Sebastián Piñera and his entire government for having declared war on the people. We demand the exit of Minister Plá for her complicit silence in the face of sexual political violence. We fight for an independent Truth, Justice and Reparation Commission and demand the immediate release of all political prisoners of the revolt.

Today we strike because we have a feminist program against the precarity of life. We have spent decades formulating what we need for our lives to be radically different and we have a lot to say about the violence that affects us and how we want to change it. We strike together because we must fight for these urgent structural transformations.

Today we strike to maintain the course of this historic moment that we the people have brought forth, this moment that we are creating and that is recreating us. We strike because we will continue to press for a constituent assembly through which to push our program -- a constituent assembly that is effectively popular, plurinational and feminist, free and sovereign. One that allows us to imagine, without impediments or compromises, the different country that we are going to build.

44 We are no longer the same as we were a few months ago and this country will never be the same again. We have opened radical new political horizons. Everything that is possible today is being built by us: nothing has been given as a gift, and no one can take this away from us: we will continue to fight together until life is worth living.

We are going on strike because we are fighting for another life, for the life that is owed us and that today, at last, we are beginning to recover. To those who declare war on us, we say: let them leave, we are going to stay right here. The future is ours, comrades, and so is the strike. And yes, it will be historic, because together we are many and together we are more.

In that moment, we called for a disruption of normality and today we affirm that normality was always the problem and we will never return to the neoliberal status quo. Because it's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years. It's 47, it's 500. The uprising was cooked over a slow and bitter fire; it is made of history and stories, of the path traced by rebellions, of the red thread we continue to hold, and of our intersecting desires. That is what allows us to recognize ourselves in past generations. Thanks to our past selves and those of us struggling today, we know we will continue to be here tomorrow.















# **The Feminist General Strike Is On!**

## **STORIES OF AN ONGOING PROCESS**

“These pages are a pure and fresh feminist memory of a revolt in motion. In the two years recounted here - from the beginnings of 2018 to the preparation of the strike 8M until 2020 - we see an enormous force of organization being built, an unprecedented capacity for mobilization and an intense desire to transform everything. Text by text, action by action, meeting after meeting.” Ni Una Menos, Argentina

The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation presents a selection of texts from the book "The Feminist General Strike Is On! (La Huelga General Feminista ¡VA!)", compiled and edited by the March 8 Feminist Coordinating Committee (Coordinadora Feminista 8M) and the editorial Tiempo Robado in Chile, originally published in Spanish. These texts are fundamental for a wider public to learn about and be moved by the reflections that arose in the heat of the feminist revolt in this South American country.



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