

It's time - to be more radical!
by Elife Krasniqi

Opening speech for the exhibition WE WOMEN* ARE GOING TO INSIST ON FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHTS – Guerrilla of Enlightenment

The exhibition series *Guerrilla of Enlightenment* intrigued me very much, and I only wish I could 'enlighten' you. My aim, however, is rather to reiterate some of the issues for which feminists have been fighting for decades; hopefully, or ideally, these reiterations coupled with constant communication and collaboration with feminists will lead us to new kinds of articulation, contextualized in our circles and societies.

Today, I will speak briefly about the issue of women's double oppression, solidarity, and crisis. The common enemy of women of different ethnicities, races, cultures and social strata is patriarchy, and we should call it by its name. This system oppresses men too, but also gives them privileges. It is seldom, if ever, that privileges are given up voluntarily. Patriarchy oppresses women twice over, in a double way. An example of this: in Kosovo, women were oppressed by the Yugoslav/Serbian regime for being Albanian, and also for being women. More often than not, this double oppression is directed at migrant women. We, women from all walks of life, need greater solidarity, transnational solidarity, and a joint transnational radical movement. The eternal question remains: how could this happen?

Often, societies will only act in solidarity when faced with a crisis – a national crisis, political crisis, wars for national liberation, etc. Historically, the biggest victims of crisis have always been women and children. Women were and are an important part of the fight, of the struggle, of the overall social and political movements. However, after the crisis, they were not in positions of power or enjoyed the same rights and freedoms as men. The 'promise' of most struggles was that women's rights and freedoms would come in a package along with the liberation of the nation/country, or would come with the democratic system. Did this happen? NO. The rights of women remain in crisis. The problem rests on what, and when, societies consider to be a time of crisis. It is surely a crisis when shelters are full of women who are victims of domestic violence. It is alarming when the lives of women are insecure in everyday life, everywhere. According to the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)*, every day, across the world, an average of 137 women are killed by their partners or family members. And this figure is certainly far larger in reality, since many cases go unreported in the media or to state authorities.

The degree of crisis and its manifestation vary from one country to another. One aspect that has never changed, over all types of political and social systems, under all types of capitalisms, in the majority of societies, is the social reproduction that produced the *crisis of care* (Fraser, 2016). Socialism was emancipatory system with regard to gender issues, and accomplished many great things, such as giving space to women in the public sphere in some contexts, such as former Yugoslavia. In some other communist countries, nevertheless, in the name of equal rights, women had no choice but to work. What socialism failed to do, however, was to make men part of the private/domestic sphere. Hence the saying coined by Yugoslav feminists in the 1970s: *Proletarians of the world, who is washing your socks?* Aspects of social reproduction such as housework and emotional labor are still usually assigned only to women. When women, due to work in their professional lives, cannot perform housework, other women such as migrant women or women from poorer strata are hired. In an unjust political and social system, it seems that women from underprivileged positions pay the ‘price’ for the emancipation and professional upgrade of women from a certain group or class.

Therefore women’s emancipation, equity and wellbeing cannot be discussed, or fought for, without including the issue of class in the discussion; without having an intersectional approach both in theory – in producing knowledge, and in activism – in social and political movements.

Speech by Elife Krasniqi, delivered on March 8th, 2019.

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