

For this edition of the Civic Exploration newsletter, Just Associates (JASS) and Hivos decided to team up. Together we have collected articles, links, and newsflashes, about women -young and old- living all over the world, and the way they deal with important issues in their lives. Liza Veneklasen tries to deal with the fact that around the world people mobilize against inequality and justice, while interest in women's rights is diminishing. Then we look at JASS' basic principles for women's education which revolves around a personal approach of changing hearts and minds. Next up are short pieces meant to tickle your brain showing innovative ways women's right are fought for around the world.

There is no revolution without the other 51%: lessons from feminist movements about how change happens

How is it that the whole world is seemingly mobilizing against inequality and injustice at the same time that the global consensus about women's equality is cracking, and a steady rollback of women's rights is underway? Behold the Arab Spring: despite their role as organizers and activists on the frontlines, women are now struggling for basic legal rights and a voice in the transition. Beyond the excitement of digital activism, one can't fail to notice the alarming statistics that demonstrate how women are the losers in the digital divide. Being left for last on the lists of the revolutionary agendas, invisible on the inequality headlines, and still unprotected: this is definitely not a new scenario for women.

It's not as if women and feminists aren't organizing and mobilizing – they're lending their support to all justice issues while fighting women's rights all by themselves, and often against extraordinary levels of normalized and sexual violence. But in the wake of two decades of advances on women's rights internationally, we are reminded of how power operates. When marginalized communities mobilize their collective power to demand justice and equality, you can guarantee there will be a backlash. That's a lesson that women's movements can offer to new mobilizations: it takes deep levels of organization, shared visions, strong alliances and persistence to survive inevitable disappointment.

How do we do this? Consciousness-raising - about the structural and internalised forms of oppression, one heart and mind at a time - has been a critical component of feminist movements and LGBT organizing for generations. In contrast, the predominant NGO approach to policy advocacy and campaigning today may masquerade as citizen action, but is more likely to combine a handful of sharp professionals and policy talking points, a wonkish celebrity and clever slogans. This approach lacks the people's organizing and mobilizing part, meaning that there is no consciousness-raising, only sound bites.

Links

Excerpted from '[Citizen action and the perverse confluence of opposing interests](#)' by Lisa Veneklasen, Open Democracy, November 2011

Changing hearts and minds: Feminist popular education in practice

'Popular education' comes from Latin America where 'popular' means 'of, for and by people.' It is a learning approach where people teach and learn from each other by critically examining their lives and contexts, and the issues that matter most to them. By questioning the structural and ideological causes of these issues, the learning process raises awareness, helps empower people, and defines a shared agenda for their organizing and joint actions.

Attributed to the ground-breaking political work of Brazilian scholar and activist Paulo Freire, popular education was forged within peasant land struggles, influenced revolutionary movements against dictatorships in Latin America, and shaped grassroots struggles for justice in the USA and around the world for decades. Where initial approaches identified class as the major force creating social hierarchies, feminists and racial justice activists from the 1970s onwards have added gender, race, and other dimensions shaping inequality. Recognizing how the private sphere is often the primary force shaping women's internalized oppression, another key contribution of feminism is the recognition that the personal, private spheres are sites of struggle and oppression.



While approaches vary, feminist popular education typically includes the following elements:

- Creating a "safe" space of trust, confidentiality, and solidarity
- Starting with and drawing from the concrete experiences of women's daily lives
- Using stories, art, theater and other ways to generate open-ended questions that promote critical and creative thinking and deepen understanding about power
- Learning by doing, developing and implementing practical solutions to concrete problems
- Prioritizing reflection, dialogue and action as the primary way to learn
- Acknowledging and address diversity, power dynamics and conflict
- Challenging assumptions and probing alternatives
- Sharing new information and terms that enable participants to name what they are experiencing and see the global forces behind the local and personal
- Tapping women's sense of hope, inspiration, and joy
- Providing time for self-care and personal renewal

Learn from women for social innovation!

In [this video](#), Warren Nilsson from Organization Unbound talks about why he thinks certain development projects (or causes) work. One element, he believes, is the experiential approach; it's not so much the outcome that matters, if not the experience. In this context, he points out that the women's movement has successfully used this approach since the twenties. What else can we learn from the women's movement?



Transforming violence and trauma into political actions

More than a decade of violent repression by the government of [Zimbabwe](#) has demobilized women activists and fractured once vibrant movements. The [Heart—Mind—Body \(HMB\) methodology](#) creates “safe” space for women to talk about their experiences of repression and violence as a means to overcome trauma and begin to restore their sense of agency. According to Tariro Tandi of the [Musasa Project](#), the only organization providing domestic violence services to women in Zimbabwe, “...we are anticipating elections and a referendum in 2013, and previously our experience has been that women face rape and sexual violence in these circumstances...The heart—mind—body process has been able to provide a space that allows women to talk freely about these issues, without fear of being condemned for it.”

Read more

- [“Musasa Project okays new draft,”](#) Daily News, 3 December '12

Ora utang, ora tuku, gawe dhewe! (No debt, don't buy make your own!)

Siti Harsun campaigns for women in the Central Java and Yogyakarta

[political activists](#) to challenge policies that enable corporate profit at the expense individual wellbeing.

[Farmers Association Qaryah Thayyibah](#)

Civilian Experiences

provinces of Indonesia to make their own food and reject the mass-produced, highly processed noodles and snacks that have flooded the market with the help of corporate-driven and state-led agrarian reforms. In addition to the nutritional benefits and savings, her campaign for food independence is reclaiming traditional, more communal, sustainable ways of life and building a cadre of

“In the struggle for land, for natural resources, what is at play is our very existence.” [Miriam Pixtún, Tz'ununija', Guatemala](#)

Transnational mining companies, in collusion with the state, [use violence and exploitation in Guatemala](#) to extract natural resources from indigenous communities' land. Women activists are drawing on their traditional values - solidarity, reciprocity, and respect for Mother Earth - to defend their territory, rights, and ways of life.

“Women in our community have focused on recreating our individual and collective identities and what it means to be a Mayan woman...,” says [Aura Lolita Chavez Ixcaquic](#), a leader of the Council of K'iche' Peoples in Defense of Life, Mother Nature, Earth and Territory (CPK).

Read more:

- [Consejo de Pueblos de Occidente-CPO](#) (Council of the Peoples of the Western Region, Guatemala)
- [Sinergia No'j](#)
- JASS & Nobel Women's Initiative report, [From Survivors to Defenders: Women Confronting Violence in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala](#)



Let's talk about sex

'Should being free from violence in your family regardless your sexuality be a privilege or a right? How about female circumcision? And, the ability to negotiate your reproductive health with your partner?', these are some of the questions Paulini Turagabeci - a young activist from Fiji - raised during [The Global Youth Forum](#) held the 5th of December 2012 in Bali, Indonesia.

During this forum, where numerous themes focusing on youth empowerment were addressed, Paulini's speech impressed the crowd because she spoke so openly about women (youth) rights and sexuality. She mentioned that although the home is often described as a safe place for young people to be themselves and discover their sexuality, it often happens that in these spaces various kinds of abuses, especially concerning young girls occur; from orchestrated child marriages to genital mutilation. Paulini's speech can be found here (After 30 mins.):



Security strategies for women human rights defenders

Everywhere in the world, women's activism is increasingly met with backlash and violence. States can no longer be relied upon to protect citizens; transnational, non-state actors are exerting increased but often behind-the-scenes influence; and violence is perpetuated with widespread impunity. Not only are women activists victims of outside perpetrators, they also suffer violence from within their own communities and movements. [The Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative](#) seeks to provide alternatives to protect activists, enabling them to continue their human rights work.

Gender-based violence finds the spotlight

Shocked and appalled we were to learn about the gangrapes in India recently. Radhika Sachdev writes: "Almost nothing, in the past or present compares with the kind of media attention which the Delhi

Civilian Exploitations

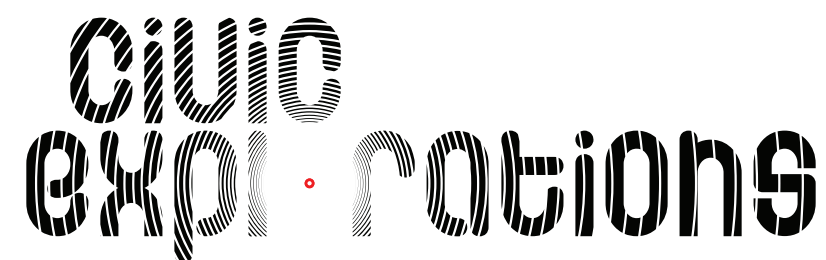
gangrape incident received; roughly 7,551 minutes or 252 hours of news coverage, special bulletins and talk shows against the 46 minutes devoted to all rape cases in March 2012. Despite such wide coverage, the weightier issues on gender-based violence remain unanswered, giving plenty of leeway to self-styled godmen like Asaram Bapu or the President's son, Abhijit Mukherjee, to stoke the fire with their over-simplified, outrageous theories on what drives men to such crimes."

Women's rights in Syria

'The escalating acts of war in Syria are not only detrimental to human rights in general, but also to women in particular', pose Rula Asad and Kawa Hasan in their intriguing [article 'Women's rights in Syria'](#); a paradigm change? They mention that women's visibility and participation in the Syrian revolution was impressive, but this changed when the demonstrations got bloodier- forcing women to act behind the front lines, e.g. as care takers of hit families. Another reason why their rights have declined in Syria, according to Hasan and Rulo, is because the 'macho' masculine mentality has resurfaced in Syrian society, using shaming and blaming methods to ban women from protesting. As a result of this, women's energy and efforts have been diverted to claim their human rights. The newly installed governments in the MENA countries have -until now - not demonstrated to take these rights into account. Hassan and Rulo therefore urge the western world to support Syrian voices that call for gender equality.

Coming up

- From 9 to 19 July, 2013: The Hivos Knowledge Programme has joined forces with the Dutch 'dothank' [Kennisland](#) and the [University of Amsterdam](#) to host a [social safari](#) in Amsterdam. A group of approximately 40 international change makers will come together to work on a set of pre-identified real social



challenges, that will enable all participants to try out methodologies for social innovation. Teams will do research and work on innovative solutions, with daily learning.

Costs: 2000 euro, including lodging & academic certificate. Register [here](#).

- As Heads of State from Mexico, Central America and the United States met for the [Summit of the Central American Integration System](#) (SICA) in Costa Rica on May 4 and 5th, JASS (Just Associates), the [America's Program](#), the [Guatemala Human Rights Commission-USA](#) and the [Latin America Working Group](#) collaborated to present a letter that has been signed by over 145 international, regional and local organizations from 10 countries in the Americas. The letter addresses civil society concerns about security issues, human rights violations, violence against men and [women human rights](#) defenders, among others.

- Association of Organisations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME) and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (UfM) have launched the [Young Women as Job Creators](#) project to promote entrepreneurship and job creation among young female university students.

The project intends to inform, motivate and train about 10.000 young female university students to become future successful businesswomen and employers. It will be implemented between May and November 2013 in Morocco, Palestine, Jordan and Spain.

About

Citizen action for social change terrain is currently witnessing fundamental changes that are challenging academics, policy makers and practitioners alike. On the surface, the Arab Spring, a global summer of protest and the Occupy movement are indicating a new wave of social mobilization. Beyond the headlines, global crises, technology, demography and the evolution of the hegemonic neo-liberal paradigm are fuelling fundamental shifts in the way in which citizens are organizing and claiming their rights in an increasingly interconnected world.

'Civic Explorations' explores this evolving context and facilitates the processes of networking, exchange and online dialogue between different actors.



Colophon

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