



# Collective Organizing Power of Women

Presented by Lisa Veneklasen, Just Associates (JASS)  
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Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is woman's virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.

– Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)



# Collective disobedience & alternative worldviews





Saving the planet

No nukes,  
no war →  
peace

Abolish Slavery

## What have women's movements championed & achieved?

End the Death  
Penalty

Contraception

Right to  
VOTE



Control of women's sexuality = control of reproduction

Women's invisible + undervalued labor sustains capitalism

fear

# So, why are women's movements & feminists either unknown or demonized?

Misogyny

Women's liberation is the greatest threat to the established order of inequality



# What is a movement?

- Clusters of NGOs are ***not*** movements.
- A movement has:
  - A political vision and broad agenda
  - Broad membership & active constituency base
  - Some degree of organization; formal & informal linkages
  - Proactive & reactive joint actions in pursuit of common goals;
  - Continuity over time adjusting to moment/ context
  - Activities that combine *outside strategies* (marches, protests, organizing, gatherings) and inside or *institutional* (advocacy & lobbying) strategies.

Adapted from Srilatha Batliwala



# What is movement-building?

- Organizing & **bringing diverse people** & groups together around a common cause & alternative vision of the world
- Facilitating dialogue to sustain & refresh political analysis/ vision
- Division of labor, multiple types of leaders, flexible linkages & core principles facilitate joint action; mechanisms for internal negotiation & accountability.
- Big visions, clear values – share resources, voice & leadership of the most affected by injustice at the heart of the movement.



# Women & movement-building: a useful distinction

- **Building feminist movements** involves organizing + mobilizing women around gender equality goals
- ***Feminist* movement-building** involves bringing gender equality goals + feminist perspectives into broader movement-building or other movements & building bridges with feminist movements

» Adapted from Batliwala, AWID





# What do women's movements change?

Building **women's activist citizenship:**

to leverage the **power of numbers**

for sustained **pressure & demand**

(to hold institutions accountable & get laws implemented justly)

&

Fresh **worldviews & alternatives:**

changing **hearts & minds**

care for **women's spirits & social fabric**

**AND.....**



# What do women's movements change?



Safety &  
Security

Backlash

Shadow "armies"

Sexual Violence

Fundamentalisms

Hate

Gangs



# From issues to women's organizing

- Activating + empowering collective citizenship
- Bringing people together to identify + find solutions to common, *heartfelt* problems
- Issues emerge from organizing process
- Flexible linkages among diverse groups
- Mobilize outside strategies for visibility, using inside linkages to move policy + politics forward
- Agendas & plans agreed to among equals
- Grassroots action equal importance as policy research



# What is feminist organizing?

- **Feminist organizing strategies** integrate the personal (as the frontline of injustice) – as political
- *REQUIRES* women only safe spaces to surface ....
  - ❖ Sex & sexuality fundamental to women's freedom/confidence
  - ❖ Personal & political relationships/ trust for action & safety
  - ❖ Self-care & security
- Head, heart & feet - inspire, creative expression
- Support & recognize all forms of women's resistance
- Use media to give new meaning to political events
- Identify sparks of potential leaders, catalyze connections
- Problems & solutions can start “small” but get “bigger”
- **Power → Negotiate conflict among & prepare for backlash**

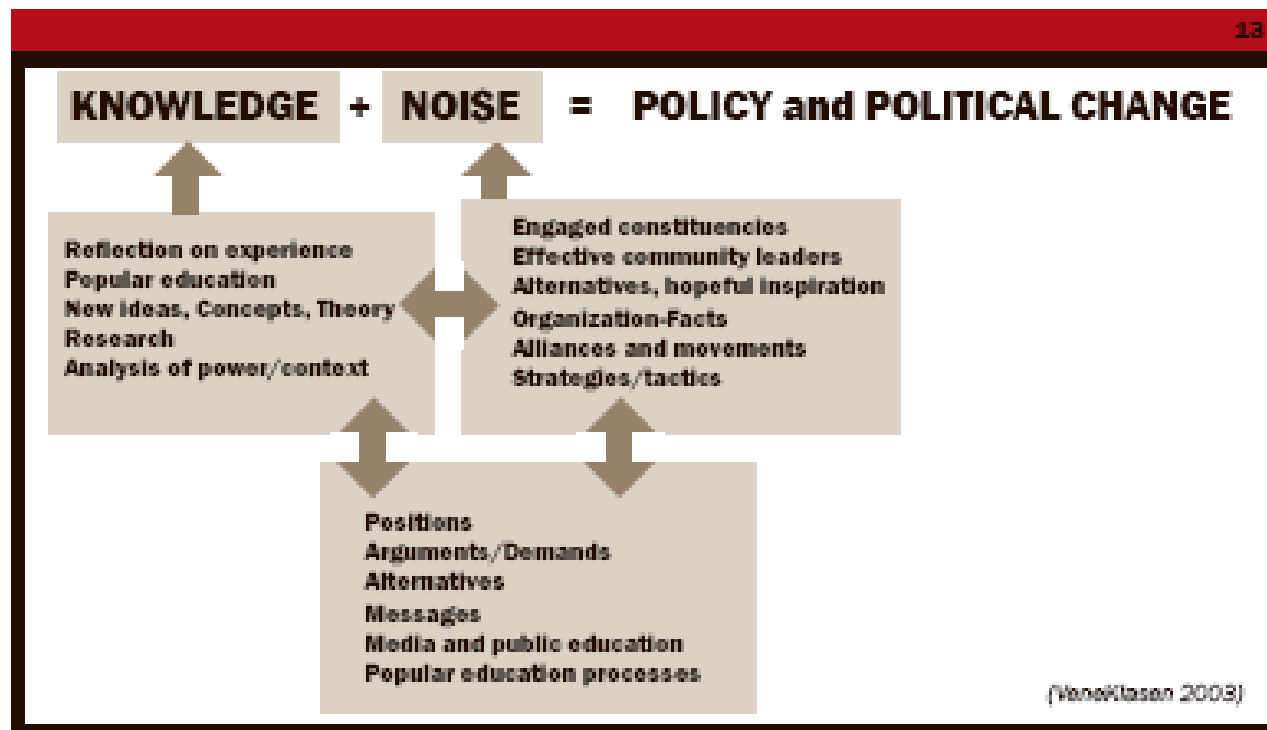




# Feminist organizing: confronting, building & engaging power



# Feminist organizing: knowledge + “noise”



# What do women's movements need?

- Safe spaces – trust + relationships
- Strategic alliances
- Diverse organizational forms
- Internal +external power
- Visibility / legitimacy
- Division of labor
- Multiple leadership roles
- Effective grassroots organizing
- Consciousness-raising
- Resources for organizing, linking
- Speak with, not for



**CAUTION**



**WOMEN  
CROSSING  
THE LINE**

