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Introduction

Our Intellectual Coming Together

This special issue began as a set of overlapping conversations among an interdisciplinary group of feminist scholars whose work centered political economy and performance; postcoloniality and empire; racialization and indigeneity; as well as traversed borders of nation, ideology, space, and time. Our intellectual praxis unfolded at the intersections of transnationalism and feminisms, yet the field of "transnational feminism" as it has been defined and institutionalized in the academy in the 1990s conjured frameworks and definitions that were ill-suited to contain the scope of our inquiries. Many of the questions we asked individually and collectively—How did transnational feminism relate to women of color and black feminist genealogies? Could transnational feminism decenter the Global North as a touchstone or default comparative for women's experiences worldwide and include geographies that were Pacific, African, Latin American, and Caribbean? What was the potential of transnational feminism to shed light on ongoing settler colonialism in North America?—stretched the boundaries of transnational feminism. Our conversations grew as new people from graduate students to activists to senior scholars from a multiplicity of places and fields brought new questions from different sites of engagement.

We came together in multiple configurations, trying to engage multiple networks of scholars and pull in new people at every turn, yet ever conscious of all the intellectuals inside and especially outside the United

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States who were missing, to think together about how to productively destabilize transnational feminist frameworks. At the Ohio State University, some of us worked to put together a "Thinking Transnational Feminisms Summer Institute" in 2014, defining transnational feminism as a "quickly growing but contested field" fraught with "potentialities and continued erasures." Eighty participants collaborated and engaged in dialogue for a week in this feminist summer camp.[1] A special issue of *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* grew out of this initiative.[2] Some of us worked to establish a Transnational Feminisms Caucus at the National Women's Studies Association Conference. At the University of Michigan, some of us crafted a collaborative research seminar on Radical Transnational Feminisms, sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Under the umbrella of the University of California Research Institute some of us designed a research cluster called Rethinking Transnational Feminism with the goal of attending to labor, centering Africa and the Americas, borderlands and indigeneity, as well as examining the "transformative impact of activism on transnational feminist scholarship." The effort has included a symposium and will potentially result in an edited volume.[3] These burgeoning networks have coalesced publicly on social media in the Thinking Transnational Feminisms Facebook group, a robust and international space where hundreds of scholars and activists share calls for papers, articles on contemporary politics, and publication announcements.[4] This special issue is part of this intellectual ecosystem.

The work in this volume adopts a critical stance in relation to the "nation" in transnational feminism. From the outset, we have sought to center Indigenous Studies and Native feminisms as crucial to the solidarities and politics we are interested in, and that inevitably makes the whole Westphalian "nations" framework that grounds "transnationalisms" deeply problematic. Whether we are thinking about the Americas or a great many other places, starting with Native feminism reminds us that the violence of the settler colonial project is at the heart of the nation. Thinking of "transnationalism" as kinds of solidarity across tribal nations, or conceiving of the United States as a nation of nations only uneasily resolves this problem. Further, for those of us interested in the island-territories that make up regions in the Pacific or the Caribbean, places whose legal status has names like Department, Commonwealth, Land, Territory, Municipality—anything but colony, even when they are under the

administration of sovereign nations, often far away—speaking of the "transnational" makes only the most limited kind of sense.

Our understanding of transnational feminism rejects imperial feminisms and neoliberal constructs, and remains attuned to the nuances of power and privilege that shape political exchanges and can obscure non-EuroAmerican axes of knowledge. We see the potential of a *radical* transnational feminist framework to foreground the global solidarities that can transform everything from international regimes of debt and austerity, to the macro and micro politics of social reproduction. *Radical* transnational feminism can demonstrate the impact of globalization and the scope of racial capitalism. A *radical* transnational feminist framework allows for the juxtaposition of fields like Diasporic Black Studies and TransPacific World Studies. The modifier *radical* ("at the root") signals an alliance with political movements that work to undo the nation and its violences, including imperialism, racisms, and colonialisms. It allows us to take up the most productive areas of potential in transnational feminist frameworks.

The modifier *radical* does analytical work that is unsettled, reflecting the dynamic ongoing conversations that continue to unite our group. We are delving into the potential of radical transnational feminism to shed light on decolonization and postcolonial movements, including racial formations, settler colonialism, colonialism, military bases, racial capitalism, antisemitism, slavery and its afterlives, sex work and the sexual violence of militaries and empires, political movements, migration and anti-immigrant sentiment, and all the other ways that we know racism and misogyny to be spacialized and to materialize their violence in ways that rely on national borders. We are less interested in pinning down a final definition of a radical transnational politic outright and are more comfortable letting the essays, interviews, poetry, field reports, and primary source analyses contained in this special issue lay out the scope of inquiry and the ways in which we leaned into the contradictions and negotiated the tensions between what transnational feminism obscures and what it reveals. As scholars and activists we have taught, read widely, or published in the field and are in conversation with the foundational literature even as we gesture beyond definitions.[5] We seek, throughout, to specify the analytical and political work that needs to be done in diverse spaces to sediment the contradictions and allow for certain types of solidarities to take root.

Inside the Issue

Transnational feminist frameworks have grappled with the role of women and formal political power. What are the radical possibilities and the potential limitations for transformation using this framework? Judy Tzu-Chun Wu's essay on Patsy Mink, the Japanese American, feminist, and liberal Democratic U.S. representative from Hawaii, analyzes how Mink embodied both feminism and antimilitarism in the Pacific. The paper explores Mink's worldview and the role of "life, land, and water" in her conceptualization of the Pacific world. It also sheds light on her advocacy of an end to nuclear weapon testing in the Pacific, including the Marshall Islands and Hawaii's Kaho'olawe. Mink worked alongside Native Hawaiians but also fundamentally in conflict with them, as she sought better terms of inclusion in the United States and they sought sovereignty. Mink's worldview and activism speak to the political fissures in projects that were transnational yet not ideologically aligned, and Wu's essay offers a thick reading of formal politics as a site of feminist engagement with the U.S. state.

Settler colonialism is increasingly used as an analytical tool to describe processes of dispossession and violence in a variety of academic fields. Maile Arvin's article asks readers to reconsider the knowledge production of indigenous women, feminist, and queer theorists who center gender and sexuality in their political analyses, like scholar-activist Haunani-Kay Trask. How can this perspective inform a critique of Asian settler colonialism faced by Native Hawaiians? Her article looks at the relationship between "white mainstream feminisms," indigenous feminisms, and transnational feminisms, and attends to the politics of citation that often erase indigenous scholars from the very geographies and histories in which they are rooted while making them hypervisible for "neoliberal diversity" work in academia. Considering the Women's March in Honolulu in 2017, Arvin's essay offers timely lessons for the politics of solidarity.

Radical transnational feminism demands an epistemological shift. Rosamond S. King's essay pushes the border of transnational feminist inquiry by using the radical interdisciplinarity of poetry, creative arts, and biography to flesh out the stories of jamette women in Trinidad in the face of archival silences. By expanding the boundaries of scholarly writing to include knowledge traditions that are organically intellectual and rooted outside of the academy, King centers activism as historical reconstruction and feminist methodology. Global south genealogies of transnational feminism knowledge production are attended to in Stanlie James's essay,

which reinserts African feminists into a longer tradition of publishing manifestos. James analyzes the text of the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists, productively comparing it to the Combahee River Collective manifesto. How do concepts like interlocking oppression, methodologies like radical collectivity, and the praxis of feminist alliance building resonate in different racialized geographies? How does the recovery of African feminist intellectual traditions shift the embedded hierarchies in the notion of the transnational? Readers are offered the full text of the document following James's comments, with this juxtaposition literally expanding the archives of feminist struggle.

Deema Kaedbey and Nadine Naber model collaborative research and embodied praxis in their reflections on research in Lebanon. Their essay centers a regional, Middle Eastern feminism, and asks what it would look like to think through the female participation in anti-authoritarian movements across the region as a kind of transnational feminism. They analyze the mobilization in Beirut in response to the state's refusal to pick up garbage in relation to the Tahrir Square protests and to queer and feminist activism. While anti-authoritarian mobilizations in Beirut and Egypt were often criticized for not being feminist, Kaedbey and Naber use oral histories to demonstrate the extensive participation of women and feminists in left mobilizations as well as the South-South transnational solidarities between and among feminists in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Elisabeth Armstrong's essay on the 1949 Asian Women's Conference suggests that an earlier generation struggled with similar issues, and that they too nested the politics of women's liberation within their work in decolonization movements. As women in Africa, Asia, and Latin America took up arms in anticolonial wars, they called on women in Western Europe and the United States to oppose imperial counterinsurgent violence and the neo-imperialism of Wall Street. As difficult as these kinds of solidarities were, Armstrong argues that they were centered in a formation that linked women's liberation, antiracism, and anti-imperialism as a unified politics.

The power of language to shift the terms of transnational engagement onto decolonial ground is laid bare in Neda Maghbouleh, Laila Omar, Melissa A. Milkie, and Ito Peng's essay on conducting community-based research in Arabic among Syrian women in Canada. Their analysis encompasses translation as transnational feminist praxis, the role that language plays in disciplining knowledge, and participants' agency in shaping

research studies. Tara Daly uses a feminist reading of Peruvian pop art by Claudia Coca to disentangle the term *chola* from its liminal framing and recast it as a site of potential transnational feminist mobilization and anticolonial critique. Her essay explores the transnational resonance of art that illuminates wars both historical and psychic; and the power of alternative imaginaries to gesture toward the possibility of a woman-led politics of solidarity.

The history of transnational solidarity work by women of color is captured in the primary sources featured in this issue. "Salvadoran Women: In Search of Peace and Justice" by Miriam Louie and Vicki Alexander details the work of *Somos Hermanas* and the Alliance Against Women's Oppression. The position paper chronicles the nationwide, multi-issue, and intersectional work undertaken by multiracial organizations during the Reagan era and the long timeline of U.S.-backed dictatorships in Latin America. It takes readers to the front lines of movements for human rights, exploring the plight of women political prisoners and the activism of women in trade unions. The second primary source, "Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association of the United States of America Discussion Group," during the chill of the Cold War in the 1950s, chronicles the discussions between five Asian and five American women whose work in United Nations projects and agencies made them coalesce under the umbrella of "Southeast Asia and the United Nations." These highly educated women operated transnationally as UN representatives and their discussions demonstrate the potentials and restraints of UN frameworks.

Brooke Lober's interview with Aurora Levins Morales, a Puerto Rican and Jewish writer, poet, and storyteller who authored key texts in the woman of color feminist intellectual tradition and remains active in disability justice and anti-imperialist and feminist struggles, weaves together a rich tapestry from a life in struggle. From Morales's family history, to the impact of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico in 2017, to the importance of the seminal *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, this interview embodies the landscape of radical transnational concerns with justice.

Pedagogical Synergies

The analyses in this issue unfold in thematic, chronological, and geographical registers. This broad approach makes this issue uniquely suited for traditional and nontraditional classroom use. In particular, essays

engage oral history, ethnography, and embodied research in ways that critically interrogate the power dynamics of the process and engage a variety of sites and disciplinary perspectives. Settler colonialism is understood as an ongoing event that animates the study of the Pacific and unsettles contemporary experiences of immigration in the United States. Solidarity and the possibility and problematics of shared struggle are explored in almost all of the essays. Readers encounter interviews with poets, scholars using poetry as methodology, and the urgent provocations in poems and creative writing by Ching-In Chen, Nancy Kang, Evelyne Trouillot, Nathan H. Dize, and Maylei Blackwell, which punctuate the issue not as sidebars but as illuminations of transnational feminist concerns.

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Notes

1 "Thinking Transnational Feminisms Summer Institute 2014," Ohio State University, accessed March 20, 2019. https://frontiers.osu.edu/tfsi.
2 *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 36, no. 3 (2015).
3 "Rethinking Transnational Feminisms," accessed April 9, 2019. https://uchri.org/awards/rethinking-transnational-feminisms/.
4 "Thinking Transnational Feminisms," accessed March 20, 2019. https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfsinstitute/.
5 Some of our collective engagement with issues of transnationalism and feminism are reflected in these writings: Nixon and King 2013; Naber 2016; Blackwell 2014; Briggs 2002; Arvin 2019; and Wu 2013.

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