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Illustration by R.J. Doughty

Inspiring Woman: Clara Zetkin & International Women's Day by Skyla Seamans

Around the world, March 8th is celebrated as International Women's Day in commemoration of all the women who have struggled for freedom and equality. This day would not exist without the determination of Clara Zetkin, an adamant campaigner for women's rights. Zetkin was born Clara Eibner in the small village of Wiederau in Saxony, Germany on July 5th, 1857. She was the daughter of the village teacher and was confronted at a very early age with the awful conditions of the workers living in the area. Aside from striving for women's rights, Zetkin was also a communist and political activist. She was always interested in women's politics and never ceased to work for equal opportunities between the sexes and women's suffrage.

Clara Zetkin was an activist and a leader. Throughout her life, she played a large role in women's and labor movements, the foundation of the Socialist International Group, and the development of the Social-Democratic Women's Movement in Germany. She edited the Social Democratic Party Women's Newspaper, and became the leader of the newly founded Women's Office of the Social Democratic Party in 1907. Her greatest feat, however, was her immense enthusiasm and support for an International Women's Day.

At the second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen in 1910, Clara Zetkin proposed that every year, in every country, there should be a celebration specifically for women on the same day (a women's day) to "press for their demands." The conference of over one hundred women from seventeen different countries, representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs, and including the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament, embraced Zetkin's proposal with unanimous support and International Women's Day was born.

International Women's Day inherited a tradition of protest and political activism since it came about during a time of social disorder and catastrophe. Before 1910, women in industrially developing countries were entering paid work in large numbers. Their jobs were sex segregated, mainly in textiles, manufacturing, and domestic services where conditions were terrible and wages extremely minimal. Trade unions were being formed and industrial disputes broke out, especially between sections of non-unionized women workers and their employers. Many of the changes taking place in women's lives pressed against the political limitations surrounding them.

The first International Women's Day was on March 19th, 1911, and was chosen because on that day in 1848, the Prussian king recognized for the first



WEL marching down Pitt Street with Women's Liberation, International Women's Day, Sydney 1980 (Search Foundation - Tribune, State Library of NSW)

time how strong the armed people were and promised many reforms, including an unfulfilled one for women's suffrage. The week after the first International Women's Day, on March 25, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City killed over 140 workers (almost all of them young women). Unsafe working conditions were blamed for the high death toll. Then, during World War I, women across Europe held peace rallies on March 8th, 1913. International Women's Day was then transferred to March 8th and this day has remained the global date for celebration ever since. During International Women's Year in 1975, International Women's Day was given official recognition by the United Nations and was taken up by many governments. International Women's Day is marked by a national holiday in China, Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Today, celebrations of International Women's Day include large-scale events that honor women's advancements while continually reminding all men and women that more changes are necessary. Women's equality has not been achieved in all aspects of life; it is still an ongoing issue around the world. On March 8, 2009, President Barack Obama made a statement about International Women's Day. He said:

"From the global challenge of climate change to a world that is not yet free from poverty and conflict, our challenges are many. Women are vital to the solutions to these problems, and we will not sow the seeds for a brighter future or reap the benefits of the change we need without the full and active participation of women around the world. Worldwide, women play leadership roles in the health and education of our families, in our fields, our factories, our classrooms, our laboratories, and our boardrooms. With or without awards or acknowledgement, women have taught us about hope, about courage, and about opportunity."

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On January 1, 1994, the United States, Canada and Mexico signed NAFTA, The North American Fair Trade Agreement. For the indigenous community in Chiapas, Mexico, this international agreement meant losing control of their land to large ranchers and foreign agribusiness, and losing control of their staple crop, corn, as the price of imported corn was driven further down. It was on the same day that the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional – also called the EZLN or the Zapatista movement – emerged. The movement has drawn international attention for many reasons – one of which being its explicit acknowledgment of the importance of women having equal access to power, both in daily life and in the EZLN itself.

Though the EZLN's formation coincided with the signing of NAFTA, there is a longer history of injustice in the rural Mexican state of Chiapas. In 1982, Mexico was obligated to pay debts to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In order to do this, the WB and IMF imposed a "structural readjustment". Wages in Mexico plunged, and the value of the peso in comparison to the U.S. dollar was halved. Unemployment skyrocketed. Programs that had made farming possible for the people of Chiapas, such as government subsidies of fertilizer, were eliminated. Others in Chiapas relied on construction jobs, but all construction projects were ended. To deal with the subsequent peasant unrest, militarization and political repression were implemented in rural Mexico.

Though it is one of the poorest states in Mexico, Chiapas itself is a rich land, where many capitalist projects – building dams, collecting petroleum, growing crops to export – flourished. These projects, however, deepened local poverty instead of relieving it. They pushed the indigenous Mayan population off of the land they once used for food production. While power generated from dams in Chiapas is sold to the U.S., many Chiapanecans have no access to electricity.

While the Mexican government considers them a threat, the EZLN has generated support both within and outside Chiapas. Their demands include the right to land, housing, food security, and the right to develop autonomous co-operatives. They also want control over the education of their children and local political and judicial systems – specifically so that they may incorporate indigenous languages and customs. The EZLN also promotes the right to regional self-government, alternatives to dominant economic and political systems, and equal rights for women.

The EZLN has adopted a declaration of women's rights called the Women's Revolutionary Law, which includes women's right to an education, to

equal wages, to live free from abuse or sexual violence, and to equal access to military positions and positions of power within the EZLN. Women account for about fifty-five percent of the support base for the Zapatista movement, and thirty-three percent of Zapatista soldiers are women. Women are also of monumental social importance to the indigenous communities of Chiapas; they provide stability through their management of home life, they care for children and teach them about their language and culture, and they bring income to their communities by selling handmade goods, fruits, and vegetables. Indigenous women not only support the Zapatista movement, it would cease to be the same movement without them.

Some see indigenous people (or any non-"First World" people) espousing feminist ideals as part of

**Intersections of Injustice:
The Zapatista Movement
By R.J Doughty**



"modernization", or that these groups are adopting Western feminism. However, this is ethnocentric and patronizing to assume. It is built on the supposition that indigenous and non-Western cultures are traditionally and inherently oppressive to women, and must adopt outside ideas from more "enlightened" cultures in order to change their gender dynamics. Gender dynamics in indigenous communities in Chiapas may not be perfectly harmonious, but they are not totally oppressive, either. In fact, traditionally, gender roles in indigenous Mayan communities were somewhat flexible. Though men and women performed different tasks – and, like in many places in the world, women's roles focused on the home while men's were outside of it – men and women could assist each other or take over each other's work as was sometime necessary. Women's roles were also often considered important and powerful. As midwives, shamans, weavers of garments for festivals, and leaders of cooperatives, women were highly respected and influenced their communities.

This changed, however, as Chiapas communities were integrated into industrialization and capitalism. While women and men both contributed to bringing food to the family before, men's work outside the home became the only source of cash income. This also added farming, once men's work, to women's devalued workload. It was "modernization" – not "backwards" traditional culture – that contributed more to women's oppression. After the economic crisis and re-structuring in 1982, alcoholism and domestic violence in Chiapas increased along with unemployment. A 1995 study found that nearly half of the indigenous women in Chiapas were malnourished.

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A War within a War

by Brianna Vear

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaire, is in a war that is being called the First World War in Africa. Like Rwanda, ever since the DRC achieved independence from Belgium, it has been plagued by violence. Col. Joseph Desire Mobutu claimed power, renaming the country the Republic of Zaire. Mobutu, a shady character, won election after election for thirty-two years, securing far more than the majority of votes, which led to suspicion about the integrity of the elections. In 1994, violence spilled over from Rwanda as refugees sought a home in eastern DRC and as the Congolese became discontent with Mobutu. Mobutu left the country when Rwandan and Ugandan troops, working for the Alliance of Democrat Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL), were sent in. He was replaced by Laurent-Desire Kabila. This armed conflict became known as the First Congo War.

Kabila renamed the Republic of Zaire the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwandan troops worked alongside the Congo's military, and Kabila's Army Chief and Secretary General were also Rwandan. Tension between Kabila and Rwanda began to increase. In July of 1998, Kabila called for removal of all Rwandan presence in the DRC. Rwandans refused to leave, and more Rwandan troops were sent in. On August 2, mass fighting broke out all over the country. Two days later, the Rwandan troops planned to march on Bas-Congo and overthrow Kabila. Their plan was thwarted when Namibian, Angolan and Zimbabwean troops intervened on the behalf of the DRC's government. The DRC was split into three regions, one controlled by Kabila, one by Rwanda, and the other by Uganda. This generated the Second Congo War.

In August of '99, all three parties signed the Lusaka Accord, which called for a ceasefire, a UN peacekeeping operation, removal of foreign troops, and a transitional government which would lead to elections. The parties who signed failed to implement all of the changes, and Kabila created international discontent when he refused to allow the UN peacekeeping operation to enter the DRC.

On January 16, 2001 Laurent Kabila was assassinated, and was succeeded by his son Joseph. Joseph reversed his father's more negative policies. By May 2003, Ugandan, Rwandan, Zimbabwean, Namibian, and Angolan troops all withdrew from the DRC, though unconfirmed reports said there were still Rwandan troops hiding within the country. Fighting began to spread again in the eastern part of the country in 2008. Rwandan Hutu rebel militia and the Rebel Congolese Militia, under the leadership of General Laurent Nkunda, began to pressure the DRC's government to declare war. As tensions continue to flair, the violence is spreading

and threatening a third all out war.

But there is another war taking place; a war against the women and children of the DRC. Both the soldiers of the foreign opposition, as well as the Congolese soldiers, have been mutilating, raping, beating and torturing the women and children of the DRC since the beginning of the conflict, holding them captive in their own country. Although technically the war is over, there has still been an onslaught of gender-based crimes, most often taking on a sexual nature.

There are no age limits of the women and children being mutilated and raped. According to Dr. Denis Mukwege, the director of the Panzi Hospital in Eastern DRC, the women and girls in the hospital ranged from three years old to seventy-five years old.

Although full scale war has not been declared, within the last year 500,000 Congolese have been forced to flee their homes taking what possessions they can with them. Each battle of the current conflict has been accompanied by rape and pillaging. As the tension begins to flare, even more people are being uprooted. People go to the refugee camps seeking a safe haven, but the truth of the matter is, there is no safe place in all of the DRC for women and girls.

CNN's Anderson Cooper interviewed Aneka Van Woudenberg, the senior human rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. Cooper asked if "Women get raped in wars all the time. How is it different here?" Woudenberg said that it was the magnitude of the rapes, as well as the systematic nature and brutality of these acts that set it apart from other places. "This is not rape because soldiers have got bored and have nothing to do. It is a way to ensure that communities accept the power and authority of that particular armed group. This is about showing terror. This is about using it as a weapon of war." In some villages, 90% of the women have been raped.

Eve Ensler, the founder of V-Day and the author of the "Vagina Monologues", has made it V-Day's mission to help the women and girls of the DRC. Ten percent of all proceeds made during the V-Day season this year will go to the DRC to create what Eve is calling a "City of Joy." The purpose of this city is to give the women who have been abused in any way by the soldiers a place to go, where they can learn to be reincorporated into society. They will be able to heal, rebuild, and learn new skills to take to the outside world. It is intended to house one hundred women at a time. The City of Joy is close to the hospital where Dr. Mukwege first recognized the poor condition of the women of the DRC. Dr. Mukwege was actually the founder of The City of Joy. Eve Ensler stumbled across his story and made it V-Day's mission to help Mukwege create this safe haven

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Comfort Women: The Forgotten Victims of World War II by Corinne Blake

Every Wednesday at noon, outside of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea a group gathers without fail. This is a demonstration headed by the Korean Council for Women which is joined by other domestic and international organizations as well as the general public. They are gathering in support of the surviving "comfort women" and they are seeking an apology for crime committed over sixty years ago. Comfort women were victims of sexual slavery during World War II. These women and their supporters are still working for some recognition.

In 1944, as World War II raged on and Japan occupied surrounding countries, reports and accusations of rape by the Japanese soldiers poured in. To settle this problem, the Japanese military set up "comfort stations" for the soldiers. These were places where the soldiers could go to have sex with the so-called "comfort women." These women were mostly from Korea and China but also from the Philippines, Indonesia (including Dutch Indonesians), and even Australia. These women were taken from their homes and forced into sex slavery. Some were tricked, told that they would find work at a factory and would be able to help their families, while others were just forcibly taken. If they refused sex, or fought the soldiers, they were beaten, stabbed, and sometimes killed. If they became pregnant, they were forced to have abortions. Forced sex with anywhere from ten to twenty soldiers was an average day for these women.

There is evidence that when the war ended, western countries (including the U.S.) were aware of Japanese war crimes such as "comfort stations." Despite this, a War Tribunal in the Netherlands only prosecuted the case of thirty-five Dutch women who were taken from Indonesia and forced into sexual service. The plight of the Asian women forced into sex-slavery was ignored and forgotten. It was a secret most women brought to their graves, because it either shamed them or their families. Some women never returned or were not accepted back by their families.

In 1990, the Korean Women's Associations United and Korean Council of University Women held a press conference and issued the statement regarding Military Sexual Slavery. A month later, the Japanese government refuted the newly resurfaced rumors of their crime, saying that there had been no military involvement in the forced prostitution of these women. They implied that any comfort women were prostitutes by their own choice. These remarks led to the creation of The Korean Council for Women

Former comfort women and students from South Korea protest outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul in 2005. (japanesefocus.org)



Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan.

In December 1991, one Korean woman finally spoke out. Kim Hak Sun spoke to an audience at the Asian Conference on Traffic in Women and told her tale of being a comfort woman. Her courage gave other women the courage to come forward and talk about their experiences. On January 8, 1992, the first Wednesday demonstration was held. Finally, in 1993, the Japanese government admitted to the existence of comfort stations during World War II. In 1995, the government help set up the Asian Women's Fund, an organization designed to give financial compensation to the women. Many of the women refused the funds because the compensation did not come directly from the Japanese government.

Though the government has admitted the involvement of the military there has been little investigation into the matter and no negative consequences for those involved. They also have not acknowledged what it is that the women or their families want. Most importantly, they want an official apology from the government. Though many prime ministers have issued apologies, supporters of the comfort women claim these apologies are insincere. Their claims were strengthened in 2007 when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe denied that any of these women were coerced into sexual slavery. This implies that the women (some of them as young as twelve at the time) were not forced, but willingly worked at the comfort stations.

Outside support for these women is strong, though maybe not strong enough. In 2007, the United States Congress passed a resolution that calls for Japan to acknowledge and take responsibility for their war crimes against the comfort women. Similar resolutions were adopted by the Netherlands, Canada, and Australia and in 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council approved a report urging Tokyo to take care of the issue. Even in Japan, there has been movement to have the issue resolved. Since March 2008, fifteen regions of Japan have issued statements urging the government to sincerely face the problem (similar statements have been adopted by five South Korean regions). Since 2001, lawmakers in the Democratic Party of Japan, the Social De-

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Women of the Chipko movement.
(www.thehindu.com)

Ecofeminism! by Alex Nichipor

Most people do not have a positive reaction to the term “ecofeminist.” As a combination of two very maligned ideologies, “ecologist” and “feminist,” ecofeminists are subjected to stereotypes associated with both.

The negative stereotypes of ecofeminists belie the importance of the movement. Around the world, women are disadvantaged simply because they are women.

Around the world, environmental destruction threatens entire ecosystems, disproportionately affecting communities of color and so-called “third world” countries. Ecofeminism believes that these problems are interrelated, and calls upon people in many different communities to help solve them. Ecofeminism may be one of the most important and relevant strands of philosophical thought today.

Ecofeminists believe that strong parallels exist between the subjugation of women and the destruction of nature, parallels that derive from the tendency of patriarchal thought to see things in terms of a hierarchical binary. That is, things are completely separate, and one is better than the other. Stemming from this is the implication that the superior entity can use the lower entity. Human culture is better than nature, and thus culture can gobble up or pollute natural resources as it sees fit. Men are better than women, so men are allowed to control women and to use them as resources, for making babies or for cheap labor. Racism also originates in this hierarchy: people living in industrialized countries are better than people living in the Global South (the “Third World”), so we can use and abuse the natural resources and humanity of these countries. Many American companies, and even some divisions of the U.S. government, use developing countries as landfills for radioactive, toxic, or hazardous waste. Ecofeminism, as we shall see, is very interested in the intersectionality of these prejudices, especially as they pertain to the Global South.

We can see evidence of the woman-nature connection every day. It’s present in language – “Mother Nature” or “the rape of the land.” It’s also present in mythology. Many mythological creatures – such as kitsune, selkies, sphinxes, mermaids, and sirens – are half-animal, half-woman (interestingly, myths often depict these wild creatures falling in love and being “tamed” by men).

The advertisements of the animal rights group PETA are an excellent example of the conflation of women with nature. One of PETA’s recent ads featured a bare-breasted pregnant woman on her hands and

knees, locked in a cage, and gazing at the viewer with an imploring expression. This ad was meant to protest the treatment of pigs by the meat industry. A more sensible organization might realize that simple facts would get the message across, but PETA’s ads seem to delight in putting women in humiliating sexual situations. Although they are sexist, devoid of useful information, and unlikely to persuade anyone to become a vegetarian, these ads *do* show how seamlessly we can substitute one kind of meat (animal) with another kind of meat (woman).

I have spent a lot of time pondering the curious question of why women are so profoundly associated with nature. Perhaps it is because women’s bodily processes – menstruation, gestation, nursing – make them seem somehow more mammalian and animalistic than men? Perhaps because women were – and still are – usually the ones to tend crops and gather plants for food and medicine? Or perhaps there is a very old cultural memory of the primal power of the mother over the child she holds, and this perfectly mirrors the vast power of the natural world, which can nourish but also destroy.

These musings are really here nor there. Back to the more solid ideology of the hierarchical binary, of man over woman and nature over culture. Ecofeminism utterly rejects this idea. Man is NOT separate from woman, and nature is NOT separate from culture, and it goes without saying that one is NOT better than the other. Ecofeminists suggest a more holistic worldview, and they study the reciprocal relationships between all types of living beings. The world is a web, with all parts coming together in a unified whole. You can see this in your backyard by watching the ways plants and animals interact with their habitat – or in the ways human beings interact with each other.

To the aim of solving environmental problems, ecofeminism often suggests solutions similar to those proposed by other strands of environmental thought – sustainable technology, reduction or elimination of pesticide use, the reduction of waste, and so on, although ecofeminists do differ widely in what they consider to be appropriate technology. Ecofeminism also proposes unique solutions that recognize the subtle ways in which benefiting women can also benefit the environment.

Birth control is one example of this. Overpopulation exacerbates many environmental problems, such as pollution, environmental destruction, overharvesting. However, many women across the world are not allowed to control their own fertility – this right is coopted by husbands, parents, or a disapproving society, or perhaps quality birth control is simply too expensive or totally unavailable. Many women have more children than they want. Additionally, many women are denied the education that they need to support themselves and become full participants in the global economy.

If women were given educational opportunities, and access to low-cost, unstigmatized birth control, and to safe abortions – that is, control over their fertility and

the means to enforce these choices – then population growth might begin to decline. It is a known fact that women who have more education have fewer children. By granting women educational opportunities and access to birth control (two goals of feminism), it may be possible to lower the rate of population growth and by extension, to slow or stop the rate of ecological destruction (one of the primary goals of environmental activists).

Some ecofeminists theorize that women may actually have more of a stake in what happens to the environment than men do. Because of the caretaker roles that women in many cultures occupy, they are the first to notice ecological degradation. They are also hit hardest by serious environmental problems. Single mothers (who constitute a substantial portion of the world's women) are more likely to live on the fringes of society, living in the poorest and least clean parts of cities, or farming the least desirable portions of land. Such women who live on the edge are most in danger from natural disasters and pollution. Indeed most climate refugees (those displaced by ecological problems due to climate change) are women.

But remember, ecofeminism is a philosophy of intersectional, and it recognizes that women are not the only ones disenfranchised by environmental injustice. Since women also perform many tasks essential to the running of a household, such as gathering water or firewood, entire families suffer when water is polluted or forests are cut down. Notice that such families are more likely to live in the Global South, and that those people who cut down trees or dump chemicals into drinking water are probably more likely to have ties to the manufacturing industries of the privileged Global North. In this way, people from the so-called "First World" can oppress the people of the "Third World," men and women alike.

Women may also be more vulnerable to the ill health effects of environmental pollution and pesticide use, since women's bodies appear to process toxins at a slower rate than men's bodies. Also, some harmful toxins have a tendency to build up in body fat, where they are released at a slow but steady rate into the bloodstream - and most women have more body fat than most men. In the past half-century or so, rates of breast and ovarian cancer, birth defects, and autoimmune disease have skyrocketed. Tellingly, the occurrences of such disease seem to mirror the increasingly widespread use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and pollution. Substantial amounts of the chemical dioxin has been found in women's breast milk. Dioxin is one of the most potent carcinogens known - even a tiny amount is sufficient to cause cancer.

Activism is beginning to change this. In America, ecologists and feminists are using the free market system to their advantage, to challenge prod-

ucts and manufacturing methods that harm humanity and the environment. Woman- and minority-owned companies, like Natracare and Nubian Heritage, offer products that are pesticide-free and created without the use of animal testing. Co-ops around the country unite small farmers who utilize ecologically-sound farming methods. Fair trade and organic cocoa suppliers pay their workers, who are mostly women, a living wage, and create working environments where the women do not have to be exposed to dangerous pesticides.

There are also many courageous women who have devoted their entire lives towards preserving the environment and benefiting women, sometimes using the ideas of ecofeminism to unite these seemingly different aims.

Rachel Carson was one of the first environmentalists to recognize the risk of pesticides. Her book, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, focused on the dangers that the chemical DDT posed to animals (she correctly believed that DDT harmed the reproductive capacities of birds so severely that if we did not do something, we would one day face a spring without any birdsong) and that it posed similar biological dangers to humans. She dismissed as ludicrous the notion that DDT affected only the insects it was supposed to kill. Her focus on interconnectedness, and the relationship between the health of the ecosystem to human health, is reminiscent of ecofeminism ideas, although the movement was not fully underway but the time of her work. She is considered by some to be an inspiration for the ecofeminism movement. She died of breast cancer in 1964 - cancer perhaps caused by the DDT she had spent her life opposing? Her book later became a national bestseller, and led to a major worldwide reduction of DDT use.

In the 1970's, the women of rural India effected even more incredible change. At that point, India was rapidly harvesting its forests for international trade, especially in the Himalayan region. This led to serious erosion, causing landslides and the destruction of houses and fields. It deprived the people of the region of firewood, clean water, and good farming soil.

In one remote hill town, the women decided they'd had enough. When contractors showed up to cut down a forest of 3,000 trees, the women rushed out and embraced the trees, interposing their bodies between the trees and the men's axes. The woodcutters tried shouting at the women, then threatening them with guns, then explaining the importance of timber harvesting on the modernization of India. "What do the forests bear?" one of the woodcutters reportedly said to them; "Resin, timber, and therefore foreign exchange!" To this, the women replied, "What do the forests bear? Soil, water, and pure air."

Eventually, the contractors left, unnerved, and the forest was preserved. The movement spread throughout rural India, and was dubbed the Chipko movement, deriving from the Hindu word for "clinging." This is actually where the term "tree hugger" comes from. So if anyone

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Inspiring Woman: Clara Zetkin & International Women's Day (continued)

Without the determination and ideas of Clara Zetkin and other inspirational women, there might not have been an International Women's Day. The tradition is for men to honor their mothers, wives, girlfriends, sisters, and colleagues with small gifts and other signs of appreciation, as well as women honoring other women. In some countries, International Women's Day is the same as Mother's Day. Since the new millennium, there have been considerable changes and a shift in both women's and society's thoughts about women's equality and liberation. However, women are still not paid equally to their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in politics or business, and globally women's levels of health, education, and victimization by violence is worse than that of men.

March 8th, 2010, marks the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. Gradually, the status of women has improved. The United States has even designated March as 'Women's History Month.' Don't just recognize the amazing women in your life only on International Women's Day; make sure they are appreciated every day. Clara Zetkin is one of many women who have paved the way for a brighter future for all women. International Women's Day is a great beginning, but now it is our turn to follow in the footsteps of our sheroes and continue the fight for equality.

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Intersections of Injustice (continued)

While the U.S. places special importance on individual rights, women's rights in Chiapas are seen as more of a community problem than an individual one. Equal participation of women in education and organizing is understood to benefit all people. (Likewise, women within the movement see ending injustice based on class and race as equally important to correcting gender inequity.) The only controversial aspect of the Women's Revolutionary Law within the EZLN is the right to select how many children one has. This includes the right to abortion, but it is not controversial for the same reason it is in the U.S.. In indigenous communities in Chiapas, children are seen as a community responsibility. Therefore, a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy places individual concerns before community concerns.

Establishing equality for women in the EZLN is also important because they are specific targets of harassment and violence by the military occupying Chiapas. Sexual abuse, harassment at checkpoints, and threats of rape are used by the Mexican military and the anti-Zapatista paramilitary groups to instill fear in Zapatistas. In 1998, one such group, MIRA (who are supported by the police and government), threatened to enter homes and rape the women of Taniperlas, Chiapas if the men of the village would not come out of hiding to avoid an armed confrontation.

Indigenous women also face different kinds of dangers due to the economic injustice in Chiapas. The maternal mortality rate in Chiapas is also high because of the lack of access to health care. Instead of improving healthcare in the region, the government addressed this problem through imposed sterilization of Mayan women.

At the emergence of the Zapatista movement, student activists flocked to Chiapas, thinking they could teach the rural poor about organizing. They instead found themselves learning new things from indigenous Mayans. Zapatistas urge outsiders to think critically when they get an urge to aid the movement. A spokesperson for the EZLN, Subcomandante Marcos, recalled receiving a single size six and a half high heel in the mail. This shoe, and the many other useless donations he had seen, reflect the idea that Chiapanecans as so poor that they'll accept anything. Charity and pity are not helpful as a response to the injustice in Chiapas. Charity projects can even lead to more harm than good, and at the very least, are interpreted as disrespect. Sub. Marcos stated:

"Imagine the desperation of a community that needs drinkable water and they're saddled with a library. The one that requires a school for the children, and they give them a course on herbs."

One Zapatista woman stated that even those

Americans and other internationals who seek solidarity with, instead of charity towards, the indigenous community of Chiapas come from a place of privilege and can therefore often slip into a patronizing and controlling mindset. She stated any commitment to working with the movement that is shorter than six months is not worthwhile. It might just be "activist tourism" – commitment not due to a vested interest in the area or empathy with the needs of the people, but because an international cause seems more legitimate, more educational, or more "cool" than a local one.

A more helpful role outsiders can play is to come to the community as "peace campers", recording information to report to international non-governmental organizations. The presence of international peace campers is a deterrent to military harassment. One camper recorded a vehicle of armed men passing by her every five to ten minutes. During her time there, 70,000 soldiers (excluding paramilitary groups) – or approximately 1/3 of the Mexican army – were occupying Chiapas. For more information on becoming a peace camper, to read further about Zapatista women, or to buy goods created by (at prices set by) Zapatistas, visit www.mujereslibres.org.

Experience and answers are not transferable from one place/group with a distinct history and culture to another. Solidarity with the EZLN means a commitment to the liberation of all people; it means learning from each other's struggles instead of trying to fix one another's problems. If you want to support the Zapatista movement, it may be more helpful (and remove the environmental impact of international travel) to support the fight for indigenous peoples' rights, women's rights, social programs, sustainable food production, and economic justice in your own community.

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Comfort Women: The Forgotten Victims of World War II (continued)

mocratic Party, and the Japanese Communist Party have continually submitted bills calling for the government to apologize and give compensation.

In 2005, the comfort women became the focus of a global V-Day campaign. V-Day (a movement fighting violence against women) teamed with other organizations in East and Southeast Asia to organize the "Global V-Day Campaign for Justice to 'Comfort Women': Survivors of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery." It started on February 28 in New York and reached its peak on August 10 with demonstrations in front of Japanese embassies around the world. The campaign included a petition signed by one million people, sixty days of demonstrations and survivor testimonies, and a street march featuring survivors and celebrities, all geared towards educating people about the comfort women and their struggle. There were also benefit celebrity performances of the "Vagina Monologues" in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The voice of the comfort women was added to the "Vagina Monologues," a play written by Eve Ensler, V-Day creator.

On January 13, 2010, the Korean Council for Women held the 900th weekly Wednesday protest. Every day since 1992, they have stood outside the Japanese Embassy asking to be acknowledged.

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A War within a War **(continued)**

for the women of the DRC.

Men and women are working together to create this city. To Karen Bartlett, a reporter for the Times of London, Mukwege said "You see the women working on this building, they are saying: I protest. I won't take what is happening to me any more. I want freedom. The war goes on, but their attitudes are changing, and it is the start of a revolution."

The women of the DRC are hurting, but they are not just standing by while their fellow Congolese are raped, mutilated, beaten, and killed. Survivors are talking with officials in the DRC and telling them their stories. They want the DRC officials to understand what they are going through. They are holding "Break the Silence" rallies to tell their stories.

One woman told the story of the women of her village, where the soldiers came and lined the women up. They took a newborn baby out of the arms of one woman and threw it at the wall. She tells of how it "burst." The soldiers then picked up the "meat" of the baby and passed it out to the women. The women were warned by the soldiers that if they dropped it, they would be killed.

Another woman described how seven soldiers came and grabbed her husband. They beat and tortured him and then took him off to kill him. All seven soldiers raped her. She said that if you were to see her "down there", you wouldn't recognize it as human. "Women are suppose [sic] to be respected, we are not objects. Women get pregnant and breastfeed you. How come you disrespect me today in public?", one woman shouted during the Break the Silence Rally.

Mukwege told the story of Ruth, to Bartlett. Ruth was thirteen when she arrived at the hospital. Soldiers came to her village, raped her mother and her, and then killed her parents while she watched. Ruth became a sex slave. She was tied to a tree for days at a time, so soldiers who were passing by could take turns raping her. Ruth was released after several months of being held captive. She was pregnant and began the long journey to the Panzi Hospital and Dr. Mukwege.

Ruth's baby was stillborn, and her internal injuries were horrific. Mukwege rejoices over how he was able to fix her urinary incontinence and fit her with a colostomy. But that was all he was able to repair. Ruth no longer has a vagina, and she says that she is no longer a woman because of it.

Another victim, Erisa, was taken in the same fashion as Ruth. "I escaped and went back to my village, but my neighbors said I smelt. I couldn't

work. They said I was a Rwandan rebel prostitute. I was pregnant by my rapist, but it was a great shame." Erisa lives in a half built house near the City of Joy along with her little girl and other young women who like her, escaped from a life of being a sex slave. They call their group "I Will Not Kill Myself Today".

Eve Ensler dedicated both her newest monologue for the Vagina Monologues and a section of her new book "I am an Emotional Creature: The Secret Life of Girls Around the World" to tell the story of the DRC. The spotlight monologue, titled "A Teenage Girl's Guide to Surviving Sex Slavery" is meant to tell the story of a young girl in Bukavu named Marta. It really tells the story of young girls in the DRC who are being taken and held captive for the purpose of sex slavery, as well as young girls around the world who are sex slaves both in their own homes and in other war driven countries.

The spotlight monologue has eight "Rules" on how to survive. It starts with rule one "Get Over That Girl Thing 'This Can't Be Happening to Me'" and ends with rule eight "No One Can Take Anything From You If You Do Not Give It To Them." Marta, the young girl who is the subject of the monologue, was 15 when she was taken. She was raped three times a day, and eventually became pregnant. She escaped with her little girl after two years of slavery and returned to her home village. When she learned that her captor, Claude, was killed she told the soldiers that told her that "God did something good." This is a typical story of women in the DRC.

And it is only getting worse. Mukwege said that "We are now seeing cases again of women who have been raped for twenty-four hours, forty-eight hours. If the fighting continues there is no solution for our women." Together we need to help end this war within a war that is taking place inside the DRC. Both Congolese and foreign soldiers are using rape to win a war, while thinking nothing of the women and girls who fall victim. They are raping our greatest resource and must be stopped.

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Ensler, Eve "Vagina Monologues 2010 Script" *VDAY*

Ecofeminism! (continued)

calls you a tree hugger, just remember the story of the Chipko women and chuckle to yourself.

Another heroine is Wangari Maathai, a woman of Kenya and the first East African female to obtain a Ph.D. Her educational background in biology and conservation, as well as her family's political leanings, led to a focus on environmental conservation that created jobs for the underprivileged, especially women. To this end, she has created the Green Belt Movement, an organization that, among other things, plants trees. This may sound simple, but in fact, Kenya and other African nations have suffered severe deforestation, leading to erosion and ecosystem degradation. Historically, about 10% of Kenya was covered with trees - today only 1.7% is forested. The Green Belt Movement seeks to correct this, and it does so by placing women in charge of the cultivation and planting of trees. Women earn money to support themselves and their families while learning important leadership skills, and Kenya is becoming green again. Wangari Maathai has faced arrest and persecution by the government, but she has continued to be active in the struggle to preserve the environment and elevate women. She is expanding her focus on other countries that suffer from severe deforestation, and she has recently launched a movement called the Billion Trees Campaign. The goal is to plant a billion trees worldwide every year.

It is notable that many of these women do not call themselves ecofeminists, even though they believe that the welfare of women and the environment are interconnected. But then again, no one has ever been forced to call themselves a feminist if they are seek to improve the lives of women, and no one who encourages sustainable development is required to have a membership card for the ecology club. Ecofeminism is still growing and changing, influencing many people around the world.

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Thank You!



Thanks to the fabulous cast, crew, bakers, and audience, the Vagina Monologues at MCLA was able to raise over \$1,000 for the Elizabeth Freeman Center in Pittsfield, MA and the City of Joy Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

No matter what part you played, you can be proud that you made a big difference in the lives of women!

**March is
Women's History Month!**
Celebrate by reading a book, watching a biopic, or just googling a woman you want to know more about.

**March 8th is the 100th
Annual International
Women's Day.**

Celebrate one hundred years of feminist activism by performing some of your own. Write a letter, research a campaign, or just start a conversation.

Also check out the Women's Center's bulletin board in the Marketplace this month, and join our celebration on March 8th with free cake!

Mail to:

Phone: 413-662-5497
E-mail: womenscenter@mcla.edu

North Adams, MA 01247
MCLA
Campus Center Room #322

Susan B. Anthony Women's Center

Kate Bornstein: Gender Outlaw

Student Talk and Q&A Session

Wednesday
March 10, 2010
5:00pm-6:30pm
Murdock 218
MCLA

Speak to the activist, playwright,
performance artist and author of:

- *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws*
- *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and The Rest of Us*
- *My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely.*

Two FREE events!



On Men, Women,
and... the Rest of Us
An evening of comedy,
slam poetry, and
weird gender theory

Thursday
March 11, 2010
7:00pm
Church St. Center
MCLA

What is a man? What is a woman? What are you? When was that decided? And how much say did you have in it? Transsexual not-man not-woman Kate Bornstein provokes these questions and more during this engaging one-human performance.