

*FEMINISM FOR THE
AMERICAS: THE MAKING OF
AN INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS
MOVEMENT* BY KATHERINE
MARINO

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In a time when the Women's Marches and social media campaigns that frequent the news cycle heavily feature North American and European women's experiences, it is important to re-examine traditional historiography regarding feminism. During the Twentieth Century, feminism's development is generally split into three distinct waves: the first wave, at the turn of the century, concerns itself principally with the right to vote; the second wave, peaking in the 1960s and 1970s, corresponds with the women's liberation movement in the United States; and the third wave, beginning in the 1990s, responds to the essentialist nature of the second wave, notably its lack of representation of feminists of colour. Against this strain of historiography, *Feminism for the Americas* examines North and South American women's contributions to debates surrounding women's rights and human rights. With a focus on Pan-American collaboration, Katherine Marino approaches the oft-overlooked period between the 'first wave' and 'second wave' of feminism as an opportunity to consider the rich contributions of *feminismo americano*.

Marino characterizes *feminismo americano* as a multilateral movement advocating for the legal, economic, and social rights of women. This Popular Front movement promoted Latin American leadership in the international forum as a means of combatting U.S. hegemony and championing anti-fascism, in addition to championing women's equal opportunities. Despite the common misconception that Latin American feminism was hampered by a conservative devotion to Catholicism, this movement was prolific and helped to bring the issue of women's rights to the international forum.

A valuable aspect of *Feminism for the Americas* is its focus on six specific women from different countries: Ofelia Dominguez Navarro from Cuba, the United States' Doris Stevens, Paulina Luisi of Uruguay, Brazil's Berta Lutz, Clara Gonzalez of Panama, and Marta Vergara from Chile. Through cooperation and conflict, these women, among others, 'ushered in the first intergovernmental organization for women's rights in the world (the IACW); the first international treaty for women's rights; and, in 1945, the inclusion of women's rights in the United Nations Charter and its category of international human rights' (3). However, beyond depictions of multilateral collaboration, Marino reveals the intricacies of conflicts based in perceptions of national, ethnic, and linguistic superiority, tracing their varying perspectives on the fight for women's rights via epistolary contact and records from Inter-American conferences.

Feminism for the Americas begins with an anecdote from the fraught relationship between Dominguez Navarro and Stevens – one that sets a precedent of women in the United States attempting to exert influence over Latin American feminism by imposing a focus on suffrage and political rights. The trajectory of *Feminism for the Americas* follows this pattern, beginning with the anti-imperialist roots of *feminismo americano* that countered the hegemonic tendencies of US women. One result of opposition to imperialism, both within and beyond feminism, was the formation of 'networks of dissent' and *feminismo práctico*, 'an alternative Pan-American feminism centred on solidarity and support for local struggles' (69). The ability to generate solidarity while encompassing diverse struggles of different regions

of the Americas distinguished Popular Front Pan-American feminism from that of the United States and the ICAW's Stevens, which fixated on suffrage and the Equal Rights Treaty.

Much of the contact between North and South American feminists occurred at international conferences, despite the lack of funding offered to Latin American women from groups like the IACW. In addition to promoting various understandings of feminism, Marino asserts, the participants in these conferences acted against US imperialism and fascism, thus paving the way for later discussions of human rights. Latin American activists shifted the configuration and discussions of organizations like the IACW, thereby 'broaden[ing] the meanings of international women's rights and global feminism' (168). In the wake of World War II, feminists connected the struggle for international women's rights to the global focus on human rights.

By supporting the history of *feminismo americano* with the lived experiences of six individual feminists, this study gives voice to the women who expanded the global understanding of women's rights and human rights. *Feminism for the Americas* makes an urgent contribution to the historiography of feminism by highlighting the pivotal role of Latin American women in generating a broadened understanding of feminism.