WE SEE

Photo by Anastasia Demianuk
femLENS mentee

Photo by femLENS
femLENS workshop group part of the Art
Despite Exclusion Festival in Berlin, Germany

Photo by Lica Stein
femLENS workshops 2019, Berlin, Germany

WE SEE

"Women's rights are human rights." We see these words on banners at protests and demonstrations, on signs at Women's Marches, on T-shirts and stickers. It's common sense – women are humans, and therefore their rights are human rights. But when we say that women's rights are human rights, what exactly are we calling for? Back in 1948, the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris defined which fundamental rights were to be protected globally and was seen as one of the great moral achievements of human history. But over 70 years later, is the context in which this declaration was made still relevant and applicable in today's world? And how has that context affected the way human rights are seen and protected? More importantly, has this concept of human rights distracted society from fighting not only for other rights such as constitutional rights, civil and political rights, or natural and legal rights, but for the equal rights of vulnerable populations including women and refugees? Is the real state of human rights different from what we've come to believe about it?

> The conception of human rights based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human. – Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism

As much as the world has clung to the human rights rhetoric established in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains a product of history. When we look at the era in which this declaration was drafted, it becomes clear that the codification of human rights is inseparable from the power dynamics of the time. As early as 1965, Louis Henkin – widely considered one of the most influential contemporary scholars of international law and US foreign policy – noted, "With the end of war, observance of human rights was required of defeated nation in the peace treaties. The victors were not subject to similar obligations. That these provisions were imposed on the vanquished gave them the character of punishment, of 'reparations.' They were not the responsibility of free nations generally." In this light, the concept of human rights is cast as post-World War II victor's justice and becomes the chosen weapon of powerful states to be wielded over other nations. This political and historical context in which human rights were drafted inevitably prioritises state interests over the rights of individuals.

While human rights, as defined by the UN, are "rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status," they have long been politicised to the

advantage of powerful states and to the detriment of individuals. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman point out in their 1988 book, Manufacturing Consent, that there exist two types of victims – worthy and unworthy. While worthy victims can usually be described as "our own" – or those who stand for the same ideals as the dominant discourse – unworthy victims are the tens of thousands of unknown and unnamed victims who were in the wrong place at the wrong time as the dominant power waged its just wars. The value of a victim is therefore judged by which side of the stage of international relations s/he happens to stand on. Just as "worthy" victims are entitled to human rights, if one finds themselves in the position of an "unworthy" victim, so do their human rights become irrelevant.

Human rights institutions and treaties also allow for nations to prioritise certain fundamental rights over others, which is demonstrated by the separation of civil/political and social/cultural human rights into two separate UN Covenants, with either or both to be acknowledged or dismissed on a state-by-state basis. What is politically beneficial for the international system greatly influences what determines and defines "human rights," and ultimately the will of the state over the needs of the people results in the lowest common denominator in terms of human rights language.

This dichotomy is evident in the issue of migration and refugees. Granting concrete and specific rights to migrants and refugees would allow them to fight for more than just "basic" rights, which is often not what states want. This is evident in the "open prison" conditions of the Direct Provision system in Ireland, which is set up to deal with asylum seekers (or, as activists claim, to deter asylum seekers). It is also evident in the stateless status of Palestinian refugees, in the thousands of stateless people in Estonia and Latvia, and in many, many more.

> Rights of Man turned out to be the rights of the rightless, of the populations hunted out of their homes and land and threatened by ethnic slaughter. They appeared more and more as the rights of the victims, the rights of those who were unable to enact any rights or even any claim in their name, so that eventually their rights had to be upheld by others, at the cost of shattering the edifice of International Rights, in the name of a new right to "humanitarian interference" – which ultimately boiled down to the right to invasion. – Jacques Ranciere, Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?

Since the concept of human rights was designed for states rather than individuals, it can be inferred that, as codified human rights are contingent upon the existence of states, refugees and migrants, or "stateless" people, fall between the cracks and remain unprotected.

"Human rights" exist inasmuch as they can be upheld by political powers: refugees, as "stateless" individuals, are therefore deprived of human rights, despite the fact that they are those most in need of protection. This is visible in the present Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (1950), whose activity, according to its statute, does not have a political character but rather only 'social and humanitarian' one. Not only does it show nations' political aversion to refugees, but it also further illustrates the division between and even dominance of social rights over political rights.

In the currently defined structure of human rights, the rightless are the powerless, and the powerless are the rightless. According to Arendt, "the Rights of Man … were the paradoxical rights of the private, poor, unpoliticized individual." The paradox is that those who are not at the bottom of society, including those who designed our human rights instruments, already have rights and do not necessarily need to be protected by such tools, while populations such as refugees who would most benefit from human rights protection fall outside of its scope.

This exclusion is not coincidental. Human rights language, created by the powerful, portrays relatively weaker groups as victims and then paints a picture of victimhood that objectifies these populations and strips them of any political or moral value. Of the law, Roland Barthes says, "And this 'universal' language comes just at the right time to lend a new strength to the psychology of the masters: it allows it always to take other men as objects, to describe and condemn at one stroke… It knows only how to endow its victims with epithets, it is ignorant of everything about the actions themselves, save the guilty category into which they are forcibly made to fit." Ironically, the concept of human rights manages to dehumanise vulnerable populations through their perceived victimhood, and it is this dehumanisation that allows society to justify its exclusion of certain groups, such as migrants and refugees, from human rights protection.

So where does this leave women in the 21st century, when the places of power are so well defined? Maybe, at least as an addition to human rights, we can also put "Women's Rights Are Representation Rights" or "Women's Rights Are Equal Rights" on our protest banners. Rosa Parks was fighting for more than her human rights when she refused to get off that bus – she was fighting for her civil rights and an equal society: equal opportunity in employment, housing, and education, as well as the right to vote, the right of equal access to public facilities, and the right to live free of racial discrimination. Today, women to various degrees still face many of those challenges. So why have we been so distracted by human rights rhetoric designed for a different time and purpose?

Berlin, January 2020

Photo by femLENS
Street Exhibition 2019, Berlin, Germany

A WALK IN HER SHOES: BEARING WITNESS TO WOMEN ON THE MOVE

By Claire O'Brien
Photos by Jekaterina Saveljeva

I was in a drug store in Alexandria, Virginia, when I witnessed the unhappy moment in an immigrant woman's experience. She was young, 19 years old, maybe. She stood at the register, wearing the store's blue polo shirt, her hijab framing her pretty features. She spoke English with confidence as she assisted shoppers purchasing deodorant, birthday cards and beer.

It was a busy afternoon, and a line formed at the checkout. A dozen customers and I did a decent job reflecting the ethnic diversity of the Washington, DC, area while waiting to pay for our items.

Then, the screaming started.

The customer appeared to be in her 60s. A white woman, her impeccable clothing and jewelry hinted at her wealth. But her rage—directed at the young woman in the hijab at the register—ignited from her frustration with being unable to purchase the paper towels she preferred.

It was unclear what happened exactly. Maybe the product was out of stock, or the young clerk had misunderstood this woman's request. Still, the customer's contempt for the young clerk's existence was undeniable. With words dipped in venom, the older woman attacked: "Learn to speak English if you're going to live here."

The other customers and I stared, paralyzed by what was unfolding before us. The young clerk remained silent. Her lowered eyes welled with tears as the angry customer concluded her rant by marching out of the store.

In the United States, we begin absorbing immigration's complicated role in our national identity from our first day of school. If you're from an immigrant family, and 19 percent of Americans like myself are, the education starts even earlier: translating your parents' accents to your friends, celebrating 'extra' holidays and that summer spent overseas meeting strangers called "Auntie" and "Uncle."

I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1980s and 1990s. A cultural tapestry of pride, shame, struggle and appropriation wove itself through school lunches that served Mexican-style street tacos one day and Vietnamese noodle bowls the next.

Classroom lesson topics were a mash-up of Ellis Island, the first Thanksgiving and the American Dream versus the Trail of Tears, slavery and Japanese-American internment camps. We studied Spanish, French or Japanese and spent weekends attending classmates' bar mitzvahs, quinceañeras, Irish family weddings and Indian barbecues.

HALF OF TODAY'S 272 MILLION MIGRANTS ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE 50 PERCENT OF THE DISPLACED POPULATION, FEMALE MIGRANTS FACE MUCH HIGHER RISKS OF VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION. DESPITE THESE STATISTICS, MIGRATION IS RARELY SEEN AS A FEMINIST ISSUE

Diversity is celebrated. And it's not.

In absolute numbers, the United States has the largest population of immigrants in the world, 47 million foreign-born people in 2015. However, that number is dwarfed by the 272 million people globally that the United Nations classified as migrants in 2019.

But human migration isn't a new phenomenon.

Inextricably linked with our deep evolutionary history, women's global movements are traced back millennia. By studying our mitochondrial DNA—the genetic component we all inherit unchanged from our mothers—scientists follow the maternal lines of inheritance of modern humans back to our origins in Africa, and the subsequent migration of women and their descendants around the globe.

Half of today's 272 million migrants are women and girls, and even though they're 50 percent of the displaced population, female migrants face much higher risks of violence and discrimination. Despite these statistics, migration is rarely seen as a feminist issue.

With over one hundred million women on the global move at one time, it's impossible to characterize a 'typical' migrant. But it's also equally impossible to live in the world and not bear witness to their stories.

Economic Migration

In the early 1970s, my mother emigrated to the United States alone. She was in her early twenties, the only child of a coal miner. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities in her working-class town in Northern England, she enlisted in the military as a way out. But fate intervened in the form of a postal strike, preventing the acceptance letter from reaching her. Ever resourceful, she answered an advertisement in the back of a magazine. Instead of joining the Royal Air Force, my mother found herself in Boston, Massachusetts, as a child carer for a British family.

My mother moved to the U.S. in pursuit of a higher standard of living, which, by the UN's categorization, made her an 'economic migrant.' In 2017, 164 million migrant workers sought economic opportunities abroad. A recent UN report explains that women now represent a significant proportion of economic migrants and an overwhelming majority of migrant domestic workers.

Not only are female migrant workers facing double the discrimination as their male counterparts—xenophobia, plus sexism—women are consistently marginalized, undervalued and seen as disposable for the work they perform. They're also at risk from sexual exploitation, trafficking, violence and lack of access to medical care. However, policies aimed at providing support to migrant workers rarely consider the specific needs of women.

To combat gaps in government services, non-profit organizations focused on serving women migrant workers have been established by women, often immigrants themselves. They recognize that empowering these vulnerable women strengthens the community overall.

One such woman is Arielle Kandle, a French immigrant to the United States. She believes that vast potential exists in every immigrant woman's contribution to the city's fabric, regardless of her national origin, cultural background or educational level. She founded the non-profit organization New Women, New Yorkers to ease the experience of immigrant women who've recently moved to New York City through workforce development, networking programs, community building and storytelling.

In December 2019, the organization hosted a storytelling event called "Finding a Job in America—A Night of Comedy and Horror, presented by Immigrant Women." Dozens of women from China, Colombia, Ecuador, Guinea, India, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine bravely stood before the large audience and shared their narratives through much laughter and tears.

Mama Arima, from Senegal, talks to tourist before braiding the girls hair, in Torrox, Spain

Climate Change and Disaster Displacement

Over a hundred years before my mother boarded her transatlantic flight, my great-grandmother left her small village in Ireland alone. She had never even seen a train before. Yet she made her way to Dublin, then across the North Sea, fleeing famine and poverty for the chance of a new life in Wales.

Swap out Ireland in the 1840s for today's food crisis in Southern Sudan or the 500-year storms regularly swallowing communities on America's Gulf Coast, and my great-grandmother's "leaving home" story is recreated thousands of times every day.

In 2010-2011, more than 42 million people were displaced in the Asia-Pacific region alone by storms, floods, heat and cold waves, droughts and sea-level rise. One recent study found that women make up nearly 80 percent of these climate refugees. Women are also more susceptible to the harmful effects of environmental toxins, pollution and other health problems. Organizations like MADRE recognize that climate change, while a global threat, hits poor, rural and Indigenous women the hardest. Food shortages, droughts, floods and disease impact these women sooner and with greater severity—yet MADRE believes that these women are not victims. They are sources of solutions whose voices should be heard in economic and environmental policymaking spaces, and MADRE provides them the means to do just that.

In Sudan, for example, a country ravaged by drought and war, MADRE co-founded the Women's Farmers Union. The program now assists over 5,000 Sudanese women in securing loans for seeds, buying land and training in adaptive agricultural techniques, such as water harvesting, to mitigate against the inevitable realities of climate change in this harsh environment.

Roma children from the Musicantia community group perform for the Mayor of Dublin at the Mansion House before Christmas, in Dublin, Ireland

Romani Women

In 2005, I moved to Bosnia for a two-year international work project. As an expatriate, I grappled firsthand with loneliness, learning the language and forging a place in a new community abroad.

In the small Balkan town, being instantly recognizable as a foreigner stressed me. But, it also allowed me opportunities for new acquaintances. The Roma population in this particular town was sizeable, with a few thousand residents, although they lived separately away from the city center.

Believed to have left India 1,200 years ago, Roma communities exist in all European countries, with significant populations in the Americas as well. Traditionally itinerant and considered stateless, the Romani people are historically subject to social exclusion, discrimination, poverty, even forced sterilization. They are often evicted from their communities and forced to relocate, as occurred recently in Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary.

In Bosnia, I never saw their homes and rarely any adults, just the children. When they saw a foreigner walking through town, they'd race over sensing (correctly) an easy target for spare change. One girl was older than the others, and a foot taller. She spoke basic English. But it was her fearlessness when approaching strangers for money that impressed me, mostly because I loathed conducting even the most basic transactions with my shaky Bosnian language skills.

The local Bosnians sometimes teased my international colleagues for giving the children money. I'll never forget the pained look on my Canadian colleague's face as he shrugged, "Yes, well, she doesn't have any shoes." She wore flimsy plastic slippers taped to her feet, offering only the most minimal protection from the street.

Traditionally, Roma culture is male dominated, with strongly defined gender roles. Because of the social expectations to take care of responsibilities inside the home, Romani women leave school much earlier than both Romani men and the non-Romani women in the broader community. Their lack of education means they suffer much higher illiteracy rates than Romani men and therefore have few marketable job skills, making them vulnerable to prostitution, sexual violence and poverty.

But attitudes are slowly changing, both externally towards the Roma and from within the communities themselves. The Decade of Roma Inclusion, which kicked off in 2005, is an initiative from 12 European countries (including Bosnia) to improve the socioeconomic status and social inclusion of the Romani people by emphasizing education and breaking the poverty cycle.

In Rome, Italy, a group of entrepreneurial Romani women, originally from Romania and Bosnia, bucked their traditional roles of housekeepers and mothers as the first from their communities to start a business. With support from a local non-profit, Arci Solidarietà, they started a catering company selling Balkan delicacies to earn enough money to leave their government-constructed settlement camp and pursue better opportunities.

Houses damaged during the war are seen in Sarajevo, Bosnia in 2012, the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the siege

Calling themselves the Gipsy Queens, these chefs use the universal language of food to dispel stereotypes. At the same time, they work towards their dream of buying a food truck to expand their catering business. Unfortunately, of the 30 women initially involved with the project, as of 2017, only five remained. The others returned to their home responsibilities due to pressure from their families and communities.

Refugees Fleeing Persecution

Work took me to Bosnia 10 years after the war in the region ended, but the violent conflict had left deep scars on the country. My role as a forensic expert revolved around efforts to identify the men who had been killed in the genocide yet remained unnamed. Bosnian men were killed by the thousands, then buried in hidden mass graves throughout the countryside, hence the international project dedicated to identifying them. But, I learned that it was the Bosnian women who had been subject to unspeakable acts of cruelty, including a systematic policy of rape warfare.

One day, I visited the site used as the barracks by UN Peacekeeping forces in the village of Srebrenica, where, in 1995, over 8,000 Bosnian men and boys were executed in the act of genocide. As the site was still abandoned since the war, I simply pulled over on the side of the road and walked through a door. Once inside buildings, I was confronted by the graffiti covering the walls. I remember the murals being large, colorful and well illustrated; however, they depicted Bosnian women in violent and graphic sex acts and were accompanied by racial slurs written in English.

I imagined my family being ripped apart by war, my husband and sons murdered, daughters raped and my house burned. At the same time, soldiers (maybe even the ones intended to protect me) are amusing themselves nearby by creating wall-sized pornography of my misery. I wondered if this was the first time I had shared the room with evidence of true evil.

Over two million people fled their homes in the 1990s during the violent collapse of Yugoslavia, 600,000 from Bosnia alone. Today, that region is largely stable, but spin the globe in either direction and the story plays out again and again. Just five countries account for the majority of the world's refugees fleeing violence at home: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia collectively have 13 million citizens displaced outside their country of birth.

In 1993, Iraq-born Zainab Salbi was disturbed by the systematic violence and suffering she saw taking place against women during the Balkan War. She had fled Iraq by way of an arranged marriage to immigrate to the U.S. when she was 19. She had also experienced firsthand the effects of the Iraq-Iran War on civilians. So, at 23, she founded Women for Women International to offer support to 33 Croatian and Bosnian women displaced by the Bosnian War. Today, Women for Women International still operates in Bosnia—and seven other countries—and to date has assisted over 400,000 women who have survived war.

100 Million Steps in Every Direction

Several years have passed, yet I still regret not protecting the young clerk from the abuse that day. If I could rewrite history, in the new version, I'll have tackled the older woman, dragging her out of the store in the name of human decency. Alas, I can't rewrite the past, and we all must live with our decisions. But I can write down women's stories, including what happened that day to a young immigrant woman, in a store in Virginia, who deserved so much better.

Every day, all over the world, women flee their homes because they want to survive. She might be searching for work. Or love. Or missing her family. She could be hungry. Or hungry for adventure. Maybe she won the visa lottery. Or got accepted to medical school overseas. Or she lost her home in a disaster. She could be running from her past. Or chasing a new future.

The angry customer in the drug store—her family's roots in the U.S. likely run shallow, a few generations at most. And certainly, someone close to her, her best friend, her doctor or her child's teacher is foreign-born. The young clerk's accent, her darker skin and her hijab allowed the customer to believe that she knew something about her—and that "thing" made her angry.

Would she also be angry at the young Romani woman begging on the street because she must eat? What about my mother, who arrived in the U.S. with her fluent English and white skin? What if the cashier in the headscarf was Bosnian Muslim with a brave story of surviving the terrors of being a woman during war?

While the angry customer's behavior and my own failure to intervene that day are disappointing, what saddens me more is the lost opportunity. So just once, I'll pretend I can rewrite history: Two women meet in a store in Alexandria, Virginia. One is in her 60s, wealthy, born in the U.S.—the other, only 19, is from Bangladesh. The older woman shops there often. Every time she sees the younger one, she is delighted. They both smile, ask about each other's families and share updates about their lives. They become friends. Just imagine what skills and lessons they teach each other. Then, believe we can do that 100 million more times. Everywhere. I hate to be cliché, but we just changed the world. ■

FEMLENS NEWS

2019 was an active and successful year for femLENS. We ran three series of documentary photography workshops in Berlin, Germany, as well as a spontaneous storytelling workshop at the 36th Computer Chaos Congress in Leipzig, Germany.

The workshops were done in collaboration with Die Lernwerkstatt, a community learning space; International Women Space (IWS), an independent activist, support and educational space for migrant women; the third workshop was done part of the Art Despite Exclusion Festival.

femLENS' volunteer team has done an amazing work to fundraise money to organise a series of documentary photography workshops for women living in Gaza! With the help of our friends and supporters, we have already raised over 1000 Euro and are now working on getting a permit to enter Gaza. We also published a number of articles on the topic. We started with marking World Refugee Day, talking about how photography skills can improve women's and their community's life, and looking at Gaza's photographic history (fetured in the magazine), and why we think it is important to document life there through women's eyes.

femLENS was feature in Wanderful Magazine, highlighting our history and achievements! We're very grateful for this support.

We also celebrated four years since our first workshop in 2019 with a party and an exhibition!

We are super proud of having organed four photo exhibitions in 2019 featuring the photo stories of our workshop participants from Poland, Lebanon and Germany! Enjoy the photo selection from the different exhibitions. ■

Photo exhibition at Buchhandlung Cafe, Berlin, Germany

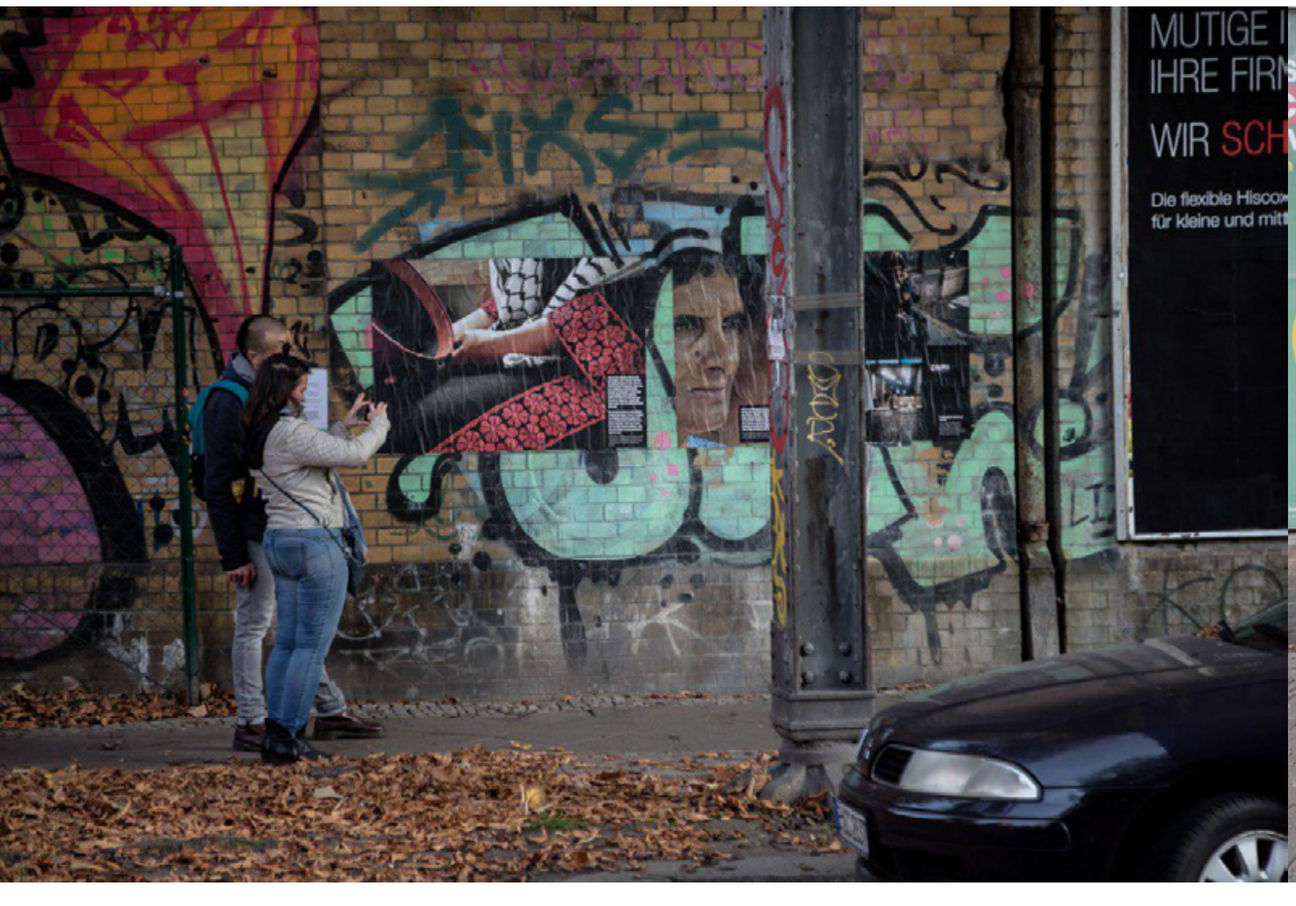
Photo by Bianca Geburek
Street exhibition in Berlin, Germany

Photo exhibition at Regenbogen Fabrik, Berlin, Germany

Photo exhibition at Oblomov, Berlin, Germany

Street photo exhibition under a bridge in Alt-Treptow, Berlin, Germany

Street photo exhibition under a bridge in Alt-Treptow, Berlin, Germany



Rasha Rahhal participated in the femLENS documentary photography workshops in March 2019, in Berlin, Germany. Rahhal is from Damascus, Syria, where she was a professor of law. She has been in Berlin for over three years, learning German and working part-time at a social learning centre

DAUGHTER

by Rasha Rahhal

She was born to give me many interesting challenges. The sun of my life.

Time management, I have a lot of experience with that. I have different tasks to do every day.

My day has two different parts: In the morning, I am a student. I'm learning the language, and I am gathering the experience I need to succeed in the job market.

In the afternoon, I am a teacher of a single student: my daughter. Life full of mosaic-like tasks, so that no boredom can sneak in.


Tel. 033 03 /
500 894
Elektroinstallation
Werbeanlagen
Leuchtreklame
BETHKE
OHV EB 60
DUCATO
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Werbeanlagen
Leuchtreklame
BETHKE
OHV EB 100
MAN

MAY 1

by Lica Stein

The experience during the 1st of May demonstration in Berlin depends on where you stand and with whom you walk. It can be strong and confrontrative at the front, a party-like collective walk at the blocks close to end or it can be feminist if you are walking close to your comrades. Passing by the Liebig 34, the only Anarcha-Queer-Feminist Collective still active in Berlin is a reminder of a city that resists gentrification and join forces against all evictions.

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER
ARLETTE RHUSIMANE BASHIZI

We See magazine aims to support and promote women photographers in print as well as online. On the following pages, Congolese photographer Arlette Rhusimane Bashizi talks about her interest in photography

A CONVERSATION ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY WITH ARLETTE RHUSIMANE BASHIZI

by Jekaterina Saveljeva

City/Country?
Goma, east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

What do you enjoy most about photography?
I like photography because through it I express myself very freely. I transmit what I see and what I feel without having to write long messages or long text.

Was there anything that inspired you to start making photos?
Regarding inspiration, I am passionate about communication and journalism since I was very young, and growing up I was interested in photography, to communicate visually. African Congolese woman inspire me a lot.

What is your favourite object/subject/topic to photograph?
I prefer to photograph stories in their natural and everyday life in order to document history or facts. I think it is more authentic. Sometimes I also take photos of models, often in African style. I also make black and white portraits.

Do you feel it is important to share your vision on social media?
I share my work on social networks because I think it's important to share my visions that are glorifying African women's exploits in particular, and women worldwide in general, and to denounce all social injustices that are happening in our communities. My camera must be the voice which helps women to denounce all those injustices. Social medias help me to have the greatest audience possible and it also helps us to connect to the whole world, which is an asset.

Who do you think is your aimed audience?
My aimed audience is women and youth.

Do you like working on stories at home/in your local community?
I like a lot to work on actual stories that happen in our different communities because they tell the true version of facts without distorting the story. Local stories easily explain the stories the injustices experienced, the suffering, and also the efforts made to reduce these injustices... But I would also like to travel and make photos in other regions I have never been to. It is a question of learning more about life of other communities, other people...

Do you think photography could change someone's life? In what way?
I strongly believe that photography can change the way of living or seeing things for some people like myself, because an image containing a true message can change behaviour, a reaction. Also photography can inspire other women to overcome things and do what they want to do, for example a job that is supposed to be done by men only. According to the community's design in which I grew up the fact of me doing photography can also inspire and influence other people directly or indirectly, to overcome and give women the opportunity to engage in other fields of life. ■

A young woman itinerant, seller of kitchen utensils in Goma, DRC


Portrait of a young woman in Goma, DRC


This portrait is an illustration I made to give hope to young women. The two overexposed images show sadness and sorrow, the injustices they face on the one hand, and on the other there are smiles. I want to show hope in a better tomorrow, the joy of living. This photo is part of a project I am currently working on entitled "A smile, a hope"

WOMEN OF GOMA

by Arlette Rhusimane Bashizi

I photograph women to praise the hard work they do every day, to show the whole world that they are capable of doing many things even if they often face so much social injustice.

The difference that I see between young women and those who have already aged what I believe they no longer have the same aspirations for bringing to life they no longer have the same dream so I prefer to give more hope for the new generation thanks to the experiences of older women. Also because we have to invest a lot in the youth who represent the present and the future of the world.

I feel comfortable photographing both the younger and the older generation. Some people at first disagree to have their photo taken, they think we will use their faces for commercial purposes but after explaining why I take photos, some finally agree and I work can with them.

Women work in recycling workshop for used tires which are turned into furniture, in Goma, DRC. The three women are in charge of marketing, fashion design and communication

Top: Woman selling corn in Goma, DRC
Left: Street vendor in Goma, DRC

RECLAIMING TITLES

by Mai'a Williams

This is my roomate, Maria and her two friends, Fadi and Yelda; all three of whom identify as queer people of color and stayed in our shared flat during Pride weekend. Maria's family is from Palestine, Yelda's family is Cypriot-Turkish and they both grew up in Germany and identify proudly as 'kanakin,' a word that is derogatory when used by white Germans to describe non-European migrants, especially those who are of Turkish and Arab descent.

The word has been reclaimed by people like Maria and Yelda. To be a 'kanake', according to Maria means that you are culturally different from white Germans, that you speak the 'kanake' German dialect, and are often times louder and more expressive.

Fadi is a queer Syrian, a brilliant intellectual and has been studying in Germany for the past nine years.


GENERAL
STRIKE!


Dear washing machine user!
Make sure the dishwasher is not running at the same time as washing machine, as it might cause issues with water supply and drainage to/from one of them.
Always turn the dial back to zero at the end of using, and/or before choosing your program, if it wasn't already on zero.
Make sure the Start light isn't blinking (that's pause/standby). If it is blinking, press Start again to launch cycle.
Lieber Waschmaschinenbenutzer!

MARIA

by Denise Bergt

Maria da Romenia is a friend of mine and of IWS (International Women Space). We met during the occupation of the Gerhart-Hauptmann School at the Ohlauer Straße, in Kreuzberg, Berlin, Germany. Maria, her family and other families came to the school in 2013, a few months after we started the Women Space.

They occupied the floor below ours and we connected immediately. Together we have been planning, organising political actions and campaigns. She is one of the strongest and smartest woman I know.

BRAZILLIANS

ANNA GRILLO

Anna Grillo participated in the femLENS documentary photography workshops that ran in partnership with the International Women Space (IWS), which is a feminist, anti-racist political group in Berlin with migrant and refugee women and non-migrant women as members, in Berlin, Germany in 2019

My name is Anna Thereza Prates Grillo, I participated in the femLENS documentary photography workshops at the International Women's Space in Berlin.

"You don't look like a Brazilian", is what I often hear. I believe the world's lack of knowledge of Brazilian diversity, and the widespread stereotyped and sexualized culture of women, are the reason for this common misconception.

My father's family has Italian, Spanish and Uruguayan origins. My mother's has Portuguese, Indigenous, African and who knows what else.
I'm white, tall, lower-middle class and from the south of Brazil.

I'm very Brazilian and I want to show how we all look like.

To make the subject more understandable, here is a short summary of how Brazil's population became so ethnically diverse:
- The Indigenous Brazilian people have been almost extinguished since Portugal colonized Brazil.
- African people were taken from their homelands, enslaved and sent to forced labour in Brazil.
- Natural treasures and world wars have made Brazil attractive to Europeans, Arabs and Asians.
- Recently, South Americans and Africans have been migrating to Brazil, as their countries are facing political and economic problems.

White Brazilians usually know their origins because, for being white, their ancestors had their arrival in Brazil registered in official documents.
The same did not happen with African families, who had their stories taken and erased.

Brazil is an amazing country. Despite being an inheritance of colonialism and slavery, the diversity is our identity.
We are facing a social, politic and economic crisis and the road that led us here began to be traced when white immigrants built the Brazilian elite. Since then, the elite rules politics and justice, in a strange and corrupt way.

We already paid for their greed, now we are paying for their fear of losing power. Anyway, we pay. So it's necessary to understand what happened, talk about, correct the mistakes and never forget.

> It was the face of a country that had never punished the crimes committed under military rule. A country that has been shaped by slavery, privilege and coups. Our democracy was founded on forgetting. - Petra Costa, The Edge of Democracy, Netflix

This sample represents a social bubble that is living in Berlin. The environment of the Brazilian woman is much more plural than that.

Samanta Fumie Zenatti Giotoko from São Paulo

Denise Garcia Bergt from Porto Alegre

Indiana Freire from Rio de Janeiro

Dinara Mallmann from Bom Princípio

Gabriela de Miranda Biasi from Porto Alegre

Andrea Dias Carneiro Maia from Belo Horizonte

FIGHTER

by Antonia Gerlinde Schui

Batool Nakhoda-Kohlhof is a fighter; she does not give up easily.

Batool is a Berliner who grew up in Iran.

She is living without hands, for a long time now.

After a liver-transplatation she had to stay in hospital for more then one year, most of the time in koma. But she had no doubt: She would not die, dead was no option.

The socialworker wants to live. Now she also got cancer. Good food, books, black tea, her family, the home with garden in Lichterfelde and her friends give her energy. She appreciates the beautiful moments. Batool uses the fruits in her garden for jam. As long as possible she prepared it on her own - with her arms, without hands. The profit is for children with handicap in Iran.

Batool wants to be visible, she likes to be portrayed, refuses to hide. Her time is too precious.

A STUDENT HOUSE

by Maria Paula Sanchez

The student dorm in Franz-Mehring-Platz is now part of my life in Berlin. It's a place that represents for me a mix of feelings and emotions. One day it could be awesome because of the many different nationalities living there but on another it could be just crazy, loud and messy.

A student dorm is a dynamic place that could be constantly offering surprises and new things to see. The purpose of the pictures is to show the different nationalities, the different activities, different spaces in the building, such as the kitchen, rooms and corridors and curious facts such as the names of the washing machines and the clothes or food people leave on the floor or at the reception to give away. In some of the photos there are random people, whereas others were taken in the flat of an Indian and Indonesian tenants in the dorm.

VIEWING GAZA THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

By Kerriann Marden

Life in the Gaza Strip is hard and getting harder. A recent United Nations report predicts that conditions there will be "unliveable" by the year 2020, just five months away. In male-dominated Gaza, where no one has enough, females have even less: less freedom of movement, less economic opportunity, less political power, and less hope of having their voices heard.

But that's where photography of and by women in Gaza can make a difference. Images captured by women photographers allow them to share their viewpoint, and allow us to see-with our own eyes-life as they experience it. In Gaza, women inhabit a space from which most of the world is restricted by religious or cultural prohibitions, geographic boundaries, language barriers, or gender norms. Photography offers women the opportunity to share their unique perspective and to open a window on the world they embody.

Female photographers are a rare breed in Gaza, where photography is generally a male profession. However, those who have dared to break the mould are truly noteworthy. Freelance photojournalist Samar Abu Elouf has been capturing haunting and compelling images of life in Gaza for almost a decade, including her 2016 series for the International Committee of the Red Cross, Portraits of Women of Gaza. Seeing it as her responsibility to document the truth through her camera lens, her work has been described as "part documentary, part politics." Mariam Riad Abu Daqqa is a press photographer whose work eloquently expresses the precarious balance of her life in Gaza, between violent explosions on the one hand and tiny vegetable gardens on

Opposite page photos by Halima Al-Haj Ali
This page photos by Faten Anbar

Halima Al-Haj Ali and Faten Anbar participated in the femLEN documentary photography workshops in Shatila refugee camp, Beirut, Lebanon in 2017.

the other. Photojournalist Eman Mohammed explained in her TED Talk that she primarily photographed violence and its aftermath because this was the reality of her world. Although she lived and worked in Gaza, she has now relocated to the US, reducing the number of female Palestinian photojournalists actively working in the Gaza Strip today to two.

Laila Shawa, a Gaza-born artist currently living in the UK, uses her photographs of people and protest in Gaza as the foundation for powerful mixed-media artwork depicting the injustice and persecution that have become the political reality of her nation. During a self-imposed confinement in protest against violence in Gaza, local artist Nidaa Badwan produced a series of vibrant photographic self-portraits of her literal and metaphoric interior life, One Hundred Days of Solitude.

Women from outside of Gaza are also working to impart the experiences of those living within the territory. American photojournalist Heidi Levine documented Israel's 2014 offensive facing not only the same dangers but also the same discrimination, as the women she photographed. She used her gender status to her advantage, gaining access to intimate situations that her male colleagues could not, and capturing the truth of the female experience in her photographs. Photographer Monique Jacques, an American based in Istanbul, draws upon the local tradition of storytelling to develop trusting relationships with her subjects in order to document the joys and victories of women's lives in Gaza. The Jordanian-born, American- and British-educated East Jerusalem resident Tanya Habjouqa depicts the daily lives of women living in this impoverished, isolated territory in her unflinching photo series Women of Gaza.

Yet despite the vision and talent of these courageous women photographers, their voices remain stifled without an audience. Female photojournalists Enas Mraih and Laila Abu Odeh have been named in certain Palestinian blogs, but have left no discernible footprint beyond their nation, so their work is entirely lost to the outside world. And although there have been several photography exhibits focused on Gaza, these almost exclusively showcase the work of males. In order to share their unique perspective and to credit their brave work, greater effort must be made to disseminate the work of these female photographers, both within and beyond the closed borders of their nation. Exhibiting these women's work enriches all of our understanding by, quite literally, completing the picture of life in Gaza.

Some important efforts are being made, including a series of workshops in Gaza "to encourage more women and girls to take up a lens and document their perspectives" currently under development by femLENS. These workshops are designed to be a form of empowerment, giving a voice to those who have been kept silent or for whom others have spoken. By putting the camera directly into the hands of women and girls in Gaza and letting their eyes direct the lens, their lives will stop being invisible, and they can regain some sense of control over their circumstances.

Photo by femLENS
femLENS workshops 2019, Berlin, Germany

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Front cover photo by Rasha Rahhal, femLENS workshops 2019, at Die Lernwerkstatt, Berlin, Germany.
Back cover photo by Mateja Kert, femLENS workshops 2019, at Die Lernwerkstatt, Berlin, Germany.

PHOTOGRAPHS INCLUDED IN THIS MAGAZINE WERE TAKEN BY WOMEN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS ORGANISED BY FEMLENS IN BERLIN, GERMANY (MARCH-AUGUST 2019):

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Kateryna Gorbachova

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As well as photos by Faten Anbar and Halima Al-Haj Ali, workshop participants in Shatila refugee camp, Beirut, Lebanon, 2017.

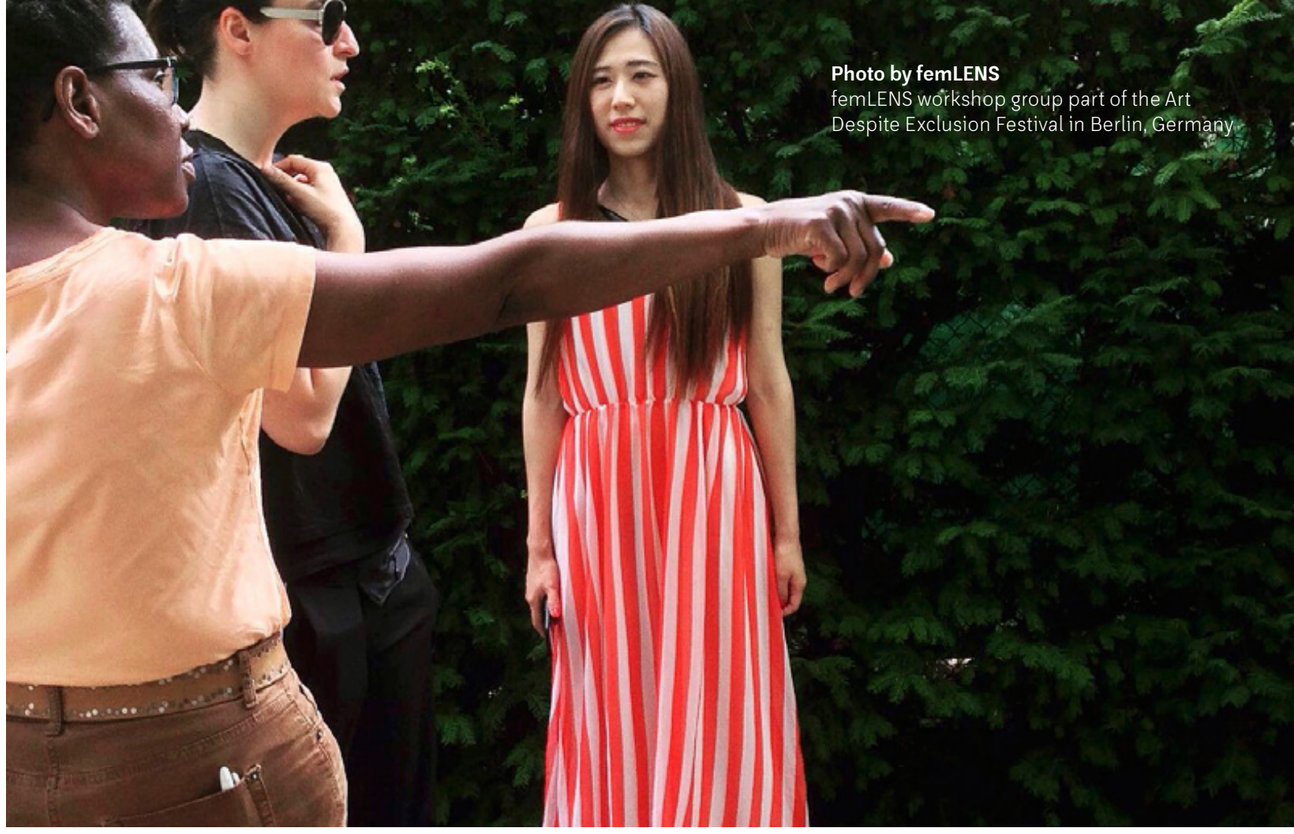

Photo by femLENS
femLENS workshop group part of the Art Despite Exclusion Festival in Berlin, Germany

Photos by femLENS
femLENS workshops at the International Women Space, Berlin, Germany

Photo by Kateryna Gorbachova
femLENS workshop in Berlin, Germany