PUBLICATION ON GENDER STUDIES

"TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM"

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ABSTRACT:

Transnational Feminism is a response to global and international feminisms that have tended to view the world from a Eurocentric, colonialist perspective. Under the rubric of transnational feminism, theorists look at interrelationships between and among players situated in different contexts across the globe. Global feminism tries to fit the whole world into one feminist mold, or studies discrete areas of the globe; transnational feminism articulates issues as they take place through multiple related contexts, often with different meanings in different places. Transnational focuses on relationships and movements of people, capital, ideas. A transnational critique of global feminism asks how to link diverse feminisms without requiring either equivalence or a master theory. Grewal and Kaplan call for Western feminists to examine academic work and everyday life in terms of understanding that privilege in a world system means someone else’s exploitation/oppression. Thus, not all feminists will have the same agendas, or the same approaches to particular problems. Transnational as defined by Grewal and Kaplan is used to
problematic a purely locational politics of global-local or center-periphery in favor of the lines cutting across them. As feminists who note the absence of gender issues in all of these worldsystem theories, we have no choice but to challenge what we see as inadequate and inaccurate binary divisions.

Keywords: Gender, Human Rights, Economics, Nation-state.

Introduction:

The theory termed transnational feminism was first used by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan in 1994 in their seminal text *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, which situated transnational feminism among other theories of feminism, modernity, and postmodernity. Soon after, M. Alexander and Chandra Mohanty published *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* in 1997, a book important in formulating transnational feminist canon. This text, building on Grewal and Kaplan's, focused more on the ways in which a new theory of transnational feminism could help foreground feminist activist practices in global contexts. They talk about feminist democracies as ways for activists to imagine nonhegemonic futures.

The practice of transnational feminism networks, in which feminists started exchanging ideas and collaborating across nation-state borders, originated from the United Nations conferences in the 1970s. In 1975 the United Nations Decade of Women began with the United Nations declaration of an International Women's Year. This ushered in a decade of conferences that would continue to the present. Important events during this period included conferences in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing in 1995.

These conferences and others facilitated the contact of feminists from all over the globe, allowing for discussions to occur that transcended borders. While so called western feminists, a term for feminists that were US-based white, class-privileged women had dominated the women's
rights movement, when women from other parts of the globe were brought in, they began criticizing this type of women's rights for assuming all women had the same experiences, and not considering the impact of factors such as race, state, economic status had on their lives.

Gender:

Transnational feminisms examine how powers of colonialism, modernity, postmodernity, and globalization construct gender norms, or normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity among the subaltern, Third World, and colonized.

Second-wave feminism in the 1980s started to explore gender instead of sex as a category of distinction between people. With a recognition that biology can identify differences between people, feminists focused on the system of gender norms as an ongoing, changeable process that shaped people's lives and behaviors. This production of critique was largely used in the Global North and is a liberal feminist ideology. Though it did not broaden the discussion of workplace discrimination and reproductive rights for heterosexual female identified people of the first world, this wave was exclusionary of Third world feminist and developing countries. Second wave feminism rejected critic of inequalities due to class, race, sex, socioeconomic status, legal status, age, ability and religion.

With global capitalism causing more people to migrate away from their homes in search of jobs, migration has affected genders unequally, and is thus a key concern in transnational feminisms and feminist economics. Women currently account for roughly half of long-distance migration, and overwhelmingly marginalized women of color bear the burden of global capitalism.

Human rights:

Because the original design of human rights, particularly as constituted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was designed to fit into specific legal categories, it reflected the needs and values of affluent white Western men who were the subjects of the legal system. Transnational
feminists argue that human rights sometimes do not take into account other conceptions of rights, and do not recognize the experiences of women, in particular those who are *indigenous, Third World, women of color, poor, rural, disabled and queer*. For example, human rights are geared towards public life and often don't account for the violations of women within their private lives. The private sector is often one of the major focuses of women's rights, including domestic violence, the double day of work and family, discrimination against homosexuals, or the denial of reproductive rights, and even rights tied to keeping these private for women. However, human rights discourse doesn't largely concern itself with these areas. Feminists also critique that these definitions of human rights are often tied too much to the nation-state itself, and that this model discludes *the majority of women and communities throughout the world*.

Feminists argue that human rights tend also to reinforce power imbalances, giving marginalized people the false assumption that they have rights. In reality these kinds of rights often work more greatly in favor of those already with power, and furthermore that nation-states that already do not care to follow human rights declarations have no incentive to protect women's rights.

Economics:

Some transnational feminist groups focus on economic issues. Many of the most important issues to transnational feminists revolve around economics. For many transnational feminists like Mohanty, global capitalism is a serious problem and one that hurts women, particularly Third World women. Mohanty argues strongly against global capitalism. She considers herself an anti-capitalist and is opposed to globalization. The expansion of neoliberalism and neoliberal policies are also of concern given their often negative impacts on women. According to Audre Lorde, empowering people who are doing work, like educating others, does not mean using privilege to overstep and overpower groups like educators. Instead, these people must use their privilege to
hold the door open for more allies to step in and support groups like educators or less-industrialized
groups of women.

The nation-state:

Because global capitalism is one of the driving forces for much of the inequalities that transnational feminists are addressing with, and nation-states produce and reproduce structures of global capitalism, nation-states are important to look at in transnational feminist practices.

Today, there is also a wave of transnational feminism with important currents of feminism are challenging the state-territorial framing of political claims-making and that rejects the state-territorial frame itself. They point out that the actions of one state can and tend to affect the lives of women in surrounding territories, and even throughout the world with more powerful actors. Furthermore, the actions of non-state actors, especially those of international organizations, of the governmental and non-governmental varieties, have huge impacts on the lives of women without consideration of state borders. Likewise, communication at the scale it exists today can alter the lives of women, especially with global mass media and cyber technology. Many of the issues that women around the world face as well are not simply from within state borders, such as sickness and climate change, so the traditional model of the state does not do enough for helping to solve these issues.

Some further claim that this framework of the state further contributes to oppression, as it partitions political space in ways that block many women from challenging the forces that oppress them, especially with the protection international corporations and the current global governance of the economy. Many of the poor and marginalized in the world, especially of the women, are restricted in seeking justice for problems against such large, international corporations. It also takes many groups out of the global decision making, as, with a few exceptions, women are underrepresented at the national level in many states and in many global governance groups. These feminists argue that because women are among the most impoverished and underrepresented of
the world, in the current framework of the global nation-state, it is even more difficult for women to attempt to create change, when in order to do so, they must often go against their domestic state or an international corporation, both of which have more resources and influence than a singular or even a small community of women, so this power division and systematic structure seeks to further oppress women.

Conclusion:

Gender is more than a factor its narrative of human experience reshapes the way we look at core issues such as security and development.

Reference:

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