

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S AND GENDER ACTIVISM AND
SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: PERU

**Transcript of Indira Huilca
Flores
Interviewer: Karen Bernedo
Morales**

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Indira Huilca Flores, born in 1988, is a sociologist and progressive feminist activist. She received her degree in Sociology from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, in Lima, and studied for a Master's in Political Science and Government at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. In 2013 she was elected councilor of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, where she joined the Commissions for Urban Development, Environment, Women and Neighborhood Participation. In this capacity, she promoted the creation of the Women's Management as the body responsible for public policies on gender equality in Metropolitan Lima. She was elected to Congress in 2016 and her work had three priorities: gender, diversity and human rights; labor rights and unionization; and the right to the city and public spaces. As a Congresswoman, she was the President of the Committee on Women and Family and a member of the Committee on Labor and Social Security in which she worked for the rights of women, workers, and the LGTBI community. She was also outspoken in calling the first congressional plenary session on women held in May 2018. In 2017 she joined the new political party New Peru and was the elected official spokesperson for the period 2019-2020. In 2019, she resigned from the New Peru Movement after the dissolution of Congress led to the movement to support electoral alliances in the congressional elections of January 2020.

Karen Bernedo Morales is a curator and researcher of Visual Anthropology and Gender Studies. She is professor at Universidad Científica del Sur and a founding member of the award-winning peripatetic Museum of Art and Memory. She has directed documentaries on memory of the internal armed conflict of Peru: *Ludy D, women in the armed internal conflict*, *Mamaquilla, threads of war* and the series *Other memories, art and political violence in Peru*, and has curated visual arts projects with a gender perspective such as: *María Elena Moyano, texts of a women on the left* (2017), *Collaborative Carpet of Visual Resistance* (1992-2017), *Pedro Huilca, let's struggle for a cause that is superior to our lives* (2017), *Las Primeras, women encounter history* (2018, 2020), *Emancipadas y emancipadoras, the women of independence of Perú* (2019). She is currently completing the documentary *The invisible heritage*, which explores the fewer representations of women in monuments in the public space in Lima.

The interviews for the Peru country site were conducted in summer 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. These interviews were conducted over Zoom, and due to this format, there were some interruptions in the interview due to problems with connectivity. Many of these interviews discuss life and activism during the pandemic.

Karen Bernedo Morales: I know that most of the interviews maybe focus on your work as a politician or in organizations that you've been a part of, but we'd like to start with your life story and your personal history from the early years. What about the context that you've gone through or those memories that you may have, somehow have to do with what you're doing now?

Indira Huilca Flores: Yeah, I started in politics, let's say actively, when I started college, right? In 2005, let's say that during those first years, that first year, I got to know what was going on in the university in terms of organization, in terms of student spaces or university spaces, and I entered San Marcos,¹ which is a large and important public university, right? Where there is a lot of student participation, but I didn't get directly involved in the university's union spaces, which were equally as important, I still participated from time to time, but I got more involved with the spaces that were linked to feminist activism in the university, right? At that time there was an interest in gender studies, in feminist studies.

At the university, a gender studies program had recently been created as part of the graduate program, and so there was a kind of... [brief pause] at that time, I think, a lot of openness for undergraduate students to go to the classes, right, or to meet the professors. So I went to the classes and in fact many of the people who were taking classes there, or studying, or attended these classes just like me, were people who were also in some kind of organized space or some other initiative that combined academics and politics. So that's how I left, that is, I got to know small collectives or feminist collectives at the university and in the space of a master's program.

And well, later on, it was as if things were flowing naturally, you know? I was soon in a collective or with friends or colleagues in feminist spaces, who were not only looking to discuss or debate gender studies or feminism, or how this was linked to the social reality of our country, but also to take action, right, to take action outside the university, not just within the university. And I would say that this was my first approach, for me, towards organized politics. Not so much in a partisan way, I've always been a left-wing person, right? I come from a left-wing family where, right? my parents have been militant, but it didn't necessarily catch my attention to participate in a left-wing party, right? From the beginning it seemed to me that these other spaces, spaces were much more open in terms of being able to propose, to learn. And well, that's where I first got involved for a few years. And like I said, these spaces were initially for university people, but later, as we advanced in our careers and were about to leave, or some had already left the university, it was also a

¹ Located in Lima, Peru, the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM) is a public university with more than 35,000 students (including undergraduate and postgraduate students). ("National University of San Marcos." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_University_of_San_Marcos. Accessed 14 May 2021.)

reflection on how we could contribute by being feminists beyond our immediate spaces, where we are most naturally: the university or certain circles.

So it was a very interesting experience. And despite the fact that at that time, we're talking about 2006 or 2007 to 2008, I don't think there was the enormous openness that there is today with respect to feminism, that is, feminism today is a topic that many people like or don't like, it's a global topic, it's a massive topic, right? At that time, the view was "This is not massive, this will never be massive." But that does not mean that it is not important, but rather for those of us who already had some type of practice or attempt at organizing from the perspective of feminism, we said, "Well, this is something that has to be in diverse political spaces and decision-making spaces so that women's lives can really change, right?"

It's going to be very difficult, it's true that feminism is not prioritized, but it has to be done, right? So of course, at some point in time or in history there has been an explosion in feminism, but at that time, since there were people in these groups who were getting together, it was already something very positive, you know? And I felt that it was always growing when a group started, right? That they were getting to know young feminist people in those years and suddenly, after a few months or weeks, it doubled. There were always people looking to learn more or connect, weren't there? So that was also, like I said, that there was a lot of potential for feminism in those times.

KBM: And something you said that you come from a leftist family but you weren't interested in those in those years, in being involved with left until you got to college, why do you think that happened?

IHF: Well, because the left in Peru has also had a complicated, complex trajectory, right? By the time I went to college and, well, I left school first, I was thinking about that in addition to being a person who is studying a profession, right, if I wanted to actively participate in something, as a matter of civic responsibility. Because during those years, I am talking about, well, I left school in 2003, right? And I started to attend university because I was applying, but my first year was in 2005, so these are very recent years of the return of democracy. At that time, the discussion about what to do with the country after getting back the democracy was in vogue, wasn't it?

There was a lot of talk about, maybe like now, but at that time there was much more optimism about the reforms that were needed. They talked about reforming the constitution, they talked about... anyways, at that time it was very like.. not in style but it was very.. fresh- this whole debate about decentralization in Peru. And then there were many discussions pending about what to do, how society could contribute so that the country would not fall back into a dynamic similar to that during the dictatorship. So all this was very much in the air, wasn't it? And I was wondering what could be done, what options were available for young people to participate. Obviously, the first thing for me was to look at what was closest to me, but I felt that this was obviously a very personal opinion, and perhaps a very partial view, that there was not necessarily a more important offer from the left than someone who was young at that time, right? With maybe a profile, a little, I don't know if for a senator, but a little more with the expectation of a dynamic within a less

hierarchical politics. Less charged with these images that have sometimes accompanied the left of this space, which do not necessarily invite debate or democratic dialogue, but where each one has his or her own truth and tries to convince the other, right?

That is to say, I have lived it very closely because that is a little bit the way or the environment in which my parents were militant. And of course you understand that this is part of an era, right? Nor can you judge from your reality. But you say, "Well, that time has passed, hasn't it?" So we are in other times and therefore there should be other dynamics, right? And I think that was like, either the realization that those dynamics hadn't necessarily changed, or they hadn't changed for the better, was what didn't encourage me to look for a space within the parties of the left at that time. At least for me they didn't offer that, right? That is to say, the possibility of finding an environment different from what, unfortunately, had also contributed to the loss of the left's presence in society and caused them to fall, right? because they came from a very strong process of mobilization and organization and well in the 90s, In other words, yes, they were an important part of the recovery of democracy, but not necessarily as organized references of parties.

And for the year 2000, there was not much clarity about where the leftist parties were, or what their horizons, or what their projects for the country were, and some of the references of the left had even tried to renew their discourses, but I think that this expectation of social change had been lost in some depth, hadn't it? So there was also a lot of this, the people of the left have to adopt a modern discourse, right? And I'm not really convinced by that discourse because apparently it sounded good, but on the other hand it lost depth, didn't it? Always as implicitly renouncing to expectations of greater change. And at least for me, because after what happened in the 90s, I said, "Well, this country cannot change only superficially, right? it has to change a little more deeply. That is, no, there are things that had not been resolved, have not been resolved," right? And, well, I think that was one of the reasons why I was not necessarily very enthusiastic about going to the left, but I was concerned to see what other spaces there were at the level of society where one could participate and learn and debate.

KBM: And is there any experience that you remember from those university years that you are telling me about, a leftist feminist experience that has marked you and in which you have been a part of?

IHF: Yes. Well, several initiatives, as I say, but perhaps the one that was the most important for me was a learning space, a collective called La Mestiza.² That... well, at that time when I was entering the university, it already existed. I mean, it had already been in existence for a few months, and later I met some of the colleagues that were there and I then I also joined. And well it was a very interesting space because, of course, more than that, the idea that it

² La Mestiza Colectiva is a left-wing feminist collective that introduces youth to feminism and lesbian activism. La Mestiza worked to expand feminist discourse into a 'new feminism' through their blog and magazine *La Mestiza*. (Zobl, Elke. Reitsamer, Rosa. "La Mestiza: Making new feminisms. An interview with Raquel from Lima, Peru." Grassroots Feminism. <https://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/654>. Accessed 4 June 2021.)

is that collective that will strengthen and grow, what I think was most interesting for me about that space was that it promoted the existence of other spaces or similar spaces or spaces that could be used to build. So this space of La Mestiza has published a magazine, it did activities, you know? Like many collectives at that time, but it always sought to locate others or locate other feminists who were elsewhere, you know? La Mestiza, above all, were these students from San Marcos and Bellas Artes,³ but we knew that there were, for example, classmates at the Catholic School,⁴ classmates at the School of Dramatic Art,⁵ and that there were several other university spaces. So we were doing activities to meet, right? to debate and also to support each other, because as I said, feminism was a project in itself that was seen as a minority in society, and in the universities it was no exception. There was also a lot of hostility, so that some activity that was openly feminist in its proposal could be developed. There was also a certain hostility at times from professors or from some colleagues. So we are always going to support that. At some point, a space was created by these small groups or by what La Mestiza did, as a coordinator of young feminists in the universities, which grew a lot. I was surprised because there were many people who were not named feminists at the beginning, who said, "Well, I am not a feminist, but I do everything you do, so I guess I am a feminist," right?

And that space, that coordinator had a lot of people, that is, some meetings were up to 100 people who wanted to do things. And that was very interesting. We did the magazine thing. We did some more cultural activities, because we were clear that this also had to do with conquering some common senses, right?, from culture, from art. And sometimes, in the first resistance of feminism, it was simply the enunciation of the word itself. Feminism. And some of the words related to it as a barrier, right? So, in opposition to this, there is machismo and so many other things that are said now, right?

But that was like an everyday thing, there were many things that we did on a daily basis and that helped me a lot. This first one was good from a point of view of the content. Also from a point of view of the things we were reading, learning, but also from a point of view, at least now, I value it like that, of organization. I mean, this idea of people or people who don't necessarily come from a traditional political background, in a society that is so depoliticized, but I know that they try to organize themselves and promote things that go beyond them outside of their professional activities or even their academic activities. That was an important lesson. It was like knowing how to get along with people of your generation, as I say, many, well I don't know if all of them, but perhaps many of them came

³ La Escuela Nacional Superior Autónoma de Bellas Artes del Perú is a public fine arts university located in Lima, Peru. ("Historia." Escuela Nacional Superior Autónoma de Bellas Artes del Perú. <https://ensabap.edu.pe/ensabap/historia/>. Accessed 4 June 2021.)

⁴ The Pontifical Catholic University of Peru was founded in 1917 in Lima, Peru. The institution is one of the oldest private universities in country. In 2016, 25,178 students attended the school. ("Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú." Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontificia_Universidad_Cat%C3%B3lica_del_Per%C3%BA. Accessed 14 May 2021.)

⁵ La Escuela Nacional Superior de Arte Dramático is a college located in Lima, Peru. Its students are actors, actresses, set designers, and instructors of the dramatic arts. ("Quienes Somos." Escuela Nacional Superior de Arte Dramático. <https://www.ensad.edu.pe/quienes-somos/>. Accessed 4 June 2021.)

from spaces that were not necessarily politicized in the most traditional sense, right? And having that effort to push things, right? A magazine, an activity, this academic activity at the university, or participating in the marches together. Even opening debates with other colleagues from other generations, or as referents of feminism, at a time when there were also certain debates among us, at the level of Peruvian feminism, there were certain debates that had not been fully addressed. As always there is this idea of... taking stock among feminists of things that were done and not done.

I think that at that time there were very interesting discussions that were also good because they were done in a very fraternal way. Now I think that since we are so... for good and for bad, so influenced by social networks, many of those discussions and debates can no longer be done face to face, right? So sometimes we debate in a not so fraternal way. And like with this idea of, "what I say to cancel out or invalidate their work," right? But at that time, something that satisfies me a lot and makes me very happy to have been able to live, perhaps, was having discrepancies or having questions or having doubts about the processes of feminism that was prior to us. Because we were very young and what do I know? Those discussions, those debates, those questions could still be asked directly, couldn't they? By asking our sisters who had fought before us.

It was very interesting and I'm glad I was able to be part of those discussions, which today, as I said, are a little more complicated, aren't they? Because first there is a lot of feminism everywhere and sometimes it is difficult to meet. And on the other hand, because I feel that the main tool for these discussions or these expressions are usually social networks, which are not always the best way to reach a conclusion, but rather to let people say what they want to say, but not necessarily so that something can be done to conclude this idea.

KBM: And in that sense and in the work you've been doing so far, what would you consider to be your most satisfying achievement?

IHF: Well, I don't know, several things, and several stages. In terms of what is my militancy, I think the fact in itself, right? Of having, I don't know, of having organized myself. I can't say what has given me more personal satisfaction because of course, that is, there are several measures. Someone could say that, well, I have been a congresswoman, I have had a responsibility as an authority and there are things that have been achieved from Parliament, right? In my... Let's say from the perspective that I wasn't just a person in politics fulfilling a role but also someone with previous militancy. I could tell you that, but I also think that there are things that cannot be compared in the same way, right?

The very fact of having organized myself, of having been part of a space already when I have militated in the left. A space that took over the agenda, right? That we feminists had been building, some things that perhaps 15 years ago would not have been so firmly enunciated from the left. The agenda in favor of sexual and reproductive rights, in favor of gender equality, trying to also articulate that struggle that is not something isolated but something that is really understood within a more comprehensive program of change within the left. That is to say, that makes me very proud because I feel that at least when I don't know if when I ran for office or when I was encouraged to join the militancy in a left-

wing party or in left-wing parties, that was a bet not made by many of us who came from previous experiences, right? As I was telling you about those experiences of a more activist and social militant kind. And the fact that this was also incorporated previously in the programs and also to a certain extent in the organizational dynamics of the left seemed like an achievement to me, it seems to me to be something important, it seems to me to be something that I hope can be maintained, right? Anyway, there are several achievements on a personal level and I don't know if I value one over the other, but these things seem to me to be very valuable, don't they?

KBM: And you've talked a lot about activism and feminism and a little bit about what has inspired you to that and on the political issue, how is it that... What inspires you to run for public office so soon?

IHF: Well of course, it's not a personal decision or at least in my case I don't think it was at all. In other words, it was not just an individual decision in the sense that, as I said, I was already militating in different spaces, right? This kind of decision, plus this..., was a very political one, which means that fortunately we didn't have this idea of "we're not political," no, on the contrary, we always recognized that we were doing politics, but then one thing led to another. And you say "Well, how can it grow? How can it articulate?" And you find yourself in other struggles, don't you? At that time it was also important for us in other struggles that were already developing very strongly in our country.

Well, then all those years during the 2010 decade were years of much social conflict in our country linked to environmental issues, to the issues of Indigenous peoples. And I think there was also a lot of solidarity from the feminist movement with those processes, right? So for me, it was like, "Well, this is also part of it," right, we are feminists, but this is also part of it. I remember that I was very marked by The Baguazo.⁶ I always say this because when the baguazo happened you said "that's a barbarity," that is, how can they kill people like that with such impunity and without a firm response? I mean, yes, of course, Alan García and his party govern the country,⁷ but there is, there is a rejection of what has happened and where this rejection is expressed politically, right? I didn't necessarily feel that there was, right? At that time there was an opposition to nationalism with the figure of Ollanta Humala,⁸ but it was not, I think, a rejection... I don't know how to say it but... plausible right? with respect to... what had happened or the magnitude of what was happening in our country right?

⁶ In 2009, President Alan García's government sent military forces to end indigenous protests against new national regulations that would allow foreign companies access to natural resources in the Amazon. The conflict, which became known as the "Baguazo", resulted in the deaths of 23 members of the military and 10 indigenous protesters. ("2009 Peruvian Political Crisis." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_Peruvian_political_crisis. Accessed 4 June 2021.)

⁷ Alan García served as president of Peru during the years 1985-1990 and 2006-2011 as a representative of the Peruvian Aprista Party. Peru faced wide-spread violence and an economic crisis during his first term, but saw growth in the national economy during his second term. ("Alan García." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Garc%C3%ADa. Accessed 4 June 2021.)

⁸ Ollanta Humala is a former president of Peru, having served in the position from 2011 to 2016. In 2017, he was arrested for his involvement in the Odebrecht scandal during his presidency. ("Ollanta Humala." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ollanta_Humala. Accessed 4 June 2021.)

And I was saying, well of course there is a rejection obviously because here what is at stake between the two is a more electoral dispute, right? And at some point he wants to be president, right? He had already lost the first election. But I was saying, what is the answer from us? From the left, from the feminists, from the women, from the Indigenous peoples. And it was very frustrating to feel that there was no such answer. Except for a few personalities from the left who had a public or media presence, I felt that there was not a response, right? And that was what I think, among other things, pushed me to decide to join a political organization, a party, a party, or a collective that openly manifested itself as a political movement. And that's when I entered at the precise moment to Adquiero Libertad.⁹ That was a party that at that time, by the year 2009 more or less was a new party, it was a political party, that is, it was a movement first but it aspired to be a party, it was in its registration process.

It was in that first stage, with many people, what we wanted was for it to be inscribed in [inaudible] freedom and for it to be a space that would precisely welcome these diverse expressions that within the left had a link to other movements. I was there for a while, then I also left, but I still knew that I would always be able to come across spaces like that. So I was able to meet with comrades who gave me [inaudible] freedom and who had later joined other collectives. And a few years later, we launched what would become the Frente Amplio.¹⁰ This was a left-wing political front. It had several political parties, even though they were not formally registered, but organizations that claim to be political parties or political collectives of the left. So, first of all, it was that this front or this space exists, rather than perhaps my decision to participate or not, it was "well, let's make this exist," and that it represents a little of all these struggles that we have come to, some people or various people, from feminism, from the struggle of the Indigenous peoples, the struggle for the environment, of the workers, right?

That's maybe like the first decision I made. And the rest come as if by inertia, perhaps? Because this front was, well, already existing. We decided to participate in the 2016 elections, knowing that it would be an uphill climb. Because in Peru, to participate politically in an electoral process, you have to have a lot of money or you have to have a more or less functional organizational apparatus. That is, with people who are present in the territories and that. So we really didn't have much of either, but we did have a lot of will to make sure that at least this organization would conform and be able to sustain the decisions that we were making. So I think part of sustaining those decisions was good. Then we have to form committees, organizations, we have to build what is needed to make a

⁹ Flores may be referring to the Liberty Movement in Peru, which was a political party from 1987 to around 1995. The party opposed nationalization of banks, and favored a free market approach to fighting inflation in Peru. Mario Vargas Llosa ran for president with this party in the 1990 election, which was won by Alberto Fujimori. ("Liberty Movement." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_Movement. Accessed 5 July 2021.)

¹⁰ The Frente Amplio por Justicia, Vida y Libertad is a coalition of Peruvian political parties, activist organizations, and individuals. The group was formed to connect left-of-center political and social movements. ("Broad Front (Peru)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broad_Front_\(Peru\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broad_Front_(Peru)). Accessed 4 June 2021.)

front.

Well, and then we're also, we had decided to launch a candidacy. At that time, a colleague who was a congresswoman, Verónica Mendoza,¹¹ well, she also made her candidacy an exercise in democracy. An open election with citizens' choice, which was something that many people were skeptical of, even within the left. Some were skeptical, to say the least, while others were very critical or felt that it was an irresponsible way of defining a candidacy. But a lot of us thought that, on the contrary, it was a way of inviting people to join in. So, of course, this is a strong decision and part of these decisions was, well, who made up the lists for the congress then? They have to be people who are not outsiders, but who have been building this process or believe in it at least, maybe if they have not been part of the beginning, they believe in it. Of course, you can't turn a blind eye if they say, "Hey, look, there must be people who have been militant here who are going, let's say, to be responsible for pushing a campaign that is difficult where there is no money, no resources," but with the idea that we do it the best possible. They tell you that you can't look at the ceiling, right? And that was more or less a good thing, so I made the decision, but of course, knowing that it was part of a collective decision in my case as well.

KBM: And how has this experience of militancy and feminism that you have managed to articulate modified your own life?

IHF: Oh, yes on many levels. There are things that, of course, already become part of your total everyday life, right? That is to say, and also of the things that you want to do in the future. I mean, it's not a residual issue anymore. Neither feminism nor politics. I mean, this is not even organized politics. It's not something you can do without anymore. For example, if I was struck by the fact that when they were still in Congress they told me, there was a time when in Congress, in its second or third year, we approved the non-reelection of congressmen, which was a measure to avoid the reelection of people, nefarious, the people took it with.. as in spirit this and I also no? I really didn't have any interest in hanging onto a position. But then the question that many people asked, many journalists or some curious people also said "What are you going to do later when you finish the congress, what are you going to do?" And they said, "What everyone does: works on their activities, but also does politics" because, in other words, no, no, it's not just that one day you wake up and say, "Well, it's over, isn't it?"

At least in my case, right? Then of course what changes is the responsibility you can assume publicly. You are not always going to be a congressman, you are not always going to be someone public, but you are always going to have to, I think if you really feel that there is something to change, right? From politics, you are always going to have to be, I think, in some kind of initiative that allows you to push for some kind of change. In other words, what our country lacks most is precisely those social fabrics. So what you need to do is to

¹¹ Verónica Mendoza is a French-Peruvian politician. She was elected to represent Cuzco in the Peruvian Congress in 2011. In 2016, she ran for president as the Broad Front's nominee, ending in third place. She placed sixth when she ran again in 2021. ("Verónica Mendoza." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ver%C3%B3nika_Mendoza. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

mobilize these expectations for change, which are many, I mean there are many expectations for change in our country, but it is as if there was nowhere to take this expectation, nowhere to put it. And so the people are uneasy at the same time. Because the only visible moment in any case for people to place their expectations is the elections. And we all know that this cannot be the only moment for you, as a citizen, to express the discomfort you may feel, or the expectation you may feel that your institutions, your authorities, your rights are working well, in order to fulfill minimum things, right?

So there has to be, during the rest of the non-electoral moment in the political life of a country, organizations, social networks, meeting spaces, for people to at least say what they think and to know that they are not talking to a wall. You are not alone, but with someone, with others, you are expressing something that is very valid and you are also proposing things. For me, well, that's like a chip that I already have, that is, I always have, I hope, the ability to be organized in some kind of space, even if I'm not a political party member, and even if I don't have to assume public responsibility, right? But it's part of me, it's like my ... I don't know, my common sense as a citizen, right? If I really believe that there are some major things that should change in my country, then I will have to find a way, or I will have to contribute in some way, so that this change can take place, right?

KBM: And I can't help but ask, among the flags that you raise and that you've already mentioned the environment, feminism, and your relationship with the movement of Peruvian workers, what is another flag that you raise and another union that you're connected to?

IHF: Yes, I've been learning in truth because it's like a flag that I think that naturally we people of the left have, right? With more or less closeness in my case perhaps, with more closeness because of all the family tradition that I have. Where we have always breathed, that is, we are one more family of workers. But also where there have been incentives to value the organization of the workers a lot, but this is something that to a certain extent could also remain a question of the past, right, as a romantic question, but I have learned in these years that it is not that. Obviously the reality of the workers has changed a lot in their ability to organize since the 80's or 90's, which is what I lived, learned, lived, right, it's the world I was immersed in, you know?

I mean, a lot to recover those times. As I say, the ability to organize, persistence, because the difficulties have always been there for workers and their families to organize, to overcome the anguish of everyday life and your most immediate needs. And overcoming - knowing that this exists and is real, and that it will not change from one day to the next, because even if you have the capacity to organize yourself, right, and to raise awareness among those around you, your colleagues and your family, right, they are also workers, just like you. That is something of the greatest value that I recover and always remember, but of course now in recent years I have come to know that reality is much more difficult, that is, if there were difficulties a few decades ago, today those difficulties have grown, haven't they? For the workers to be able to organize themselves and like I said, overcome this collective feeling that has brought us up. That is to say, I have had the luck and the pleasure of meeting union leaders or worker leaders my age or a little over 40, 45 years old at the

time, who have grown up just like me in these last decades, being trained in that totally depoliticizing common sense. Where everyone looks out for themselves, where everyone fends for themselves.

And then even so, knowing that there are young people who have lived these years, this one who is trying to break this common sense and organize this and... who is doing this without maybe having a space behind them, as well a, I don't know, a space that supports you, that is very valuable and it's something that I have valued very much, especially in these times. So on the one hand, I know that today the workers do not have the same strength as before to express their demands, there are many changes as well, there are many difficulties in understanding the changes that are taking place in how the dynamics of work function today in a society as particular as ours, right, so unstructured, with so much informality. I also see with much, much optimism or hope, that there are many people who are very sensitive and willing to organize. Many young unions of people like me, I tell you clearly, suddenly went to work and realized that half of the things they had promised were not being fulfilled. Simply because (sic) certain bad employers don't feel like fulfilling them and there's no one to monitor or enforce the rule and then, no? you say "this is crazy, I mean if you're telling me that you're hiring me and you're going to give me 'A' you can't give me less than 'A.'"

And well, that is also something that is happening today, isn't it? Well, people are organizing, many of them are young workers who are leading changes, and that's why we have to accompany them, isn't it? It is not easy, as I say, to overcome this common sense, above all to convince your fellow workers that a union is useful, that this is needed to enforce these things that, in themselves, should no longer be demanded. And the state doesn't have the capacity or strength for that to be guaranteed. So, yes, there is also a lot that I have learned from that, as I say, even beyond what I was able to experience at the time at the family level, this, but also what I am hoping for today. Developing as a movement and the response of the workers in our country.

KBM: And you have talked a lot about the organization and how you are proud to have been able to organize, but what has been your experience as a woman in the organizations of the left?

IHF: It's been hard but I think I've learned to be very patient. That is, I don't say this with resignation in the sense that things are questionable that still occur in political spaces, all of them. In any sector, and that are therefore linked to machismo, or to the hierarchy, which sometimes exists because of the ages. This or other expressions of discrimination can also occur due to issues of social or class origin. I am not saying that this, which is present in all organizations, should be tolerated, or that one should act with resignation, But I think I have tried to battle with them knowing that it is not something that changes from one day to the next and that of course what corresponds is this within the same spaces, in this case of the left, eh work so that what there is is a collective response to the same thing right? In other words, not just what I believe and should be, which of course I have my own opinion of what should be, but the answer we can give collectively to what is wrong, right?

So of course, when I have had to live in situations of machismo, but not in the most daily, in meetings, in assemblies directly. That's one of the most common things that happens, isn't it? In the daily life of the organization, in its political practice, the fact of being a woman always means that someone can try to stop you by appealing to that letter, isn't it? The "oh you're a woman" So there will always be someone out there who will think that this is an option to counteract you, if, for example, they want to debate with you, and then one way in which they will win a debate is by saying, "Oh well, but you are a woman, aren't you? The colleagues who are women, well, maybe they don't know so much about this or that either," right? This is something that you have to fight with and as I say, this is perhaps what your partners in other years have been very accustomed to and have known how to, in quotations, handle it, without putting up with it. But of course today many young women are not accustomed to this and they shouldn't be. So that's something you have to know how to hear and read, right? If a leftist organization persists in this type of practice, it will disappear or it will not have women in its space.

So we have to be very very careful... How are we reading then our capacity to present ourselves to a society that has changed and that is not as permitted as before as those types of practices or manifestations that some might find well "it was just a comment, nothing more," don't you think? Well, and on the other hand, that is a difficulty, or at least that has been a difficulty, today I think it is already easier to question it, those kinds of practices or comments or ways of doing politics. And the other one, I think, has to do with the fact that it is an important issue, and I have also experienced it, it is the same issue on the women's agenda, right? How can we not get this off the hook, that is, how can we not have a fight to simply be put as an item in the long list of things that can be the priority among the political organizations of the left? Right? Like, "Yeah, we fight for that, for this, for this, and a little bit more women," right?

I don't think so, I think it's part of understanding that we are part of a political project of transformation, right? Integral. So that comes with some things that some people may find debatable, but I think that the decision, in any case, of those who are part of organized political spaces, is to commit to that, isn't it? It's not saying well "since people are still debating about it, we should be too, right? We'll put it over there, under evaluation" right? And well no, that at least in my case I think is not acceptable. But it's a whole discussion, isn't it? in the political spaces. So I have also lived it this way, we have lived it with various issues, haven't we? Within the agenda of feminists, the issue of the right to decide about our bodies, the issue of the secular state, the issue of the rights of LGBT people.

I think that today we still do not fully understand the importance of valuing unpaid work, it is still a topic that of course we talk about a lot among ourselves, but I think it should be a flag totally taken by the left. It is part of a whole economic structure that is based on the inequality between men and women, isn't it? So I don't think it's a small thing, but I think it hasn't been sufficiently debated or internalized yet. So, that's perhaps what I've experienced, right? I think that what many have experienced, but as I said, I think that the best way to counteract this type of resistance is by trying to give collective answers. And of course, seeing that there are results. Because there is no point in debating something tirelessly and saying good, one day we will solve it, right? It has to be solved in an equal

democratic way, right? considering also the different views but being therefore honest with the commitments that are assumed with other struggles, with the struggles of women in any case.

KBM: And what is feminism for you, Indi?

IHF: Let me see, how to define it in the simplest way? I think it is to assume a personal commitment for a collective change, right? I mean no, it is difficult to define feminism but of course there is not one version of feminism, right? So that's something that maybe takes a lot of people out of the picture today, right? Because they expect that there is a version of feminism and more or less if someone is mmm I don't know, if someone expresses that plurality of ways of living feminism that exist and that is real because that's how we women are or .. who assume that we are feminists says "ah well how incoherent." This "your feminism doesn't represent me," that is to say those barbarities that I hear about "your feminism doesn't represent me" is that feminism is not made to represent anyone. Everyone lives it, expresses it in their own way, because each one is transforming a set of life experiences marked by these dynamics of relationships and male domination.

So, one is building feminism from within, but of course, this is not an individual exercise, it is part of an individual project as I say, but with a collective commitment. That is to say, there can be no feminism that says, "I've already become an emancipated woman, and that's enough, and good for me, and that's enough for everyone I see." That's not how it works, at least not for me. It is always, of course, a dynamic that is lived at an individual level that one lives in the first person, isn't it? Like discovering, if you will, the things that happen to you, they mark you, but in the end it's a collective effort. I mean, you say, "Well, I live this, I believe in this, and I think we have to transform this," but then I have to look at the women on the side, around me, and see how we can push these changes together. So, for me, that's a little bit, it's this dynamic where the individual, the personal is very present, but in the end it has a place where the desire for collective change is expressed. So that's what I believe.

KBM: Well I know what the answer is going to be, but do you consider yourself a feminist?

IHF: Yes, I consider myself a feminist. A very convinced feminist. [Laughs]

KBM: You've been talking about how difficult it has been to work, or a little bit, or that there are also certain barriers to not only including the gender agenda, but also to being a woman in a leftist organization, in the same work that they do, that which we women do. What strategies have been used by the organizations that you've been a part of? What strategies have they used? Or from your own work as a congresswoman as well.

IHF: Of course, look first in in the political spaces, I could tell you, I don't know if that is correct or not, or, of course, every feminist movement has evolved, right? Enormously. I also believe that there are women who are pushing, let's say, these processes of evolution. Of the growth of feminism, which surely have their own perspective, but at least during the time that I was perhaps in a minority in political organizations, I believe that one thing that

we always did was to let our position be established. I think that's something that we should never stop doing, that is to say, just because we are taking care of the space doesn't mean we'll stop saying the things that we think. As I say, even though they [our opinions] may be, I say in quotation marks, "very, very controversial," within the space, that is, they have to be said so that no one will have the excuse of, "I didn't understand what you meant" or "it wasn't clear to us what the compañeras [co-workers] were proposing." I believe that the minimum, basic, indispensable thing is to be very honest among all of us and to leave the position we have established.

But then comes, of course, other steps that are already more complex, right? It is good once our position is clear and maybe there is a disagreement, then how do we move forward? I think there are things, of course, of principle that cannot, at this point in history, be in question. In other words, if we say that we want to change the world, to transform society, well in our case if we are of the left, then change will not come without women, right? So we are not in question, we are not in negotiation. It's not that this schematic logic that existed before there was a main contradiction, right? And, well, all the others are subordinated, at least in my case, I think that it's not the type of space in which I would like to participate. And I think that we also have to make that clear because if that is not clear, if it is clear, I think that from that other types of agreements can be built on perhaps nuances that can exist, right? What can come later are nuances or discrepancies about how to proceed. About, how do you say, the tactic, what is done, what is not done.

That can vary, but the other thing has to be clear, right? Maybe if it's clear and we don't agree, well, it's also healthier. Each one of us will see how he or she decides if, yes or no in the same space, but I think that has to be clear. And the rest, well, that's part of the daily exercise of searching, agreeing, or exercising our capacity to act, right? In other words, then comes that impulse to set agendas, and yes, I think that has less formula. I think that depends on the capacity to deploy this capacity to mobilize, to organize, something, for example, I don't know if it worked for us, but we did a lot, didn't we. When we were in left-wing or mixed spaces, it was, of course, we agreed on the principles, and now when we have to implement the tasks, we, that is, we push and add, don't we?

In other words, I think that something that always helps to resolve these apparent contradictions is asking who does this and who does what. If someone has an idea and does it, and puts it into practice, he adds other actors, he is capable of articulating it. I believe that this will move forward, regardless of the oppositions that may exist, which may be a minority, this will move forward. So I think that a strategy is always to join forces. Adding others and convincing others, that seems to me to be the best way, doesn't it? More than entering into disputes, right? About whether or not I'm going to end up convincing you of something that maybe you think is not going to be like that, that is, not going to end up being successful, but what I think is more useful is always adding others. Adding others and opening up, right, opening up to those who are not necessarily convinced or informed of what we are proposing.

KBM: And you, who have been militating for several years, in leftist spaces, in feminist spaces, spaces that are both at the same time, what are the main changes you have seen in

this trajectory in relation to the historical political contexts that are changing?

IHF: Well first I think the most obvious is massiveness, right? So today, as I say, talking about feminism and how it takes you, [short pause] it takes you a second to say feminism. I mean, I remember that one of the things that most, I don't know, blew our minds 15 or 10 years ago, was "how do we explain to people what feminism is," right? Feminism is, and was like "try not to be so academic, try not to be so speaking in our languages of university students," right? So there was everything, because of course we wanted to add organized women who were already doing more feminism than one, and without saying they were feminists, right?

Or we should also enter into a dialogue with these women who are more militant in their defense of their Indigenous or working identity. But today I think that this work is almost 80% done, that is to say there are things to be clarified because there is a lot of misinformation regarding feminism, and they try to distort feminism. There are also errors within the feminist space, also in the feminist movement, which sometimes I believe that there is little vocation to finding points of agreement. So, but I think this is the biggest change. I mean, it's so massive that it's in the air and maybe you don't have to explain it so much, and what you have to do is maybe build ways to do it in a shared way. Everyone comes from practices, someone can tell you "I am a feminist" and have worked all their life in artistic or cultural spaces, right? And then their way of doing politics is totally different from someone who comes from the left, right? I also include myself, traditional, right? Where we are or are used to things being. Sometimes a little hierarchical. So that's perhaps today's biggest challenge, isn't it? Not so much overcoming the distance from the political identity that we may have, but from the practices that we have, from those stakes, no? That sometimes there are more coincidences than differences, but sometimes in the lack of a more appropriate dialogue it may seem that there are more, right? So I think that is the most important change I see. I mean, it's so massive that you can really turn around and you're going to find a feminist or someone who assumes she's a feminist maybe without ever having been in an organized space, or a collective, or a group or anything, but she says "I'm a feminist." So that's no small thing. That is one, I would say that it is almost like part of a revolution, right, as we are in the middle of a feminist revolution in the world and then of course the forms of doing politics within that, this whirlpool, has changed.

KBM: And if you had to somehow choose two projects in which you think are the most important ones or the ones that have achieved the most, which ones would they be? They can be in your work with the congress, your work as a political activist or a feminist.

IHF: Ah well, in the congress of the projects that is to say there are several perhaps but I will mention two perhaps that have made me excited to be able to have worked on them. Well, going back to the issue of decriminalizing abortion. That is to say, perhaps there was not so much work in terms of building the project because it came from a previous history. That was the enormous work done by our campaign partners so we tried to pick up on that and update it, right? Finally, to the things that have already been given, like to contribute new suggestions and such.

But the very fact of presenting it in such a difficult context as the one we had at the previous congress. A congress that is mainly, categorically, pro-Fujimori,¹² where the very fact of its existence was already a discomfort for pro-Fujimori and that was openly announced. The decriminalization of abortion, the right to decide. And that for me, well I feel, I don't know, I feel useful that this initiative, even though it has not [sic] prospered, it has not been debated, it has not even been archived, but I feel that this is the usefulness of having reached the congress, right? I felt that an initiative that was a struggle for so many people, activists, institutions, militants, feminists, did not simply remain there, right? But with at least until 2021, this project is there, it exists in parliament.

Let's hope that later, in 2021, we will have the same, right, congressmen who will take up this struggle and, of course, from society, that it can be done in a different context. It won't be easy, I'm not saying it will be easy.. but not in a political era, be able to pick it back up with such strength that is also needed being debated from the street right? But this feeling that your position is not only a position for you or your party, but it is useful for a movement that has been able to promote actions like this, is very significant for me, isn't it?

And well there are also other projects. The project of the cribs and day care centers is also a very nice project that we were able to build with organized workers from the Textile Federation.¹³ I found it very interesting to see what was happening in the spaces of the federation, because this is an initiative of the federation's board of directors. It is a directive that is embodied by women. So it is not a request from the women's secretary of the Textile Federation but "We as leaders, right, have become more like leaders of a federation that brings together various unions in this activity. The textile activity that is so important, with so much tradition in our country. We have realized that we will not be able to continue being leaders if we don't have some tool that allows us to reconcile our work outside the home and our work inside the home."

So that's how clear they were. So it's like, "We want this to be another point on our agenda, that's an important point." So I think it's very clear and very clear that they had it that way and that presenting this project is also, I think, a way of entering into a broader debate about, I hope, how far we are from reconciling, or as we say, harmonizing our family life, at the domestic level, with our responsibilities outside the home, right? So that's something that encourages me a lot because every time we talk about this project, the chip immediately turns on, doesn't it? That is, when we debate it in the congress, because it even

¹² Alberto Fujimori is a former Peruvian president who served in the role from 1990 to 2000. His government is celebrated for ending the Shining Path conflict and improving the national economy. Since 2005 though, Fujimori has been tried and convicted on multiple cases of human rights violations that took place during his presidency. ("Alberto Fujimori." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alberto_Fujimori. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

¹³ The National Federation of Textile Workers of Peru (FNTTP) is a union that advocates for better labor practices in Peru's textile industry. ("Unions in Peru Take Action for a Fair and Sustainable Textile Industry." Industriall Global Union. <http://www.industriall-union.org/unions-in-peru-take-action-for-a-fair-and-sustainable-textile-industry>. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

reached the plenary session. It could have been approved, but basically the business lobby stopped it, right? Because what we were proposing is that, ideally, the state should have a policy, a day-care policy, right? That's not going to happen, because we have a weak state. Almost completely non-existent.

So what we proposed was that okay, this is a responsibility that begins to be assumed by large companies, where there are more than 50 workers who have that need. In other words, the need exists, just as the employers love to talk about, the supply or demand exists, so let the supply happen, right? Let it be a responsibility that companies can assume, right? This is possible, isn't it, and some companies do this. In fact, where they need their workers to be available and no one to distract them and to be very productive, they have set up a daycare center, right? So why not do this in other large companies where the need exists, I don't mean where I can think of it, but where there are more than 50 workers who have family responsibilities for children under 5 years old?

And well, it was approved in commissions, wasn't it? It was even approved unanimously, in other words, Fujimori and all the other parties approved it, but when it reached the plenary session, which we managed to get to on March 8, 2019, it set off the alarms of the big companies who said "They are going to throw this at us," right? I mean, big business, the society of industry, right? And they stopped it, literally, because they came to me and said, "Look, how can we put it differently, maybe it's not obligatory, maybe it's not a formula," and I said, "Well, I don't legislate with you, I mean, you can give your opinion, but you're telling me that you want me to reach an agreement with you on how the formula of the law should be. No," right? And well, then they found a congressman who did make a point of state about it, and he set up a whole false debate in the plenary session and got the bill, not that it was disapproved, but that it went back to committee. No, they didn't want to disapprove because they knew that it would be very unpopular to disapprove of a project like that, right?

When we publicized it, announcing that it was going to be debated in the plenary, the amount of people on social networks who were asking for it to exist was enormous. I'm talking about people who are not organized or unionized. They are people, "I work in the company X, and I need a daycare center, that is, I would even like to pay for it. I don't want to get it for free, but I want the service to exist because I don't have a safe place to leave my daughter, but I want to keep working." I mean, people are already there, but they must live in great distress. I don't have children, but I can imagine the level of anguish that there must be in many people who work today in, in quotations, formal jobs, right? even in factories, offices or whatever, who don't know where to leave their children. No, not even at the private level is there a more or less reliable offer. So it's very clear to me that many people would prefer to have a daycare center in their company, right?

And when, as I tell you, when that topic was discussed and we announced it, the amount of people who responded on the networks was "Finally, please do something." So that's a pending issue, it's an issue that has one, that generates a lot of concern. In any case, I was very pleased that it got as far as it did, as I say by a hair and it was approved. And a pro-business, pro-progress congressman, I mean, he shouted to the heavens and asked for it to

please go back to the committees so that they could continue studying. I don't know what else they could study, in other words, that the decision is political, right? In other words, it has already been studied, there is already a justification, there is also a calculation of that, of course it implies an investment for companies, but it is also an investment that I believe, firstly that they can make. Secondly, it is an investment that will not only benefit the family but as I say, that as they like to say, it will generate an enormous productivity. In other words, there is a huge difference between a worker who knows that she can even accept to work at her job, that is to say, to stay 12 hours or 10 hours at her job because she knows that she will have a daycare center there in her work center, where she doesn't have to return home at 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening, worried, right?

So, well, that's something that is still pending and I was very pleased with it and I hope that it will be taken up again strongly. I think it's something that must still be demanded. It can change the situation of thousands of women today in our country, this well, this is something that was pending in Congress. And on a political level, it's perhaps one of the things that has given me pleasure, this, well, also a certain amount of pain, right? because it's already a space that [sic] has been transformed, I think that the Frente Amplio was commendable, something very important for many, right? Even for those who, at the time, were voters or people who joined the electoral campaign, which was a very beautiful campaign, very very full of will, of contributions from these citizens, but I think that arriving at that moment was a very enriching experience. For me, I was able to build the whole process before the primary, to articulate with organizations that, being very small, were clear about what the north was, right? We took a risk, yes, but I think there were also some things that worked, and those things that worked, hopefully, will remain as a learning experience for the future, right? This way of making more decisions, of opening up such important decisions, like choosing your candidate, that is to say, your candidate, who is in the hands of a citizenry that wants to participate and who even feels close, or identified with the left but who does not fight with the left, right?

I think sometimes we don't understand that, do we? There is one, or there may be an enormous number of people who feel they identify with the ideas of the left in our country, but they aren't convinced about being in the militancy with us or they don't feel a part of it, or they feel that they are going to be stigmatized if they say "I am for the left," right? Because of course we are in a country where the left has been stigmatized so much and society has been depoliticized so much that someone who assumes himself to be on the left at first sight will not exist, but someone who feels identified with what we say will. So we have to give people the possibility, at least at some point every four or five years, to be part of what we are too, to make decisions together with us, and what do I know?

KBM: And what organization are you in now? What is your current work? What projects are you in now?

IHF: I'm not in a political party today, am I? I'm like right now, trying to close some things at a personal level, right? but I'm in a space that we can say is organized, but it's a space that we can say is very, very particular, right? This is not a party as I say, I haven't made the decision yet to call ourselves parties, political movements, but it is a space of organization

that has a very firm commitment to political education, to action from activism. We have been meeting for some months now, and some of us had already been militating before. Others have not, in other words, we have met others in these months and so it is also a challenge to get to know each other and learn together again, isn't it? That is to say, sometimes one has already assumed certain things, how they have to be, like if I am on the left, I know in quotations which leftist I am or which leftist I want to be, but many people with whom there may be many coincidences do not necessarily have it as clear. Or they may be clear, but it's not uh, it's not expressed the same as what one thinks, is it? So we have to know each other, understand each other, and build a common language and understanding of the things that we are living today in the country of the changes that are needed, right?

So let's say, I'm in that process with other colleagues, with other partners. This year we are thinking of debating the term to define exactly what type of organization we want to be. We are going to do it, even with the difficulties of this situation, because the pandemic is a challenge. Hopefully, we will be able to strengthen it and give it, let's say, permanence, understanding that we are in a situation that, in addition to the pandemic, has an electoral period as a moment with a lot of influence. A lot of influence, the discussions can be on one side, but at least for me, I think it's important to look beyond that situation, because that's all situations are. These are moments that pass and then what we have to do is see what is left of that electoral moment or the electoral result. So if there is something left, that is what must be preserved and we are in that too.

KBM: Indi, you belong to these two environments, because you have a university academic background but you are also in this other space of action, politics, activism, right? How do you perceive the relationship between the academia and feminism or political activism?

IHF: Well I think there is a love-hate relationship maybe still distant right? I mean, it's good but in general I think that the academy in our country is also very invisible, isn't it? I mean, there are many difficulties in doing academic work in this area, so someone who has decided to focus on this area knows that they will have many problems, right? That is to say, to get that space for research and financing, freedom to define their topics, their approaches, right? So, knowing that, this first one, then it's not that [sic] it is such a big academic space in Peru, it is relatively small. As I said, the few spaces that are stable at the moment are also linked to institutions in our country, whether academic or university, because they have a certain vision of how they are linked to social organizing initiatives. I think that's where the key is, isn't it? Why the relationship between academia and the spaces of activism is not so fluid, because for the few researchers who are already linked to an institution, sometimes the rules are at best, I don't think they are written down anywhere, but they are a little rigid in terms of not, not, not, (sic) appearing to be very involved in certain flags, certain activisms, isn't it? That's kind of like a very extended thing in general, isn't it?

Certain, like keeping some distance from anything that might seem political or anything organizational, right? So, well, maybe today it is not as fluid a relationship as I say, but it doesn't have to be that way, right? Not necessarily. I think that there, too, on the side of

those of us who organize, there I also think that we have to be open enough to be able to mmm convene people who have these concerns, right? That is to say, from that their contribution to a proposal or a project of transformation, of change, of social participation, be that, be the most academic contribution without that being this or any other, or put as a second theme, right? There are various ways of contributing politically and truly at the level of political parties and academic spaces--activists, there is not enough contribution from academia, right? And sometimes we are not enough to be able to get that input, or to involve people who can contribute at that level. And sometimes we are not enough to be able to receive those contributions, or to involve people who can contribute at that level. So, well, there's also like two sides.

KBM: And in your own work, have you experienced any dichotomies or dilemmas around that?

IHF: Mmm no, not necessarily. As I say, I'm not in an institutional space, right? Where I practice my profession as well as in a more rigid way, but I have seen it, haven't I? But I have seen it, haven't I? I've seen it with people close to me, right? Obviously, but I understand them, don't I? Because it's as if suddenly they are working in a much more permanent way in a university as researchers. They feel like "I can't be connected to this or that". Especially if you are from the left, right? So that's something real and understandable, isn't it? But as I said, I think we have to make an effort to see how this work, these contributions, these experiences, are received, used, and how they are really useful, isn't it? Because this is also what many people who work this way are hoping for, right?

KBM: Well and you've mentioned it before, you've been mentioning it but how do you see the feminist movement in Peru? What would be your evaluation, your analysis?

IHF: Look, I don't think I could make an evaluation today, well, at least completely because the truth is that I feel that there is so much that has grown in several places that we really need, we need as maybe take a picture, right? of ourselves. This I am sure that if someone, not someone, but if suddenly the initiative arises to do as a kind of feminist meeting in Peru, or women. There are going to be many more of us than we think, right? In fact, I also know that there are going to be tensions along the way, tensions that are natural, perhaps not from unfinished balances, from adjustments, I don't say this in a bad way, but from settling of scores, not settled, between us because we come from diverse organizational processes where there have also been these disagreements, what do I know? So the first thing I could tell you is that the picture, the picture is bigger than we think, isn't it?

On various sides, in the regions, there are many feminist spaces, universities, and non-university spaces, with Indigenous women, workers, that is to say, feminism is everywhere, that picture is much bigger than we think and then it also forces us to look at our reality beyond the immediate. In other words, Lima¹⁴ cannot continue to be a reference point for

¹⁴ Lima is the capital of Peru. The city is located east of Callao, a port on the Pacific Ocean, and west of the Andes Mountains. Lima has a population of over eight million people. (Robinson, David. "Lima." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lima>. Accessed 28 April 2021.)

feminism alone, right? In other words, there are many ways of living feminism and it must be with many difficulties, with many debates among us, based on these different realities. Not only the debates that we already know, but also the debates that there are, right? I mean, I don't say it, I know that there are tensions today in feminism at the global level because of certain issues.

The issue of sex work, a topic of much discussion on the issue of trans women, the inclusion or not of trans women in feminism. I know that there are debates going on all over the world, here too, but I think that there are also debates about how feminism is done, more of our own, that is, it is not the same thing as feminism if you live here in Lima and you have the possibility of being connected all day long in a zoom lens as if you were this one, not there in Puchana,¹⁵ Apurimeña,¹⁶ or Puno.¹⁷ It must be a different experience.

KBM: And how do you think the women's movement in Peru, the feminist movement, is dealing with those inequalities with those differences...

IHF: I just... I just don't think we're dealing with it. That's a concern I have. Now, well, with the pandemic, it's worse, but a few months ago I was wondering, no, where are we feminists meeting, no, where are we talking about the things we are building, which are different, no, different but can have a common goal. In other words, if we march for the decriminalization of abortion, that's a common objective, and in the street, there are no differences, so no. When, if we march for the decriminalization of abortion, that is, the day they are going to repress us, they are going to give us all the same. But, of course, these points of agreement must sometimes be made explicit and the points of disagreement and differences must also be made clear, right? So we are not having those spaces, we need those spaces a lot. First of all, to listen and know about the other one is not as easy as saying "Well, I know that such and such a girl or such a group does such and I don't like it or I do like it." Sometimes it's more complex than that, isn't it, is to meet.

I think that we are not meeting, perhaps we lack these spaces, and we are good at it, at least we are good at it, we were there for me a few months ago, before the pandemic, I had a lot of ideas about this year perhaps that in the space that I am in the movement, we can work in these spaces of feminist encounters among women, among us women who work from the perspective of anti-racist feminism, women organized in the neighborhoods that perhaps do not advertise themselves as feminists but who are doing very strong work.

And I had to learn a little bit about this issue of violence, that is, legal promoters on various sides, in various neighborhoods, who do a lot of work on the issue of gender violence, and of course I don't know if they advertise themselves as feminists, but I think that with

¹⁵ Puchana is a city located in northeastern Peru in the Amazon Jungle. ("Puchana." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puchana>. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

¹⁶ Apurimeña means "related to Apurímac", a region and department in southern Peru. ("Department of Apurímac." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_of_Apur%C3%ADmac . Accessed 6 June 2021.)

¹⁷ Located on Lake Titicaca in southeastern Peru, the city of Puno is the capital of the Puno region and the Puno province. ("Puno." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puno>. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

feminists, that is, because if something motivates them voluntarily to seek support for women who have been violated without judging them, without criticizing them, like the police or the judicial system, well, for me that is quite feminist, isn't it? Pretty sonorous, as they say.

So, I thought that this year we could do this meeting thing, right? To get to know each other so that we know how each one of us is acting politically in our communities, but the pandemic has made this difficult, but I think that this is something that is missing.

KBM: And what has been your experience working with women's organizations in other parts of the country?

IHF: Well in the immediate term, the most recent thing was in congress. And as I tell you there I did not question myself, but, that is, I did realize a lot of what has changed in feminism in these years, right? Because I have felt happy that in various parts of Peru, there is at least one group, two groups, three groups of feminists, right? I don't know if they know each other, but I always received invitations to events anywhere in Iquitos,¹⁸ in Madre de Dios,¹⁹ in Tumbes,²⁰ in everywhere. So I know there is, right? And something that, of course, one realizes is that there is a lack of articulation, a lack of meeting, sometimes there are economic difficulties, right? No, there is always a way to get things together, in which we could help, with materials or something, but for me that has been like a learning process, hasn't it? of many organized women's groups, some more feminist than others, perhaps in their way of identifying themselves, but with a lot of clarity. The situation in which we women find ourselves today is not restricted to the issue of violence, or to issues in which we are not considered only as victims, right? But with a great capacity for agency, for combining different demands or different struggles, right?

So I see that. I see that there is a lot of willingness to mobilize, to organize, and maybe what is missing is this space to meet and maybe common agendas, right? That is to say, maybe this is a priority, but that's what is most immediate, isn't it? Because before, when I was an activist or militant, it was clear that the way to connect was different because it was like looking for something, wasn't it? I remember that one of the last things we did with La Mestiza, I think, was to try to develop a project or find funding for a project at that time to hold meetings or schools for feminist training at the national level. And the fact of identifying a collective in each region was like giving birth.

In other words, I think it was one of the most difficult things, no, we said there wasn't one, there isn't one, or if we knew a group, the colleague told us "No, we have been deactivated

¹⁸ Iquitos, known as "the capital of the Peruvian Amazon," is a port city located in Peru's Maynas Province. ("Iquitos." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iquitos>. (6 June 2021.)

¹⁹ Madre de Dios is a region and department of Peru. Located in southeastern Peru, the region borders Brazil and Bolivia. ("Madre de Dios." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_of_Madre_de_Dios. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

²⁰ Tumbes is a Peruvian city located in northwestern Peru. It is the capital of the region, province, and district with the same name. The city is located on the Tumbes River. ("Tumbes, Peru." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumbes,_Peru. Accessed 6 June 2021.)

for a few months, we are not in our work, we are closing the university, so we are not so active. And it was, it was a real difficulty that was like really, we said "what a pity, how painful," but now that's something different, it's something that has changed quite a lot and what's missing is maybe this joining of the pieces that are on various sides is loose, isn't it?

KBM: And in your work as an official, or as this feminist, or as a leftist activist, have you had connections or generated networks with organizations in other countries?

IHF: More than with organizations, well for my last work as a congresswoman with congresswomen, right? So also on that side, well I was very pleased, yes there are a lot of feminist congresswomen, they are obviously not the majority in the parliaments or anything, but there are networks that from certain agenda items, you can realize which is their clear commitment, right? So I have been in some networks linked to all the issues of sexual and reproductive rights, issues linked to the issue of abortion, the right to decide. This has allowed me to know that there are feminist women in parliaments, very young women, that is, I was lucky enough to meet very young women, with the same age or similar age as me in parliament, with a very clear agenda. And of course they come from similar work, right? Participated in feminist spaces or parties, right? So there is also a representation that is changing, which hopefully will be more numerous, but that speaks of a change and a push that feminism is having, so that it can also be present in the spaces of institutional decision making.

KBM: Have any of these connections generated any learning for your work as a congresswoman?

IHF: Yes, no, all of them, because at least in these meetings, in these networks that I was telling you about the issue of sexual and reproductive rights, the first thing that generated in me was the peace of mind of knowing that many of the issues that we had to struggle with, the issues against, were common, weren't they? In other words, I can tell you that these networks that I have known since 2016 were already alerting you to this ultraconservative groups that were demonstrating, campaigning, and seeking to delegitimize, and also seeking to have a negative electoral impact on the people they identify as enemies, because they are committed to other agendas. So that was already like one, it gave me a little bit of peace of mind to know that of course that's not just something here and maybe they'll give you some tools to counteract that, right? in terms of political strategy, right? Yes, yes [sic] no, I learned a lot, and I learned how to get more people involved in [sic] these agendas, in these struggles.

I think also understanding that some people sometimes have been mediated by messages in the media, so we must also know how to explain them, we must know how to break down some false contradictions, right? So, yes, this one has been very useful, hasn't it? And I think that these networks are very useful to share this learning and also in the way we link up with other organizations in society, isn't it? That's always a challenge. I know that it is difficult, isn't it, in our country, especially because we have a parliament that doesn't necessarily have a good image, so of course, as much as you want to say "I am something

different," the image of people is sometimes one of mistrust.

That's something we were also learning, wasn't it? That in general there is a whole dynamic of discrediting the parliamentary representations not only in Peru, but also in Latin America. This is also something that should be looked at with a little concern, right? Because this means that the representation itself is not being sufficiently useful or effective as it should be, and this is also a call to attention for those of us who do politics from another side, right? So, yes, yes, there have been many things that have allowed me to connect, right, with what is happening here.

KBM: And to conclude, talking about these times of health crisis, how has your work changed with the COVID,²¹ with this new context?

IHF: Oh, very much so. I think, and as I was saying, the expectations themselves are different, aren't they? Of course, in March or February²² I had the idea of "ah well, the space I'm in, I hope we can have these meetings," right? Like, to meet again, right? the things that are being done, you have to join them. Obviously this is no longer possible, not only because it is not this, not just because of the physical contact, but also because what we have to be now is to understand what is changing, what is going to happen, what the consequences of the most immediate emergency are going to be, right?

In other words, the saddest thing is to know that right now there is an emergency that could be killing so many people, many key people, valuable in the social movement because they are people at risk, because they are people in vulnerability. And then that is going to leave some consequences, isn't it? I also believe that feminism is going to have to make an effort to understand how much, after all this time of impact on women's lives, of the additional work, how are we going to get out of this? I mean, I don't know if we are going to get out of this, but when the "most dramatic" part of this health emergency has passed, what feeling are we going to have of our own work, of our lives? What things will we want to face after living through something so intense? What will happen in the neighborhoods where we are trying to organize ourselves? [sic] How much has changed, how much is going to change?

So I think it is a challenge, first to understand, isn't it, that what is going to happen, or what we already have to do, is not so immediate? I think the first thing is going to be to understand, to comprehend. And additionally that we are going to be living in an electoral process. So that is going to exacerbate certain tendencies in our society and certain concerns, right? Certain fears that exist today are going to be exacerbated even more. I am very worried about these demagogic speeches, which I don't even know if I can call them

²¹ The Covid-19 pandemic led Peru's government to instate a strict lockdown on March 16, 2020. The first lockdown lasted until June 2020, longer than most other countries. However, the number of deaths from Covid-19 in Peru remained high due to spread in markets and banks, among other locations. (Pighi Bel, Pierina. Horton, Jake. "Coronavirus: What's happening in Peru?" BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-53150808>. Accessed 3 May 2021.)

²² February or March of 2020

populist,²³ but demagogic, about... that [sic] that are wanting, no? to take advantage of the concerns that there are at the level of [sic] society, with respect to its existence, isn't it, about how to face this crisis having certain economic and social securities, no? And the answers that are being given are not enough, right?

So many of those who do not want anything to change, so that this is not an opportunity to change anything, that everything was fine until March, wasn't it? From 2020 everything was perfect, or if it wasn't perfect everything could stay the same, those sectors that don't want anything to change, but also people feel that it is an insufficient response from the other side, right? from those who maybe bet on a change, right? There is no forcefulness, no clarity about what has to be done, and then another sector of people also emerges who are willing to propose easy changes, or propose superficial changes that can be very easily promoted, right? That worries me a lot.

KBM: Well, thank you very much Indi for your time, for having accepted to participate in the project ... (describing the part of the consent agreement)

KBM: Listen, thank you very much again.

IHF: No, thank you.

KBM: Ciao

IHF: Good luck, good luck. Well, good luck with everything, cheer up, we will be seeing each other again.

KBM: Yes, we will be seeing each other soon, yes for sure, ciao.

IHF: Okay, take care of yourself.

²³ Populist leaders appeal to the values and concerns of 'the people' and paint upper-class people and members of the government as corrupt. They are often very charismatic leaders. ("Populism." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populism>. Accessed 6 June 2021.)