

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

SITE: PERU

**Transcript of Virginia Vargas
Interviewer: Karen Bernedo Morales**

**Location: Lima, Peru
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Virginia Vargas, born in 1945, is a sociologist and a leader of the women's movement in Peru. In 1978, Vargas was a founding member of the Flora Tristán Center, a non-governmental Peruvian organization that studies, educates, and lobbies for women's rights. She served as the organization's coordinator and later its director until 1990. She founded the Latin American division of DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era). She has long been engaged in the struggle for democracy and was candidate for Congress in 1985 and one of the leading activists in coordinating the organization Women for Democracy (MUDE) in 1997. Vargas was the recipient of a UNIFEM Award during the United Nations' 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. In 2000 she spoke at the UN General Assembly in New York on behalf of Latin American and Caribbean women's NGOs. Beginning in 2001, Vargas became part of the World Social Forum's International Committee. She is also on the Advisory Council of the National University of San Marcos' Institute for Democracy and Global Transformation. In 2005, at the Millennium Social Summit, she was a speaker representing Civil Society at the UN General Assembly, New York. Vargas has participated in debates and discussions in many countries, and has been internationally recognized as an activist and academic/researcher; she is the author of over 40 publications on citizenship, the state, and democracy from a feminist perspective.

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.

Note: For this interview, there were connectivity problems that complicated both transcription and translation. These problems are noted where present.

Karen Bernedo Morales: Gina, the idea is that the interview will last around one hour, it may be longer. And that..

Virginia Vargas: Yes, no problem. I have time set aside.

KBM: Ah, perfect, and we're going to talk, well, about different topics, from your personal history, how you've arrived at the work you do now. Some reflections about your own work, reflections about the women's movement in Peru and the networks that there are. Ok? So those will be more or less the main topics.

VV: You're going to be asking me questions, right? Because all of a sudden..

KBM: I will be asking you.

VV: I might get carried away. [unintelligible words]

KBM: I'll ask you, I'll ask you.

VV: Perfect!

KBM: I will ask you.

VV: You will guide me, ok.

KBM: Yes yes yes yes.

VV: May I drink my coffee in the meantime?

KBM: Of course! Well then, to begin I know that everyone asks you specifically about your work as a feminist, as an intellectual, as an activist but I would like to know a little about your personal history. What was sparked or initiated from your life history? Or what memories do you have and what do they have to do with what you do now?

VV: Look, I was extremely lucky that when I was working at the National Institute of Culture¹. There was a group of Peruvian women that went to a seminar for five or six months in The Netherlands, I believe. They brought the task back to do it here, and the National Institute of Culture was the one in charge, where Alicia Sebastian was working and who was the boss of my office, and she then put me in charge of it. I was working on border investigations. I was very happy, and I said “Wow!” I don't know much about what I'm going to do, but in the end, I had to take responsibility. And it was extraordinary, we had more or less three and a half months of that seminar here in Peru. There were about 30 of us, three men and the rest were women from different parts of Peru, as well. And there, for three months we began to really discover what the view was. Gender as a concept did not exist yet, you know? I'm talking about '79. And well, I know, I thoroughly know the whole view about what happened with women in general and with the women in Peru. In the different regions, we also did field work -- well like I told you, it was three whole months -- with an English feminist, [unintelligible word], who was really extraordinary, also a Dutch feminist, [unintelligible word] and the rest were the first feminists in Latin America. Magdalena León de Leal², Marcia Ruedes, they were the ones who came and started teaching us the basics.

Then, when [unclear because of connectivity issues] we had finished those three months, that was when some of us thought that it was not possible to lose this- We had books, we had reprints, and whatnot. And so that was when we began to join together to see how we could keep it going. From there, the importance of giving our reality an adequate name came up, and of course, the name of Flora Tristan³ occurred to us. Why? Because first, Flora Tristan had Peruvian roots, in different ways *laughs*. She had her father [unintelligible words] who had been- who had a relationship with the liberator Simon Bolivar⁴. She was a person who had been a socialist with pre-marxist beliefs including fighting for the workers, you know, in the labor union for example, who at the same time was a feminist because of the type of life that she had gotten to live. It's great, it is truly fascinating to be able to follow her. So, we thought that woman, that name, that personality united the two dimensions that we wanted to give to Flora Trista: a commitment to her reality and to change, and at the same time, the view from when we started discovering feminism. Well, that's how Flora Tristan⁵ arose.

¹ Peru's National Institute of Culture, headquartered in Lima, is a department of the Ministry of Education. The institute aims to showcase Peru's rich cultural heritage and encourage community participation in national traditions. (“National Institute of Culture.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Institute_of_Culture. 11 May 2021.)

² Magdalena León de Leal is a Colombian feminist researcher whose work focuses on creating policies that empower women, particularly rural women, in Latin America. (“Magdalena Leon Gomez.” Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdalena_Le%C3%B3n_G%C3%B3mez. 11 May 2021.)

³ Flora Tristan, born in 1803, was a French-Peruvian feminist writer who is known for her theory that granting women's rights would be integral to empowering the working class. She became known as the “mother of feminism and of popular communitarian socialism.” (“Flora Tristan.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora_Tristan#The_Workers'_Union. 11 May 2021.)

⁴ Simon Bolivar, a member of the Venezuelan military, led campaigns against Spanish rule in northern South America. Bolivar held multiple leadership positions in the governments of the territories he helped liberate and is known as the “The Liberator.” (Masur, Gerhard Straussmann. “Simón Bolívar.” Britannica Academic. <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Sim%C3%B3n-Bol%C3%ADvar/80491#article-contributors>. 11 May 2021.)

⁵ The Flora Tristán Center for Peruvian Women is a non-governmental organization that works to strengthen Peruvian women's political and citizenship rights. The organization also educates the public on women's issues and ensures that

Our relationship with the leftist parties in that moment was very fluid in the sense that we would go out to the streets when there were protests or strikes, etc. We also did fasting days. I remember many things that we did in solidarity with male and female workers of that time, you know? However, shortly after, we went out for abortion, because it was May 28th I believe, so we went to the streets. We found many women. We assembled, I think, no more than 50 of us and we ended up with 20 due to the type of aggression we had, you know? And none of the colleagues, in quotation marks, applauded us as serious committed feminists. Nobody went, and the next day in the *Marca* newspaper -- the Sendero⁶ Newspaper wasn't around yet because it was the leftists' newspaper -- on the third page there was an article of someone whom you may perhaps know because you are also a writer, of a poet, Paco Bendezú⁷, that was titled: "The feminists are unwatered flowers." And his argument was that we lacked a *macho* and that was why we were protesting in the street and screaming, and abortion, and who knows what else. That was our real feminist beginning in Peru. In reality, that was where we closed ranks, we started to set up our group of self-consciousness, and we began to develop the feminist view, design, reflection from within ourselves, you know? That was in the first year. We formed in '79 and in the 80s, but there were already other groups like *La Rama*, *Mujeres en Lucha*, *Socialistas de Mujeres*⁸, *Barrio*, another one that I cannot remember. Ah, and *Mujer*, of course, was the oldest one: *Acción para la Liberación de la Mujer*⁹. With those groups we began to put together feminism in Peru in that time period, you know, from that time period onward.

KBM: And before?

VV: This is the first part...

KBM: Before this first contact that you have with these first feminists in Latin America that you talk about, is there something in your personal history, family history, that in this context makes you look at the world in this other way?

national development policies empower women. ("Misión y Visión." Flora Tristán.

http://www.flora.org.pe/web2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=198&Itemid=27. 11 May 2021.)

⁶ The Communist Party of Peru, also known as the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), is a revolutionary group in Peru. The organization was founded by Abimael Guzmán. Guzmán spent the 1960s enlisting armed members from indigenous communities in rural and poor urban areas. In the 1980s, the group carried out bombings, assassinations, and other forms of violence in the Andes and larger cities such as Callao and Lima. The group aimed to liberate indigenous people across Peru. In 1992, Guzmán was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. ("Shining Path." Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shining-Path>. 28 April 2021.)

⁷ Paco Bendezú was a poet, writer, and educator born in Lima, Peru in 1928. He subscribed to communist ideologies and was exiled to Chile during Manuel Odría's dictatorship in Peru. ("Francisco Bendezú Prieto." Wikipedia.

https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Bendez%C3%BA_Prieto#Biograf%C3%ADa. 11 May 2021.)

⁸ Socialistas de Mujeres (Socialist International Women) is a human rights organization that connects more than 140 member groups globally. The organization's mission is to empower women and girls and eradicate discrimination against women. The organization provides member groups with opportunities to meet other activist organizations and strengthen transnational women's movements. ("About Us." Socialist International Women.

<http://www.socintwomen.org/en/index.html>. 13 May 2021.)

⁹ *Acción para la Liberación de la Mujer* (ALIMUPER) is a feminist organization founded in 1973 that works for the protection of human rights broadly and women's rights specifically. (Lissell Quiroz-Pérez. "From the center to the margins. The feminisms of Peru and Mexico from the 70s to the present." LIRA.

<https://journals.openedition.org/amerika/8056>. Accessed 27 June 2021.)

VV: Look, I believe my family was a pretty traditional family. My dad was a soldier; my mom was a housewife. And well, some aunts came from Tanga¹⁰. My mom had 14 siblings. Two of the younger aunts arrived to study here: one in social work and the other to study education. So, when they had to do their homework, they would bring me so I was in the *barrios*¹¹ in what in those ages they called the *barriadas*¹² at that time with my aunts seeing how it was and so on. I would go to the women's jail because they had to do their interviews. And so I remember that when I went back to school, I would do my writings about vacation. How was your vacation? What did you do? I would talk about [unclear because of connectivity issues]... appropriate for girls, you know? Well, that was my first relationship with- and then I don't know. I have always- For example, when I got married I never took my married name but kept my maiden one. I thought I was pretty autonomous.

I went to college despite the fact that nobody in my family studied. It was very difficult for me to go. I think that is another one of the aspects. I mean, I decided to go to college because I had the support of other people, like a woman that also influenced me. She was *pause* I'll remember, [unintelligible word], who was the sister of the historian Maestre.¹³ She was also the one who insisted a lot because she married young to an older soldier. She insisted on the importance of doing it, you know, of studying. Then, when I decided to enroll in the university, the deal was this: they would pay for my pre-university that was on Arequipa Avenue. I remember the doctor [unintelligible word] in the mornings every morning, and I had to go to the Helena Rubinstein institute to learn how to be a lady in the afternoon three times per week. To drink tea, to smoke...it was really very amazing *laughing* that when I went to college I said "*Púchica*¹⁴! This isn't for me!" Well, of course, those are the experiences, right?

Then my political activism in Chile. I was in Chile for many years. It was extraordinary. We didn't have any feminist ideas. We didn't have them, but one of our colleagues, who I believe was the only feminist that there was, was Julieta Kirkwood¹⁵. She is our first theorist in Latin America, you know? With Julieta, what there was a special sensibility. There wasn't necessarily feminism, but ultimately those types of things were what in some way began to shape us.

¹⁰ Tanga is a port on the India Ocean in northern Tanzania. The Tanga Region of Tanzania has a population of over 270,000 residents. ("Tanga, Tanzania." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanga,_Tanzania. 13 May 2021.)

¹¹ "Barrios" translates to the English word "neighborhoods". ("Barrio." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barrio>. 13 May 2021.)

¹² Barriadas are shantytowns on the edge of large urban areas. ("barriada." Dictionary.com. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/barriada>. 13 May 2021.)

¹³ Francisco Espinosa Maestre is a Spanish historian at the University of Seville in Spain. His research and writing focus on topics such as the Spanish Civil War and human rights abuses during Francisco Franco's dictatorship over Spain.

("Francisco Espinosa Maestre." Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Espinosa_Maestre. 13 May 2021.)

¹⁴ "Púchica" is slang for "Damn!" The term is popular in Central America. ("puchica." Collins. [https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/spanish-english/puchica#:~:text=\(very%20informal\),\(informal\)%20%E2%AB%20damn!](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/spanish-english/puchica#:~:text=(very%20informal),(informal)%20%E2%AB%20damn!). 13 May 2021.)

¹⁵ Julieta Kirkwood was a Chilean feminist professor, theorist, and activist. She was a leader in gender studies in Chile and was one of the founders of the feminist organization La Morada ("Julieta Kirkwood." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julieta_Kirkwood. 13 May 2021.)

I came back to Peru, after being kicked out by Pinochet¹⁶, and well, we had in some way lost space. I could not return to Chile, neither could Alejandra or her father. All three of us were kicked out, but it was very impressive that in the 80s we were in a meeting- I think it was in '80 in the Second World Conference on Women¹⁷. We went and it was in Copenhagen¹⁸ and I was very surprised when they told me "there are some Chilean women that are looking for you." They were the colleagues from the political party from the university, who were all feminists. They had formed a women's group and then they began to form *La morada*¹⁹ shortly after. In the organization *La morada* our process in all Latin America has been that- We were coming from political party commitments with our reality and at the same time in a particular moment we realized that things really were not working, and we began to set up our feminist group, you know? That was in general in many of the Latin American countries.

KBM: And how do you feel your work has modified your own life, your own life experience?

VV: A lot! A lot! I am what I am because I made a commitment to a cause like the feminist cause, you know? And well, of course I was not a scholar although I taught at the university. I have written articles, books, etcetera. And I have a lot of respect for what has been done in academia, for example, here in Peru, for what has been done in San Marcos²⁰, in the Catholic University²¹, for the university studies, especially in San Marcos. I believe that with Emma Mannarelli²², I believe that there have been impressive advances.

However, I define myself more as an activist that reflects on our practice, you know? Because from there is where I have the ability to reflect about our view, our politics, new

¹⁶ Augusto Pinochet was the leader of a military group that toppled Chilean President Salvador Allende's government in 1973. Pinochet headed a dictatorship over Chile until 1990. During his time in power, an estimated 130,000 citizens were arrested; many were also tortured. Pinochet aimed to implement free-market reforms in Chile and silence all liberal opponents. ("Augusto Pinochet." Britannica Academic. <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Augusto-Pinochet/60104>. 14 May 2021.)

¹⁷ In 1980, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women took place in Copenhagen, Denmark. The conference evaluated the progress made since the first world conference on the status of women, held in Mexico City five years prior. ("World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/copenhagen1980>. 14 May 2021.)

¹⁸ Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark. The city is split between the islands of Zealand and Amager. The urban center of the city has more than 500,000 residents. ("Copenhagen." Britannica Academic. <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Copenhagen/26183>. 14 May 2021.)

¹⁹ La Morada is a women's organization, founded in the 1980s, that runs various programs aimed at empowering women and supporting democracy in Chile. The organization founded Chile's first domestic violence program in the early 1990s. La Morada also runs programs to counsel women leaders and workshops to educate public officials on issues like sexual violence. ("Nuestra Historia." La Morada. <https://corporacionlamorada.cl/lamorada/>. 14 May 2021.)

²⁰ Located in Lima, Peru, the National University of San Marcos 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. 14 May 2021.)

²¹ 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. 14 May 2021.)

²² Maria Emma Mannarelli is a Peruvian professor and writer. She is the founder of the department of Gender Studies at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marco in Lima, Peru. Mannarelli also works with the Flora Tristán Peruvian Women's Center to conduct research. ("Maria Emma Mannarelli." Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mar%C3%ADa_Emma_Mannarelli. 14 May 2021.)

tendencies, our contentiousness. A movement grows from conflicts, or else it would really be something more or less static, which is not what feminism is, you know? So I believe we were committing to the construction of this movement and we were fighting for autonomy not only in regard to organizational autonomy but also to autonomy of ideas. The thing is that that gives your reflection a completely different view. I think it's been the same practice that leads us to do that type of learning and reflection.

KBM: And do you feel, you being active in feminism for so many years and so much time, do you feel there has been a change in these decades in the same experience?

VV: Of course, of course. That's why I was telling you exactly that feminism *laughs*, I'd say, is a permanent and never-ending, political and social construct because it continues to expand and develop. It continues to have certain types of actions or views, while reality becomes more complex, or that you're discovering it in new forms, you know? We have been born as a group basically from the middle class of Latin America with greater or lesser relation to other movements. In Peru we were extremely lucky to have a very powerful popular urban movement of women where Maria Elena Moyano²³, Esperanza De La Cruz were, I mean I can't remember the names after such a long time, but that movement was the one that was constantly pressuring us toward a different view, a view rooted in our reality, right?

And so then [unclear because of connectivity issues] for the rest, at the beginning I think sexuality, for example, was what we started to subsequently develop with the entrance of our lesbian colleagues. Because at the beginning we were all together -- lesbians, non-lesbians, blacks, non-black, et cetera -- together without any differentiation. But the lesbian colleagues, when we did the feminist meeting here in Peru, which was in '83, which was the second meeting- I remember that it was very very very (sic) interesting because we were setting up the project, the meeting about the main concepts of patriarchy: patriarchy and the church, patriarchy and the state, patriarchy and democracy, patriarchy and sexuality. Then, one of the colleagues who had come from Mexico to help us said "And what about- There isn't one about lesbianism?" and very openly I say "absolutely!" I tell her "Of course. Let's make a mini workshop about lesbianism." Imagine a mini workshop *laughs*. We did this mini workshop while in the others they had 20 or 50 women, here there were 350. I mean more than half of the participation in the meeting. There the lesbians obviously began making groups for us, also developing groups about self-consciousness with us. They came out with the newspaper *Al Margen*, they formed the lesbian-feminist group and, well, they also caused conflicts. I remember that Flora published a journal *Viva*²⁴ and one day

²³ Maria Elena Moyano was an Afro-Peruvian feminist activist who worked in Villa El Salvador, Peru to create soup kitchens and centers for mothers, among other projects. She was also a co-founder of the Popular Federation of Women of Villa El Salvador. In 1992, Moyano was assassinated by the Shining Path, a terrorist group in Peru. Her murder, along with the arrest of the leader of the Shining Path, Abimael Guzmán, led to a decrease in support for the Shining Path. ("María Elena Moyano." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mar%C3%ADa_Elena_Moyano. 14 May 2021.)

²⁴ In 1984, the Flora Tristán Center for Peruvian Women began publishing a bimonthly journal called *Viva*. ("Viva." WorldCat. <https://firstsearch.oclc-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/WebZ/FSFETCH?fetchtype=fullrecord:sessionid=fsap04pxm1-1680-kp1rdp5u-ohplu5:entitypagenum=3:0:recno=2:resultset=1:format=FI:next=html/record.html:bad=error/badfetch.html:entitytoprecno=2:entitycurrecno=2:numrecs=1>. 23 May 2021.)

Navy [unintelligible word], who was one of the leaders in the initial lesbian movement [unclear because of connectivity issues] from here she comes and tells me “I want to talk to you because you are always supportive. You always say you are with us, you go to the demonstrations but where is that here in the *Viva* journal?” Everything was heterosexual, of course. There was no lesbianism, so- I want to bring up again how conflict was a substantial part of our advancement.

Then with time, in this moment in the 21st century, what is it that we see since the beginning of the century? Other actions, a very big force of movements that before were more in the margins, more hidden like the movement of black women, or the African movement, or the indigenous movement. Then being able to achieve a movement that has these different voices changes your way of analysis. I remember this black Brazilian woman feminist Sueli Carneiro²⁵ had something very interesting. She would say, “Gina, when you all talk about wanting to break the domestic imprisonment of women, which women are you talking about? If it’s us black women, never. I mean we were slaves. We were *amas de leche*²⁶. We were street vendors. We were prostitutes. We were everything except imprisoned at home, you know?” And then what we have to do- and she has a historic article that is wonderful -- *Blackening Feminism*²⁷. Well then, blacken it, indigenize it, transexualize it [feminism], give it all the ways of seeing the world that is different that women bring. That is what for me makes up the wealth of the feminist perspectives in this moment and its current view.

KBM: Gina, what has your experience been working organizationally, because you began organizing very very very young, whether it be in politics, in Flora? What has been your experience in organizing?

VV: It has been fundamental. Why? Because working in a team gives you another view of life and of reality. You can- You know it from the political parties and from feminism, of course. That it is the only way that you can truly advance, you know? Because there are other ways to look at leadership, right? I in a certain moment, talking about some feminist women that I like the most, that had a strong presence in the movement but were not the ones that spoke or wrote the most- But they were present so I would say we have to take into account the different types of leadership that will build us, right? I mean, there are leaders that are visibly more passive, but are contributing a lot from reflection to the way of organizing events, the type of guideline or procedure, the type of view that there is, and whatnot. So I think that working together as a team has always been important. I don't necessarily believe that we have to think about unity.

²⁵ Sueli Carneiro is a leading Afro-Brazilian writer known for her black feminist activism and anti-racism work. She is the founder of Geledés: Instituto da Mulher Negra, a black feminist organization in São Paulo, Brazil. At Geledés, Carneiro runs a health program for Afro-Brazilian women that provides participants with consultations with mental health experts and education on sexual, mental, and physical health. Carneiro also established a legal program to support people affected by racial discrimination, called SOS Racismo. (“Sueli Carneiro.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sueli_Carneiro. 15 May 2021.)

²⁶ *Amas de leche* are wet nurses, women who breastfeed children who are not their own. (“Wet nurse.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wet_nurse. 15 May 2021.)

²⁷ Article written by Sueli Carneiro: <http://www.bivipas.unal.edu.co/bitstream/10720/644/1/264-Sueli%20Carneiro.pdf>

Unity is tricky because it makes you think that there is only one way, only one guideline/procedure, only one view that gives you unity, right? Of course, in collective fights there is only one guideline/ procedure to go forward, but it is fed by the different positions and views and subjectivities that are brought by the different people. That is why I prefer to talk about a very diverse movement that is in a permanent process of coordination for a particular type of fight, particular types of solidarity support, for particular ways to face conflict, et cetera. So, unity over a long period of time, we believed it came because we were all declaring ourselves as feminists, but really outside this nucleus there were many other people. So, we learned another interesting thing.

The Latin American feminists have had a powerful impulse for collective work and the collective regional, international work. It has helped a lot to have feminist meetings from '81 up until now, at first every two years and then every three after, spaces where you can connect, you can talk, you can make campaigns, you can create networks, ultimately a series of issues. So, when we were organizing the first feminist meeting- I remember it was Peru's turn. Magaly Pineda²⁸, a marvelous feminist from the Dominican Republic who died a couple years ago, she would say, "The only thing that we have to be clear on is that we don't have a feministmeter. Nobody has a right to think that their feminism is better than another. Without a feministmeter we will advance." It was very interesting. Why? Because that was like the beginning of our creation of feminist dynamics in Latin America, you know? Then it was truly- I'll return to your first question- That teamwork in the country and at the regional level, I think it has been a *pause* powerful enrichment of the Latin American feminisms.

KBM: Have you suffered discrimination? Or have you been a victim of prejudice for being a woman in any of the places of organization that you have been in?

VV: Let's see *pauses*. Well, I witnessed a form of discrimination that was very enlightening for me, very disturbing, as well. I was in the United States- It changed my dad when I was 10 years old more or less. I was shocked because on the bus the black women and men were in the back and not in the front, and there were bathrooms for black people and for- and I did not understand. And I remember a moment in one of those airports, that I don't know why I was there, but I went in the bathroom for black people, for black women, and of course they took me out. They said, "What are you doing here?" "This is our space!" *exclamation* And then it dawned on me. I said, "Of course!" This separation makes people have a reason to not accept these other people that- [unclear because of connectivity issues] I think that was one of the first things to learn.

²⁸ Magaly Pineda was a feminist professor and activist and is considered the "mother of feminism" in the Dominican Republic. Pineda founded the Research Center for Women's Action and Quehaceres, a leading feminist magazine in the Dominican Republic. ("Magaly Antonia Pineda Tejada." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magaly_Antonia_Pineda_Tejada. 15 May 2021.)

Later I remember something very very very intense. Look, I took some pictures of the Andes²⁹ from here, of the indigenous people, men and women weaving, sewing with their typical clothes and when I took it for show-and-tell at school there, they asked me if it was my grandpa. I almost died! I told them, "No!" [unclear because of connectivity issues] I realized and said "this is something else from my country." All of this made me really think about another way to position myself in the world. Those were like the first instances of discrimination towards others and myself that I took on. Then later when I was in the political party, I never felt it, no. I think at least I did not realize it. *laughs* I don't think that there was much coordination in the people of the political party in Chile, which was, I mean, my experience. Here, no, at work I have had that type of experience, but I have had them in protests. When we began to protest, not only that the feminists were unwatered flowers, but shoot, one day one of my very dear colleagues- My colleague, when just we were returning after the march for abortion, I arrived but very depressed and then my colleague who had been with me all the first part of the construction of the feminisms, because this was like in the year that we had started, so he said to me, "Well, I have to tell you something." He said to me, "I do not understand how a woman as intelligent as you can waste their time with *stupid stuff* like *that*." Then well, of course, that is an attack. I mean, it was really *moves hands* tremendous, tremendous... And then this feeling helps in the production of knowledge. The women's things were always like a lot more to the side than the rest of the reflections about the reality of the country, regarding whatever problematic issue, right? Luckily, we have had very good journalists. We've had excellent writers who have also suffered from a lot of discrimination, you know? But right now, they are picking up.

Four- five minutes of technical difficulties. Video resumes

KBM: Well, we were... you were telling me these anecdotes of that discrimination that had come since academia, since the production of knowledge.

VV: Yes, well, I think that has always been and still is even today a strong, more or less, dispute of ours, you know, because generally everything that is a production of women is seen as a lesser feminine production. From there, the importance, for example, of the meetings of women writers that are being done, which is already the second one, where of course you have been, and which reflect everything that we women are contributing and improving. And that would have to be for all women, the contributions or the professions of women. I think that it is interesting. We in the meeting- I think it was the 34th meeting of the Latin American Association of Sociology last year- We made an announcement. The women academics that, of course, participated there- That was very interesting, specifically talking about the extent that we had contributed to academia, an academia that kept seeing reality in a bipolar way, in a dichotomous way. Subjectivity did not exist, etcetera, etcetera. Then this whole new view, in the form of knowledge coming from other parameters, from other epistemologies, has been the great feminist contribution, not only to academia but to

²⁹ The Andes mountain range is located in western South American and stretches over 4,300 miles long. The mountains are located in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, and Chile. ("Andes." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andes>. 15 May 2021.)

the production of knowledge, you know? That is one thing I think that is very very very valued. And it has meant struggle. It has evidently meant conflict, to be able to open spaces.

KBM: Can you tell me about your experience and the strategies that you have used to work from your organization, Flora in this case, right?

VV: Well, look, Flora was created about 40 years ago, 41 this upcoming year and there's one thing that is important that Julieta would also say, "When you put an idea out in the world, it no longer belongs to you." And well, of course, it's not that Flora no longer belongs to me - - I feel very Flora -- but the process of Flora has been a very very rich process with many changes, with many people that have assumed the role of management in quite a good way, you know? I think in the first years, it was interesting because we were a pretty extensive group, and we were assemblywomen. In our initial group there was not only Ana Maria Portugal³⁰, who was one of the eldest feminists. Rosa Dominga Trapasso³¹, we- I came- I was an atheist. I mean, I'm not a believer, and on the contrary Rosa Domingo was a nun, but an absolutely feminist nun that defended everything, all the views we had and also provided us with reflection. That was the beginning of Flora. It was truly very very very interesting. And we have been like that with pretty fluid coordination. We then changed to have something a little more formal in terms of direction and program, but there is one thing that characterized Flora, and I think that it still characterizes her, right? It has characterized her from the beginning. Like Vicky Guzman used to say, who is another founder of Flora, she said, "Flora Tristán has two forms of existence. On one hand, it's a center of work and of feminist study that helps to deepen the knowledge about the reality of women. And at the same time, it's an inseparable part of the structure of the feminist movement." Two views, one evidently contributes to the structure, but we didn't remain with just one thing. We didn't remain in the production of the center; we were basically activists and militant feminists. I think that is what characterized Flora. That has possibly been my most enriching experience throughout the whole process of Flora.

Until now, the big demonstrations, the holidays, the feminist calendar that we created, the one we recovered from the rest of Latin America, like for example the day of no violence against women. This was very interesting because it was also something we did to benefit, or rather, remembering the Mirabal sisters³² who had been assassinated by Trujillo³³, the

³⁰ Ana Maria Portugal is a native of Arequipa, a writer and journalist, and a pioneer of feminism in Peru and Latin America. ("Ana Maria Portugal." Feminist Archives. <http://feministarchives.isiswomen.org/categories/author/399-ana-maria-portugal>. Accessed 7 June 2021.)

³¹ Rosa Domingo Trapasso was a feminist nun who spent most of her life in Peru. She was known for speaking out against state regulation of prostitution and encouraging Christians to consider the effects of patriarchy in their religion. ("Rosa Dominga Trapasso. Feminista, siempre!!!" Centro Latinoamericano de Trabajo Social. <https://www.celats.org/publicaciones/130-rosa-dominga-trapasso-feminista-siempre>. 15 May 2021.)

³² The Mirabal sisters were four sisters from the Dominican Republic. Patria, Minerva, and María Teresa were vocal in their opposition to Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship over the country. On November 25, 1960, the three sisters were assassinated at the direction of Trujillo. Since then, they have been honored globally as symbols of feminist resistance to injustice. ("Mirabal Sisters." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirabal_sisters#Legacy. 15 May 2021.)

³³ Rafael Trujillo was the leader of a brutal dictatorship over the Dominican Republic that lasted from 1930 to 1961. During his rule, thousands of people were murdered or abducted, including as many as 67,000 Haitians in the Parsley Massacre which took place in 1937. In 1961, Trujillo was assassinated in a plot supported by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). ("Rafael Trujillo." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael_Trujillo. 15 May 2021.)

dictator Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. And about three years, four years ago, a little more perhaps, I was very involved in the Worldwide Social Forum³⁴. We can talk about that later. We went to Turkey, and we went- The meeting was in the part where the people from Kurdistan³⁵ were. I mean, the part that was more or less in conflict. Much less than now, but they were in conflict there. And well, I asked apart from knowing the reality, how the conflicts were, and whatnot, but I went to the feminists *raises shoulders*. And then in the feminists' house, there was just like you have there behind you, your pictures of women. Exactly the same. All the Turkish women of the area that had contributed were there and all of a sudden, a poster of those from November 25th, of the Mirabal sisters! I said, "Wow! You celebrate that day?" They said, "But, of course, we know about the Mirabal sisters and that is a day we celebrate in Kurdistan, as well." So it's like a small anecdote that makes me really happy when *laughs*- When you see the feminist calendar- Like March 8th³⁶ is a little bit of all of us, each one gives it her own content. Also, November 25th has turned into the universal day for feminisms in all of Latin America, in the whole world, actually.

KBM: And your work with the Worldwide Social Forum, how has that been?

VV: Look, you know that in a petola the first phase- There is a part that we have not talked about, which is the Beijing conference³⁷. I think it is important because that also marked my perspective further ahead. In '95 there was going to be a conference, the fourth Women's Conference in Beijing. In the previous conferences, the women, the feminists were on one side and the states on the other. It didn't matter to us. They took out their documents. In Beijing there was a different strategy on behalf of the United Nations³⁸ because they tried to involve more distinctly the feminisms and the organizations and the young women from the regions. But they named people. In each country they named- In each region they named one hand-picked person responsible. And we realized that in Latin America they had chosen a Chilean woman close to Opus Dei³⁹ who had no relationship with the movement or anything of the sort. We quickly made a campaign. In those times there was nothing but fax, hundreds of faxes to the United Nations saying- They said "Hey,

³⁴ The World Social Forum is an annual conference where non-governmental organizations and other social movements gather to reimagine globalization. ("World Social Forum." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Social_Forum. 15 May 2021.)

³⁵ Kurdistan is comprised of areas in West Asia where the majority of the population is Kurdish. The region is not a sovereign nation, but is comprised of parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. ("Kurdistan." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdistan>. 15 May 2021.)

³⁶ March 8th marks International Women's Day. Many women's movements globally plan events on this day to recognize the accomplishments of women and advocate for women's rights. ("International Women's Day. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Women%27s_Day. 15 May 2021.)

³⁷ The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace was held in Beijing, China in 1995. At this United Nations (UN) conference, 17,000 participants including activists and representatives of governments, the UN, and international agencies gathered to discuss women's rights. The conference passed the Platform for Action. ("World Conference on Women, 1995." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Conference_on_Women,_1995#Attendees. 29 April 2021.)

³⁸ The United Nations is a supernational organization that aims to enforce international law, protect human rights, and support sustainable development globally. ("History of the United Nations." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un>. 15 May 2021.)

³⁹ Opus Dei is a Catholic organization that encourages Catholics to connect with God in their daily lives. The majority of members are laypeople (non-clergy). The organization was founded by Saint Josemaría Escrivá in 1928. In Latin, "opus dei" translates to "Work of God." ("Message." "Historical Overview." "Christians in the middle of the world." Opus Dei. <https://opusdei.org/en-us/>. 19 May 2021.)

you have to do- Should we put your name?” “Of course, of course!” *laughing* thinking that it was a battle that we were going to fight but that we were not going to win. Well, they put my name down and we won! They took that woman out and I stayed. Then we left for Beijing, which was very difficult because the movement, one part of it was divided because they were not in agreement. Well, we went to Beijing like *laughing* like I was saying in key *emphasized* movement, and we had the voice of a movement, and we had the appearance of a movement, even the banner that I took out in the assembly “For justice, procedures, and resources.” We even had demonstrations on the stairs where the assembly was taking place so that nobody would pass until they saw that we had our vests with the chants that we wanted. I mean it was a very very very powerful presence at that level. And we were also the only region that could do it. Then we managed to change the text so Cecilia Olea⁴⁰ would always say, “Beijing was a text and a pretext.” The text was that we had to change, to leave a Platform for Action that was more or less close to what we were wanting. And the pretext, to organize ourselves, to raise our banners, to coordinate our actions, et cetera. I mean that was Beijing for us.

Of course, once we returned to our countries, all the negotiation with the states- a not very democratic state, states with little respect for citizens and even less for movements. Well, we achieved of course several things, but in these 25 years that just passed, evidently the Platform for Action still has not been accomplished for the most part. And at the same time, there are new dimensions that weren't there 25 years ago and that are not taken into account in the platforms. It's very important to make a readjustment so that all these new risks and these new views are there and that the way of negotiating with the states changes in addition because at the beginning it was putting too much emphasis on what we could achieve with the negotiation with the states when clearly, as Avici Guzman would say, “a demand does not get to the State because of its urgency or seriousness.” Ours would have gotten there a while ago. “It arrives because of the ability it has to extend to a wider public”

So, the work in the society continues in the society, I don't know, in the civil society. In this work, the public is fundamental, and in the cultural audiences, it is also fundamental, and from below it is also fundamental. I mean, it is not only the strategy with the state that we have to rescue but specifically all this intercultural presence generating other views, generating other dimensions, fighting for what, of course, the government is not going to give you, like for example the fight for abortion. For now our agenda has become enriched in a rather impressive way. I mean, the fight to defend the body and the territory is fundamental, the fight for a different ecosystem. That is to say the fight against voracious capitalism that is mulling over life and letting people die like what's happening now with the aggravating circumstance of- There just was a study by OXFAM⁴¹ that says that the rich in Latin America have become richer from the pandemic. This gives you an idea of what this

⁴⁰ Cecilia Olea is the president of the board of the Flora Tristán Center for Peruvian Women. She has held the position since 1983. (“Cecilia Olea Mauleón.” LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cecilia-olea-maule%C3%B3n-7b1321b7/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁴¹ Oxfam is an international organization that aims to eradicate poverty by addressing the systems that keep people in poverty. Oxfam works with organizations around the world to fund and support their missions. (“About Oxfam.” Oxfam. <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/about/>. 19 May 2021.)

toxic development means, what neoliberal⁴² as well as colonial and patriarchal capitalism is seeking right now. And so that's our agenda. At the moment it's the agenda, and we cannot fight for women's rights. We cannot fight to get recognition if we don't disarm all these powers that are fundamental to the patriarchy. Give me a second.

Phone call

KBM: [Interviewer asks new question, but interviewee continues with answer from before.]

VV: Ah, well...I missed the Forum, didn't I? Then after *laughs* Beijing we realized that that we also had to look at what was happening in society from another angle. Then came the World Social Forum. I was there from the beginning as part of the Feminist Marcosur Articulation⁴³ and then I stayed in the international approach of the Forum, up until now, fighting for there to be more indigenous people, more women from black organizations, transsexuals, that is to say everything that does not exist in the Forum at the moment. The Forum was very important in all of the first period. At the moment it is still important, but it really has to broaden its connection with the new views and the new problematic ones that exist. So, we are still in this moment in the International Council of the Forum -- all of this for the moment on Zoom⁴⁴ -- trying to see exactly how to reformulate the view regarding what is important today. But the Forum gave us wealth. It has given us, I mean, connections to other movements. We had feminist dialogues with women from different parts of the world at the beginning of the Forums. The inter-movement dialogues with the indigenous people, the Dalits from India, the transsexuals from Asia, the black women from Latin America -- more or less that type of coordination. We do that all the time at the World Social Forum, but the experience has been very very interesting, but you were asking me something else. What were you asking me?

KBM: I asked what project are you currently on?

VV: Ah! I'm currently in a very interesting experience that's called "The Movements of Movements" that is an experience that, well, was done about 10 or 12 years ago where two very powerful books with different articles from different parts of the world were published, exactly about the way in which movements- The movements of the Zapatistas⁴⁵, indigenous, black women, the Arabs, Afghans, in short are there. A series of- A very diverse and very interesting view. Now, a couple of months ago, perhaps three, this group of some

⁴² Neoliberal capitalism relies on free-market principles and rejects most state intervention in the economy. ("Neoliberalism." Britannica Academic. <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/levels/collegiate/article/neoliberalism/600983>. 19 May 2021.)

⁴³ Founded in 2000, the Articulacion Feminista Marcosur is a collaboration of Latin American and Caribbean feminist groups. The organization runs campaigns focused on creating dialogue between diverse feminist organizations and educating the public on feminist visions for their society. ("Qué Somos." Articulacion Feminista Marcosur. <https://www.muieresdelsur-afm.org/que-somos/>. 19 May 2021.)

⁴⁴ Zoom is a video conferencing service that gained popularity at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. ("Zoom Video Communications." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoom_Video_Communications. 19 May 2021.)

⁴⁵ The Liberation Army of the South was a revolutionary group formed in Morelos, Mexico. The Zapatistas participated in the Mexican Revolution, with a mission of rural land reform. ("Liberation Army of the South." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_Army_of_the_South. 19 May 2021.)

of us who were participating in the Movement of Movements has revived again. I have gotten involved happily because I was also working there. I was participating because it's not work but rather militant and voluntary participation. Peter Waterman was there, my life partner who died three years ago, and so I'm entering that space where it is not necessarily a totally feminist space, but it's feminist because the voices are there. We recovered everything that is diverse. The indigenous view, the view of the other ways of analyzing life and the world. So, I'm very interested in that. I am also preparing- I just finished an article- a book- a publication done with Daphne⁴⁶, a young Mexican colleague, Daphne Cuevas, about 25 years after Beijing. I'm going to send it to you because the online version is done, ok? And it's where I have more or less- We put some of the ideas that I was giving you about what happened 25 years ago and what has to be done now. Now I am trying to recover things about our Latin American feminists. Besides what we know, I mean about ourselves, the subjectivity, the point of view about the.. [unclear because of connectivity issues] well, what indigenous means, what is it that the views of our black colleagues are providing based on their practice. That is to say I am involving myself in something that has been worrying me, and I have been working for a while, which is all this view of -- to call it somehow un-colonial or anticolonial -- where all the other voices are that enrich a view, a feminist view like I was telling you at the beginning, for example, the indigenous Guatemalans who are truly impressive, but in general Latin America has a really extremely enriching production of reflection from these different positions. I'm doing that. We'll see how long it takes me. I might be preparing a small online course. I'm looking at that with Cecilia Olea. It really was very interesting.

KBM: You have spoken a bit about these differences, these different frontiers, and complexities within the same feminist movement. How do you think the women's movement is handling this? Do you think they are handling it well?

VV: I get the impression that they're handling the contentiousness that is necessary. I mean, of course, I fight back terribly when there are some articles that say that pro imperialist white feminists- I say, "Well" *laughs* "they may be over there because they're not here in Latin America." But besides these slips that evidently- When new ideas arise, it's for you to look critically and to rescue from what was done what is still valid, what allows you to advance, and it's not simply starting over with a blank slate because that is also a fundamentalism. So, my worry is just this: tying together what moved forward from this perspective and what is now moving forward with the enrichment of these new views and new voices. I think that yes, I think that Latin America is a multicultural, multiethnic continent of different historical perspectives and memories. And that has to be part of Latin American feminism. That is my conundrum, my worry, my interest at the moment.

KBM: And you have also talked about your experience as an academic and as an activist. How do you see that balance between research and feminism?

⁴⁶ Daphne Cuevas is a feminist activist and director of the Committee for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equity in Mexico. ("PBI Mexico." PBI. <https://pbi-mexico.org/about-us/mission-vision-and-mandate>. Accessed 27 June 2021.)

VV: *pause* I see it as fundamental. I think there is already a lot of feminist research that is taking a much more transgressive view in the manner of producing knowledge. There already is a clear idea that I think is important, that academia is very important when the feminists are fighting, but the production of knowledge is not a privilege nor a monopoly of academia. Because if it were, we would be thinking only that what is produced is what- No! This very interesting idea is Boaventura de Sousa Santos⁴⁷ who talks about the ecology of knowledges, meaning knowledge is not just one-of-a-kind. There is a- Just like there is an ecology where all the diversity is that breaks the monoculturality of the view or of knowledge or whatever, I think that the same thing happens with knowledge. I mean because if not, you couldn't explain how right now you can get back views like "buen vivir"⁴⁸ or recover Abya Yala⁴⁹ as a way to name Latin America, which is not simply a name; it's a whoooooo view -- a view that is inquisitive about what you did, that still probably exists, but that there is a way to thematize its absolutism because there are other realities that are wanting and are becoming vocal and are setting up the experience. A woman like- an extraordinary black Brazilian feminist who also died, Leila Gonzalez⁵⁰. I'm talking about the late 80s or early 90s, so long ago- We became good friends. We were participating in something in Bolivia, I don't remember. So, she was saying to me, "Gina, the feminist movement is racist. Not for action but omission. You don't talk, you don't exist, we are not here." I mean this is the kind of impulse that has allowed me to see them. I mean she gave Latin America another name. That's called [unclear because of connectivity issues] because she realized the African roots that the continent had and the diverse roots of the indigenous people. Well, I think I opened up too much.

KBM: Can you repeat the name because it cut off a little bit? Can you repeat the name that the Brazilian feminist gave it?

VV: *Amefricanidad*, African America, no? *Amefricanidad* exactly. Well, then this for me is also the production of knowledge, from other different experiences and views that open other dimensions of the world. So, I believe that your experience and subjectivity produce a way of looking at the world, which is important, which is as important as any other and that- It is always important for academia, and whenever it gets it back as such and not with this subject-object relationship- This acceptance is not in our -- the feminists' -- best interest in any way.

⁴⁷ Boaventura de Sousa Santos is a Portuguese legal scholar and professor. He played a major role in the early years of the World Social Forum. ("Boaventura de Sousa Santos." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boaventura_de_Sousa_Santos. 19 May 2021.)

⁴⁸ Buen Vivir is an emerging discourse that evaluates community well-being within that community's cultural and ecological context. It is a critique of mainstream conversations around sustainable development. (Salazar, Juan Francisco. "Buen Vivir: South America's rethinking of the future we want." The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/buen-vivir-south-americas-rethinking-of-the-future-we-want-44507>. 19 May 2021.)

⁴⁹ "Abya Yala" means "land in its full maturity" in the Guna language. Abya Yala is an indigenous name for North and South America. There is currently a movement in Latin America for indigenous organizations and governments to recontinue use of the name. ("Abya Yala." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abya_Yala. 19 May 2021.)

⁵⁰ Lélia Gonzalez was a feminist political anthropologist, professor, and politician from Brazil. Much of Gonzalez's work focuses on the intersections of gender and ethnicity. She has founded multiple organizations to empower black women in Brazil. In the 1980s, she ran for federal and state positions with the Workers' Party and the Democratic Labour Party. ("Lélia Gonzalez." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A9lia_Gonzalez. 19 May 2021.)

KBM: Gina, what is your evaluation or your analysis of the feminist movement in Peru?

VV: Let's see *pauses* it's diverse. There are a lot of young people, a lot of young people who maybe don't have much of an idea of what we fought for before or who perhaps think that we are a bunch of old women from last century *laughs*. There's some of that without a doubt, but I think that there is a lot of wealth. There's a lot of wealth. There are groups, organizations today. For example, this week the FENMUCARINAP⁵¹ is going to have their 14th or 15th anniversary. And it's powerful and made of its own feminist form that is truly very interesting. There is OMNIAMAB. There are various women with diverse initiatives. There are our trans colleagues that did not exist before. Furthermore, when in feminism- In the feminist meetings, our trans colleagues in 2005 -- look how long ago -- asked to be part of it because they felt they were feminists, to be a part of the meeting. There was an open discussion, and for the first time we voted. And, well, those of us who voted "yes" won and the others lost. And the argument some of the feminists made was that the heterosexuals -- which was not true because not all of us were heterosexuals. I recognize myself as- I consider myself bisexual. Well, the hetero women, since we couldn't have men at the meeting, we wanted to bring representations of men to accompany us. And well, the fight was strong. So, now for me their presence is truly a fundamental achievement, from their voice, from their view, from the way in which sexual dissent begins to be a truly political and public issue, right? I think that this is important. I think there are different trends. There are some that are looking very closely at what happens at the official, formal political level.

We have achieved a lot of things. We have obtained equality and change, things that we did not even think about let alone have them within 20 years. I mean there are things that have without a doubt been won, but there are other strategies and other views and other types of fights where I believe it's worth looking at. They are feminist waves. I mean the feminists, the writers that are here and there, the lesbian groups that are doing different things, the indigenous women, the African women- Now we have their African movement. Obviously, there were black movements before, African movements, but there was not this so clear feminist view as [unintelligible words] has it, which also is a new dimension, right? Well, I believe so. We have young people, we have diversity, we have contentiousness, and because of that we are moving forward, I think.

KBM: Gina, how has your relationship been over the years with other women's organizations in the country? How has it been up until now?

VV: Look, in this most recent period, I have historically had a very strong relationship with some organizations like, I was telling you, the Urban Popular Movement of Women.⁵² Maria

⁵¹ FEMUCARINAP is a Peruvian indigenous human rights organization that works to empower indigenous women socially, politically, and economically. The organization is working towards food sovereignty and environmental protections in indigenous communities. ("Quienes Somos." FENMUCARINAP. <http://fenmucarinap.org.pe/quienes-somos/mision-y-vision/>. 19 May 2021.)

⁵² An urban popular movement describes a type of social movement generally made up of low-income urban residents. These movements involve neighborhood and community organizing to foster community participation and improve living conditions and residents' rights. (Dosh, Paul. "Urban Popular Movements in Latin America." Oxford Research

Elena Moyano- When we were candidates at a particular movement with Alicia, with Vicky Villanueva⁵³ as independents on the lists of the United Left⁵⁴ in '85, Maria Elena Moyano got behind us, and it was because she was also from the party. She truly was an impressive supporter. I had an extraordinary relationship with the women from FEPOMUVES⁵⁵ in general. All of a sudden, the conflicts had to be discussed here in the house. I would go there. I would stay there to sleep. And well, with Maria Elena, we had decided to write a book about her experiences in her movements and my experiences in this other movement. Looking a little at the advances, the limitations, our differences, the urgencies, where we were kind of frustrated, all of that. Well, she died. So, my article, my book that I published a few years later, I dedicated it to Maria Elena, of course. Those have been the experiences that have left a mark on me from those other views. I also think that with organizations like FENMUCARINAP I have had a relationship- I still have- Really they give me- They are experiences that I believe are really admirable for everything they have to say and all the conditions against that they have. And one of the things that I have liked the most in the last period is- We have done a series of something like workshops -- macrosouth, macronorth, macrocenter, and well, I love it!! Because they are women from different organizations, different experiences from each one of the groups, all brought together. Whether in the south, in the north- And what can be achieved in the workshops- Now they're on Zoom. We've had a few on Zoom- I feel that it is also a personal enrichment. It's not just what I give, but what I can gain and learn. And it's truly very interesting. I am basically dedicated to that. I'm still part of Flora Tristan, but clearly, I am not in the everyday activities. Occasionally, I give some views, teach some courses. And I am from the Marcosur Feminist Articulation at the level of Latin America region, and with the Articulation we promote campaigns. I really like the Marcosur Feminist Articulation because it's a current of political feminist thought. It's not just an organization that has- No. We are in different places with different women's organizations, but the idea is exactly that: to be able to reflect, make a current that is capable of producing types of reflections from our reality that we are having as feminists in the region. So, there are very interesting things that have been published, of course. There are publications about ecofeminism⁵⁶. We are releasing a publication about feminist economists, which is also very interesting about the reality here in Latin America. That's to say it keeps me connected to reflection. And of course, every time I can go out to marches -- now I can't of course -- I would go out. *laughs* Except when I had problems

Encyclopedias. <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1722>. Accessed 5 July 2021.)

⁵³ Victoria Villanueva is a Peruvian feminist activist and founder of Manuela Ramos, a non-governmental organization that advocates for economic, sexual, and reproductive rights for women, as well as public policies that support women's rights. Villanueva's activism has focused on fighting against rape and femicide in Peru. (Leimbach, Dulcie. "Rape in Peru: Stopping a Deadly Epidemic." PassBlue. <https://www.passblue.com/2018/09/20/rape-in-peru-stopping-a-deadly-epidemic/>. 19 May 2021.)

⁵⁴ United Left was a Peruvian political coalition formed in 1980. The partnership consisted of six leftist political parties. ("United Left (Peru)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Left_\(Peru\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Left_(Peru)). 19 May 2021.)

⁵⁵ The Popular Federation of Women of Villa El Salvador (FEPOMUVES) was founded in 1983 to unify several women's organizations in the region. María Elena Moyano served two terms as the organization's president. FEPOMUVES serves the community through providing food, education, and more. They also run a health center and community center. ("Un Poco de NUESTRA HISTORIA." FEPOMUVES. <http://fepomuves.blogspot.com/>. 19 May 2021.)

⁵⁶ Ecofeminism is a movement and philosophy that explores the similarities between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature. This branch of feminism visualizes a future where both women and nature are respected. (Miles, Kathryn. "Ecofeminism." Britannica Academic. <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/levels/collegiate/article/ecofeminism/605372>. 19 May 2021.)

with my spine which I had surgery for, but well, the street is still my place of mobilization, as well. I mean, yeah, that.

KBM: Gina, and you talked about this network of Latin American feminists. *Marcosur* you said?

VV: *Marcosur*. The south is the frame. The south is the frame, right? Not *Mercosur*, *Marcosur*.

KBM: *Marcosur*, yes. What other networks have you created? What other international networks?

VV: I have participated in the formation of ALASEM, for example. That had to do with women. They were not lawyers, but it was about women's rights. I was one of the founders of REPEM⁵⁷. That was marvelous because we began with CEAAL⁵⁸, which was the center, which continues even today, which is very interesting. But well, at CEAAL, we dealt with issues in general, but there weren't clear voices for women. That's where REPEM comes in. So, with Rocio Rosero⁵⁹- I was there from the beginning and we were teaching courses and whatnot. I always really liked it -- I am not doing that anymore -- but well, I still like it a lot for everything they are doing. Then in DAWN⁶⁰- DAWN is an international network, too, at the beginning. Very interesting with very very interesting people, with Gita Sen⁶¹. There was one, who has already died as well, who was a feminist, who was Argentinian-Cuban. *pauses* Isabela Larguía⁶², who was the first to begin talking about domestic work, the invisible work, before the Italians. I'm talking about the early 80s. So, well, those women were the ones who- Those are the places where in some way I have circulated through. Also, after the *Marcosur* Feminist Articulation, I started it along with a few others. And I mean, no, I didn't create them, but I have participated a lot. A very very interesting experience was the Campaign for a Convention on Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights⁶³

⁵⁷ The Network of Popular Education Among Women of Latin America and the Caribbean is a feminist organization with 108 member groups. The organization advocates for accessible public education that teaches participants about gender and promotes equality. ("¿Quiénes Somos?" REPEM. <https://www.repem.org/index.php/somos>. 23 May 2021.)

⁵⁸ CEAAL, the Latin American Popular Education Movement, promotes alternative discourses around topics such as capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism. Founded in 1982, the organization now has member groups in 21 countries. ("Acerca de CEAAL." CEAAL. <http://ceaal.org/v3/acerca-de-ceaal/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁵⁹ Rocío Rosero Garcés is an Ecuadorian sociologist and feminist activist. From 1986 to 1992, she served as the regional coordinator of REPEM. She has also held positions on advisory boards for the United Nations Population Fund and UN WOMEN. (Rocío Rosero Garcés. <https://rociorosero.com/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁶⁰ Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) is a feminist group of the economic south that advocates for gender, environmental, and economic justice. ("About." DAWN. <https://dawnnet.org/about/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁶¹ Gita Sen is an Indian feminist activist-scholar. She is the director of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and the Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity & Social Determinants, a program of the Public Health Foundation of India. ("Gita Sen." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gita_Sen. 23 May 2021.)

⁶² Isabel Larguía was a Latin American feminist and Marxist theorist who focused on creating recognition for women's domestic work. ("Isabel Larguía, una teórica feminista latinoamericana." CLASCSO. <https://www.clasco.org/isabel-larguia-una-teorica-feminista-latinoamericana/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁶³ A Convention on Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights would focus on campaigning for national public policies to be reformed so that they are in line with international and national agreements on sexual and reproductive rights. ("Overview." Oxfam Policy & Practice. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/cladem-and-the-inter-american-convention-on-sexual-and-reproductive-rights-111976/>. 23 May 2021.)

that was launched by CLADEM⁶⁴ with Roxana Vasquez⁶⁵. Well, we were a team, a small international team. We did the documents, and it was a very very very interesting experience. I mean we still haven't accomplished it but I mean at some point these other aspects will be restarted. I don't remember...many more, many more.

KBM: Yes, I can only imagine all your experience, how many international networks you must have been a part of. And is there something you learned that you remember from those networks that has been applied here or that you've seen with those other examples?

VV: Well, of course! Because all these networks have had roots here in Peru. The DAWN network now is with REPEM. I mean, that's an interesting thing. REPEM is propelling here, as well, in the region. We are with them in the World Social Forum in the International Council, which is also a great relief for forming a feminist nucleus inside and strengthen it more. But here, yes, I think that they are- There is participation I mean in different- in many of the networks, which is how it's been transmitted, besides the women that belong there, besides the things that I have been able to do, with regard to contributing to what they are doing. A very interesting experience that has helped me a lot- I didn't start it because as I told you I'm not a believer, but the Catholics for the Right to Decide⁶⁶, when they made the Peru chapter, they invited a Mexican priest, and they asked me to be a part in the organization, to speak in the opening plenary, talking to the priest. "Ah! Me?" I said. "Why have I gotten into? What am I going to say to a priest?" *laughs* Well, I was astonished. This priest, whose name is- I'll send you his name because he's a rather excellent priest. He said, for example, one of the things I remember the most was "a secular state has no religion, does not go to mass, accepts all the confessional commitments as valid but none as a decision-maker for its politics." Tell me what priest would say that about the secular state? I loved him forever, and for his style. I've also learned a lot from all our initiatives about the feminisms that have always had a lot of creativity for their speeches and things. Yeah, yeah.

KBM: Gina, and to finish up, how do you see this health crisis⁶⁷? How has it changed your work in these times?

VV: A couple of things. The first is that I've been confined for five months. Before the pandemic, I got this allergy problem that I had never had before and because of the books and the papers that I have in the house- I don't have anywhere to move to and I have no way to publish them. And, well, I've been taking pills, but my lungs feel very weak. So,

⁶⁴ The Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM) is a feminist organization with the mission of improving women's social position and legal status in Latin America. ("Nuestra Historia." CLADEM. <https://cladem.org/nosotras/#vision-mision>. 23 May 2021.)

⁶⁵ Roxana Vásquez Sotelo is a lawyer, writer, and human rights activist who has focused on defending women's reproductive and sexual rights. She has also served as a consultant to various human rights movements in Latin America. ("Roxana Vásquez Sotelo." O'Neill Institute. <https://oneill.law.georgetown.edu/faculty/roxana-vasquez-sotelo/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁶⁶ Catholics for the Right to Decide is a Catholic feminist organization that promotes women's autonomy, as well as reproductive and sexual rights. ("PERU: 'The ultra-conservative tide is affecting democratic life and fundamental rights'." CIVICUS. <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/3952-peru-the-ultra-conservative-tide-is-affecting-democratic-life-and-fundamental-rights>. 23 May 2021.)

⁶⁷ This interview took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic is the health crisis Karen Bernedo Morales is referring to in this question.

obviously, the doctors' recommendation is that I don't go out, that I don't put myself at risk, especially now. So, I don't go for walks. I don't go shopping. I remember one day my daughter took me out, and I begged her to take me to the supermarket. That's the only time that I've been out. She took me, and I wore a mask and everything. I went crazy! I hadn't had- I hadn't bought anything for like four months. I didn't go out shopping. I only saw what was brought to me, so I started putting everything *frantic grabbing motion* *laughs* until I realized that I didn't *laughs* that I really only needed a few things. It was this feeling that you're not in control of your life, that you have to wait. There is a lot of solidarity in my building. They come over, they call me, they ask me what I need. I dance. Every day, I put on music and start dancing, which is the only way to be- to feel like I'm doing something. I stand up as much as I can. Since I sit right here- My body asks me to, and I stand up. I eat standing up. I mean *laughs* that more or less began to be my routine on a personal level.

On the social and political level, I think it is terrible. It's terrible what's happening because it truly is an epidemic that has this kind of epidemiologic racism because who is dying? Look at what's happening in the Amazon, for example, without any kind of health service. Look at what's happening in the slums, or rather, what's happening in Brazil. Bolsonaro⁶⁸ is a fascist who is saying that it doesn't matter if they die. It's a form of ethnic cleansing what he is trying to do with the black people and the indigenous people. What I was telling you about is happening. How is it possible that the business owners aren't able to prioritize health for the benefit of the community and they just keep doing what they're doing? I truly believe that if there is something positive with this pandemic, it's outrage. The outrage over injustice, the outrage over not having at least adequate health service. I know that the most that can be done is being done. Nothing more can be done. Of course, there were many other things to do, without a doubt. Starting with a stimulus check, no doubt, that is being delayed, that is not being given. And well, we truly have to do something that meets their needs, not to the benefit of the transnational companies or the businessmen like what's happening now, but truly to the benefit of the people or of small-business people, as well. And not those big thieves. Because I truly think that they are criminals. Our upper business class are criminals that take advantage of the suffering of their country.

KBM: Do you think that COVID has impacted women in a special way?

VV: Look, I believe two things with that. First, more men are dying. That is more or less clear. But women are having a *pause* not one, many difficulties. First, the level of violence against women is tremendous in all of Latin America. There are even special studies from the United Nations, from UNFPA⁶⁹, from different places that are saying what is happening with the violence against women right here. The feminists, the ministry, it's not enough.

⁶⁸ Jair Bolsonaro is the current president of Brazil. He was elected in 2018 as the representative of the Social Liberal Party but has since discontinued his affiliation with the party. Bolsonaro is firmly against homosexuality, abortion, and affirmative action. He has been widely criticized for down-playing the Covid-19 pandemic. ("Jair Bolsonaro." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jair_Bolsonaro. 23 May 2021.)

⁶⁹ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) fights against gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and the practice of child marriage. The organization funds access to contraceptives and healthcare for pregnant people globally. ("About us." United Nations Population Fund. <https://www.unfpa.org/about-us>. 23 May 2021.)

There are rapes, especially against adolescents. And, of course, when we get out of the pandemic, there are going to be a lot of unwanted pregnancies. And who is going to respond for this? Of course, we the feminists are going to try to give all the necessary support that we can, but we also can't do as much with a government, a state, that is too incompetent to recognize women's rights to choose how to respond to their own pregnancies, especially when they are raped and they don't want to have them, no?

But at the same time, the women's work at home has tripled. That, we know perfectly well, but even more for those who are working from home. It's barbaric! It really is working double without any kind of real time because you're with the kids, you're in the kitchen, you're working from home. The day goes by and you keep working until 10 at night. I tell you this because of my daughter, because of the [unintelligible word] because of the group of friendly people, the OIT⁷⁰ has come out with something looking at the rights of working from home because it used to be there, but now with this we truly have to fight for the establishment of a legislation and to keep the workers' rights.

Plus, I think that it is time for us to change the work hours. We've had 8 hours for 100 years. If we worked for 4 hours, as our most beloved cartoonist Carlin, Carlos Tovar⁷¹, says, with 4 hours of work we could give jobs to many more people. We would have more time for other things that are really creative, be a part of a life that is worth living like the feminist economists say. That is what we need. I mean the fight is fierce. It's for women's rights and for the rights of leisure. The right to fewer working hours and the right to regulate *laughs* the new ways of working. It's to say "*shoot*" we have a lot to do ahead of us like our poet would say.

VV: Hey, there's one thing that I have not said. I am a mother. I have a daughter that is now 40-some years old. Please put that down. And I've been a widow for three years, and I'm not suffering anymore. I am not in mourning, now just memories and good memories. The relationship was, imagine, 28 years, the longest of my life and the most beautiful, truly.

KBM: So, has there been a conflict inside of you between motherhood and feminism?

VV: *pause* Well, what happens is that yes, I mean, of course my daughter is the best thing I have, but of course at first I was active in the organization and whatnot. Then her dad wanted to have kids, and so I say, "Fine, okay. Let me go to this thing I have to do in Bolivia." I remember that we were leaving with three friends to teach a course, imagine this, us all [unintelligible word]. And we met Alejandra's dad in Arica⁷². That is where

⁷⁰ The International Labour Organization is a United Nations agency that promotes labor rights and equal access to employment. ("About the ILO." International Labour Organization. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang-en/index.htm>. 23 May 2021.)

⁷¹ Carlos Tovar Samanez is a Peruvian political cartoonist whose pen name is Carlin. His work is featured in La República, a daily newspaper distributed in Lima, Peru. ("Peruvian political cartoonist Carlos Tovar Samanez receives death threats." Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2020/04/peruvian-political-cartoonist-carlos-tovar-samanez-1/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁷² Arica is a city in northern Chile, near the Peruvian border. In 2017, over 200,000 people lived in the municipality. ("Arica." Britannica Academic. <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Arica/9418>. 23 May 2021.)

Alejandra was conceived. So even I was surprised. "So fast!" I said to him, but *laughs* it was there. After taking that leap, or putting it off a little to take the leap, it was there. But, well, look, from the beginning I have had- Please, I want that to be in there, too! I have been incredibly lucky because I've had, well, Alejandra's dad who was a good dad. When we got to Lima⁷³, he got sick, so he was for a while -- it was a long time -- he was sick for like 6 years until he died. Then I had a long relationship with Sinesio Lopez⁷⁴. Alejandra thinks of him as her father. I mean, they've had a very good relationship, even now it's that way because he's been very good to her. They love each other very much.

Well, when I began with the histories of the feminisms and this and that, my downstairs neighbor, because her daughter was the same age as Alejandra- And I would say "Aidita, please, I'm going to get home late because we're in a meeting." "Don't worry." Well, Alejandra would get there, she'd ring the bell after school, and she would stay there until I got there. My sisters, as well. It was wonderful because they would stay with her, too. And of course my mom...with a cost. What does that mean? Because that, too, is something. When I would go on a trip, I would leave her with my mom. So all of a sudden Alejandra says to me, "Mom, I want to take my first communion." I say, "What?!" *laughs* "But you haven't even been baptized." Ok, fine. And I did it for her because she wanted it. So, a priest friend of my dad's did the baptism ceremony at his house. Alejandra was about 9 years old, and there we were, just the family. Alejandra was there in the front saying "Alejandra Veas Vargas blah blah blah yes yes" and whatnot. And at one time she is asked, "Alejandra Veas Vargas, do you renounce Satan and all his works and empty promises?" And my wonderful daughter turns around and says to me "Mom, what is Satan?" *laughs* And well *laughs loudly* I loved her even more. I LOVED HER! The priest said, "Just say 'yes.' Say 'yes.' I'll explain it to you later." *laughing*

Well, my daughter is wonderful. She has been wonderful her whole life. And luckily, I've had support from women who have supported me, and eventually from some men at times. But yes, really that's how it's been. I've been for a while as well- It's another one of the things that I haven't told you yet, it's part of my story- Throughout all these years that I was with Peter. Peter is English- He was English, but he lived in The Netherlands. He worked in one of the universities of the Institute of Social Studies of The Hague⁷⁵ where I was invited in the 90s to be a visiting professor. And then I was hired as a professor for a few years but I did not want to accept being there permanently so I was only there for a few months per year up until a certain time when I stopped teaching, but I was with Peter so it was a unique life at that time because I would travel to the Netherlands for three or four months. Peter would come here for three or four months, which generally was winter over there. He

⁷³ 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>. 28 April 2021.)

⁷⁴ Sinesio López Jiménez is a sociologist and professor at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos and Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. His work is focused on political and democracy theory. ("Sinesio López Jiménez." Escuela de Gobierno Y Políticas Públicas. <https://escuela.pucp.edu.pe/gobierno/escuela/plana-docente/sinesio-lopez-jimenez/>. 23 May 2021.)

⁷⁵ The International Institute of Social Studies is a graduate school established jointly by the Netherlands Ministry of Education and Dutch universities. The school is now a part of Erasmus University Rotterdam. ("About ISS." International Institute of Social Studies. <https://www.iss.nl/en/about-iss>. 23 May 2021.)

would come here or I would go there, never losing connection, of course, because just the same, I traveled from there, I made- I stayed connected and everything else. But my life has been like this in the last phase. Therefore, the relationship that I have with some of the networks and people from this part of the world is really interesting. Plus, I believe, as I used to say to Peter, our relationship is so good because we are together for a few months per year, and then we have two months free here and two months there so you never get bored because you always think, "How nice! The time is coming!" But all the other time you're doing your own thing. So, yeah, more or less 8 months here in Peru, and 3 or 4 months over there, and, well, with Peter coming and going and coming. That has been my life.

KBM: How nice, Gina. How nice to listen to you. How nice to learn about all your career on a more personal level and to find a lot of sense in it. How you've arrived at everything- to do all that you do today. Thank you very much. I thank you again for your time, for your generosity, we'll keep coming across each other on this journey, right?

VV: Thank you, thank you. Of course. I congratulate you, one of the new voices that we have. I think it is rather wonderful, and let's continue, continue, continue.

KBM: Thank you very much, Gina.