



Zillah
Eisenstein

Sexual Decoys

gender, race
and war

IN IMPERIAL DEMOCRACY

About this book

In this book, Zillah Eisenstein continues her unforgiving indictment of neoliberal imperial politics. She charts its most recent militarist and masculinist configurations through discussions of the Afghan and Iraq wars, violations at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, the 2004 US Presidential election, and Hurricane Katrina. She warns that women's rights rhetoric is being manipulated, particularly by Condoleezza Rice and other women in the Bush administration, as a ploy for global dominance and a misogynistic capture of democratic discourse. However, Eisenstein also believes that the plural and diverse lives of women will lay the basis for an assault on these fascist elements. This new politics will both confound and clarify feminisms, and reconfigure democracy across the globe.

About the author

Zillah Eisenstein is one of the foremost political theorists and activists of our time. She has written feminist theory in North America for the past twenty-five years. Her writing is an integral part of her political activism. She writes in order to share and learn with, and from, others engaged in political struggles for social justice. She writes about her work building coalitions across women's differences: the black/white divide in the US; the struggles of Serb and Muslim women in the war in Bosnia; the needs of women health workers in Cuba; the commitments of environmentalists in Ghana; the relationship between socialists and feminists in union organizing; the struggles against extremist fundamentalisms in Egypt and Afghanistan; the needs of women workers in India.

Zillah Eisenstein is Professor of Politics at Ithaca College in New York. Throughout her career her books have tracked the rise of neoliberalism both within the US and across the globe. She has documented the demise of liberal democracy and scrutinized the growth of imperial and militarist globalization. She has also critically written about the attack on affirmative action in the US, the masculinist bias of law, the crisis of breast cancer and AIDS, the racism of patriarchy and the patriarchal structuring of race, the new nationalisms, and corporatist multiculturalism.

Her most recent books include: *Against Empire* (London, Zed Books, 2004), *Hatreds: Racialised and Sexualised Conflicts in the 21st Century* (New York, Routledge, 1996), *Global Obscenities: Patriarchy, Capitalism and the Lure of Cyberfantasy* (New York, NYU Press, 1998), *ManMade Breast Cancers* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001).

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*Gender, Race and War
in Imperial Democracy*

Zillah Eisenstein



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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>1 Gender as Politics in Another Form</i>	1
On gendering sex / 3	
Gendering gender / 7	
War as coded politics / 10	
<i>2 Resexing the Wars of/on Terror</i>	17
Re-militarizing daily life / 18	
Militarizing gender / 23	
Rape as gendered war / 27	
Patriarchy, suicide bombers and war / 30	
Women's rights and the military police / 32	
Sexual humiliation, gender confusion and Abu Ghraib / 33	
<i>3 Terrorized and Privatized Democracy</i>	49
Terrorism, torture and the new extremism / 51	
Documenting democracy's demise / 53	
Working-class warriors and privatized democracy / 58	
Corporate terror and war / 60	
<i>4 Diversifying and Racializing Decoys</i>	68
On racism and power / 70	
Racism and militarization / 71	
Affirming action and diversifying for war / 72	
Surveilling diversity in the academy / 75	
Katrina and her gendering of race and class / 79	
Women marching against war in the two gulfs / 87	

5 <i>Ungendering Feminisms and the Pluralisms of Sex</i>	93
Neoliberal/imperial feminism / 97	
States and gendered decoys / 99	
Diversifying while militarizing gender / 104	
Imperial patriarchal gender / 106	
Gay marriage and gender fluidity / 109	
Bush's cowgirls / 111	
Gendering gender in testosterone elections / 117	
Dislocating imperial feminism / 124	
A polysexual ungendering of democratic feminisms / 127	
 <i>Index</i>	 135

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... to all those who risk hoping for new ways of being

Preface

January 2006 is a hard month. Snow covers the ground but it is iced and dirty, not new and clean. It is cold ... and with gas and fuel at record highs in the US, most of us are living chillier lives than before. The recent past has included the exposing of the torture at Abu Ghraib, the re-election of George Bush, and then the horrors of the tsunami and hurricane Katrina with their continuing devastation. The American public is told that our president has secretly authorized the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on us as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq limp forward. There is greater surveillance, while dissent is criminalized. More and more is made visible and visual, while there is less and less power to change the picture.

I start here with a heavy heart to uncover the new in these 'new-old' scenarios.¹ I look to trace and uncover the racialized and gendered silenced stories of this militarized moment of global capitalist racialized patriarchy. These entire scenarios are man-made by so-called manly men – but men can be either male or female, white or 'other-than'. Racialized gender operates as a decoy. Men can be male-identified males or females given that there are male- and female-bodied men. As such, there are more than two sexes and more than two genders and yet politically we are said and made to be male and female, man and woman.

So sex and gender and race can be used as decoys because their meanings can always be multiple and varied at the same time that they are ossified. Sex and gender, though distinct and multiple, are more often than not collapsed as one. The variations of femaleness and femininity, and maleness and masculinity, stand counter to the homogeneity of heteronormative gender. This creates confusing, illegible, and unknowable readings and meanings.² The unreadable aspects of sex, gender, and race allow for their deceptive role today as sometime decoys for imperial and fascistic democracy. But gender cannot always or completely be

deceiving or it would not work as a decoy. This increases the difficulty of reading the meanings of sex and gender and race. The complex decoy process – of allure, deception, and entrapment – defines history and also takes on ‘new–old’ historical meanings. War makes these processes more visible and contested. It is this racializing and gendering of politics that I wish to see more clearly for today. Yet the language itself almost makes it impossible to think with these complexities.

I am looking for ‘unthinkable facts’, needing new ‘instruments of thought’, wanting to conceptualize without the categories to do so.³ There is female and male masculinity; and male and female femininity. Condoleezza Rice embodies this decoy status as she makes war for white men. And veiled Muslim women become the decoys of and for wars of terror – by both imperial and Islamic insurgent misogynists. Read on if this is not clear to you.

My focus now is to see how the particular moment of war and militarism continues to transform and reconfigure the meaning of gender along with its relationship to the sexed and raced body. I look to explain and reveal the newest fluidities of gender that disconnect the meanings of the female body from its gendered formation. So more females today are in the military, are affected by wars, are militarized in their private lives, are in fighting forces in third-world countries, are immigrants and refugees, and this destabilizes entrenched gender meanings while the privilege of a racialized masculinism also remains in place, even if changed. While using women’s rights discourse as a cover and ploy for global dominance, females like Condi Rice and Hillary Clinton articulate the newest imperial democracy that only further complicates things.

This *may* be a critical historical juncture where gender will be truly destabilized with the help of feminisms across the globe; *or* masculinist formulations of gender in defense of imperial democracy may hold sway but in more variegated forms. In just the past year there have been a series of firsts: women have been elected president in Chile, Germany, and Liberia, Cecelia Fire Thunder has been elected leader of the Oglala Sioux tribe, Tzipi Livni serves as the first Israeli foreign minister since Golda Meir, and six women were elected to the newly chosen Hamas parliament. The meanings of each of these happenings are not clearly obvious. Some of these victories reflect enormous political struggle and achievement. Each of my chapters deals with different aspects of the making of sexes and genders and races; the gendering of war, the militarizing of

gender, and the multiplicity of patriarchies and therefore feminisms. Gender remains incredibly complex and confused amidst these changes. On the one hand so much is changing ... and on the other it is not clear what exactly is changed.

Greater varieties and expressions of gender and sexuality exist for my daughter than did for me; women are present in new and different sites; patriarchy is more differentiated and complex, creating more choice and variability; and there are also greater restrictions on many of the choices given neoliberal privatization across the globe. It is harder to get an abortion today in the US than a decade ago. More male and female teenagers engage in oral sex today and say that this is not sex. In the fall of 2005 a TV series – *Commander-in-Chief* – was broadcast about a woman president. Yet, females have not regendered the military. And the wars of/on terror often morph into talk about sex and gender while conflating them.

I trace the development of gender fluidity and racial diversity, rather than equality, in this militarized moment as oftentimes anti-democratic. And I will argue that the diversity that exists within women's lives today across the globe should not be confused with sexual or gender equality or justice and that it also sometimes means exactly this. And that the co-optation of racial diversity of the few, for the displacement of racial equality for the many, underpins the horrific moves towards right-wing fanaticism. So there are the processes of resexing gender – females acting like men; re-gendering gender – women becoming more modern and diverse as women; e-racing race – blacks becoming Clarence Thomas or Colin Powell; re-racing race – black women becoming white. Do not misinterpret these political processes as essentialist and static. The brilliance is in the constant exceptionalism. The difficulty is with essentializing categories that I mean to displace.

President Bush did not mention the Iraq war in his 2005 inaugural address and instead focused all eyes on his struggle for freedom and liberty – at home and abroad. “The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands.” He said that America will not impose our own style of government on the unwilling, because they must find their own way and voice.⁴ He promised to bring unity to the country – despite the so-called blue (liberal) and red (conservative) states. His democratic message codes politics as war. Within a few months, as discontent for the war mounts, speaking at the National

Endowment for Democracy he is more defensive and aggressive although not more truthful. “We will not rest until the war on terror is won.” He says the choices are simple: between freedom’s triumph or Islamic radicalism and its militant Jihadism/Islamo-fascism. He reiterates his stance again – that the US will never back down and will accept nothing less than complete victory. He speaks of the “murderous” ideology of Islamic radicals and compares it to the struggle against communism, also an ideology with “cold-blooded contempt for human life”. Islamic radicals have ambitions of “imperial domination” while they “brutalize their women”. Iraq is the launching pad for all that is evil. America will stay the course.⁵ By March 2006, with support for the war waning, Bush is very much more on the defensive.

On October 8, 2005 the US public awaited the indictments of Scooter Libby and Karl Rove for their role in leaking information about a CIA agent – Valerie Palme – the wife of Joseph Wilson, in order to punish him for challenging Bush’s claims about Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction. This same morning National Public Radio (NPR) led with a news story charging the CIA with the murder and torture of detainees held in the Afghan and Iraq wars. On the one hand the US government appears rational and legal as it charges offenders with lying; and on the other hand torture and death are condoned. This is what neoliberal fascism, or fascistic democracy, must look like; what militant global capitalism necessitates. The war on terror has destroyed the remnants of democracy through the militarization of us all. The always troubled emancipatory rhetoric dating back to the Enlightenment appears to have been *almost entirely* displaced by terror rhetoric.

Once again I am at a loss for words to help me think. There is little new in the claim that liberal/Western/bourgeois democracy has never been fully democratic, or that it is wrong to conflate Western-style democracy with democracy itself.⁶ Today, neoliberal forms of democracy parade as though they too are one and the same with democracy and position themselves against Islam as such. Although Western democracy has an imperial past and present, it also now newly articulates fascistic neoliberal practices. I use both ‘neoliberal fascism’ and ‘fascistic democracy’ as terms of alarm for present tendencies in the US. Although these tendencies may appear to be exceptions, they also can too easily become the rule. The slide from and between neoliberal and fascistic democracy can only be seen from particular sites.

Many Germans said they did not know about the extermination of more than 6 million Jews during Nazism. For them, ordinary life continued. Today ordinary life continues for many of us in the US while it does not continue as such for those detained elsewhere, or those who are wire-tapped, or incarcerated in Guantanamo. Whether one calls these actions exceptions – to the rule of law – depends upon where one is located and from what position one speaks. This kind of exceptionalism leads towards the newly forming fascistic democracy, and away from an Enlightenment liberal and neoliberal reading constrained by the promise of legal rights for all.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are destroying the soul of America. Bombs are dropped indiscriminately, bodies are maimed, prisoners of war have no rights, Guantanamo continues to house inmates illegally. Tsunamis and hurricanes ravage poor people's lives and the US government offers belated charity but not social justice. Katrina uncovers racism and poverty that many in the US say they did not know existed, and I wonder if Halliburton will once again be the true beneficiary of all this misery.

The new lawlessness of the Bush administration both at home and abroad fully neglects democratic discourse. The newness locates today's enemies at home as much as abroad. Muslims, South Asians, Latinas, El Salvadoreans, Pakistanis, Somalians are located in New York, New Jersey, Minnesota, California. Those who came to America to escape violence and persecution now wonder where that America has gone. Since September 11, 2001 they have lost the freedom they came here seeking. They say that our prisons and detention centers are worse than the refugee camps they have been in elsewhere. War rhetoric has licensed new undemocratic processes: from racial profiling to enforced registrations, to racist round-ups and deportations.⁷

To the rest of the world, the US, especially since the Abu Ghraib scandal, no longer stands for human rights doctrine, no matter how limited the actual practice may have been earlier. We are no longer as welcoming a nation to the world's migrants, exiles, and refugees. In the name of 'security' we mistake people in need for criminals and terrorists. As Edwidge Danticat says of her ageing Haitian uncle: "My uncle was treated like a criminal when his only offense was thinking that he could find shelter in the United States." She continues: "A zone is being locked in place on the outer perimeter of the United States where the constitution is no longer fully operable."⁸

We are becoming more unlike our better selves as exceptions are made. To the wife and son of a man the CIA detained, tortured, and killed in Afghanistan, the US government is no different than fascists. Racialized gender and sex operate as both cover and deception – as though democracy exists because Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice exist – and as exposure – as in the sexual and racial violations in the prisons of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Amidst this cacophony it is no longer clear, if it ever was, who or what a woman is, and/or what it means or should mean to be African American. Color trumps race; gender trumps sex. And, patriarchal/racialized hetero-masculinity has authorized and normalized a privileged white womanhood.

Females like Condi Rice and Sandra Day O'Connor do the bidding of imperial power while women and girls join militaries almost everywhere as part of the newly militarized global economy. The new diversity of choice for gender sites, alongside their racialized identities, defines this militarized historical moment. The economy runs strong for only a very few. Everyone I know seems to be driven and too busy. Professional jobs are being restructured and changed and we pretend that they are the same. Work of all sorts is leaving the country for elsewhere. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq make no sense no matter what your politics is and yet they continue. We are exposed as humiliators and torturers and continue with arrogance to do the same.

There is less accountability as the nation-state is privatized for the needs of global capital. The newly defined wars of/on terror have undermined the nation which was a key site for articulating racialized gender. This undermining, or reconfiguring, of the nation loosens and deregulates the patriarchal site of 'the' family. Hence the transitional and conflictual relationship within and between the relations of public and private life.

With militarization everywhere, given the wars of/on terror previous notions of war, peace, civilian, and combatant are dislocated along with the rigidity of gender and race. A militarized economy rooted in war constructs new rules for neoliberal and fascistic imperial democracy. Global capital, with its need for privatization, becomes less and less able to afford the messiness of democracy. Just-in-time flexible and fluid configurations are always constructed from the vantage point of the powerful.

War is fictionalized as spectacular and exceptional rather than common and everyday and personal. Many of us privileged at the site of empire can remain removed and distant. In the US, too many can keep from

wondering how people survive in Iraq, or how they themselves would survive if they were there. So Cindy Sheehan, the now well-known mother of a son, Casey, who was killed in Iraq, camped outside Bush's Crawford, Texas, ranch demanding to speak with him. She publicized the war as up-close and personal. She was arrested at the 2006 State of the Union address because she was wearing a T-shirt reading: 2244 DEAD. She says later of the arrest that she wept because she has lost not only her son Casey, but also her First Amendment rights and with them the country she has loved.⁹

Riverbend, the young Iraqi woman writing a daily blog, describes the dreariness of everyday life in war. She writes about the lack of electricity and water, about the unrelenting heat, and the night-time raids which meant people went to bed in their clothes, and the shortages of gasoline and its high cost. She writes of the daily life that doesn't happen, the daily routines that no longer exist. War is not just about dying; it is about living a life that isn't worth living. She says of Iraq that "no one is 13 anymore"; that everyone is 85.¹⁰

In the US there is more and more control of everything – even our memory, or lack of it. The militarization of everyday life has people fearful rather than emboldened. We watch the devastation produced by hurricane Katrina and floods in Mississippi and Alabama and find it 'unspeakable'. The racism, the poverty, the huge numbers of displaced women and children of the poor are unthinkable. As Jenny Edkins writes, we lack a language to help us with our betrayal by our country. "After traumatic events, there is a struggle over memory. Some forms of remembering can be seen as ways of forgetting..."¹¹ Bush used the Katrina tragedy to call for greater militarization, suggesting that it would be preferable for the military to be in charge when natural/national disasters hit. Militia rule for New Orleans.

The amount of mediation between our bodies and the rule of law, as in torture, is disregarded. Lying has replaced misrepresentation. The notion of 'normal juridical order' is less and less clear; and the 'state of exception' has started to become the rule.¹² The US government has moved beyond the rule of law while policing the world with impunity. There is total control of media, and the control is not exactly total.

The conceptual deficit that disallows the naming of racialized gender as central to the reconfigurations of power allows its decoy status for anti-democratic rule. More women and people of color are to be seen every-

where. This is the truth and falsity of the globe. The manipulation of race and gender as decoys for democracy reveals the corruptibility of identity politics. Not until women had the vote could they know its insufficiencies for changing their lives. Not until civil rights movement activists gained an end to legal discrimination could they know its insufficiencies for ending racism. Not until apartheid was ended in South Africa could blacks know its full complexities. And not until militarism is seen for its masculinist heteronormative gendering can war be viewed as always antithetical to peace; or the full complex array of feminisms which imagine a socially just, inclusive world come into view.

Notes

- 1 See my *Global Obscenities: Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Lure of Cyberfantasy* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) for a discussion of how the new is always historically connected to the old in the phrasing 'new-old'.
- 2 For a compelling discussion of the historical unreadability of multiple sexualities see: Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
- 3 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon, 1995), p. 82.
- 4 [www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural/January 20, 2005](http://www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural/January%20,2005).
- 5 www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051006-3.html.
- 6 C.B. MacPherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).
- 7 Tram Nguyen, ed., *We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), pp. 80–81.
- 8 Edwidge Danticat, "Not Your Homeland", *The Nation*, vol. 281, no. 9 (September 26, 2005), pp. 23, 26. See also her foreword in Tram Nguyen, ed., *We Are All Suspects Now*.
- 9 Cindy Sheehan, "What Really Happened", February 2, 2006, at www.truthout.org/docs.
- 10 Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning* (New York: Feminist Press, 2005), p. 11. See also: <http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>.
- 11 Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 16.
- 12 Giorgio Agamben. "Means Without End: Notes on Politics", *Theory Out Of Bounds*, vol. 20 (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 38.

1

Gender as Politics in Another Form

In December 2003 the US was on code orange alert. Air France canceled its Christmas Eve flights because of information that they might be used to ‘hit’ targets in New York City or Los Angeles. Meanwhile *The Last Samurai* played in theatres romanticizing the Eastern warrior – through the visor of yoga and life’s harmony – and humanized war in Eastern fashion. Death – in war – is honorable despite the fact that the samurai fights on behalf of the emperor and other hierarchies of power. The wife of the slain samurai falls in love with his killer. She is deferential and suffering and therefore noble as well. *Elephant* also played in our theatres. It tells the story of the massacre at Columbine High School and the sad effects of a militarized culture. This same season the Vietnam War is the backdrop for explaining the unexplainable in life in *The Human Stain*, a story about racial self-hatred and passing for white while black.

In 2004 a remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* is produced. It is a story about a fictional right-wing senator who happens to be both female and a mother. She manipulates and betrays her son, and abandons all morals to create a world of complete surveillance and mind control. In the remake film we see people having their brains drilled for implants and total manipulation, and I cannot help but wonder if this is a form of the mindlessness that allowed Bush his second term. And I wonder if the film is a kind of whitewash: that filmgoers look at this depiction of the world and fantasize that they are free because they are not having their brains drilled.

In 2005, *King Kong* is remade in old form. The beast and natives are still black but made more horrific and terrifying by new digital tech. The beauty is still white and blonde. Misogyny is still the trope: warring factions define human life, be they digital dinosaurs or unfathomable creatures or helpless white men. Females still love anything that protects them.

In real life, war rages in Afghanistan and Iraq but as a backdrop and not front and center. These wars are mired in discourses about democracy and

2 *Sexual Decoys*

women's rights to be free from abusive lives under the Taliban or Saddam Hussein. Neither of these wars were committed to freeing women so it remains critically important to think through why these were the particular narratives at this specific point in historic time.

Human rights – and with them women's rights – have been used to mystify and rationalize the misogynist and racialized aspects of global capitalism. Women's rights as a discourse both legitimizes democracy and critiques other-than-Western forms of democracy simultaneously. As such, women's rights parades as Western to the rest of the world. But it is closer to the truth, if there are truths to be found here, that masculinist militarism uses women's rights for right-wing agendas inside and outside the West. Right-wing fundamentalisms of all sorts – east and west – emphasize militarist agendas alongside the gendering of women's lives, with or without the veil/chador/abayya/burqa, as decoy.

Bush's wars of/on terror have authorized a culture of racial intimidation and surveillance while establishing gender confusions to mask this process. New forms of this militarized process create larger numbers of women as the refugees and displaced people of the world, as the rape victims in many locations like Sudan and Nepal, as the new warriors for the US military and as suicide bombers in Palestine and Iraq. Sometimes it looks like women are becoming more like men; if being militarized is the same as being masculinized. But I think similarity is not what is simply happening here but rather that the constructions of gender are being more fully diversified *and* essentialized simultaneously.

In this militarized setting masculinity and femininity are becoming more complex but not necessarily more equal. The redefinition looks newly different, but is more 'new-old' than new. Gender is being mobilized for new purposes and refashioned in more 'modern' fashion. Differentiation of women from men remains and yet they each occupy more like spheres in similarly different fashion. Militarized masculinity still needs a hetero-feminine gendered complement; and each keeps the other in place.¹ So gender codes the Afghan and Iraq wars. It is also not inherently biological. Gender regulates sex and sexuality that are more ambiguous than they are certain. And gender is reshaped continually in order also to shape and control sexual meanings. King Kong still lives.

On gendering sex

Gendering is the process of transforming females to women and males to men when neither of these starting points is completely autonomous from their transformed state. Gendering is a process of differentiating supposed heterosexuality – of making gendered difference matter by institutionalizing it.

It is often thought that sexuality – as in biological sex and sexual preference – is more stable, or static, and predefined, than gender. But I continue to query whether gender – as in the cultural construction of masculine and feminine – is not more static and contrived and more resistant to change.² In this way gender rigidifies sex; gender regulates sex and sexual preference, as much as, if not more than, the other way around. This is not to overdraw the distinctness of sex and gender but rather to query whether the body's sexuality is not more ambiguous and multiple and diverse than the constructs of gender allow. Or, put slightly differently, it is to propose that gender exists to control sex and its variability. Gender makes biological sex and sexuality static and rigid. The point: neither sex nor gender is simply essentialist or constructed: they are a complex relational mix. But, given this, the sexual body is probably more fluid than its gendered meaning. Yet the biological body – meaning both the so-called 'natural body' and its given heterosexual proclivities – are normalized as a justification for the cultural meanings of men and women. In sum: gender colonizes sex.

According to Anne Fausto-Sterling, "labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision"; actual physical bodies blur clear boundaries. She argues that the state and legal system may have an interest in maintaining that there are only two sexes, but that "our collective biological bodies do not". She believes that "masculinity and femininity are cultural conceits"; that the "two party system" of sex is a social construction, and that male and female "stand on extreme ends of a biological continuum" with many other kinds of bodies which are a "complex mix of anatomical components". As such, our sexual bodies are "indeterminate" and therefore "policed" to become male and female.

It follows both that biology as well as gender is political and that the more gender is challenged the more rigidly sex is constructed as either male or female. This extends to hormones themselves that Fausto-Sterling says are identified as though they were sexually determinant, but rather are

simply part of an already “gendered discourse of scientists”. Citing Frank Lillie, Fausto-Sterling states that there is “no such biological entity as sex”: it is merely a name for our impressions about sexual differences. Sex is not fact here. It is random acts of science that name male hormones androgens and female hormones estrogen.³

According to Joanne Meyerowitz there are “overlapping sexes”; possibly a universal bisexuality. Men and women have male and female hormones — “all women had elements of the male and all men elements of the female”. Thus it is scientifically inaccurate to “classify people as fully male or female”.⁴ In this sense, biology is not simply innate or genetically determined. Nancy Krieger and George Davey Smith write that “societal conditions shape the expression of biological traits”, that there are “linkages between bodily constitution and the body’s politics”.⁵ New constructs of sexes and genders reflect this fluidity. Krieger argues that self-identified transgender, transsexual and intersexual individuals blur the established boundaries within the gender/sex dichotomy. Gender influences biological traits and sex-linked biological characteristics can affect gender.⁶

Similarly Susan Oyama queries the distinction made between nature and nurture and says that each is partly constructed by and through the other. She rejects the notion of biology as an innate category and instead argues that innate and acquired characteristics are complexly intertwined — that genes are complexly interactional and change as a result of context. “Bodies and minds are constructed, not transmitted.” As such, nature is a product and a process: “nature is not transmitted but constructed”. The biological/sexual body includes our whole selves “which includes the social worlds in which we are made”. Oyama asks us to reject the “disciplinary imperialism” of “genetic control”.⁷

It is, then, crucial to understand that gender impinges on how we see and name the sexual body; and the sexual body is used to justify the very notion of gender. Gender even defines the sexed body and the sexed body constructs gender. There are more than two sexes. And there are more than two genders. Yet the language of twoness dominates. This means that both sex and gender are part of the most intimate constructions of our political world; so black slave women were seen as breeders, and not as mothers *per se*. As slaves they were denied the gender of white women. And sex and gender along with their racial meanings become politics by other means.

So there is always the process of gendering sex and gendering gender; and sexing gender and sexing sex; and regendering gender, and resexing

sex, and racializing sex and sexing race and racializing gender... The political – power-filled – dynamics are multiple and chaotic. The plasticity and variability of sex and race may be less visible/visual than the multiplicity of gender. And the complexity of gender identities is defined by one's sexual origins, and supposedly not by race. Hence, female-bodied women, male-identified females, and so on.⁸

Judith Butler has long argued that gender is made-up, performed, plastic, improvised, and multiple. Enforced gender categorization is tied to an “anatomical essentialism” when there is no simple original form of the copy. She thinks that many so-called men can do femininity better than she can. A universal notion of gender can be a form of cultural imperialism – so we need to pluralize our understanding of both cultures and their genders. If gender dysphoria and sexual minorities can be embraced and recognized in the human community, then Butler says we must focus on the possible. “For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity.”⁹

The idea that there are two biological sexes is, then, in and of itself a political limitation/regulation that depends on a formulation of gender as twoness also. Sexual and gender classifications are regulatory and by and large stand in defiance of the fluidity and changeability of sexual and gender identities. Sex is assigned at birth; but through a gendered biological visor. According to Paisley Currah this denies chromosomal ambiguity, gonadal ambiguity, gender pluralism and sexual indeterminacy.¹⁰ One could instead start with a notion of trans- and multi-genders: a male who thinks he is a woman or a female who thinks she is a man; or a male and a female who are each neither and who think they are neither man or woman.

But there is no adequate language to embrace this complexity, and we re-create gender while debunking it: female lesbians, female men, et cetera. Sexual and gender indeterminacy needs to become a part of a radically pluralized sex/gender system allowing for a democratic sexual life that is freely chosen. The presumption of essentialist biological/ innate gender categories still remains firmly in place, however, even when it is scrutinized. Lawrence Summers, former president of Harvard University, explains that women are underrepresented in tenured science positions at top universities because of “intrinsic aptitude”, a concept sounding awfully close to “innate differences”: as though scientists are born, and not made.¹¹

The politics of sexing gender and gendering sex is embedded in the discussions and changes in gay marriage at present, while still race remains

unreadable. It is possible that gay marriage attempts to gender gay sex – to rigidify and control the fluidity of sexuality itself, to domesticate gay sex. As well, same-sex marriage is not really the same thing as same-gender marriage. The law speaks of husband and wife, not males and females. The law is actually about not simply sex, but also gender. Traditional views about marriage are not clarifying here. At one time black slaves could not marry; later miscegenation laws prohibited interracial marriage. So, clearly, things change but what in particular changes is less clear. The politics and power relations of gender and race are not simply the same as the politics of colored and sexual bodies themselves.

And even though gays are willing to prove their patriotism by enrolling in the military, the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that bars known gays from serving remains in place. Even though enlistments are down and the military is in need of recruits, over 6,000 soldiers have been discharged since 1998 for being gay.¹² A hetero-masculinist military can absorb females, but not those who defy gender differentiation. So the military will become more female, but not more womanly or gay; and more colored but still ‘white’.

If this is so then the process of resexing gender to allow for female masculinity rather than male femininity regenders masculinity with males and females. Meanwhile femininity remains gendered as womanly despite the sex and the military remains misogynist despite the presence of females. This means that females become more like men; but men do not as readily become more like women. Yet females also remain women while males remain men even if more womanly. As such, gender fluidity is written more with women’s bodies than men’s, while racial diversity is appropriated for the purposes of conquest across gender lines.

Gender bending, particularly in terms of women’s rights, allows females to become or be used as decoys for imperial democracy. US-run antidemocratic wars have a woman’s face – Karen Hughes, Condoleezza Rice, General Karpinski, the slain private Michelle Witmer. ‘Women’s rights’ genders the discourses of war while actually constructing the newest stage of US imperial politics. The wars of/on terror use women and people of color like Colin Powell and Rice as imperial decoys while liberal democratic rights are dismantled at home and nowhere in sight in Afghanistan or Iraq. Arab men are unmanly; and anti-war activists become girlie men.

Imperial democracy has always been defined by sexual and racial conquest. As such this form of democracy has required imperial

repression, and now gender(ing) becomes war in yet another form. This war is fought with more females than any previous war while women still also continue to birth the next generation.

Gendering gender

Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas* writes that war is a man's thing. Why does she essentialize women in this way given that she got so much right about their lives? Woolf had the gender part partly right – women as a group still remain more peace loving than men – and partly wrong – she essentialized women from the site of privileged white women. Today, much has changed. Our historical moment has refashioned and diversified the lives of most females, especially poor and working middle-class girls and women across the globe. The newest possibility here is then that women – meaning, in terms of their gender – may fundamentally change as a result.

Woolf championed the rights of women – rooted in their right to earn a living of their own. She thought that once a woman earns her own living she is free to criticize and have independent thoughts. It is only then that she can stand against war. Woolf criticized women of wealth for supporting the British empire and the privileges they accrued from it. They consciously were desirous of their “maids, carriages, and fine clothes” while unconsciously desiring “our splendid war”.¹³ She nevertheless believed it was women that would stand against war in the end. “‘We’ – a whole made up of body, brain and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition – must still differ in some essential respects from ‘you’ whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and are so differently influenced by memory and tradition. Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes.” For Woolf, men make war, and by habit, and although men and women share many instincts, they do not share the instinct for war. Although Woolf sees the gendered boundaries as “artificial” and “rigid”, they remain in place when it comes to making war.

She further writes, “Scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle.”¹⁴ Woolf is careful to say that not all men favor war; but most do. She thinks women do not need the glory or necessity of war, unlike men. Instead, women will remain “outsiders” of “despotic culture” and against war. And as an outsider a woman has no country. “As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.”¹⁵ So Woolf lived in the world long before its noted global stage, and as a

pacifist. I assume that if she lived today she would criticize the militarization of women and the complicity of females in making war. And I expect she would also recognize that many women in the military and in fighting forces elsewhere are there by economic necessity and not by choice. Yet she has an essentialist view of the differences of woman from man. It is unclear how her views would change given the way gender is being resexed and sex regendered in new complex and more varied formulations.

This gender recoding has traces in earlier forms: of women missionaries during colonialism and collaborators as in World War Two. As such, today's wars become gender in yet another form. If gender is a form of war, women's bodies are battlefields of a sort. There is no civilian space; no clear delineation of combat areas.

Yet there is no woman's body *per se*. Gender is being differentiated in more complex formations, as are the constructions of race. Women are differentiated by greater economic class extremes both within Western countries and between East and West. So what is true for one economic class of women may be largely untrue for another, and yet the structural relations of patriarchy continue to thread gender privilege in structural formation through these class and racialized lines. Gender is recoded through and by economic and racialized differentiations. Militarizing gender in the global economy then takes on specifically racial and class codings.

As such, women in their gendered form can take new shape and meaning while also remaining bound by earlier constructions. But these are historically gendered constructions and not essential biological truths. The essentialist notions about women – their peacefulness and capacities for nurture – should take on a new skepticism given the more diverse lives of women. As more is required and demanded of women that redefines their positions as mothers, their assumed essence comes under new scrutiny. Although women's reproductive capacities and placement in the sexual division of labor can still initiate insurgent critique of the new militarism, it is not clear if or how this will happen. No singular response – especially not across the imperial/anti-imperial divide – applies to all women here. These, rather, are contingent questions that develop out of historical necessity and possibility. There are new meanings of gender(s) and feminisms to discover if an unselfconscious essentialist lens is not to be allowed to determine the view.

War also breaks down existing lines of patriarchy and redraws them in

new and old ways. There is both continuity and discontinuity. Some of the redrawing solidifies and rigidifies masculinist privilege; other changes challenge and dismantle. Women's bodies, themselves, mask the continuities by occupying spaces that were once completely male. In the US, women are paraded in view by the Bush administration to put a human face on conservatism: his compassionate conservatism in woman-face. Women march in Baghdad as part of the Shiite militia, the Mahdi Army, to protest US occupation of Iraq. Women, wearing the blue burqa, vote in so-called democratic elections in Afghanistan.

Masculinity is continually shaped by war; and initiates war itself. The constructions of gender – masculine and feminine – are made of interactive moments. Christopher Hedges writes that war gives men meaning; while women birth, men kill.¹⁶ As such, the intensity of war fills men's lives with purpose. There is a troubling essentialism here because not all males are masculinist men in this sense; nor are all females womanly mothers.

Yet wars and female bodies have strange and unusual historical connections – from rape to the introduction of Kotex. It was not until 1920 that Kotex was introduced and began to be widely used in connection with women's menstruation. It was made from cellucotton, a material developed for bandages during World War One. It is thought that it was the surplus of cellucotton at the end of the war that initiated the development of Kotex – as a way of absorbing the excess cotton that had been produced for a war market.¹⁷ The cellucotton absorbed first the blood of war, and then the blood of menstruation.

Despite the presence of women in war-making today, they are still viewed as more peaceable than men. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, recognizes the importance of women in peace building and therefore specifies the necessity of women's participation on all international criminal and peace planning tribunals.¹⁸ Women are recognized here as increasing the possibility of peace making, as they often do. The UN Security Council members have for the first time recognized that no approach to peace can work without the equal participation of men and women; and that the possibility of peace is connected to the degree of equality that exists between the sexes. The needs and capacities of women and girls during disarmament, repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction are now viewed as central to rethinking the possibilities of peace.¹⁹

In East Timor, women are threatened with rape and death and still

refuse to inform on others.²⁰ Even when they are victims, women often act as peace builders in that they resist rather than succumb. Yet women are also not only victims of war. They also make war. Today females are more likely to be actors in war given the changing necessities of a militarized global economy. This new diverse articulation of gendered differentiation is a partial assault on essentialism and a proof of the plasticity of gender.

War as coded politics

Karl von Clausewitz is often identified by the phrase that war is simply politics in another form, by another means, an instrument of politics. However, he is more precise than this depiction attributed to him. War is an act of violence: to compel one's opponent to succumb to one's will; it is a form of "human competition" much like business. "War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means." As such, war is a carrying out of commerce. Clausewitz likens business competition to political intercourse in that it is rational and instrumental. War is a policy that takes up the sword, rather than the pen.²¹ As such, war is extreme capitalism by other means.

For Clausewitz war is, then, commercial politics by other means. It is a form of daily exchange. As such, war becomes normalized and naturalized as constant, unexceptional and ordinary, like politics itself. This normalization legitimates the use of war for politics, despite war's horror and devastation. War becomes unexceptional and necessary, but always for those who are distanced from it. Yet war is also horrific and should focus us on the unordinariness of death and maiming. Today, the wars of/on terror are orchestrated as unending and inevitable. Bush and Cheney defend this militarized stance as simply politics in another form.

Following Clausewitz I might argue that globalization is also war by other means. This stage of global capitalism requires militarization in new forms. The US police state grows along with its military interventions and its prisons. The US's unilateral and unipolar stance requires more war, which mutates covert relations of power into something more exposed. The new technologies – digital cameras, the internet, email – make much more of the world of politics visible and visual – while arrogant forms of power become more overt and militarist. Unipolar empire building

depends on the privatization/corporatization of war and renegotiates the public and private spheres that misogynistic power has depended upon.²² As militarization transforms the established distinctions between public and private, military and civilian, combatant and noncombatant, and war and peace, the established gender differentiations connected to these configurations begin to shift. As such, women are not simply civilians, nor is peace simply the opposite of war.

War economies today appear to be less clearly delineated than hitherto, with violence appearing in dispersed form around the globe. With half of the world's population – 3 billion people – living on less than \$2 a day and malnourished, and with 1 billion people with no clean drinking water and 2 billion with no electricity, the contours of neglect, abuse, and war become more porous.²³ In comparison, the poverty rate for a family of four in the US is set at \$18,392. In the US, poverty rates continue to increase with more than twenty percent of Latino children, and thirty-five percent of black children, considered poor. Excessive income growth is limited to the top one percent in the US while the same can be said for India and China.²⁴ This may in part be why the right wing was voted out of office in the May 2004 Indian elections, leading to a Congress Party victory.

This troubling economic situation of excessive wealth alongside growing poverty both establishes and utilizes the militarization of the working poor. US military jobs are comparable in pay to jobs at Wal-Mart, with most frontline battle troops earning a mere \$16,000 a year; lieutenants earn somewhat more, at \$26,000. The civilian security contract worker who was kidnapped and then released in Iraq in April 2004 was a failed dairy farmer who lived in Macon, Mississippi. He drove a truck in Iraq to help pay the family medical bills back home.

All this tells a troubled story of daily necessity and war. Neat lines of demarcation do not hold easily. According to Michel Foucault, the very idea of war must be managed and normalized by those in power. War will make no sense to most people most of the time, so it is politics that is used to justify it. It is through this inequality and domination that war becomes naturalized. And it is because domination does not end that war is perpetual and must be normalized. Rulers always need war. It is the ruled that do not. As such, Foucault reforms Clausewitz, and politics becomes the continuation of war by other means. Below the surface of peace is a war. "Peace itself is a coded war." The very discourse of obligation subjugates and immobilizes, as war subjugates. Foucault looks to see power at its

extremities, at its outer edges. It is at these sites where activity becomes less and less juridical and “transgresses the rules of right” that one sees the truths of power.²⁵

If war is politics in another form, and if gender is a political configuration, then the process of gendering males and females is a continuation of politics and war in other forms. It is why the rape of females continues to be so central to war, and a form of war, and not simply a crime of war. And, yet, gender lines are also unsettled in war: women take up arms, they take on new jobs and responsibilities, they replace men who have died in battle, as in Rwanda. War in this sense renews old forms of misogyny and at the same time also creates and exposes the fluidity of gender. In war, gender formations can be more readily seen as part of politics – both in old static form, and as more newly diverse.

Power reveals itself at its outer extremities with its “external face”. These extremities are “where it implants itself and produces its real effects”. They are where sovereignty and subjugation are exerted.²⁶ So I especially look to Afghanistan and Iraq and to the politics of war as a politics of surveillance and obedience. Politics at this moment of hyper-globalized militarism requires acquiescence and subjugation of the masses and this is most of us. For Foucault this disciplinary society demands a continual constraint that “conceals the mode of power in which it is exercised” which is sovereignty itself. Sovereignty is rather a “mechanics of discipline”.²⁷ Instead of a democratic sovereignty, an antidemocratic disciplinary exists. Foucault calls the entire discourse of rights into question in terms of the way it legitimates submission more than it allows freedom. The discourse of rights – particularly when used to justify war – disciplines and dominates in exchange for the promise of sovereignty. I have already argued that this is complexly true for the discourse of women’s rights.

Rights discourse in Western-juridico-legal form masquerades as freedom itself. And those who criticize the US are seen as hating freedom. Bush says he goes to war in the name of freedom; that he builds empire for freedom; that the US brings freedom elsewhere. According to Wai-chee Dimock, Thomas Jefferson justified empire building for liberty; and Andrew Jackson defended continental expansionism in the name of freedom. America became an asylum for those who love liberty. The connection between nation building and freedom justifies the ‘imperial self’, an imperial nation in the name of a sovereign self.²⁸ Freedom becomes ensconced in dominion and domination.

As war is normalized, neoliberalism becomes war in a more distanced form. Wars exist but are put out of view by a narrowing of seeing and remembering. Silences and forgetting become the narration. Politics as war means forgetting. Atrocities and killing are repressed. This repression becomes the new normal. Repression and masquerade are a replacement for seeing and knowing. Ashis Nandy writes that politics as war in another form constructs our enemies in repressed form. He states that the enemy is an “inner representation become flesh” while the boundary of self/other is a “sacred illusion and delusion”. Nandy believes that European and Western modes of disciplining even create the categories of insanity, criminality, and disease. Even medicine, as such, is an intimate politics.²⁹

Freud believed that war demands that we hide from ourselves. During Nazism he wrote critically of war and lashed out against the hypocrisy and timidity of the mass public. “The warring state permits itself even such misdeeds, even such acts of violence, as would disgrace the individual man.” Hence the state deliberately lies and deceives and creates excessive secrecy. When there is war there is no wrongdoing – and no moral compass. The private individual must sanction all this as an act of patriotism. Freud concludes that people always welcome their illusions even though war shatters most of them.³⁰

Jacqueline Rose, writing of the Iraq war, states much like Freud that “warfare is the deadly repository of our most tenacious and precarious self-idealization”. We find it hard to tolerate that which disorients us, and we all fear doubt, “yet we will be less likely to act on our fears by blaming others if we can face our disillusionment”.³¹ Nevertheless, Americans are taught today to fear Iraq and all those who support terror. However, this is a shift from an earlier rhetoric used during World War Two. Then, a handbook – *A Short Guide to Iraq*, published by the US government in 1942 and written for American soldiers who were stationed in Iraq to prevent the Nazis from seizing the country’s oil – stated: you need to be kind to Iraqis, get along; understand their differences. Hitler will use differences between ourselves and Iraqis to divide and conquer and “ours is to unite and win”.³²

The naming and seeing of war involves political maneuvering. The globe is war-torn as the US struggles to maintain its singular dominance. The present excesses of global capitalist racialized patriarchy demand a more overt war politics as covert systems of imperial empire-building uncover new inequities and brutalities of the market. The anti-democratic system of global power attempts to silence dissident voices. And extremist voices

– of the East and West, and North and South – militarize the globe. This moment needs more explanation than our current language provides us. These are new-old forms of war as politics, for new-old systems of power.

Neoliberal globalization has now existed for over a quarter of a century. The New Right of the 1980s Reagan administration is no longer new, nor is the conservative rewriting of liberalism neo anymore. The terms ‘religious extremism’, and ‘brutal fanaticism’ describe Bush’s policies as much as ‘neoliberalism’ does. War seems more present and closer to home. Borders are supposedly secured but they cannot be.

I wonder if less has changed for most people of the globe, and more for those of us who live at the heart of the empire ... if what has changed is that ‘we’ feel less safe and more exposed, less autonomous from the mayhem of the globe. Tarak Barkawi says that the so-called Cold War was a hot war for peoples living in Africa and South America. He argues that the myopia of the superpowers allowed them the privilege of not seeing and not naming the wars of the South taking place in Cuba, Africa, Nicaragua, and Chile. During the Cold War millions died in the third-world. There was no détente for non-Europeans.³³

The very phrase ‘Cold War’ normalized war for millions of people while making it invisible from the site of the imperial center. The US utilized terrorism during this period in Mozambique, Nicaragua, Laos and South Africa. Much of the world experienced the Reagan doctrine as a doctrine of terror. Mahmood Mamdani argues that the US actually started the present jihad during the US support of Afghanistan against the Soviets; that the US used its own methods of terror elsewhere and called it civil war.³⁴

Present-day war politics necessitates opening the racialized and gendered configurations of this period to careful scrutiny. Domestic violence and sexual rape are gendered configurations of a politics of war and terror. So are the new diverse gender expressions of women’s lives in all colors. Unless we name and see these new configurations of racial and sexual inequities, the resexing and gendering of war cannot be uncovered in its newest forms. And the bartering of democracy in the name of women’s rights and freedom will continue to mask the destruction of democratic possibilities.

Notes

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- 2 Although this has been a central query for feminist theory for over two decades now, I particularly wish to address this issue in terms of its relevance for my viewing of sex and gender decoys.
- 3 Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 3, 31, 32, 40, 54, 177, 179, 188.
- 4 Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 28.
- 5 Nancy Krieger and George Davey Smith, "Bodies Count and Body Counts: Social Epidemiology and Embodying Inequality", *Epidemiologic Reviews*, vol. 26, 2004, pp. 92, 93.
- 6 Nancy Krieger, "Genders, Sexes, and Health", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 32 (2003), p. 652.
- 7 Susan Oyama, *Evolution's Eye* (Durham: Durham University Press, 2000), pp. 3, 18, 22, 28, 29, 48, 191.
- 8 See the discussion in Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa, *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2005).
- 9 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1, 7, 9, 31, 213.
- 10 Paisley Currah, "The Transgender Rights Imaginary", *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, vol. 705 (Spring 2003), pp. 705–20.
- 11 Lawrence Summers, "Remarks at NBER Conference on Diversifying the Science and Engineering Workforce", 14 January 2005, available at: www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2005/nber.htm.
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- 13 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harvest, 1938), pp. 17, 101, 40, 84, 39.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 18, 6.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 16 Christopher Hedges, *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), and Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Gendering War Talk* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 17 Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), p. 163.
- 18 "Security Council Resolution 1325", *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 4 (Summer 2003), pp. 1266–9.

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- 22 Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 25.
- 23 Fred Magdoff, "A Precarious Existence", *Monthly Review Press*, vol. 55, no. 9 (February 2004), p. 1.
- 24 Michael Yates, "Poverty and Inequality in the Global Economy", *Monthly Review*, vol. 55, no. 9 (February 2004), pp. 37–47.
- 25 Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (New York: Picador Press, 2003), pp. 267, xviii, 15, 68, 51, 27.
- 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 27.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 34–7.
- 28 Wai-chee Dimock, *Empire for Liberty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 7–9, 11.
- 29 Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 59, 175.
- 30 Sigmund Freud, *On War, Sex and Neurosis* (New York: Arts and Science Press, 1947), pp. 251, 252.
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- 33 Tarak Barkawi, "On the Pedagogy of 'Small Wars'", *International Affairs*, 80, 1 (2004), pp. 19–38.
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2

Resexing the Wars of/on Terror

Since September 11, 2001 there is a female face to the wars on/of terror but the meaning of this is not self-evident. Females assist in the orchestration of the US wars of/on terror and therefore women have more complicity in these wars than they used to. Yet there is nothing more undemocratic than war so it is highly unlikely that women's presence can mean anything good. No one's rights – especially not women's – can be met in war, or by waging war.

Females, although still a minority, are more present in militaries, as government officials, as suicide bombers, as soldiers in third-world countries than in earlier times. There are more women being militarized for and against imperial power. Today there are both more women at these sites of power, or what were sites of power, fighting on behalf of the powerful, *and* they are more visible. This visibility is unusual because females are more often than not out of view – made absent, silenced – rather than seen. So the fact that women appear more present needs attention.

Condoleezza Rice wields power, but not as a woman – whatever this might really mean today – and not for women and their rights – but for an imperial democracy that destroys women's equality and racial justice. Imperial democracy uses racial diversity and gender fluidity to disguise itself – and females and people of color become its decoys. Condi's black skin and female body operate to cloud and obfuscate. Imperial democracy mainstreams women's rights discourse into foreign policy and militarizes women for imperial goals. Imperial democracy creates women combatants both inside and outside the military, and Laura Bush authorizes this process as civilian in chief. My point is not that nothing has changed, or that these changes do not matter, but rather that these changes do not mean what they seem to mean.

War bespeaks exceptional circumstances and is also naturalized as part of the human condition: there will always be war(s). War is, then, awful and

normal; universal and yet unique. Each war is both similar and different to a previous one. The Vietnam War is different than the Afghan and Iraq wars, and not. Each war is defined by and defines anew its racialized gender power relations. And these power relations are defined by early global capitalism and anti-communism in Vietnam, and US unipolar capitalism and anti-terrorist rhetoric in Afghanistan and Iraq.

More than a quarter-century of feminist activism partly initiated by the Vietnam War defines new trajectories today. Sexual politics and the sexual/racial/gender systems of violence have new exposure and visibility because militarism and militarization redefine both masculinism and femininity, alongside a hyper-sexuality and neoracism that construct new-old racialized gender formations. Although women's bodies that birth have also always been maimed in war, today's wars make this more complex, with more females as actors in war. The newest technologies of war, alongside feminist activism and the demands of global capital, de-essentialize and de-naturalize the earth mother.

I am therefore focusing on the resexing of gender in the past quarter-century to better understand this stage of highly militarized global capital. The years after 1989, with the fall of the Soviet Union and the revolutions in Eastern Europe, ushered in this stage of US unipolar power. The start of the Gulf wars in 1991 solidified the militarist phase of US global power: more surveillance, more privatization, more concentration of power, more military expenditure. September 11, 2001 authorized this militarism in its heightened form and began the slide from neoliberal to fascistic democracy. With the rejustification of this militarized frame – be it the growth of prison facilities or the activation of the National Guard and reserve units or declaring code orange and red alerts for the civilian population – racialized gendered configurations are being rearticulated in established but revisionist form.

Re-militarizing daily life

A culture of pre-emptive strikes and unilateral power plays out both on the battlefield and in everyday life in the US. An aggressive self-absorption justifies a heightened individualism on the part of most successful people. And our leaders think they do not need to heed international law that defends against torture, or need to sign treaties to help protect the environment. The US controlled 32 percent of the world trade in weapons

in 1987 and in 1997 controlled 43 percent. Of the 140 nations it gave or sold arms to in 1995, 90 percent did not have democratic elections or were known for human rights abuses.¹

The US has the most advanced arsenal on the face of the earth and is becoming more and more conditioned by a military style of discipline because of this. The presence of our military – at home and abroad – is too significant not to affect the very culture that surrounds and is surrounded by it. The US spent more on its military – \$329 billion in 2002 – than China, Russia, Japan, Iraq, North Korea, and all other NATO countries combined.²

The US also spends greater amounts than ever before on its prisons – much more than it does on its schools. There has been an 81 percent increase in the number of prisons from 1990 to 2000. C.W. Mills's military-industrial complex is now termed a prison-industrial complex by Angela Davis. She states that there are at present more women in prison in California than there were women in prison in the whole country in the 1970s. In 2003 there were approximately 2 million prisoners in the US and about 1.5 million people in the military.³ Our militarized culture spends 52 percent of the federal budget on the military and 6 percent on health.⁴

War is our cultural metaphor. We war on drugs, on AIDS, on cancer, on poverty, on terrorism. But 'war' as metaphor obfuscates. Its language is as deceptive as its end goals. War is a danger to democracy because it justifies and therefore normalizes secrecy, deception, surveillance, and killing. This mentality of war spills out into everyday life. The games our children play naturalize war at home while US troops in Iraq use these games for training and relaxation. The popular Play Station is a recruiting tool – one thinks one can play with war, be in war and have fun, be warlike and win.⁵ Meanwhile in 'real' life Governor Jeb Bush supports the use of a computer cyber-matrix program that has marked thousands of citizens as potential terrorists.⁶

Cynthia Enloe writes of militarization as a process that impacts on and pervades everyday life, from the site of the military. The actual military is only a small, even if central, aspect of this disciplining and regulating of social relations. Hierarchy, surveillance, authoritarianism, and deference become part of the way people live both inside and outside military barracks.⁷ Homeland Security defines civilian psyches in militarist fashion. Codes orange and red demand a kind of unconscious consciousness of fear. They authorize the need for a security state; a war of a different sort – the

kind you might not see, or feel first-hand, but is there. The 2004 presidential election was embedded in these militarist frames, calling forth particular memories of the Vietnam War to construct the new heroes and patriots of today.

Enloe worries that militarized culture mystifies its own significance by focusing on the military as the location for militarized ways of thinking/living. She argues that by focusing on the military as the site of warlike life we normalize “the militarized civilian sites”. She insightfully argues that the newest way that militarization is “camouflaged” is by presenting women’s service in the military as though it were connected to women’s liberation.⁸ Instead of liberation, women’s entry into the military is better understood as the newest stage of militarizing global capitalism. In this post-1989 era the constructions of racialized patriarchy are being reformed once again. New-old constructions of the dutiful wife, the black mammy, the welfare mother, the soccer mom, the professional woman, are being refashioned for and with militarization. More women are forced to join the military out of economic necessity; and more non-military women have been disciplined by the demands of a privatized public sphere that restructures gender with its intensified demands.

Women in the military may make the military look more democratic – as though women now have the same choices as men – but the choices are not truly the same. So this may be a more modern military, if ‘modern’ means ‘changed’, but it is not more democratic or egalitarian. Actually, it is because there is less democracy, if democracy means choice and opportunity, that more women have joined the military. At present, this stage of patriarchy often requires women to join the army in order to find a paying job or a way to get an education. Given this militarist stage of global capital, the military is one of the main arenas where working and middle-class women can find paid work – like paid domestic labor was for black women in the 1950s. Given the structural changes of labor in the global economy, marriage no longer affords most women – no matter their race or class – life without paid labor. These women are looking for ways to get medical and housing benefits, educational resources, career training. These are significant shifts in women’s needs and lives, and in the institutions of marriage and the family, that cut across racial and class divides.

According to Enloe, whereas women made up only 1 percent of the Soviet Union army, in post-communist Russia they made up 12 percent of the armed forces. In the US during the Vietnam War women made up

2 percent of military personnel, and by 1997 they constituted 13 percent. As of September 2003, 213,059 women made up 15 percent of those serving on active duty. Women constituted some 18 percent of new enlistees in the army, 17 percent in the navy, 7 percent in the marines, and 23 percent in the air force. Almost all say they joined for the education and job training. Over 50 percent of enlisted women are from ethnic minorities: 33.2 percent African American, 1.8 percent Native American, 4.1 percent Asian American, and 10.2 percent Hispanic.⁹ The presence of women is also growing in the militaries of Croatia, Mexico, Jordan, Argentina, Chile, Japan, and South Korea.¹⁰ Of the US forces in Iraq, one in seven service members and one in three in the army's military intelligence department is female.¹¹

Young women make up a near-critical mass in the Maoist movement in Nepal. This highly militarist movement is remarkable for its male leadership and female combatants. Nearly 30 percent of the Maoist movement are women and many of them find their military involvement both a problematic and a liberating opportunity. These women are surrounded by domestic and state violence so that the 'People's War' gives them new and different options. These militarized struggles reproduce and unsettle stereotypical gender relations. Women's involvement is in some sense emancipatory and yet constraining, as the patriarchal relations of their country are both in play and subverted by their mobilization.¹²

It is important to note that the militarization of women's lives is complex and disorderly. The military has offered women entry before as a place of survival. Japanese American women signed up for the military during World War Two to prove their loyalty and to further their education. Brenda Moore writes about the Japanese American women who served in that war. Many of them saw military service as an "avenue of upward mobility", especially given their minority racial status. Citizenship was offered to immigrant groups in exchange for military service. Six thousand Nisei – US-born children of Japanese immigrants – trained to serve with the military in the Pacific. "An estimated 5000 Nisei men were on active duty before the US declared war on Japan." After war was declared, most of these individuals were "denied the very rights they were willing to fight and die for" given the injustices of American racism. In all, over 100,000 people of Japanese descent were 'relocated'; approximately 80,000 of these persons were born in the US. Some Nisei women eventually entered the military straight from internment camps. This was then used as a show of democracy:

the US army will open itself even to those of “enemy extraction”. Nisei women broke the norms of US culture both in general and in their more private lives. Their desires were various: to use their particular skills for the war effort, to prove their loyalty as US citizens, to see the world.¹³

African American women suffered extreme stigma and discrimination in the military during World War Two. There was a racial quota of 10 percent and a policy of racial segregation was practiced. African American women were segregated into an all-black platoon and were isolated from their white counterparts. Many of these women were trained professionally but assigned menial tasks simply because of their race. Segregation meant that segregated units were led by African American Women Army Corps officers but there were no officers among the Nisei women. All Japanese American women remained in the enlisted ranks.¹⁴ Traces of patriarchy continue as gender is reformed and modernized for the new needs of combat. Racial segregation is now illegal and gender hierarchies are nuanced so patriarchal privilege is camouflaged, but it is not less present. And the nuances are embedded in inadequate knowledge about the varied actual lives of women in the military across the globe.

Hundreds of thousands of women fought for Germany, the Soviet Union and Britain during World War Two; many of them engaged in combat. According to D’Ann Campbell, approximately 800,000 women served in the Red Army and over half of them were in frontline duty units. The Soviets could not afford the luxury of the non-combat/combat classification that preoccupied the Americans, British and Germans.¹⁵ A lack of sufficient ‘man’-power drew women into combat, not democratic priorities. Women soldiers died in hand-to-hand combat in Okinawa – necessity drew women to combat roles rather than a feminist quest for ‘equality’. Slightly more than 200,000 women serve in the enlisted ranks in the US military at present. Necessity should not be misunderstood here as progress, or democracy, or feminisms.

Women in war-torn countries live the new militarized life sometimes as combatants but more often as refugees and displaced people. Countries like Palestine, Israel, Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan do not have neat divides between civilian and military realms. Private life and familial relations take on militarized form as the usual divides of home and battle are smashed. Sexed and gender relations are remixed in war alongside the remix of militarized zones like the US.

Militarizing gender

First-world countries get to make the distinction between militarized life and war more readily than countries elsewhere. War-torn countries live without the luxury of this divide. Gender violence in India and the Sudan is publicized, and put in view, as both horrific and ordinary. Gender violence and the gendering of violence appear as one process. Gender violence can be practiced against males and females; this loosens the grip of traditional meanings of gender, while also reinforcing them. Public rape and publicized gender humiliation are the newest forms of very old practices.

People in the US were horrified by September 11, 2001 because they felt a bit of what war feels like up closer than usual. People in the US with loved ones in Iraq and Afghanistan also feel a bit of war up close. But most of us do not consciously feel the wars in the sense that we do not walk around experiencing a constant aching and fear. Yet more women in the US than ever before are away at war. As such, women have joined the once-male landscape in greater numbers. These changes alter gendered relations both inside and outside the military. Women are mobilized for and by combat. It remains to be seen exactly what of established gender remains in these newest wars and how war will change with these newly gendered constructions.¹⁶

Peace is often identified with females, and war with males. Because war unsettles previously gendered life, space itself is reconstructed. The language of war – home front, battle zone, combatant, civilian – challenges established notions of home, safety, and privacy. Death creates new necessity. So many men lost their lives in the Rwandan massacres that women now lead most of their local councils. In Iraq, so many men were taken into custody by US forces – more than 10,000 men and boys – that women began to do men's work. They till their fields and guard their homes.¹⁷

Much of war is covert. Yet war itself is an overt and violent form of politics. War is seeable and in view, even if not knowable. Because the obscene inequities and injustices of global capitalism are more visible today than ever before, more crushing systems of power are needed to protect it. The US protects itself with its fists while democracy is still trotted out as a defense and its women in khaki are used as decoy.¹⁸ Meanwhile the protection of women along with children – as civilians – is simultaneously used as a justification for war despite the fact that 95 percent of the

casualties of war are civilians and the majority of these are women. These civilians are also militarized as refugees, as wage-laborers, as haulers of wood and water, as mothers.

Women who enter the military enter a masculinist bastion. Military culture seeks to stabilize and punish the dangerous female. At the US Naval Academy a nightly ritual is practiced in which the newest member of the Academy says “Goodnight Jane Fonda”, and the entire company responds, “Good night, bitch.”¹⁹ Domestic violence is found to be three to five times higher in military couples than civilian ones. Men who have been in combat are four times more likely to be physically abusive. In 2002, five military wives were brutally killed by husbands recently returned from Iraq to Fort Bragg.²⁰ Before the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Miles Foundation – a non-profit agency in Connecticut that deals with abuse in the military – received about 75 calls a month from military families reporting domestic violence and sexual abuse. After 9/11 it started receiving 150 calls a week. Eight soldiers committed suicide after returning from Iraq; another drowned his wife in the bathtub.²¹

War supposedly exposes the evilness that lurks beneath the surface; that gives it purpose and trivializes everything else. War is both desired and despised. It is an “orgy of death”, destruction, and violence. As such, war seduces. Christopher Hedges describes and authorizes this Hobbesian version of life and death as one of male conquest. Men are driven by Eros, their flirtation with life, and Thanatos, death.²² Thomas Hobbes’s world was a world of men – women were missing. War does not give me meaning. Nor do I think war gives most people – male or female – meaning. Hobbes was not right about most men or women. Yet, the naturalization and normalization of war are maintained by this notion of a mythic human nature, which is also constructed as male.

It is dangerous to think that war is inevitable and intrinsic to human nature. I do not think genes are simply nature nor do I think human nature is natural at all. The concept of nature is truly political at the start. It is a construct that reifies the needs of those who need us to fight their wars. In this techno-masculinist world that we inhabit we are shown war as the drama of manhood. Sometimes it is named the “oedipal compulsion”, and the “psychic quest for the father”. Yet over 120,000 dutiful sons who fought the Vietnam War came home to commit suicide – twice as many as were killed in the war.²³

Gender naturalizes war; and war is gendered. Masculinity and femininity

are set as normal oppositions. And the sexual body itself is left silenced. The very process of birthing is most often not in view, or is trivialized, or is fantasized.²⁴ None of these options help real live women. This process silences and obfuscates the female body and leaves it unreadable. War in Hobbesian fashion starts from this mythic place. Women are absent giving birth; men kill. Or, as Klaus Theweleit says, “War ranks high among the male ways of giving birth.”²⁵ Women then are supposedly peaceful; and men make war. The essentialist argument assigns these categories in nature while masking the artificial gendering of wars.

Women are sexed in particular ways and give birth in a world that demands that they nurture as well. If we give up the fixedness of both sex and gender then we are left to examine the changeability of sexing gender and gendering sex. This does not erase sex or gender but rather demands an accounting of their politicized contextual meanings. So some women may look to preserve life rather than smash it but many females will enter the military. This means that the practices of gender will change even though the authorized essentialized views of femininity and manliness can remain static.

War institutionalizes sexual differentiation while also undermining it. War demands opposition, differentiation, and the othering of peoples. The privileging of masculinity underscores all other processes of differentiation. War is a process by which masculinity is both produced and reproduced. The heroic warrior is the standard.²⁶ Everyone else is a pussy, a wimp, a fag. It is why the defeat of the US in Vietnam was viewed as emasculating. The defeat required a rearticulation of gender as much as a refocusing of foreign policy. As recently as 2003 the newspaper *The Blade* published an exposé of the Tiger Forces – the elite unit that “savaged civilians in Vietnam”. This highly trained unit of paratroopers, in 1967, cut off ears and scalps of their prisoners and donned them as necklaces of triumph.²⁷ It is now well documented that US troops maimed and raped innocents in a series of Vietnamese villages. Yet the Tiger Forces are still fighting US wars, leading some to say that the only difference between the Afghan and Vietnam wars is that Afghanistan is brown, and Vietnam was green.²⁸ One is left to ponder how the ghoulish war atrocities in Vietnam are a part of the Tiger Forces strategy in Iraq.

Vietnam continues to be a reminder of the unsettling demasculinization of the US in defeat. It is why Jane Fonda is still hated for her anti-war activity and remains nothing but pussy to defenders of this war. She sadly

continues to apologize for her anti-war activism, but to no avail. Gertrude Stein had it right when she said that patriarchal is supposed to be the same as patriotic and the patriotic woman is supposed to be silent and supportive, not subversive.²⁹

Post-Vietnam politics turned to remasculinizing the US military for global capitalism. The US defeat in Vietnam was used to justify the downsizing and privatizing of the ‘feminized’ inept government. A leaner and meaner state is what global capitalists wished for, while Donald Rumsfeld desired to restructure and privatize the military as well. My own trajectory back to thinking about the Vietnam War was when I read about the Tiger Force and the special counter-terrorism Delta Force, but this time in Iraq. And then the 2004 presidential election brought Vietnam up once again. Kerry was a Viet vet and was tainted with it, rather than embraced because of it.

Too much hateful happened there. Millions of tons of bombs were dropped on civilians and soldiers alike. Three and a half million Vietnamese died; 58,000 US soldiers were killed. Those who returned home came with terrible memories that they could not live with. Some tell their stories in the documentary film *Winter Soldier*.³⁰ They speak against the war and tell the horror: women and children indiscriminately murdered, mutilated, burned and killed, cut open while still living, prisoners thrown alive from helicopters. They speak of how they were trained to think of the Vietnamese as “gooks” and “commies” and not human beings. They say they were totally scared for their own lives and did what they had to survive.

I watched *Winter Soldier* again while writing this book. I sat listening and watching and yet not quite able to do so. The footage of young Vietnamese women screaming and begging for their lives was beyond bearable. I kept thinking that if this is the truth, we should not be allowed to forget. These acts cannot be forgiven because they must not be forgotten. They must be remembered. I am not speaking of the need to punish when I renounce forgiveness. But I am speaking of the need to not forgive the making of war.

The feminizing loss of the Vietnam War was a significant historical moment that refashioned the historical process of gender renegotiation. The war became a “vehicle for expansion and specification of altered gender relations”.³¹ The oppositional gender relations became more transitory and fluid. Gender would become more supple... but not more equal. The gender divide would still exist but not in simply old formations. War would be shaped less by biological sex – by one’s male body, by maleness – and

more by masculine discourses that can be adopted by males or females. Discourses shape what gender looks like. There is a move “away from gendered individuals and toward gendered discourses”.³² This process of gender renegotiation took on particular significance in the 1991 Gulf War. This was the first US post-Vietnam war and it was the first US war that acknowledged the troops as both male and female.

The Iraq wars from 1991 to 2006 have been an expression of the rehabilitation of the post-Vietnam US military through a resexing of it. In part femininity has been militarized while the military has not been demasculinized. Early on in the Iraq war, the story of Jessica Lynch’s capture by the Fedayeen in Nasiriyah was used to mobilize US male soldiers to action. They would find her and protect her.³³ Jessica Lynch and her comrades Lori Piestewa and Shoshanna Johnson represent the shifting sexual and racial make-up of the military. Only one of the three was white, while all three were working class and female. They remained gendered as women while being militarized like men. These young females were in harm’s way. Both Lynch and Johnson came home with serious injuries. Piestewa, a single mom, died.

Yet the Iraq War of 2002 was initiated by a cowboy, with no military record to speak of. And women at home also face a refeminization – be it liposuction or a remake of *The Stepford Wives* – in their everyday lives. The gender confusion is real. In 2005, the film *Brokeback Mountain* was a hit. Now, even cowboys can be gay.

Global capitalism requires a rearticulation and regendering of patriarchy. This involves a use of class differentiation among women to affirm masculinist privilege across class lines. And working-class women, especially women of color, are most often the new masculinist warriors. As class differences exacerbate inequality and injustice globally, these class realities are written into the militarization of gendering everyday life.

Rape as gendered war

Rape articulates the violence encoded in gender; in wartime it re-inscribes the continuity of the gender inscription of woman as victim rather than actor. Yet enemies, male or female, are also feminized in this process. Rape in Bosnia or Darfur sexually violates girls and women while also attacking the gendered system of masculinity. Men are demasculinized by the rape of their daughters or wives. Everyone is shamed in this process.

Rape is war in brutal, torturous form – not simply war’s effect, or its crime. As such, the female body is the battlefield. Women’s bodies are appropriated, conquered and destroyed. War rape smashes all distinction between private and public life. It destroys the ownership and privacy of one’s body as individual lives are destroyed as barter in gendered wars. There are no civilians left. It disallows the mapping of a civilian status in war or the confinement of torture to a context that is disconnected from home and family.³⁴

The enemy nation is demasculinized while the victor is remasculinized. Systematic rape policy – as a “murderous misogyny” – often exists as integral to military policy.³⁵ There have been different forms of this process: the sexual slavery of Jewish women for Nazi soldiers, the enforced institutionalized rape of ‘comfort women’ by the Japanese army in World War Two, the genocidal Serb rape camps of the Bosnian war, the rape and mutilation of Tutsi women in the Rwandan massacres, sometimes initiated by Hutu females themselves.

Over half a million girls and women were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Tens of thousands of girls and women have been raped in Bosnia, Sierra Leone and East Timor. In many of these countries, as in Serbia and Pakistan, a raped woman will be shunned by her community, and suicide is often thought to be her only avenue of escape. Despite this stigma and shaming, in Sierra Leone the scale of war rape was so massive that rape survivors were allowed back into their communities despite all else.³⁶

If I build on Clausewitz and Foucault here, rape can be said to be a form of war in yet another inhumane form; an integral form of war rather than an effect.³⁷ War and rape are both normalized as though they are inevitable, almost biologically driven as in the mythic warrior’s state of nature. Yet bodily violation destroys established gendered stereotypes. A violated female is no longer a woman that a man wishes to lay claim to. In war rape, females are reduced to their patriarchal definition as a body vessel and also denied the status of a privileged womanhood. In war rape the woman is totally occupied which is the “ultimate invasion”.³⁸

Although less acknowledged and less systemic, homosexual rape – man on man – occurs, but because of the way it collides with established notions of hetero-masculinity, it is less publicized. Rape in war – whether hetero or homosexual in form – structures a regendering of gender. When raped, males become womanlike or like a fag; they become feminized as

helpless. In this instance, gender floats from the biological body in horrific form.

According to Yvette Abrams, one in two females have been raped in South Africa because of the institutionalization of violence, starting with slavery and following with colonial wars. This violent sense of trauma underpins any possibility of viable politics today.³⁹ And the more war-ravaged the globe becomes, the more necessary it is to recognize rape as politics in yet another form. Nevertheless, in fall 2005 General Musharaf of Pakistan spoke dismissively of the claims of Pakistani women, saying that many of them make false or exaggerated claims of rape in order to get financial support and visas from foreigners. He likened rape to a “money-making thing” if you want to go abroad. He did so despite the publicity surrounding Mukhtar Mai who was raped – as an act of honor revenge – at the orders of a village jurga in 2002; and despite the threats against Shazia Khalid’s life after she went public about her rape.⁴⁰ Pakistani feminists were outraged and demonstrated in the streets to make their counter-statement.

Rape as war-in-another-form also exists much closer to home. Dozens of servicewomen in the Persian Gulf area have alleged sexual assaults and rape by their fellow troops. During 2002–4 there were over one hundred reports of sexual misconduct in the Central Command Area – Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.⁴¹ These sexual assaults simultaneously construct these females as both the womanly warrior and the womanly victim.

The military needs female recruits. This means that the military is becoming more female, with approximately 14 percent of the Army, 17 percent of the Air Force and 13 percent of the Navy now female. But military life still nurtures masculinist sexual predators.⁴² Thirty-seven servicewomen sought sexual trauma counseling from civilian rape crisis organizations after returning from war duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Eighty-eight cases of sexual misconduct were reported by the 60,000 women stationed in these areas.⁴³

Jessica Lynch has no memory of being sexually assaulted by her kidnappers. Rick Bragg writes that she was probably tortured and raped – her medical report cites “anal sexual assault”.⁴⁴ The intra- and transnational presence of sexual humiliation and rape defines and constructs enemies, nations and their wars. Women’s bodies become the universalized representation of conquest, while male bodies are both masculinized in victory and feminized in defeat.

The sexed body – whether whole or maimed, male or female – is usually forgotten in war. Sometimes we are forced to remember. Tammy Duckworth returned home as an amputee after losing both her legs to a rocket-propelled grenade. She was an Army aviator in Iraq scouting the Tigris river, and then came home to run for public office in Illinois. Legs and arms are shattered and blown off, vaginas are violated, people are blinded, psyches are tortured by unforgiving nightmares and little is said of this. This silencing of the racial, sexual and gendered body is vital to the persistence of war.

Patriarchy, suicide bombers and war

Patriarchal gender continues to morph according to context. Many US women looking for job training and steady-paying work continue to join the military in new numbers. Over 50 percent of enlisted women are from ethnic minorities.⁴⁵ Similarly positioned women in countries elsewhere also look to the militarized zones of their lives. Palestinian women – living some of the most militarized lives of any women across the globe – find themselves smack up against the daily life of war. As such, they are some of the most activist women in the world today – struggling to survive and build their nation. Their lives have little space for what is usually considered private and familial, and few of them could claim civilian status in their war-torn circumstances. They suffer and struggle and die in equal numbers to their men.

Women suicide bombers reflect similar gender bending to that in other militarized arenas. Female suicide bombers do not bespeak the demise of patriarchal relations in these countries – Lebanon, Palestine, Chechnya – but rather the new fluidity of gendered roles carried out by male and female alike. According to Barbara Victor's book *Army of Roses*, as early as 1985 Syrian intelligence officers encouraged young Lebanese women to blow themselves up in attacks on Israeli troops. Palestinian authorities distribute a lifetime stipend of \$400 a month to families of male suicide bombers, and to families of shahidas – female suicide bombers – like Wafa Idris, \$200 per month. Once again the economic needs of these young women play a part. And patriarchy in obvious ways devalues their lives in relation to men's. According to Victor these women who give their lives do so in a mix of economic necessity and their own personal despair. "Suicide attacks become the ultimate 'smart bombs' of the poor."⁴⁶

Several of the women suicide bombers are bright, intelligent, divorced, and mothers. Yet they are also described by Victor as irrational and distraught and remain within the masculinist discourses as emotional and unstable vulnerable women. They are feminized as such, while occupying the masculinist position of bomber. When the reality of women suicide bombers is discussed the query is always, why? It is assumed that politics cannot sufficiently describe the actions of women so there must be something else to the story; some other reason for their actions. So their acts are described as ones of “personal despair” and their reasons are coined in terms of their personal stories of “moral transgressions” needing redemption through a “martyr’s death”. Whereas male suicide bombers are explained in terms of a “psychosis of martyrdom” given the “humiliation of occupation” and the “hopelessness of deeply stagnant societies”, female bombers are explained in terms of jilted love, and failed marriages.⁴⁷

Jacqueline Rose wonders why suicide bombers are seen as more irrational than other soldiers. Or why dying is a greater sin than living when you kill. She thinks that suicide bombing – that kills far fewer people than conventional warfare – is no less sane than killing in general. Rose also thinks that Victor is wrong about the women suicide bombers. Victor envelopes them in their gender – they are simply scorned and rejected women, not Palestinians or politically passionate people or martyrs.⁴⁸

Palestinian women are crucial to the armed resistance/intifada. Arafat called these women his “army of roses”. Hamas needed women to crush the Israeli army like the Bush administration has needed women to help fill the ranks for the Iraq wars. At the same time patriarchal privilege is protected in these scenarios, especially as suicide bombers are depicted by the West as irrational and pathological. In part this pathology is defined by fear of and aversion to death; but in part the gendered viewings of female irrationality play significantly in these instances.

The Black Widows are suicide bombers in Chechnya. Some report that in order to make these girls choose death, Chechnyans rape them and videotape the rapes. Then they have nothing left to live for and have a reason to die. This explanation begins and ends with patriarchal gender: women are not viewed as political agents so they must be raped to force them to take such action *and* rape is used as the narrative for domination. One is left to wonder why else a woman would choose to be a bomber. The rape explanation once again denies that women are actors in their own right, that a woman is an agent of her own self. But not all Black Widows

are described as such. Another female bomber is described as cultured, and ‘modern’.⁴⁹

In Russia these women are also known as *shakhidki*, the feminine Russian variant for the Arabic word that means holy warriors who give their lives. They are depicted as nihilistic rather than courageous even though they have taken part in at least fifteen different attacks since 1999. Although many were not Black Widows, nineteen of the forty-one captors who took part in the hostage siege of the Moscow theatre in October 2002 were women. A decade of war has created the new woman suicide bomber. And this is as much a part of a deep commitment to Islamic culture as it is to feminist democratic theory.⁵⁰

A female suicide bomber is killed in Iraq for the first time, in September 2005. She initially dressed as a woman, in traditional robes and veil and was not searched at the checkpoint. After clearing this hurdle she switched to men’s clothes and travelled to where she detonated the bomb, killing eight people and injuring fifty-seven. The veils of gender – both as woman and man – are used to enable the making of war. Bodies are clearly not what they seem.

Terry Eagleton writes that “blowing yourself up for political reasons is a complex symbolic act, one that mixes despair and defiance”. It expresses the tension between living a life under occupation that has no self-determination and determining one’s death. By becoming invulnerable suicide bombers taste a kind of freedom. Their only power is to die a devastating death that makes life appear “monstrously unrecognizable”.⁵¹

Once you are preoccupied with death and dying, martyrdom feels like a real choice. But people are not expected to think this way, especially not women. The female suicide bomber denies traditional gender essentialism; she denies hetero-normative gender in its usual construction.

Women’s rights and the military police

The US claims to free Iraqi and Afghan women in war while women at home join the military. Many of these young women choose to join the Military Police Corps because its jobs in the field are open to women. Some 34 of the 171 soldiers in the Corps are women. These units often perform the same duties as all-male combat units. Many of the MP gunners are women. The jobs are dangerous. Private Tracie Sanchez, thirty years old and a mother of four, had her face hit by 15 pieces of shrapnel from a

rocket-propelled grenade. She is a combat machine gunner in a kill zone. Her children are twelve, ten, seven and four years old. She had a boring job after high school so she turned to the army. She has bad dreams, not because she froze in combat, but because she did not. She killed people and wishes that she hadn't.⁵² This is the new-old gender geography.

Specialist Danielle Green, a former college basketball star for Notre Dame, also a member of the Military Police, returned home after losing her left hand. She says she is disappointed in her tour of duty because she didn't do what she thought she would. She said that they did not rebuild neighborhoods or schools, but spent time doing too much of nothing. Given the way things have turned out, she now thinks the US should not have gone to war. "I thought we were going for humanitarian reasons."⁵³ She too is an expression of new-old gender.

On the other hand Iraqi teenage girls find themselves with new restrictions and less freedom. They are not allowed out of their homes by themselves for fear of kidnapping and/or rape. Their lives too have been militarized: they live with little security and if they are lucky enough still to have a semblance of a social life, it is under strict surveillance from parents. One mother says, "you have to keep your daughters in the house".⁵⁴ There is no easy call to make here. The limited changes in a post-Saddam Iraq have not been sufficient to justify the turmoil and sadness.

Women and girls may lose a great deal depending on how the intra-Islamic conflict and imperial democratic forces play out. Imperial democracy does not look too good for women because women will be bartered once again. The US has never truly stood with women's liberation abroad or at home. A militarized notion of women's rights is a far cry from women's and girls' liberation. It is significant that Spain's prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, was elected on the promise that he would withdraw Spanish forces from Iraq. When, shortly after his election, he appointed his team of ministers, half of those he named were women; he has also spoken out on behalf of women's rights, especially the right to abortion. Whether these females will be gender decoys in another form, or instigators of democracy, is yet to be seen.

Sexual humiliation, gender confusion and Abu Ghraib

The *New York Times* reports that there have been new releases of prisoners formerly held at Abu Ghraib. The photo shows a young man, aged

seventeen, being embraced by his mother and sisters. His body completely slumps into their protective arms. He is two years younger than my daughter. I am heartsick wondering if he will ever recover from his horror.

Muslim men are described as being sexually humiliated at Abu Ghraib. And white women of the working class are used to “pussy whip” Muslim men. I wonder about the significance of this dyad. I am struck by the use of the phrase ‘humiliated’ rather than ‘tortured’ or ‘raped’. The women I met with during the Bosnian war that had been forced into the rape camps there were not described as humiliated, but rather as raped. The choice of words is revealing. Men who are tortured and sexually degraded are ‘humiliated’ *because* they are treated like women; they are forced to be women – sexually dominated and degraded. Men who are naked and exposed remind us of the vulnerability usually associated with being a woman. The brown men at Abu Ghraib are then constructed as effeminate and narrate a subtext of homosexuality. They were made to feel like and be like women or fags while being tortured by females. The brown men at Abu Ghraib remained male, but not men; and the white women guards were female but not women. The trick is that there is no clear demarcation between being female and being a woman. The two are connected but not determinant.

When I first saw the pictures of the torture at Abu Ghraib I felt destroyed and heartbroken. I thought ‘we’ are the fanatics, the extremists; not them. By the next day as I continued to think about Abu Ghraib I wondered how there could be so many females involved in the atrocities. Three of the torturers – Megan Ambuhl, Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman – so key to the pictorial narrative – are white and female. The brigadier general in charge of the prisons in Iraq, Janis Karpinski, is also a white female. So is Major General Barbara Fast, the top US intelligence officer who reviewed the status of detainees. Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor to the President and now Secretary of State, is not only female, but black.

Karpinski was in the Special Forces in the 1991 Gulf War. She became an army reserve Brigadier General in charge of the military prisons in Iraq in 2003. There were three large jails, eight battalions and 3,400 army reservists under her command. She was the only female commander in the war zone and the only officer held responsible and accountable for the Abu Ghraib incident. Another key player, Carolyn Wood, before coming to Iraq served at the Bagram detention center in Afghanistan, where two

detainees died in incidents declared homicides. She was responsible for instituting the new interrogation techniques – like hooding, nudity, and sleep deprivation – in the prisons in Iraq.⁵⁵ Lynndie England was an inmate processing clerk. Her boyfriend, Charles Graner, was held responsible for the most sadistic treatment of prisoners and was sentenced to ten years in Leavenworth military prison. She was visiting him at Abu Ghraib the night she participated in the torture. He was unable to prove that higher-ups authorized the treatment he handed out.

Lynndie England will probably always remain tied to this narrative as the woman with the leash. She faced the early charges against her, at the age of twenty, in court wearing a camouflage maternity uniform. Here she is as torturer/humiliator, pregnant female, sexually promiscuous, and of the white working class. She is a West Virginia mountain girl who loved softball and squirrel hunting. She looks like a dyke and maybe she is. And, it does not really matter. But what matters is that she is a woman in a man's army. So she fucks the sergeant, Graner, and pulls around naked Iraqi men. She says that what she did was just a game. She did not mean to humiliate anyone. Lynndie England's gender circulates around her body. She represents masculinity in a female body. Gender floats disconnected from its signifying body. She is a decoy for imperial wars.

England's first attempt at a plea bargain ended in a mistrial. The plea involved a defense citing a history of mental illness and learning disabilities as well as the corrupting influence of Graner on her. The military judge said he was not convinced that she knew her actions were wrong at the time. In the next trial England's lawyer defended her as "just following orders", claiming that she has an "overly compliant personality".⁵⁶ In a Dateline interview England said that she loved Graner and he told her to do it. She did what she was expected to do. She did it under pressure, and under orders.⁵⁷

It is not at all clear exactly what the point is: that she was following orders and not thinking and has no responsibility; or that she suffers learning disabilities and she is incapable of knowing right from wrong; or that higher-ups in the line of command are responsible. Since the trial she has birthed Graner's child and is described as a nurturing mother who adores her son. She was found guilty of six counts including maltreating detainees, an indecent act, and conspiracy at Abu Ghraib prison. Graner, who is in jail for the next ten years, has married Megan Ambuhl who pled guilty for her actions at Abu Ghraib in exchange for her dismissal from the military.⁵⁸ Soap opera anyone?

Other than these trials, little has come of all the investigations. To date, ten low-level soldiers have been punished for abusing detainees, but the four top officers involved in Abu Ghraib have been cleared by the army of any wrongdoing. Only one officer, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who commanded the military police unit at Abu Ghraib, has been relieved of her command and given a written reprimand. She now charges the Army with making her a scapegoat. Karpinski writes: "I am still the expendable woman in the man's Army." She feels betrayed: that she worked hard to improve the Abu Ghraib prison and make it habitable but with no support from her superiors. She says she knows now that she was not aggressive enough in demanding the improvements she requested, or in overseeing the interrogations. But she also claims that it is because she is a woman in a man's army that she was always left out of the loop of information in the first place. Interestingly she says that although she always wanted to be a "soldier's soldier", she also did not want to lose her femininity. She writes that some "female soldiers became more masculine than the men", that the men tried to defeminize female soldiers by cutting their hair short, insisting on baggy uniforms, and so on. She, in contrast, chose to keep her hair long. According to Karpinski, she wasn't masculine enough for the army, and has been punished accordingly.⁵⁹

More recently Karpinski told a panel of judges inquiring into human rights violations that Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, former senior US military commander in Iraq, gave orders to cover up the cause of death of several female soldiers serving in Iraq. Karpinski testified that these women "died of dehydration because they refused to drink liquids late in the day, for fear that they would have to use latrines late at night". They were afraid of assault and rape by male soldiers if they had to use the latrine – which was far from their barracks – after dark.⁶⁰

The reported but 'unsubstantiated' abuse and rape of Muslim women prisoners by US soldiers has remained largely silenced in the depictions of the torture at Abu Ghraib. It has been said that there was mistreatment of female prisoners and late-night interrogations of two female detainees aged seventeen and eighteen. The Pentagon has declined to comment about these charges.⁶¹ Muslim males and white females are put at the center of this narrative of abuse while Muslim females remain absent and out of view though there are whisperings. The violated, silenced Muslim woman reconstructs traditional forms of gender alongside the white female torturers of Abu Ghraib. Gender morphs in many forms here.

These racialized silences and gender confusions are both common and unique to the militarized Abu Ghraib narrative. Abu Ghraib is a horrific exposure of what war is and does always; and of what the wars of/on terror at this particular juncture of unilateral militarized globalization look like. The sadism and humiliation are not aberrations. These vicious practices had been established early after September 11, 2001 in the Brooklyn Detention Center. Pakistani Javid Iqbal and Egyptian Ehab Elmaghraby filed civil complaints describing their beatings there. They charge that they were sodomized with a flashlight. Violations of the human rights of prisoners in Afghanistan and Guantanamo were reported by the Red Cross to Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Paul Wolfowitz, to little avail.⁶² Allegations of rape at Abu Ghraib were corroborated by General Antonio Taguba.

Females are at these specific locations of power while a militarist masculinism is at its height. I am thinking that it is because these locations are unaccountable and maybe even anachronistic sites of power that women occupy them. The privatization of the military has created a lack of accountability as well as unregulated arenas where sexual rape and torture are both free – in the sense of free to do what is not expressly forbidden – and silently sanctioned by higher-ups. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has downsized and restructured the military and maybe females have been allowed in just as these locations of institutionalized power are being denuded. It may be why it is so easy to locate the blame at these very sites.

These women should be held responsible and accountable; but they also are being used as gender decoys. They play a role of deception and lure us into a fantasy of gender equity rather than depravity. As decoys they let us pretend that this is what democracy looks like. As decoys they create confusion by participating in the very sexual humiliation that their gender is usually victim to. This supposed gender swapping and switching leaves masculinist/racialized gender in place. Just the sex has changed; the uniform remains the same. Male or female can be a masculinized commander or imperial collaborator, while white women look like masculinist empire builders and brown men look like women and homos.

Females as gender decoys allow the fantasy that women are more equal, are found anywhere with no impediments to their choices and their lives. And the decoy works because some things have changed, and these changes are not insignificant, and these changes matter. But it does not mean that they matter in the way in which they are imaged, and orchestrated. The brilliance of females being used as decoys for democracy is that the

unstable relationship between sex and gender can be deployed in their confused and fluid meanings.

There is an historical precedent here. Catherine the Great, like most of the 'emperors' of Russia in the eighteenth century, was a female who ruled as a man. A clear distinction was made between the empress's female body, and her role as 'emperor', with both military and sovereign connotations. In eighteenth-century Russia in order to "attain the throne and maintain power, the female monarchs had to display masculine behavior". The common scenario for eighteenth century palace revolution "involved a ritual transversion: a female pretender dressed up as a man". Russian female rule developed "gender transversion in order to secure and strengthen her successful, but illegitimate accession". Legitimacy required "masculine attributes". Catherine the Great used "classical masculine models of imperial power ... in order to sanction her rule".⁶³ This is a precedent for Margaret Thatcher and Madeleine Albright.

Whenever power and domination are exposed in their ugly form as in Abu Ghraib, the embedded sexual and racialized meanings of power are revealed. Racism and sexism are always in play together because they each construct the other. When one is revealed the other is lying in wait. Salient examples of the hybrid relation between race, sex, and gender are the O.J. Simpson trial, the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, the beatings of Rodney King and Abner Louima and their aftermaths. One was never sure if the issues were racialized sex or sexualized racism or whether they are ever truly separable. In the case of Abu Ghraib, racial codings are used to deeply seed gender meanings and sexual confusion to build empire.

A man who is treated like a woman becomes less than human – not a white man – like the black slave woman, and not a white woman; like the lynched black man. Muslim men, along with Jews and Semitic men of all religions, are then viewed as not virile like white men. This is somewhat like the black slave man who was forced to watch the rape of his lover or child by the master, or lynching; except that the black man is made 'different' than the white man, in his hyper- rather than homosexuality. So the black man is also lynched and mutilated/castrated. Masculinist depravity, as a political discourse and practice, can be adopted by males and/or females.

Gender decoys are females in drag and the drag allows us to think that they represent the best of democracy when they don't. Yet one could also say that all gender is a form of drag – that macho men are trying to pass as

just that. In other words, some drag passes as though it is natural, as in authorized versions of masculinity and femininity. Gender is already in place when females are defined as feminine; the gendering of the body controls the interpretative lens.

Laura Bush has morphed into a 'desperate housewife' by her own admission. She delivers jokes about her husband at a May 2005 black tie affair complaining that he goes to bed by eight o'clock, with the obvious implication that he leaves her sexually in need. She goes to Africa to do the US's bidding in Africa – to show the world "how good America is". She no longer is marketed to us as the dutiful wife; but rather as the activist humanist and defender of women's rights abroad. Neither Laura nor authorized gender versions remain constant. Flux and flexibility are the rule here – for patriarchal relations and for global capital.

Laura's husband, the president of the US, stays home to oversee the unsuccessful wars of/on terror. While overseeing the domestic realm he nominates two women, one black and one white, to the federal bench. Each decries affirmative action; one of them, Janice Rogers Brown, the African American daughter of a sharecropper, sees a "form of slavery in liberalism" – where government regulation fosters dependency like slavery did.⁶⁴ A female in black skin speaks out against the very tradition that gave her rights to be free and a federal judge. She is a racialized gender decoy.

Simultaneously, Republicans in Congress were forced to backtrack on requiring the Pentagon to ask Congress to vote each time the military wanted to open new battlefield support jobs to women. The military argued that the policy was too restrictive because flexibility was needed in assigning women to support units during war.⁶⁵ While women's gender roles are debated in the US, Bush speaks on behalf of women's rights in Jordan and Israel. And the gender hypocrisy continues as Republicans try to block amendments to the military authorization bill that would remove ideological barriers to providing good health care to military women who are victims of sexual assault. Finally, a narrow exception was made to allow the morning-after pill or abortion in these cases. The resistance to change crafts the debate about women in combat: women as of 1994 were prohibited from serving in direct combat units but women are allowed to fly attack helicopters and attack aircraft that provide close air support.⁶⁶ So more women are dying – four women were killed in Falluja in June 2005 when a suicide bomber struck their convoy – while the mythic divide between combat and support roles remains rigidly in place.

It is all the more despicable that the Bush administration used the language of women's rights to justify the bombs in the Afghan war by Taliban practices towards women; and then again to justify the bombing in Iraq by the horrific torture and rape chambers under Saddam Hussein.⁶⁷ And it should be no surprise that Bush's cowgirls – Laura, Mary Matalin, and Karen Hughes – who regularly dismiss and criticize feminism of any sort were responsible for articulating this *imperial* women's rights justification for war. Imperial feminism utilizes a masculinist militarism in drag. Imperial(ist) feminism obfuscates the use of gender decoys: women are both victims and perpetrators; constrained and yet free; neither exactly commander nor victim.

If rape and sexual humiliation are understood not as aberrations in war but as simply a form of war by other means, there is then a different context for seeing the disorder and chaos in Iraq that leaves many women barricaded in their homes. This is not simply about Islamic practices or Saddam Hussein's legacy, but rather about war itself. It also puts a different lens on the recent charges of sexual assault and rape by dozens of US servicewomen in the Persian Gulf area against their fellow soldiers.⁶⁸ It makes clear that gender degradation is integral to war and that war can therefore not be liberatory for women's rights.

The narratives of war take on more explicit gender trajectories today because the relation of sex to gender is in particular flux given this militarist stage of global capitalist patriarchy. It is in part why the most explicit conflict rages between patriarchal Islamic Osama extremists and global capitalist Bush patriarchs – they differ the most on the necessity of traditional patriarchal relations and their modernized versions. In the Balkan wars the raping of women was a central narrative demonizing Serb nationalism while the rape and sexual humiliation of Muslim male prisoners was largely silenced. More recently the sexual humiliation of Muslim men at Abu Ghraib largely silenced the sexual humiliation and violation of their women counterparts. Gender differentiation remains poignant in both narratives, while unsettling pre-existing sexual divides.

Today's militarist masculinism operates out of the enforced differentiation of woman from man – the 'othering' and differentiating of each through a hetero viewing of the self using white female decoys. The Iraq wars have finely tuned the dual role of imperial women – both as masculinized commanders and soldiers and as gender decoys. However, I also

think that these silences of war *enforce* a disconnection and ‘differentiation’ between men and women that do not and cannot exist given the centrality of racialized/sexualized violence in war. This shared dehumanization also bespeaks the very opposite: men and women’s shared humanity.

Sex and race combine and reformulate here. Bodies are disconnected from their gendered meaning. Brown men become like women of all colors, yet it is white women who supposedly dominate and hold the leashes – the white women who are also raped by their comrades in arms. This gendered chaos creates a new/old form of deception so that real people cannot be seen for their humanity. As such, the structures of power and domination defining the contours of their lives are put out of view.

Barbara Ehrenreich has argued that Abu Ghraib makes it clear that feminism – the idea that women need to be free to have the same rights as men – is an insufficient strategy. Fair enough; but this in part misreads Abu Ghraib. She writes that Abu Ghraib is a moment of “imperial arrogance, sexual depravity and gender equality”.⁶⁹ But there is no gender equality to be seen here, just gender *depravity*, or at best a deformed equality that no one wishes for, and at this point, not even the women said to be equal. Most feminisms across the globe, and many at home, know that mimicking men is not equality or freedom.

Parallel issues are presented when Colin Powell and Condi Rice become the symbols for these wars. One should not presume that their presence means that racial and/or gender equality exists today for most black men and women. In reality, disproportionate numbers of blacks – men and women – are housed in US prisons; the same prisons that strip them naked and abuse them. What is really frightening is that Abu Ghraib can be made to look like feminism – but not a sort that I recognize. Abu Ghraib is hyper-imperialist masculinity run amok. Females are present to cover over the misogyny of building empire, while also actually building it.

So I think that there is little if anything to consider feminist here. Most women are in the military because of globalization and the restructuring of the labor force in the US and elsewhere. Jessica Lynch had applied for a job at Wal-Mart and when she did not get it, she decided to enlist. Lori Piestewa and Shoshanna Johnson, who both fought with Lynch, were single mothers looking to get an education. The three women charged over the crimes at Abu Ghraib are all working class. I see *necessity*, not equality here.

I want to be careful not to oversimplify the variety and differences that exist among soldiers in this war – especially, in this case, women. Johnson,

a black woman soldier-cook, was shot and taken as a prisoner-of-war and then was rescued to return home to her young daughter. She says when she is asked about Lynndie England on the *Larry King Show*: there is no way I would ever wrap a rope around someone's neck and drag them around naked. They could court-martial me, or do anything else they wanted to punish me. I wouldn't do it. She also said that no soldier should ever follow an inhumane order. She also says that once captured she feared for her safety and the possibility of rape, but that after an early beating on the battlefield, she was always treated with respect. According to Jessica Lynch she also was treated with care and concern as a prisoner.⁷⁰ Despite her wrecked body, she refuses to demonize Iraq or become a voice for this war.

Women are used in the Abu Ghraib pictorial narrative to protect a heterosexist normativity. We see females abusing men, which protects sexual hierarchy and opposition but in reverse; don't ask don't tell is the rule of law here. These low-ranking women are clearly not in control of much of anything; they are a type of pawn supporting disgusting practices that they should have refused to perform. Their actions do not bespeak their own power or privilege yet they display the imperial power of white women over Muslim men. They are acting in a heterosexist hierarchical and punishing system of power. This same system of power now offers them up as cannon fodder. The complex web of sex, race, gender and class is woven deceptively and yet with consequence at Abu Ghraib. It is truly significant that Fast and Karpinski are white and that we do not see black women in these positions of command or implicated in sexual crimes like England. Because of the twisted effects of racialized sexuality, Johnson resonates differently as gender decoy.⁷¹

It is not insignificant that people in the US – men and women alike – were horrified to see women degrading prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Some of us even hoped that women were above this kind of action. Obviously, simple essentialism – that women are more mothering or caring or peaceful – is not simply true. Neither is it simply true that given many women's lives and their parental responsibilities they are as prone to war as most men. Women and men respond to the forces upon them and are constructed from them. Neither gender essentialism nor constructionism simply clarifies war. So, yes, Abu Ghraib bespeaks a larger problem than a few loose cannons deciding to abuse and torture prisoners. The obscene practices of human degradation were already in place in Afghanistan, and in our prisons at home in the US. It has now been revealed that former

prison guards with records of abuse were interrogators of detainees at Guantanamo, and officials from the Afghan war instructed the military personnel at Abu Ghraib.

The problem is not just about the role that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Undersecretary of Defense and Intelligence Stephen Cambone and the commander of the detention center at Guantanamo, Geoffrey Miller, played. It is also about the larger system of racialized hetero-masculinity that is put in high gear at this moment of unilateral militarization. This structural system of hierarchical privilege and power 'others' anyone who is not in the business of empire building. There are few if any civilians left in these moments. Gendered/racialized individuals are never what they simply seem.

Because gender is so flexible and complex it is a perfect foil for obfuscation. When Kofi Annan says, invest in the women in Africa and they will help solve the AIDS problem; when people depend on women in the US to mobilize in terms of their disproportionate peace-making commitments; when women in Afghanistan and Iraq provide significant leadership for real democratic struggle; when women more readily become suicide bombers; *and* when women in the US are mobilized out of economic necessity to fight the wars of/on terror, there is no easy clarification. Real commitments to gender equality will be misused and abused by those in power. Gender differentiation will be mobilized for war *and* peace. This is the ugly side of the rewired patriarchy of war capitalism. Bush's wars of/on terror mask its realpolitik – that of a racist capitalist misogyny operating in a variety of drag.

Abu Ghraib showed us that humanity and inhumanity come in all colors, sexes and genders. War readies you to kill, to be on guard always, to trust no one who is the enemy. War, then, almost always destroys the very sense of humanity that allows you to see yourself in another, to see your connection with another instead of their difference from you. Brutality reflects this process of seeing and then not seeing another's humanity. Looking at the emasculated Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib – from a distance – forced people in the US to see war upfront. Most of us saw more than we wanted to: the US wars of/on terror are ugly and debased; the war in Iraq is failing; we are not so different than Saddam Hussein.

Gender construction is a process without end. To the extent that cyber technology both creates and reflects discourses about the body – and in particularly militarized forms – cyber-tech allows and nurtures this

‘newest’ aspect of decoy status. Bodies float freer from the original site today because of their invisible visibility – which cyber communications demand and allow. The disembodiment of sex and labor in cyber-relations nurtures these new relations between sex, race and gender. And with this changed economy, militarized lives and war itself changes.

Masculinity and femininity and their specific racialized meanings are then always in flux. Linda Burnham calls attention to the “sexualization of national conquest” at Abu Ghraib and sees sexual domination as part of a “militarist hyper-sexuality”.⁷² This hyper-sexual moment is revealed because sexualized racism is always brought to the fore when systems of power are in crisis and too much of the truth of war is uncovered.

Unilateral power is blinded by a complete and total arrogance. The Bush administration thinks it is above the law, out of reach of any kind of accountability. Torture is OK. No one is innocent. The US military will police itself. It is its own court of last resort. There are no protections for prisoners. The war of/on terror terrorizes all who come in contact with it. The lines between combatant and civilian, rights and degradation, and white, black and brown men and women are realigned and remade. But this racialized gender flux takes place within the structural constraints of racialized patriarchy, and hetero-masculinized gender.

Tony Blair is emasculated as brown men capture the CARE worker Margaret Hassan and then murder her. And powerful nations stand helpless as foreign workers are rounded up and beheaded. Ultimatums are delivered and ignored and innocent people die. Race and gender appear emptied and terror-filled simultaneously. Masculinist warriors on both sides take no hostages.

The naked bodies of tortured Muslim men alongside white women holding cigarettes and leashes, and the absence and silencing of Muslim women at Abu Ghraib is a heart-rending reminder that war is unbearable. It would be a double heartbreak to think that people in the US abide any part of the violations at Abu Ghraib, especially in the name of feminism.

Notes

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3

Terrorized and Privatized Democracy

By January 2006 the US public is finally disenchanted with the war in Iraq, troubled by Bush's rationale for the use of torture, and disturbed by the news that his administration has used wiretaps to illegally monitor communications. It is clear that civil liberties have been gravely compromised at home and abroad. Over thirty-five career diplomats, economic advisors, National Security Council members, CIA staffers, and Army colonels have resigned over these issues. Nevertheless, our President continues to speak on behalf of democracy and freedom to the world, and extends these rights only to those who applaud him. He criticizes those who question his policies and tells them that they are giving comfort to the enemy. As such, he silences and criminalizes dissent.

It is amazing to me to see how anti-democratic practices can be couched in the language of democracy. So bombs are dropped, and people are detained and tortured abroad, while others are rounded up on our own streets to be deported or held in legal limbo. Given these moves towards a total power grab, I am left with my inadequate and incomplete language which queries imperial democracy for its neoliberal fascistic tendencies. Civil rights are denuded and the rule of liberal democratic law is officially under assault, even if this reality has not arrived for most Americans yet. At this juncture of global capitalism the fascistic imperial side of democracy is increasingly located at home, inside the US, and more readily exposed at its extremities.

Even Alberto J. Mora, former General Counsel of the US Navy, a respected conservative who admired Ronald Reagan, who served in the first and second Bush administrations, supported the 'war on terror' and the invasion of Iraq, appears to agree at least in part with the above assessment. Starting as early as December 2002, Mora voiced his concern and resistance to the detainee abuse in Iraq and Guantanamo as it was being uncovered. He wrote in memos that cruelty is unlawful, that personal

dignity is a human constitutional right, and that “unlawful enemy combatants” must and do have these rights. “If you make this exception, the whole constitution crumbles. It is a transformative issue.”¹ He is sickened and disheartened by these anti-democratic moves by the Bush administration.

The contradictions of this politics of imperial democracy in flux abound. Bush demands that Americans live in an ‘ownership society’ – one where people depend on themselves rather than others. Meanwhile he creates the largest deficit in history and his corporate friends get richer. He uses privatization – the privileging of business over government – as his guide and denudes the public sphere of its social responsibilities. The more privatized and imperial the country, the less equal and less just. And the less just, the more militarist it must become. Hence the significance of the wars of/on terror that underpin these moves.

Terrorism is the new communism. Many of the same terror networks that the US supported and depended upon to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran have now become the newest enemy. Friend and foe twist and turn. It is particularly significant that the bad Muslims of today are the good Muslims of the Cold War period.²

Global capitalism now dominates in singular fashion. This has necessitated and revealed the business of war and its corporatization in newer form. As war becomes more privatized and businesslike, the less regulated and accountable it becomes. As such, the more privatized war is, the more big business comes to shape war directly, making it ever less regulated and ever less accountable. It follows, then, that the more corporate, the less accountable and the less democratic *and* the more secrecy, deception, and torture there is. It is why even many in the military take umbrage at the new moves towards unaccountable power.

The corporate power grab of the Iraq war alongside a trillion-dollar debt construct an unstable political and economic climate for the US along with the globe. Anti-terror rhetoric is used to justify these circumstances, while US wars are disproportionately fought by men and women of color. As such, war capitalism is an incredible site of both cover-up and exposure. It is cloaked in the diverse racial/ethnic and gender make-up of fighting forces themselves so that the excessive and concentrated display of power is presented in dispersed fashion along racial and sexual lines. Meanwhile, heterosexist gender hierarchy is protected by disciplining gays.

Bush’s right-wing market fanaticism has become more and more disconnected from liberal democratic discourse. The talk and promise of

racial and sexual equality and social and political justice have been abandoned because of their supposed success, and displaced by imperial democracy's focus on fear. The wars of/on terror terrorize people and smash the possibility for seeing a shared sense of humanity.

When I started to read the early reports about US treatment of detainees and prisoners in Afghanistan, and Guantanamo, and Iraq I could not sleep.

Terrorism, torture and the new extremism

Jean Baudrillard writes that the US was humiliated on September 11, 2001; that global power was symbolically defeated on that day; and that terrorism is "our own judgment and penalty".³ The humiliation was emasculating so war was the answer. The war on terror was the perfect foil: no boundaries, no specific site, no end to it in sight. The standoff with Saddam Hussein over Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) stood in place of a focused and proven agenda.⁴ National security became the central focus; surveillance and discipline trumped everything, especially civil rights. The Patriot Act promised to secure domestic safety but this was in exchange for lessening personal privacy, increasing government secrecy, increasing surveillance of immigrants, initiating new guidelines for monitoring suspicious individuals, and new death penalties. Security is positioned against rights, and "terror-pork" replaces needed public policies.⁵ The war was now against civil rights and its laws.

The US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan creates new forms of terror and new dissidents and insurgents. The extremist insurgents who capture and kill foreigners, be they Americans, Germans, Japanese, Chinese, Pakistanis, spiral the war further out of control. Terror tactics on all sides initiate new networks that exist across geographical boundaries, much like global capital and its transnational technologies. The militarization of the globe becomes an integral part of its market privatization.

Former US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill rejected Bush's market extremism by resigning. He viewed Bush's tax policies as a major threat to national security. O'Neill deeply believed that privatization and deregulation were so out of control that he could no longer support the final tax cut package for the richest Americans. He, along with many centrist capitalists, thinks Bush's policies undermine the very stability of the system of capitalism itself. After the Enron scandal O'Neill pushed for more accountability of CEOs but no one in the administration was

interested.⁶ Instead, the administration continued to herald the idea of an “ownership” society – more privatization policies would be initiated in order to encourage people’s responsibility for their own lives – to replace the expectation that there should be governmental/public support or assistance. An early initiative launched by Bush was to privatize social security – for people to look less to government and more to themselves. This has come to nothing.

Bush’s “ownership” society is one that privileges the private aspects of all forms of property. It is why there are currently such keen debates about the meaning of intellectual property, and fair use, and the protection of copyright. New digital technologies undermine some of these earlier notions of private ownership. File sharing and remixing are found to be illegal by this earlier standard of property rights.⁷ Meanwhile, Paul Krugman writes that savage cuts are made to education, health care, veterans’ benefits and environmental protection to help with the deficit – reducing it by one sixth – when a cut in tax rates for the high income brackets would greatly more efficiently reduce the deficit – by one third.⁸

O’Neill argues for what he sees as an ethical and not an extremist capitalism. Much like George Soros, he thinks economic extremism undermines liberal democracy, and that it is in the interest of the US to do its share to deal with global warming and AIDS in Africa. Richard Clarke, as former counter-terrorist chief, agrees in kind about economic and political extremism. He writes that the extremist rhetoric used in the war on Iraq has simply created more, not less terror. He says the “administration has squandered the opportunity to eliminate Al Qaeda and instead strengthened our enemies by going off on a completely unnecessary tangent, the invasion of Iraq”. Given our bad policies based on bad facts he says that Al Qaeda has emerged in much stronger and tougher form.⁹ But this is not what the Bush extremists – Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, and John Ashcroft – see as true.

And the issue of facts is key here. The Bush administration ignores, deceives, and lies on multiple fronts. George Tenet, former director of the CIA, made clear before resigning that the WMDs alleged to exist in Iraq were never an “imminent threat”.¹⁰ The overstated claims about WMDs are part of a pattern of repeated deceit. Although numerous scientists write that climate change is a major problem for national security, the Bush administration continues to support oil and gas interests rather than challenge the carbon dioxide emissions that propel global warming. The

administration simply ignores and/or doctors the data.¹¹ As a result it became quite ordinary to distort scientific facts and mislead the public for partisan political ends. The Bush White House “purges, censors and blacklists” scientists’ and engineers’ research findings that question and undermine “the profits of the Administration’s corporate backers”.¹² Scientists who work on behalf of the environment, arms control and the public health say their findings are ignored and falsified and that reports are censored and suppressed.¹³

This deception and distortion underpin the extremist politics of the Bush administration – from the detainees at Guantanamo Bay to Halliburton’s war profits to the 2004 report on minority health that was revised to enhance and improve the data. The Bush administration admits “improperly altering” the racial and ethnic disparities in health care and has promised to provide an “unexpurgated document”.¹⁴ This kind of lying and deceit is usually identified with fascistic and/or totalitarian regimes; yet it is becoming integral to US imperial neoliberal democracy.

Bush is becoming more unaccountable, arrogant, and corrupt as he uses deception to achieve his political agenda. This kind of excessive demagoguery articulates a particular strand of political extremism that allows corporate excesses like the thievery by Enron’s CEOs. Such market extremism leaves many centrist Republicans and neoliberals running for cover from Bush’s Christian/market fundamentalism.¹⁵

Continual moves to authorize torture as a form of needed interrogation document the rightward drift towards fascistic democracy. Alberto Gonzales argues that the CIA falls outside the parameters demanding humane treatment of prisoners. He also believes that the international prohibition against unusual and inhumane treatment has a “limited read” and does not apply in all cases to “aliens overseas”. As Attorney General he says that the administration does not support torture but endorses the use of extreme interrogation.¹⁶ Mark Danner writes that once Gonzales was confirmed as Attorney General, torture belonged to all of us.¹⁷

Documenting democracy’s demise

Terror creates and sustains excessive and extremist politics, as is seen in White House memos on torture. Human Rights Watch documents the continual circumvention of law in the treatment of prisoners and detainees in Afghanistan, at Guantanamo, and in Abu Ghraib. Reed Brody writes that

the Bush administration has “eviscerated the important protections” of the Geneva Convention of 1949. Humiliation and degradation as well as coercive interrogation are now permissible; the Commander-in-Chief is not bound by international laws; offshore and undisclosed and off-limits sites are created in which to detain terror suspects.

Afghan prisoners were named “detainees” so that they would not qualify for the protections of the Geneva Conventions. They were designated “nobodies”, as not soldiers. This naming of prisoners authorized the pain and suffering and severe humiliation of detainees. Donald Rumsfeld initiated these practices in order to “exploit internees for actionable intelligence”.¹⁸ He believes that terrorists are a difficult and new breed of enemy that require new ways to garner information. This unconventional war needs unconventional and, obviously, undemocratic practices.

The Bush administration has determined that the wars of/on terror can only be fought effectively with new rules, ones that are less constraining and protective of prisoner rights. The new practices need to allow for stress and duress but should not include severe beatings, burning with cigarettes, electric shocks to the genitals, rape or sexual assault. This extreme form of interrogation – which the Bush administration refuses to call torture – “may be justified” in the war on terror in order to gain needed intelligence. The definition of torture needs to be clarified and limited to “acts that are specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain and suffering that is hard to endure”. As formulated by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee in an August 2002 Justice Department memo for the White House, there must be specific intent to do harm. And pain must lead to organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or death.¹⁹

Many of the seven hundred detainees from forty-four different countries exist at sites beyond the reach of jurisdiction by US courts.²⁰ It is thought that there are dozens of ‘ghost detainees’ – prisoners who are kept off the prison rolls – who have disappeared to undisclosed locations. Approximately one dozen Al Qaeda operatives are said to have disappeared in US custody.²¹ Shaming – sexually degrading men and women through nudity – has become a practice of choice. Shackling and hypothermia have become common.

The new interrogation rules – established at Bagram detention center in Afghanistan where two prisoners died in incidents determined to be homicides – were also posted on a wall at Abu Ghraib. The Human Rights

Watch Report cites General Antonio Taguba's findings: "numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses" were inflicted on detainees at Abu Ghraib. And since Bush declared an end to major combat in Iraq, more than 12,000 Iraqis have been taken into custody by US forces. It is thought that 70 to 90 percent of those in custody in Iraq in 2003 were arrested by mistake.²²

Despite the recognition of horrific wrongdoing at Abu Ghraib by an Independent Panel chaired by James Schlesinger to review DOD (Department of Defense) detention operations, little accountability has been rendered. The report starts: "The events of October through December 2003 in the night shift of Tier 1 at Abu Ghraib prison were acts of brutality and purposeless sadism." Yet the rest of the report simply calls this "deviant behavior" and says it was "not a part of authorized interrogations". The aberrant behavior was explained as resulting from "confusing and inconsistent interrogation technique policies", overcrowding, underresourcing, understaffing, and extreme duress for the US troops. It is an interesting aside that the report notes that "relevant army manuals and publications were available only on-line, but personnel did not have access to computers or the Internet". The report concludes that the global war on terror (GWOT) involves "new conditions and new threats. Doctrine must be adjusted accordingly."²³

Investigations into activity at Abu Ghraib repeatedly argue that a lack of resources, manpower, and equipment played a role in the abuses. Karpinski writes that the number of detainees continued to rise without enough military police to do the job and that conditions went from bad to worse. As the war continued despite Bush's declaration of its end, and the number of detainees swelled to 5,000 in the fall of 2003, interrogation became more brutal. Although there is a torture trail leading to Abu Ghraib, most government-sponsored reports argue that the events at Abu Ghraib were the exception to the rule. Lack of training and oversight and an absence of leadership are repeatedly noted as cause for concern leading to faulty "intelligence architecture". War doctrine is not faulted here but rather a need for "communication equipment, computers and sufficient bandwidth, access to data bases and the fusion and collaboration of intelligence data" is noted.²⁴

The notion of a digital war and its new needs are key to this moment. Donald Rumsfeld took charge of modernizing the military – downsizing and restructuring it to be lean and mean. This process followed the downsizing and restructuring of the social welfare state and the notion of

public responsibility. Privatization of both the government and the military is now to be completed. But it is not clear that the privatization and reconfiguration of the military will work in the same way as they did for the government. The high-tech war utilizes digital firepower and connectivity but some on the ground say that it is not working. There are new information networks but detention centers are still set up to get the actionable information of old.

There are attempts to transform the military “into a smaller, smarter, sensor-dependent, networked force”. Bandwidth is 42 times greater at present than during the 1991 Gulf War, and is set up for intelligence units in the field. Text emails can reach the frontlines as “digital firepower”. Nevertheless, ground troops often do not get the information because the sensors and the network often don’t work. “Digital connectivity” and “networked warfare” usually do not operate the way they are supposed to. Soldiers say, “We got nothing until they slammed into us”; they found the enemy when they ran into them, like in 1944. There was “terrible situational awareness”. “Information” is supposedly the “new armor”, but downloads took hours, and software locked up. Soldiers would come under attack as they stopped their vehicles in order to receive information on enemy positions. They became sitting ducks waiting for the data.²⁵

Digital war is still fought with real people’s bodies. As of March 2006, two thousand two hundred and twenty-four US soldiers had died in Iraq. And at least eight soldiers are wounded or maimed for each of these dead; that means approximately 18,000 disabled bodies. This latter number is double the rate of wounded in Korea, Vietnam, and the 1991 Gulf War. The number of amputations is twice that of any earlier conflict. It is the new high-tech medicine and protective armor – particularly the flak jackets made of ceramic plates embedded in Kevlar – that accounts for this difference. This new body armor protects the chest, back and upper abdomen. So more soldiers survive but they do so with more brain damage and more lost limbs.²⁶

The US government makes digital war with total impunity – towards its own and towards its enemies. Where at one time the US criticized other countries for their abuses of human rights, now it is the US that is constantly being criticized. In the name of securing freedom the US government has disabled protections for civilians and detainees alike. Instead of rule by law there is arbitrary and indefinite capture and detention. The US is lawless at its outer locations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo.

International humanitarian law is supposed to protect civilians from unnecessary harm during armed conflict, but first there must be a distinction between combatants and civilians. One Afghan man says, “In front of my eyes, two Americans laid down both the boys on the ground and pressed their boots into the children’s backs. And they were yelling: ‘Where is the ammunition? Where is the ammunition?’” The boys were aged eleven and thirteen and there was no ammunition.²⁷ Afghans have been so outraged by their subhuman treatment by US troops that Afghan men have requested that the US use more women soldiers in their searches so that military men will not be handling Afghan women. This is a strange trajectory of gender essentialism: that somehow female soldiers can protect the honor of Afghan women.

Human Rights Watch finds that American troops have used excessive force in Afghanistan and Iraq. Often the US troops will apologize after the fact, after the violation, but by then it is too late. The US now stands recognized alongside the worst of the world given US treatment of civilians and detainees of war, as well as our penal record on treatment of inmates at home. Lane McCotter, an executive of Management and Training Corporation, was sent to Iraq to oversee a mission to inspect the prisons in Iraq despite the fact that McCotter’s group was recently charged with unconstitutional practices in the jails they oversaw at home.²⁸ And the US stands alone with North Korea in allowing the use of nakedness for detainees.²⁹

The US has been exposed to the world as an enabler and collaborator with the evil of torture and its malignant growth of indecency. Bob Herbert criticizes the US practice of “extraordinary rendition” which sends detainees to be brutalized in countries like Syria, Morocco, and Jordan.³⁰ Through “extraordinary rendition” detainees enter an extra-legal domain of lawless processes with horrific effects.³¹

Human Rights Watch could not get most Afghan detainees to speak with them about the abuses they suffered. Instead the Afghans offer these shattering words: “We were treated absolutely terribly there. They did terrible things to us, things we’ll never forget. It was absolutely awful what they did. We absolutely cannot talk about it. We don’t want to talk about it with you. We have made our agreements not to talk, and we won’t talk about it.”³²

Despite all the documented and critical investigation, the White House defended its use of “extreme forms of interrogation” for months. It urged

the scrapping of a new legislative measure by congressional leaders in December 2004 that would create new restrictions on the use of “extreme interrogation”. Condoleezza Rice, writing for the White House, expressed opposition to the proposed guidelines on the grounds that it “provides legal protections to foreign prisoners to which they are not now entitled under applicable law and policy”.³³ The warrior princess repeatedly spoke in favor of the necessity of extreme and coercive interrogation.

Despite this executive opposition, the Senate in early October 2005 vigorously approved an amendment to prohibit “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment” of prisoners in US military custody, by a 90 to 9 vote. President Bush threatened to use the first veto of his presidency on the funding bill that carried this amendment.³⁴ Meanwhile a new report by Human Rights Watch 2005 documents that the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division routinely beat and abused prisoners in Iraq before and during the investigation of Abu Ghraib prison. One soldier even says that they “did it for amusement”.³⁵

Finally after months of haggling and bipartisan pressure led by Senator John McCain, Bush reversed course and reluctantly decided to back legislation calling for a law “banning cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners in American custody”.³⁶ Cheney continues to hedge publicly on the issue.

The very day that people in the US awaited the indictment of Scooter Libby for outing CIA operative Valerie Palme Wilson, and then lying and deceiving the grand jury in the Joseph Wilson case, NPR reported that no indictments had been recorded in the two-year old investigation into the brutal homicide of detainee Manadel al-Jamadi. Jamadi was tortured first by US Navy SEALs, then the CIA, but no one has been held responsible as yet for his death. So the legal machinations of democracy continue in some forms at home, as though law and order still are operative here, while Jamadi’s young son and wife live with the knowledge of his murder committed in our name. I am sure the US’s kind of democracy looks like fascism to them.

Working-class warriors and privatized democracy

Global capital and its newest needs to reform and denude democratic practices explain the Iraq wars from 1991 through 2006 more than terrorism does. The “war on terror” – in fact, wars of/on terror – is a war

to establish the imperial form of democracy. Since capitalism went global with no alternative in sight after the Soviet demise in 1989, the US has sought to establish its singular power. Iraq was a major site for establishing this hegemony in the Middle East as well as securing the flow of oil.

This system of global capital establishes the incredible wealth of a few and misery for huge numbers. Half the population of the globe lives on less than \$2 dollars a day and is malnourished. One billion of the six billion people in the world have no clean water, two billion have no electricity, two-and-one-half billion have no sanitation. Of the three billion living in cities, the UN reports that 1 billion live in slums. It is expected that this number will increase by 300 percent in the next fifty years.³⁷

The idealization and idolization of the market with its invisible hands, with no one responsible or taking responsibility, may be opening to new scrutiny. The inevitability of globalization, and its irresponsibility to those who really pay the price for it – the massive number of workers around the world – may be creating a healthy skepticism: in Iraq, in Malaysia, in South America and Africa.³⁸ The obscene excesses are more in view to people everywhere. The wars for the rich are fought by a multiracial newly gendered working class. Most private first-class enlistees earn \$17,946 a year, which, as already noted, is similar to the pay at McDonalds or Wal-Mart. Rick Bragg, the author of Jessica Lynch's story, writes that this war is fought by the daughters of endangered blue-collar workers and immigrant families who are the real victims of globalization. They have exchanged uncertain futures for "dead-certain paychecks".³⁹ Many of these young women never imagined being in combat.

This war is unfairly fought by the poor and they continue to carry the brunt of it for everyone else. William Lawson, an uncle of one of the accused young men in the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, writes: "But the Army decided to prosecute those 6 GIs because they thought me and my family were a bunch of poor, dirt people who could not do anything about it. But unfortunately, that was not the case".⁴⁰ After Lawson tried to get a meeting with an army official and they repeatedly ignored him he contacted the well-known news program *Sixty Minutes* with his nephew's story. He went public and blew the Abu Ghraib story wide open in order to say publicly that his nephew was simply following orders.

Besides being working class the US military has thirty-one thousand enlistees who are non-citizens. Its make-up bespeaks the haphazardness of the enlistment and call-up processes. In June 2004, 25–40 percent were

reservists. More than 10,000 soldiers have been kept in the army by the stop-loss edict that does not allow them to end their stay. Only 4 percent of US fighting forces have more than a high school diploma, and 35 percent of US soldiers are from minority groups.⁴¹ Many thousands of these soldiers are coming home with maimed bodies to live the rest of their lives on disability payments. Twenty suicides were already reported in December 2003.

During wartime it is harder to recruit soldiers, so it is not surprising that recruitment focuses on young people with few other options. Recruiting has more than doubled at inner-city schools. Bush's educational reform bill – the “No Child Shall Be Left Behind Act” – opened a soldier-supply channel by requiring federally funded schools to supply student information to military recruiters. It easily follows that the poor, who are also very often immigrants, African American and female, become the warriors of global capital. One young ex-Marine recruit says, “I know for a fact that America wants me to fight for it. But America would never fight for me. The army would never come fight for me on my block’.”⁴²

Corporate terror and war

War needs new types of mercenaries – warriors for hire – given global capital. These new guns for hire operate within a highly privatized global economy that is privatizing and reconfiguring the military itself. This process of streamlining – increasing efficiency and profitability – now is extended to the US military. Rumsfeld is in charge of streamlining the fighting force. He has been a strong proponent of digital war, as though digitized information can replace bodies on the ground. Where there is less ‘man’-power there is less oversight, and more license; more arrogance and less accountability.

The new configuration of a downsized military realigns US forces and bases abroad in the hopes that rapid movement and deployment will be facilitated. Instead of bases there will be “forward operating sites” equipped as “logistical facilities” like airstrips, port complexes and weapons stockpiles. There will be technicians but not combat units stationed at these chosen sites. Barebones facilities will provide a mobile and flexible framework to confront the changing nexus of power, especially surrounding the needs for oil, threatened by China, Africa and the Middle East.⁴³ This new configuration defines a digitized militarism for this techno-historical

moment. Race and sex are in play more fluidly as bodies supposedly become less significant.

Civilian deaths are seen as necessary costs of war. In this unregulated context corporate warriors have a freer hand to exploit and deceive. And they do so as a part of the Bush administration, and for it. Vice-President Dick Cheney parlays on behalf of his own interests in Halliburton – the world's largest oil and gas servicing company – and other corporate interests vie for their own space in Iraq. Bechtel – a huge construction company – lands a more than \$2.8 billion contract with no bidding. And the American public knows that it is our tax dollars that will subsidize the contract. The reconstruction effort goes slowly except for business interests that coordinate with viable investment. So QualCommco – a cellular giant – looks to develop wireless technology and market cellular phones.⁴⁴

There are unintended consequences to the multiple and varied privatized scenarios. The US has reconfigured the former Iraqi government and army and displaced them with corporate rule. According to Naomi Klein, it is many of these displaced workers who have lost jobs that have become part of the insurgency. There has been little reconstruction work because it is difficult to nurture investment given the narrowed corporate agenda with its political chaos.⁴⁵

War is big business. Let businesses run aspects of the war, instead of the military. This new marketing has Halliburton supplying food to US soldiers and gas for their vehicles. Profits become a guiding factor with no regulating political oversight. The military merely becomes a location of corporate greed. War becomes a process of money making without political accountability. The corporation is militarized and the military corporatized. The very distinction between public – as in the military with governmental regulation – and private – as in privatized corporations – evaporates. This leads to the authorized domination of corporate interests that are unregulated and unpoliced. Civilian contractors, in particular, become a shadow army as such.⁴⁶

Mercenaries are hardly a new phenomenon, but private corporations have today penetrated warfare so significantly that they are the second largest presence in the coalition forces in Iraq. This private sector is deeply embedded in this stage of the Iraq wars. It allows for war by proxy without congressional oversight while business interests span the globe. Global capital needs only to be efficient – not democratic.

According to P.W. Singer, “corporate warriors” displace the nation with the market-driven rules of profit. In this way global capitalism now undermines not only the distinction between corporation and nation, but the distinction between nation and the military. Profit making and the market trump patriotism to the nation and we are presented with privatized military firms (PMFs). These several hundred PMFs operate in ten countries on six continents and do over \$100 billion in annual global revenue. The corporatization of military services – combat training, weapons, consulting, advising, feeding of troops – is outsourced to these private companies. Singer calls this a new form of “corporate imperialism”, the new multinational neocolonialism of the 21st century.⁴⁷

This private/corporate side of the Iraq war was first exposed for the American public with the killing of four ‘civilian’ contract workers in Falluja. The dead men were dragged through the streets and then hung up for all to see. They worked for the firm Blackwater Security Consulting and were providing protection for a convoy delivering US government goods. Security firms like Blackwater are the third-largest international contributor of forces in Iraq, behind the US and Britain. Blackwater is headed by former US Navy SEALs and was founded in part to take advantage of the business opportunities created by the downsizing of the US military. Many of these operatives are former ‘special operations personnel’ who have been trained in the use of deadly force. Blackwater advertises itself as the most comprehensive private tactical training facility in the US. The company is located on a 6,000-acre site in North Carolina. Of the events in Falluja they say: “the events in Falluja demonstrate the extraordinary conditions in which we voluntarily work to bring freedom and democracy to the Iraqi people”.⁴⁸

It is impossible to know how many private security forces have been killed in Iraq because many of these deaths go unreported, but the figure is estimated at 160–200 in 2003, and this is “more deaths than any one of America’s coalition partners have suffered”. It is thought that there may be sixty to eighty of these security firms in Iraq. It is impossible to know for sure because no one is in charge of them. Some attribute part of the chaos in Iraq to this lack of oversight.

Triple Canopy is a major private security company in Iraq, its contracts with the US Department of Defense and the State Department worth \$250 million yearly. It plans to divide up \$1 billion annually in newly created protection work with the State Department in high-risk countries

around the world. These are private gunmen who had careers in the Special Forces and Special Operations who make upwards of \$400–\$700 a day. These are warriors for hire working at the behest of global capital; the dollar fully replaces the nation in these instances. Even the UN may soon hire these companies to guard refugee camps in war zones.⁴⁹

Given the lack of oversight and accountability of these corporate warriors it should not come as a surprise that much of the scandal of Abu Ghraib prison was tied to the presence of private contractors hired to do interrogations. There are 20,000 international PMF employees in Iraq. They allow for the just-in-time hiring practices that are so in vogue these days. They supply the guards and security for convoy protection and they do so on their own terms without regulation or supervision from the military. Ten times as many private corporate soldiers serve at present than in the 1991 Gulf War. Privatization and outsourcing define the new rules of global capitalism, for both war and peace.

Corporate warriors are out of the public's view in large part because they are not counted in military troop numbers. Many of these men for hire worked in South Africa on behalf of apartheid, and as Serbian paramilitaries, and as other human rights violators in Chile. Gray Branfield, who was killed in a firefight in Iraq, was a former covert-operations specialist in South Africa, and fought on behalf of white minority rule. He was a known political assassin of ANC members. The business of war allows these private contractors and human rights violators to become the interrogators at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo.⁵⁰ And all of this is done in the name of democracy and freedom.

Many operatives in the US military do not support the use of these private contractors. These individuals believe that it is important to have a clear and direct chain of command, and that military personnel are necessary in order for this to be the case. In the case of Abu Ghraib approximately 35 percent of the contract interrogators lacked formal military training and oversight.⁵¹

From 1994 to 2002 the Pentagon made more than 3,000 contracts with private military firms. As is often the case, this corporate side of politics is kept from easy public view. It was Abu Ghraib and the politics of racialized sexual brutality that uncovered this private/corporate reality to the public. Meanwhile PMFs can also distort the real numbers of the dead by reducing the number of US casualties by substituting foreign troops – and they can also often “change the color of corpses”.⁵²

Companies like Halliburton “provide the logistics for every major American military deployment”.⁵³ War is always profitable for big business. The wars in Iraq have provided extraordinary profits – in the billions – for Halliburton, and Bechtel. Yet Halliburton wasn’t satisfied with its \$11 billion contract for rebuilding Iraq, so it also overcharged the US military for gasoline at \$2.38 a gallon, and padded the food bill for troops by \$16 million.

Halliburton made \$109 million in Somalia, and several billion in the Balkans. Cheney, who still has stock options in the millions with Halliburton, is the main spokesperson and architect for privatizing the military, and limiting government regulation in the private sector.⁵⁴ Corporate weapons makers like Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Northrop Grumman have also cashed in on Bush’s war initiatives along with his surveillance policies at home. These companies receive one out of every four dollars the Pentagon spends.⁵⁵

The corporate politics of privatization has wide-ranging effects besides increasing actual profits. Corporate donors not only get war contracts but government appointments, tax breaks and actual changes in the laws. The corporatism of the Bush administration enhances tax law to benefit big business. In return they receive hundreds of millions for their campaign chests.

Warriors for hire and privatized/corporatist war often clash with older and more established military guidelines. Army generals even come to look like a last bastion of democracy. And the newly sexed –or re-sexed – troops along with their racially diverse make-up confuse the issues of gender and racial equality and democracy even further.

The US is moving much too far away from its democratic promissory. We receive news of the Iraq war from reporters who are barricaded inside hotels, or in armored cars, and who travel with security guards. As for the people of Iraq they supposedly, according to Bush, have democracy because they voted in their first post-Saddam free election. But in this election candidates’ names were not even listed, just their party – the Sistani list, and the Shiite list, and/or – because secrecy was needed for security reasons. Daily bombings and death continue to occur. The people of Iraq are like people everywhere. They just want “a normal country”, with a real government and some kind of security.⁵⁶ This is very sad for them, and for us.

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4

Diversifying and Racializing Decoys

Since September 11, 2001 the wars of/on terror have defined a security state in the US that we all inhabit, although differently. If you are Muslim your brown skin wrongly targets you as a possible alien or enemy. Blacks now have company in wrong-headed racial profiling. If your skin is white you have an added protective layering while sometimes performing heinous murderous acts. People are sometimes reminded to remember the violations towards Japanese Americans during the round-ups after World War Two, but to little effect.

Citizen and prisoner's rights – both at home and abroad – have been vaporized as the US legal code looks less democratic. Security trumps everything, so concerns with prisoners' rights are made to look like liberal excesses protecting the guilty rather than the innocent. Blacks disproportionately inhabit our prisons. Black women are being incarcerated in greater numbers and Muslims join them in post-September 11 anti-terror round-ups. The black middle class is shrinking and has continued to do so given deindustrialization and the restructuring of the social welfare state.

The number of black men in prison in the US in 2005 matched the number of enslaved black men before the Civil War. Given racial profiling that is reauthorized by the wars of/on terror, the daily practices of racism take on new-old forms. Only 5 percent of the refugee applicants from Africa have been admitted since September 11, 2001, to the US, whereas 69 percent of European applicants have been. Both 9/11 and hurricane Katrina have exposed and re-initiated these intractable policies.¹ African Americans were almost three times more likely – 24.7 percent – than whites to live in poverty in the US in 2004. Jonathan Kozol writes that segregation in our public schools exists on a massive scale – that today's is the worst situation for poor black people since slavery.² This neglect and hatred is reflected in comments by a former cabinet secretary who, on being asked how he thought the US might reduce crime, responded that if

crime reduction were the sole aim, then aborting black babies would be the answer. He then corrected himself by saying that such a thing would be impossible, ridiculous and immoral.³

Alongside this picture of a racialized country – black and brown largely living with unequal and punishing options in comparison to whites – stands Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State, replacing Colin Powell in this same job. Powell, as black, and Rice as black and as a woman no less, represent the promise and opportunity that exists for minorities. Further in the background, but there nevertheless, is Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, serving on the Court in bruised and angry fashion after his contentious confirmation hearings. The narrative surrounding him was complicated by the charges of sexual harassment and his defense was rooted in the racism that supposedly targeted him as such. But he remains a part of this opportunity storyline.

Blacks as well as other racial identities in the inner circles of power pluralize the ruling class for a global market. But these actors – and their skin color – in part become simulacra and float away from their physical bodies and towards their authorized power-filled meanings. Condoleezza Rice speaks on behalf of those in power, herself included, not as a representative of her race or gender. Her individualism denies the stance of civil rights racial policy of old that was dedicated to the erasure of structural racial or sexual discrimination. Instead she acts and believes that she is simply an individual with a black skin rather than a racial icon used as a decoy for a racist world.

Meanwhile those who occupy the dangerous war sites of empire building as well as suffer the consequences are disproportionately men and women of other-than-white color. With over one third of our fighting forces in Iraq and Afghanistan brown and black, the travesty and hypocrisy of Rice's so-called diversity is put in bold for all to see. Yet the structural realities and remnants of racism – in both historical and contemporary form – are mostly denied and the relations of power are simply colored. Diversity remains uneven and unequal, as it assists US empire. The wars of/on terror create new racial enemies at the same time that they display themselves in color. And racial discrimination is narrowed to mean only specific and factually proven discriminatory action against an *individual*, not a race.⁴

The civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s were committed to racial equality: to blacks having the same legal rights and economic opportunities as whites. The standard of judgment remained white, and

similarity or sameness remained a constriction for recognizing differences and uniqueness. Blacks were to become more like whites, at least in legal fashion. The universal standard – of fairness and neutrality – was of the white man. However flawed this method and politics, it was a legal success.

Today, the shifts and moves to limit and curtail the successes of the civil rights movement are myriad. The demand for equality has been displaced by an embrace of so-called diversity. The rhetoric of right-wing extremists in the US distorts the meaning of diversity. They appropriate difference to use as a cover for their unfair policies. They say nothing about equality – about the need to treat differences equally, with equal rights and equal opportunity. Instead they wish to keep inequality in place.

The language of diversity has been now captured and used as a defense for white men and their kind of thinking. Rather than defending diverse voices on college campuses these zealots demand more representation of their kind of thinking. Instead of worrying about the effects of racial or sexual discrimination they worry about reverse discrimination – the discrimination against white men. We have moved full circle – from the demand for equality of blacks via the destruction of racist practices – to the defense of white men who have been wrongly silenced or excluded – and now need to be readmitted for the sake of diversity.

On racism and power

There is one ‘true’ race, the one that holds power and defines normalcy. Such a discourse of race centralizes and obscures from this site of normalcy or truth. For Michel Foucault the normalized state is therefore already racist; defined by race war and race struggle. Race war underlies the racialized state so that war is always normalized through these constructions of race. The state protects against racial foreigners while it protects “the integrity, superiority, and the purity of the race”. State sovereignty, according to Foucault, becomes one and the same as protecting the race and justifying murder and killing as such. State sovereignty is then always racialized and involves war. For Foucault racism justifies the death-function and creates “murderous states, which are, of necessity, the most racist”.⁵ The term ‘genocide’ comes from the Greek derivative *geno* meaning race, and the Latin derivative *cide* meaning killing.⁶

Race as well as gender constructs the state and its economic class priorities. Race – the politicized meaning of color – has structured power

in the various forms white privilege has required of it. African Americans have experienced racism through the structural beginnings of slavery and the slave trade. More recently democratic struggles through the civil rights movement rewrote the laws of racism to integrate and incorporate blacks into the economy. By the early 1970s, affirmative action law was beginning to reform the system of racism and with it created a more economically diverse black population. Neoliberals fought back, demanding that too much equality had been granted blacks, to the detriment of whites. By the late 1980s, affirmative action law was gutted of its equality discourse. The state's responsibility for creating racial equality was privatized and the law was emptied of its radical possibilities. The right wing of neoliberalism then co-opted the commitment to diversity that is derivative of the civil rights movement and parlayed it for their re-racialized agenda.

Antidemocratic elements of this right wing have focused attention on judicial appointments, especially to the Supreme Court, because they know the significance of the legal arena for the promissory of democracy. Although law is never sufficient, it is always necessary to redress discrimination and injustice. It should not then be a surprise that the Bush administration refuses to recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, or to agree to or ratify international law and international treaties that require equality for women, protection of the environment, or rights for black and brown prisoners in US custody. This right-wing extremism undermines or ignores the very law that is necessary for democratic rule. We are then left with imperial hubris and moves towards fascist democracy.

Racism and militarization

Abu Ghraib as well as the prisons in Afghanistan and New York City bespeak a systemic militarizing of the globe. Many blacks who have been in prison in the US say that sexual humiliation is part of their initial processing and their daily life. Some of the men performing the interrogation and torture in Afghan prisons and at Abu Ghraib had earlier worked in this same US penal system. Surveillance, hierarchical discipline, and punishment – militarized life – exist side by side in the military and in the penal system. The troubled economy and related unemployment also fuel both the incarceration of prisoners and deployment of blacks into the military. As

such, unemployment, incarceration and disenfranchisement become a scenario creating a “new racial domain”, according to Manning Marable. This domain of empire forms a global apartheid that divides the resources, wealth and power that define Europe, North America, and Japan from the billions of mostly black and brown immigrants and poor people.⁷

Significantly, Amnesty International listed the United States as one of the top five violators of human rights in 2003 because of its treatment of its prisoners, especially because of the use of the death penalty. Amnesty believes that the level of civilization of a country can be measured by the kind of treatment its prisoners and criminals receive. The US has been found to be lacking in this civilization. It is time for the US to see ourselves as the rest of the world sees us.

With billions of dollars going to the wars of/on terror, while so much less is spent on public health, blacks have become half of all new cases of HIV infection in the US. Militarized budgets affect the poorest the most harshly; this is most evidently seen in the high rates of HIV and AIDS infection in the prisons. Much of this increase is tied to the high incarceration rates and increased risk behaviors associated with HIV. As a result of the high incarceration rates of black men, and the increased numbers of black women in prison themselves, black women now account for 72 percent of all new HIV cases among women in the US.⁸ The US is one of the few countries that disallows the distribution of condoms in its prisons. And elsewhere in the wars in the Congo, Uganda and Sierra Leone where rape is a prevalent form of war, HIV is ravaging their female populations. These are simply different locations for horrid effects of militarized societies.

The racialized narratives above reveal the intersections between militarization, prisons, AIDS, and war. The more war there is, the more militarized societies become. The more militarized the society, the less equal and tolerant it is, though not necessarily less diverse in terms of race and sex and gender. This is why diversity must be coupled with equality; if it is not, racism in its heteronormative masculinist forms will simply intensify.

Affirming action and diversifying for war

Affirmative action law was initiated at the point that global capital was becoming more transnational and the US was beginning to deindustrialize. Blacks were gaining access to jobs just at the moment that there were fewer

jobs to be had. White men who could not find jobs blamed affirmative action. By 1989 the Supreme Court reviewed a series of affirmative action cases and ruled against them. The court decided that affirmative action disregarded merit and treated blacks as a class, not as individuals. By the end of this Supreme Court term, affirmative action was stripped of its equality discourse. The Berlin Wall had fallen in the East; and equality doctrine had been destroyed in the West.

Initially, affirmative action law was meant to guarantee black men and black and white women the equal opportunity to achieve. Today the discourse has shifted and instead of speaking of equal opportunity the language of diversity is employed. Diversity has become a mobilizing cry for right-wing neoliberals. They use the language formerly deployed by progressives for their own particular anti-democratic purposes. To the extent that racial variety is necessary to the global economy because the globe is truly plural in colors, and white is a minority color, multi-racialism simply becomes a necessity for the corporate world. So businesses corporatize multiracialism; there is even a new category of “the top 50 companies for diversity”, as of June, 2005. Diversity Inc. is the sponsor and advertises these companies as those that are “built to win”.⁹

The term ‘diversity’ now camouflages racism in US schools. Jonathan Kozol, while discussing his new book *Shame of the Nation*, says, “Our political establishment refuses to use the word ‘segregated’. They call the schools diverse, which means half black, half Hispanic and maybe two white kids and three Asians. Diverse has become a synonym for segregated.”¹⁰

Instead of equality, the goal of post-1989 affirmative action law is diversity: to have jobs reflect diversity and diversity – as in ‘different’ – is juxtaposed against equality – as in ‘the same’. This shift more fully conservatizes neoliberalism, and further disconnects it from its original liberal democratic moorings. This shifting started with the Bakke decision in 1978. Equality discourse presumes that the government has a responsibility to provide access to opportunity, while the focus on diversity assumes that the individual is responsible for himself or herself in privatized form.

Equality expresses a desired relationship between groups of people. Diversity speaks to individuals, and their differences. Equality speaks to individuals in systems of power and calls attention to their similarity. So what is needed is a complex understanding of equality. The point is not to

de-race equality, or de-sex it for that matter, but to allow for racial and sexual individuality within the construct of equality.¹¹ Diversity, without a commitment to equal justice, leaves the structure of racial privilege in place. Diversity pluralizes the racial meanings and representations of people but does not challenge the hierarchy of privilege.

Diversity is recognized, and utilized for marketing and creating new opportunities, without creating equality for and with these plural racial identities. It is enormously significant that in the important Supreme Court affirmative action case *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003, Sandra Day O'Connor cites the needs of the global marketplace and the military as part of her defense of affirmative action. In this University of Michigan Law School case she states that in today's world both the military and corporations need qualified and racially diverse constituencies. She further clarifies that a "racially diverse officer corps is essential to national security".¹²

Global capital needs a diverse military as it polices the globe. And business today demands a multiracial student body so that people are schooled in the differences of the globe. A corporatist multiculturalism that helps sell a variety of products in new markets has instigated these new priorities towards diversity and away from equality. In this instance racial balancing is not at issue while pluralizing racial identities is. The remedying of past disadvantages and discrimination is no longer the focus. The global marketplace demands "diverse people, cultures and ideas" so race should "be used in a flexible, non-mechanical way". There can be no quotas, but rather the more flexible use of race as a "plus factor in the context of individualized consideration of each and every applicant".¹³ Flexibility means that one views race as one of many factors. Structural issues of equality are displaced and disallowed as needing remedy. Therefore, in *Gratz v. Bollinger*,¹⁴ Michigan's method for admitting undergraduates – awarding 20 points to minority students' applications – was held to be unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court found in favor of a heterogeneous student body, but applicants must be evaluated as individuals and race is not allowed to be the "defining feature" of the application. In a narrow 5–4 decision the justices allowed the "narrowly tailored" use of race-conscious admissions policies. Race can be used as a "plus" but only within the context of a series of other individualized considerations.

By this privileging of racial diversity rather than equality and access, African American Blacks have become a minority of those making up

racially diverse student bodies, at least at many of the elite schools in this country. According to Lani Guinier and Henry Louis Gates, Jr, both professors at Harvard University, perhaps as many as two thirds of the blacks at Harvard are West Indian and African immigrants. Only about one third of the 530 minority students are descendants of slaves with all four grandparents born in the US.¹⁵ This kind of variety assists the global economy by supplying higher education to the wealthy of the world. This excludes many African Americans who suffer the devastating effects of poverty exacerbated by deindustrialization. Affirmative action that is written on behalf of corporations and the military abandons those in the most need.¹⁶

The more affirmative action is stripped of its commitment to equality, the more individuals are treated as though their race does not matter, when it still does. They are treated as if they were disconnected from the structural relations of the racialized and gendered class meanings of their lives. The law supposedly reconstructs their possibility while their lives are still embedded in these power-filled locations. This makes the US less equal and less democratic, and more racialized and racist. Diversity without equality is a new global disguise for the newest revision of neo-liberalism as antidemocratic democracy.

Progressive aspects of the civil rights movement are very often captured by right-wing initiatives. There is even an anti-abortion group that suggests its embrace of racial diversity through its choice of its namesake reminiscent of earlier civil rights struggles. The NAACP (National Association for Advancement of Pre-born Children) parades with race as its decoy for undermining women's rights to abortion and their bodies.

Surveilling diversity in the academy

Right-wing neoliberal political moves in the US since 1989 have been hugely successful in redirecting the radical impact of affirmative action law. One site that remains highly contested where the effects of affirmative opportunity have made a mark is higher education. Many universities and colleges committed their hiring practices and recruitment policies to sexual and racial equality and diversity. Many colleges and universities, also hoping to remain viable in the global economy, have sought more diverse faculties and students alike. Students need to be educated and prepared for jobs across the globe; and faculty needs to both represent this

globe and be able to instruct about it as well. Elite universities attempt to be at the cutting edge of these developments. As a result of these affirmative action initiatives many universities became more liberal democratic than society more generally.

In these very undemocratic times it is then not surprising that the academy has come under particular scrutiny, especially by right-wing neoliberal extremists, many of whom are active in the Republican party. These Republican-funded activists, parading as objective scholars, legislate their particular idea of what diversity should look like. They seek to surveil and discipline the academy in particularly non-egalitarian form. Enormous pressure is put on faculties to be patriotic and supportive of the war in Iraq, and pro-Israeli in terms of policies in the Middle East. Patriotism is at a high premium, and right-wing think tanks legislate what they determine patriotism to be. These critics demand more diverse faculties, meaning that more individuals who represent the viewpoint of the Bush administration should be hired. According to their scenario there are too many liberals dominating campuses today: conservatives will bring the needed diversity of viewpoint. Campus Watch has been set up to monitor campuses for their progressive and unpatriotic politics.

It is true that the academy houses more progressive beliefs than does mainstream society. But this is quite different from saying that college campuses are bastions of radicalism and homogeneously liberal. Radicalism, in whatever form – feminist, liberal, Palestinian, Marxist – remains a minority voice. Most disciplines remain bound by traditional and imperial intellectual frameworks and epistemologies. Most curriculums remain rooted in Western epistemologies even if they have been diversified to accommodate global demands. Radical intellectuals remain few and far between on college campuses, while the mainstream of most campuses is a mix of varying forms of liberal and neoliberal politics.

Middle Eastern programs have been particularly targeted and charged with being hostile to Israel and to US foreign policy more generally. An initiative, HR 3077, intended to rewrite Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act – which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race – and curtail and suppress area studies, especially Middle Eastern programs, insinuates and implies that these programs are somehow antidemocratic, anti-patriotic, and anti-American. It is very troubling that HR 3077 was begun by a small number of extremist right-wing Republicans who are not representative of the larger population. They propose to set up an oversight/review

committee to monitor these programs for “patriotic commitments”. They misrepresent the programs they criticize and attempt to tyrannize the democratic majority stance of most members of college and university faculties. They undermine the educational commitment to diverse inquiry with their legislation and wish to singularize the notion of patriotism.

I initiated a writing campaign for progressive academics throughout the country to respond to the HR 3077 initiative. We sent the letter to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the US Senate that reviewed HR 3077, “To amend title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to enhance international education programs”. Approximately one thousand faculty signed the hurriedly distributed letter in November 2003. Our position in part read: you will find below a statement that has been signed by faculty across the country who are concerned that the above-mentioned legislation, although it may at first glance look benign and fair-handed, is not. We would like you to consider that this legislation is motivated by a small minority voice of right-wing Republicans that are not representative of the larger population and that the legislation misrepresents the actual programs it describes.

We challenged whether it was appropriate for Congress to surveil the academy in the first place. We spoke out against the intended intimidation of those of us working in higher education at present. In our judgment the proposal to set up an oversight/review committee to monitor area studies, especially Middle Eastern programs, for ‘patriotic commitments’ is a violation of the freedoms needed for a meaningful and democratic educational process. We argued that it is the right-wing radicals of the Republican Party, as a minority, who threaten democratic inquiry, and not the rest of us.

Right-wing neoliberal critics like Martin Kramer and Lynne Cheney say that Middle Eastern Studies programs are hostile to intellectual diversity; that they have failed to ask the right questions at the right times; and that they have left the US vulnerable and endangered as a result. Title VI funded language programs and area studies for the purpose of national defense, a kind of defense education. Both Nixon and Reagan decreased the support for areas studies programs because they thought they were not following their purpose successfully.¹⁷

Our dissenting letter was written in order to stand against the intimidation by an activist minority of extremist neoliberals in this country. We wanted to make our voices heard as a public stance in defense of the area

studies and international programs where students of color are often housed. These are some of the most vital places for educational inquiry and exploration across culture and geography. These programs offer a richly complex understanding of and inquiry into the geo-politics of the globe.

The targeted programs are not anti-American or unpatriotic; and many of them are not radical or simply homogeneous in perspective. Instead they nurture critical inquiry for democratic thinking – which requires inclusive rather than exclusionary standpoints. These programs provide opportunities to think newly and differently while engaging exploratory viewpoints. These faculties embrace the open exchange of ideas and believe such discussions are crucial to the nation's security. HR 3077 pretends to embrace democratic discourse while exploiting it; and it demands majority representation for what is instead a minority right-wing voice.

As the extremist elements of the Republican party take greater hold – in the courts, on our campuses, in the Presidency – democratic inquiry is stifled. The military was never supposed to be a democratic institution, but our educational institutions of higher learning are supposed to be. As our culture becomes more militarized, the importance of the academy becomes even more critically important. Neoliberal imperial foreign policy needs more critique and discussion, not less.

This rightward initiative has had chilling effects. Several Palestinian faculty members at Columbia University were investigated on charges that they had intimidated Israeli students and made them feel uncomfortable in the classroom. The investigation and hearings took months and created tension throughout the campus. In the end the faculty were cleared of any wrongdoing, but not without damaging the atmosphere of open and free intellectual inquiry.

Ward Churchill, a faculty member at the University of Colorado, became a national news story when his invitation to speak at Hamilton College in upstate New York was rescinded in fall 2004 because of remarks he had made just after September 11, 2001. He had written then that many of the people who died that day in the Twin Towers were “little Eichmanns”. He said that his comments were taken out of context. Yet he also defended his right to free speech. Meanwhile he was investigated for his seditious remarks and reprimanded. On my own campus, also in upstate New York, three Republican students charged me with intolerance towards them because they supported the Iraq war. The campus news-

paper and television station led with this story without ever attempting to contact me. In the end I was exonerated, but the damage had been done.

I am a member of the department of politics at Ithaca College. The local Republican party has repeatedly complained both to the college administration and local newspaper that the department is not diverse enough. My department is made up of two Pakistanis, one Nigerian, one Puerto Rican, one Latino, four women, three Jews, two Muslims, six Christians, seven men, one gay. What do they mean by a lack of diversity? What they mean is that there are no right-wing neoliberal extremists in the department, which is true. But it is also true that none have ever applied.

I have taught for over thirty years and observe that today's classroom is newly emboldened by right-wing neoliberal students given their license to brag. The Republican party finances student forums and gatherings for the sole purpose of bolstering these extreme voices. It also finances student newspapers. These students are a small minority but they have heroes like Karl Rove and Dick Cheney. These right-wing assaults should be taken seriously because it will be a devastating capture if the academy capitulates. The academy remains one of the few important sites for democratic discussion and hopefulness.

One can use racial pluralism opportunistically for corporate interests or as an assault on the Euro-American hegemony of corporatist transnationalism.¹⁸ Because diversity rhetoric has had unintended progressive effects, one must continue to embrace it creatively. But because diversity is used as a code word for race, it silences sexuality at the same time that it should be articulating this viewpoint. We need to make sure that pluralism extends to the very meaning of sexuality/ies themselves. If there are more than two sexes as I offer earlier in this conversation, then the demand for racial and sexual and gender diversity along with equality for all, must become a part of a revitalized democratic theory today.

Katrina and her gendering of race and class

Hurricanes are now named for both men and women in the superficial attempt at gender neutrality – as though this actually could make a difference in men and women's lives in terms of equal treatment. This alteration in nomenclature conceals the real inequities in women's lives. This was truer than ever when Katrina hit with all "her" powerful, destructive, unpredictable, foreboding force in August 2005. "She"

devastated hundreds of thousands of people's lives and there was/is no mention of the particular and disproportionate numbers of women who bore/bear the brunt of "her" fury. This fury hit blacks and poor people hard but it hit black poor women even harder. If usual numbers hold true here, poor black women make up the greatest numbers of people living below sea level without cars.

Too many women live in blinding poverty in Louisiana and Mississippi. Some 37 percent of Mississippi's population as of 2002 was black – the highest percentage of any state in the nation. Louisiana's black population is second highest at 33 percent. In 2004, 25.9 percent of women of all ages lived below the federal poverty level. The poverty rate of black families in these areas is 23 percent. In New Orleans, 56 percent of all families are female-headed; and 22 percent of them are poor and female-headed.¹⁹ The tourism industry sustains this poverty with its demands for a lot of low-wage service workers who can be housed cheaply and within commuting distance. These workers become a disposable population without full citizenship in that their lives are not insurable – they have neither autos nor homes.

In the aftermath of Katrina there is much talk of the awful reality of racism and class inequality, but there is no mention of gender. Gender should be named alongside race and class because gender structures power and women of color are the poorest of the poor in this country, especially in Louisiana and Mississippi. Our TV screens were filled with the faces of black women, but they are/were described simply by their race and class. The victims were too readily called refugees and I assume the fact that most of the world's refugees are women and children played a part – as much as race and class – in this 'othered' choice of terms.

I need to be clear that the naming of race and class by calling attention to the color of poverty is not a full recognition of the racial and class structural inequalities that exist today. The naming is not meant to recognize and indict an entire structural system of racism and racist practices that abandon and humiliate people continuously in daily life. Nor is it meant to be a serious indictment of the increasing economic class inequalities that dominate a majority of people's lives today.

Instead race and class are used in neoliberal fashion to silence structural indictment and attempt to curtail and cover over the horrible reality uncovered by Katrina. In other words, race and class are named but not as a radical indictment of the racist underpinnings of capitalism. Instead

poverty is said to be the problem and should be lessened. Capitalist inequality – in racial and economic forms – is not indicted. But gender is not even named; is not even seen as important enough to contain or name.

It is also true that to mention the overwhelming presence of black women at the Superdome stadium where many of those made homeless sought shelter is to uncover the absence of black men. No one in power wants to call attention to the absence of these men who disproportionately languish in US prisons and fight in Iraq. Racist stereotyping views blacks not as individuals. In this visor, to be black is all-encompassing and homogenizing. One becomes genderless.

We are told that 67 percent of the population of New Orleans was black, and that 34 percent lived below the poverty line. But where there is race and class there is also always gender. Class always has a gender; class always has a family structure. Race always is gendered, and gender is always racialized. Every person always has a gender.²⁰

It is the gendered constructions of power that disproportionately create the poverty of so many black women. There is nothing about being biologically female that makes this intrinsically true. So women become the heads of single-parent families. They make ends meet when there are no ends to attach. The front page of the *New York Times* tells the story of Lakerisha Boyd, a 23-year-old black mother of three and her grief and resolve to find her missing baby after the flood: “I can’t start crying because of the other children. I can’t break down. I’m all they’ve got right now. But I just want to know, where’s my baby?”²¹ These women are the people who network in order to see that those they love survive. It is with women, as W.E. Dubois writes – with the “mothers and mothers of mothers” – that the resilience of black families is found.²² And black men are then demasculinized as heads-of-households and black women are defeminized by the same route because neither is *like* their white counterparts.

A thing must be named in order to be seen. And systems of power must be put in view in order to be changed. So it is important to name and see women, particularly women of color, in this moment of hurricane Katrina. The narrative of slavery – as a racist, rather than a sexualized racist system of oppression – is once again quietly reproduced here, with Black women once again the breeders for this sexualized racist economy. Slavery was a sexist and racist and class system of oppression. There are continued silences that need to be spoken here.

If we look at pictures of the Superdome or lines waiting for evacuation we see that unexpected numbers of the homeless and displaced in Mississippi and Louisiana are women and 'their' children. The poorest of the poor are women – women of all colors including white as a color. These single-headed households led by women are now with children but without households. And sometimes these women are also without their children given that large numbers of them were separated from their parents in the evacuations. One is again reminded of the slave children taken from their mothers and sent elsewhere. These children are once again torn from their kin. One can only wonder if similar practices would have been used if more of them were white. These women of New Orleans struggle and survive. Without seeing them the reconstruction effort will leave them, with their specific needs for day care and education, behind. There is too much to figure out here to not get this right.

This gendering of the storm and its effects do not make headlines. But poverty is tied to family structures in crisis and sexual practices as well. Poverty is tied to the unavailability of contraceptives and reproductive rights. Poverty is tied to teenage pregnancy. Poverty is tied to women's wages that are always statistically lower than men's. Poverty is tied to the lack of day care for women who must work at a job. Poverty is tied to insufficient health care for women. Poverty is tied to the lack of access to job training and education.

The gendering of Katrina is complex and multiple because gender in this highly militarized and privatized moment is often not what it seems. And the gendering of the hurricane is evident on multiple complex planes that are chaotic: we see it in the effects on the victims and survivors; in how the media narrate the moment; in the Bush administration's spin; in our own reactions as the horror unfolds; in the responses of those who live the desperation but are given little voice. These different sites that are gendered construct what we see and at the same time deny the presence and resonance of gender.

As the narrative of the storm and floods unfolded we had females standing in where once men only reigned. Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco is continually described by TV commentators as looking drained and being somewhat ineffectual. Yet she is also said to be a great comfort to people throughout the ordeal – as the ever-present mother of us all. On the other hand we have males acting like women are supposed to act. The County Supervisor just outside New Orleans breaks down uncontrollably

and cries 'like a woman' on national TV. In this instance males are just as good at acting like women as females.

Gender is more about intractable stereotypes and categorizations than anything real. New Orleans is described as a city with a feminine sensibility by a Romanian-born poet who lives in Louisiana. "It's a night city. It's ruled by the moon; it's surrounded by water, and water is traditionally a feminine element."²³ It should not be forgotten that New Orleans is home to an active and visible gay community with bars and restaurants that flaunt their unconventional ways. It is also known for its sizeable transgender community, where many of its women are male; and men, female.

Gender parades in confused and confusing fashion. Republicans are supposed to be the cowboys; and Dems are said to be "girlie-men". But Bush is looking too ineffectual and bumbling to hold onto his tough-guy status; instead he looks silly parading around in his cowboy boots of yesteryear. This man's man is looking a bit ineffectual, the way "womanly" is often depicted. Condi is called in to help cover up these mis-steps and dons her masculine – removed and detached – side but still holds onto her femininity by shopping for her Ferragamo shoes. It is key that she be both so-called 'womanly' and 'manly' simultaneously here because popular gendered perceptions of these attributes remain in place. Meanwhile Cheney – still a man's man – cuts short his vacation and heads for the floods. At this dire moment of need he reassures the richest of the rich that there will be no new taxes. And Bush decides to remove Michael Brown of FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) for botching everything. Maybe this emasculation will save them. Forget that Bush told his buddy 'Brownie' that he was doing a "heck of a job" just days earlier.²⁴

Both Laura and Lynne – the wives of our president and vice-president – escort them to the flood areas to remind the rest of us that husband/wife families still exist. And Barbara (Bush) has a bad moment and mistakenly reveals white rich women's role in empire building. She tells us, those watching our TVs, that these "underprivileged people" in the Superdome have it better now than before. Oprah, as a take-charge woman, travels to Mississippi and Louisiana and says the victims deserve an apology from the feds. Sean Penn, with the muscles of a manly man, drives his boat through the damaged areas. The mainstream media reporters and anchormen, who are still disproportionately male, almost seem 'womanly' – they speak passionately and less distantly than usual about the injustice they see. They

seem somewhat suspect – too emotionally involved – to engendered audiences watching them, but on the whole the public approves.

Katrina offers us a new-old lens. Some females publicly act like men and some males act like women. Given all the gender swapping and supposed fluidity who could think that gender still matters, still is oppressive, still means that your chances of being poor are greater if you are born female and black and poor. Gender appears in decoy fashion and manipulates intractable ‘truths’ while ‘real’ poor black and white women search for food and shelter.

Katrina is as much a political disaster defined by racism, sexism and class privilege, as it is a natural one. The talk of hurricanes as natural disasters parallels the way that women’s lives are naturalized by their biological sex. Seeing all these displaced women somehow seems natural, and not political, not about power formations that are already gendered and raced. Yet so little of all this is natural by any stretch of the imagination. President Bush repeatedly said that the storm didn’t discriminate and neither will his recovery effort. But his claim is not true. There is nothing natural about who lives below sea level; or about who is more greatly affected by the hubris of encasing the Mississippi in cement; or who is most affected by global warming. The poor live in the most dangerous and afflicted areas; whether in Louisiana, or in Pakistan where 80,000 perished in the 2005 earthquake. In affluent Northwest Chicago life expectancy of whites is 75–89 years old; on the poor Southside, it is 60 for blacks.

Leave it to Katrina – a woman – to blow the whistle on injustice. No safety nets to be seen here. This disaster was man-made – by Bush, and Cheney and Condi. Be careful here not to confuse sex and gender. Condi does the work of empire building once again for white rich males, while being black and female. She is masculinized for the job, just like hurricane Katrina is naturalized as a female. Meanwhile the US has been militarized and privatized for the past quarter-century. Government infrastructure has been denuded and left ineffectual for dealing with public needs.

Trillions of dollars are allocated for the Iraq wars with little left for health, education, welfare, and so on. Over \$71 million was cut from the Army Corp of Engineers for flood protection while billions were diverted to Iraq. There is money for bombs, and so much less for dikes and levees. Privatized governments mean that the public part of life shrinks and private corporate interests are left to seek their highest dollar value.

The downsized social welfare state, initiated in the Reagan era, has destroyed the safety net and welfare 'as we knew it'. Public schools and public housing have been largely abandoned. AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) has been replaced by the punitive TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). Without a commitment to public life – schools, roads, hospitals, trains, et cetera – individuals are more on their own. If you did not own a car you were stuck in the floodwaters. The lower Ninth Ward neighborhood of New Orleans was completely engulfed by water. Some 98 percent of the residents were black, and more than one third lived in poverty. When the floodwaters poured in, they all, but especially poor black women, were abandoned yet again.

There is more war and less of everything else, especially less taxes for the rich. Bush says, "as we clear away the debris of a hurricane, let us also clear away the legacy of inequality". In the next breath he asks for a permanent extension of his tax cuts that will cost upwards of \$1.4 trillion over the next years.²⁵ A trillion is one thousand billions – that is, twelve zeros. The tax breaks of 2001–3 will cost more in the end than the entire clean-up package for Katrina.²⁶

The poor grow poorer, and the rich richer. And Bush needs \$60 billion for clean-up and reparations but the government coffers are empty given tax cuts and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The deficit grows and non-rich taxpayers become the debtors. It is criminal that Halliburton received an early contract for rebuilding in Louisiana, much like it did in Iraq. And Blackwater Security also makes its way on to the scene, looking way too much more like it is in Iraq than any of us want to think about. Bush caps off this militarist stance with his suggestion in his TV address to the nation that emergency relief at home should be taken over by the military.

Several weeks after the disastrous federal response to Katrina, Bush said he took responsibility for the slow and ineffectual recovery effort. He said he intended to redirect the rebuilding of New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana and Mississippi with "armies of compassion". He promised to rebuild the city, higher and better. He initiated what he termed a new "Gulf Opportunity Zone" that will support entrepreneurship, home ownership, and black businesses. Touting his market mentality he promised to assist all those struggling to get back on their feet by easing environmental regulations and waiving prevailing area wage laws. Once again, his assist is to corporate investors and realtors, not displaced people. Private developers build unaffordable housing for low-wage earners and the

evacuees will remain dispersed in trailer parks that look like Palestinian refugee camps.

The poor have been forced out of New Orleans and there are few signs that they will be able to return. Public housing was destroyed in the floods and there appears to be little interest in rebuilding it. Instead, the French Quarter which was 90 percent white and half-empty for years before Katrina – with a vacancy rate of 37 percent – will remain similar to before the flood. Other neighborhoods with little damage also have at least 11,600 empty apartments and houses. These vacant lodgings could be made into affordable housing for evacuees with federal funds for rental vouchers. But there is no move in these directions. Instead many evacuees feel like the post-Katrina policies are a form of racial cleansing; that the driest areas of New Orleans were white and will remain white.²⁷ Blacks in New Orleans speak openly of their desperation in the aftermath of the flood. They felt abandoned and neglected at the Superdome: as though they had been betrayed, as though they were not Americans anymore. And they still feel betrayed.²⁸

There is too much at stake here to leave it to profit-motivated corporations. A publicly, democratically focused rebuilding of New Orleans – as well as all of our cities – is needed. There is twenty-two million tons of waste that must be intelligently recycled. There are thousands of tons of household chemicals like bleach and pesticides that must be neutralized. There are one million refrigerators, stoves and washing machines that must be gotten rid of. These are environmental issues that affect everyone across race and class and gender lines in the US.²⁹ Rethinking New Orleans must be about rebuilding democracy here at home.

Women are unfairly the largest numbers affected in this disaster: its victims so-to-speak *and* also its survivors – networking, feeding, reconnecting to make daily life possible. Although it is difficult to amass information about sexual assault during the aftermath of Katrina, members of Louisiana Rape Relief document that there were unacceptable numbers of rapes in the Superdome and other shelters – that sexual assault was a part of the hurricane.³⁰ Without recognizing that Katrina has exposed the racist, *and* gendered, and class inequities of our country we cannot begin to really address the crisis of poor women and their children which operates as a microcosm for our throwaway society. By making sure we are focused on the needs of poor women of all colors we begin to envision a more inclusive society for us all.

Kofi Annan says that the only way to deal with the AIDS crisis in Africa is to invest in the women in Africa. He says this is our best hope. W.E.B. Dubois knew it was black women's souls that sustained the struggle for racial justice. Ida B. Wells wrote that it is black women who will "uplift the race". She believed it was ordinary women, as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers – not queens – who make the world.³¹ We must take these insights to further deconstruct heteropatriarchal gender and its hierarchies.

The only way to cope fully with the devastation of Mississippi and Louisiana is to first see and then invest in its "women", whether they are black or white or male or female. It is by starting here that we can rebuild Louisiana and Mississippi and with them an inclusive – anti-racist, resexed and degendered, economically just – democratic society.

Women marching against war in the two gulfs

I went to Washington, DC, like so many others, to march on September 24, 2005 against the devastating policies of the Bush administration that have created and perpetuate the wretched war in Iraq, and the despicable war on the poor on our own Gulf Coast. Both Baghdad and New Orleans are connected by the crass and arrogant policies of an empire out of control. As if this isn't enough, Bush tries to justify his politics of abandonment here – and invasion abroad – with quips like: terrorists are the "kind of people who look at Katrina and wish they had caused it".

Rich men's wars are fought against the poor while using the poor to fight them, and males and females fight these wars more often today, while women and their children suffer the unfair burdens they always have. Bush's continual ratcheting up of the wars of/on terror and rampant militarism with its old-fashioned masculinist bravado have particular impact. Women from Kabul to Baghdad to Baton Rouge look diversely different but are also gendered similarly. As such, females across the globe suffer from erasure and silence alongside over-exposure and mobilization. As a result, the two Gulfs are two connected sites of this militarized globe. The war on Iraq has more fully militarized the US itself, while Iraq is camouflaged by the gendered rhetoric of women's rights; meanwhile New Orleans is demonized by a racialized and class discourse that eviscerates black women. This period of militarization is profoundly defined by a kind of gender fluidity and complexity that demands new thinking from the anti-war movement.

Bush said that the war in Iraq was supposed to get rid of weapons of mass destruction as well as liberate Iraqi women from the rule of Saddam. (Like we supposedly freed the women in Afghanistan from the Taliban.) Now, given the solidification of right-wing Muslim misogyny, the women of Iraq face newly imposed confinement. The US exports the rhetoric of women's rights as a kind of decoy and smokescreen for imperial despotism. But instead of liberation, women are subjected to the rule of guns because of poverty and war, while the military both polices and oppresses these women, in their different locations of empire.

The Washington march and rally targeted both Gulfs. Posters and signs connected the two sites as part of a similar corrupt politics. Signs read: "Make Levees, not War"; "Fund People's Needs, Not the War Machine"; "Wrong War, Wrong Gulf". Another sign read: "My son was once an embryo, please don't send him to Iraq". I thought, extend this to your daughter too. And, yes – then blast the hypocrisy of Bush's so-called "right to life" policies.

My friends and I chose to walk with the Code Pink contingent. Code Pink is a woman-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement. Great pink balloons filled the air; pink outfits speaking all their irony declared women's presence on this anti-war march; and I wore a pink head-band that I made before we left. I wrote on the headband in black Magic Marker: "No Man-Made Sharia Law" – wondering whether the women of Iraq – who at least had formal rights under Saddam Hussein to an education, to work, to dress by choice – will now be threatened with a new constitution that the US is ready to approve that will relegate them to the crushing misogynist rule of right-wing religious zealots. It is not clear at this moment whether Islamic misogyny or Islamic democracy will win the day in terms of recognizing women; what is clear is that Bush used Afghan and Iraqi women to justify his war. Now these very same women who have fought for their rights for decades are easily forgotten and abandoned as Bush parlays for a constitution. Women are once again bartered for imperial democracy.

Meanwhile at home, women's rights have been undermined and weakened by legislation initiated by the Bush administration: from the escalating restrictions on abortion law to the constrictions on Medicaid and Medicare payments, to the final dismantling (initiated under Clinton) of AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), and so on. The poorest women of our country have now been abandoned completely by

the Bush administration. Anti-terror legislation has displaced proactive policies for health care, education, and job training. Militarism dominates at home and abroad.

We waited to start marching down Pennsylvania Avenue and I thought about how many women are forced to live as exiles today due to hurricane Katrina and the Afghan and Iraq wars, the Sudan, and so on. Yet women, who share a gendered identity most often not of their own making, are effaced by the very politics that genders them in the first place. They are the lifeblood of their communities but not recognized as such. So the history of Iraqi women's activism and Islamic feminisms are wholly ignored. And African American women's activism on the ground in Louisiana parishes is entirely dismissed.

Amidst the marchers and the chanting, I remember back to the days just after Katrina hit. In the first few weeks it was sometimes hard to distinguish New Orleans from Baghdad on the TV screen. New Orleans looked like a war zone because it was already that. Signs read "WE SHOOT LOOTERS", even though the "looters" took food that would ruin anyway, even though people were taking bare necessities like diapers and water and tampons, even though televisions were stolen by those with no cars to be used as barter in order to get a ride out of town. Militarization is the response to people in need when they have no rights; when they are seen as the enemy; when those *with* guns fear the ones without, even if those without guns are mothers and grandmothers. There were no innocent citizens or civilians at the Superdome. Imperial democracy militarizes – at home and abroad – once-civilian locations. So we stood before the White House and chanted: "We are what democracy looks like."

Militarization means people lose their rights to the demands of securing the peace. Such security is defined by established notions of masculinity deployed through hierarchical systems of fear, and is never safe for females, even if females are activated as military personnel. Although more girls and women are bearing arms across the globe today than ever before, they remain especially vulnerable to gendered violence. In the instance of Katrina, most of the gun carriers were males – both as looters and as members of the National Guard – while most of the people holding families and communities together were females. These old configurations of gender still predominate, but they are orchestrated for new purposes.

Little compassion is to be seen in the aftermath of Katrina for women and girls, at home or abroad. Instead there is a racialized and sexualized

politics of empire that denies the real rights of women and children and, with them, other-than-masculinist males. Meanwhile, Under-Secretary of State Karen Hughes is sent abroad to improve our public image with Muslims. She says that the government's lack of quick response to Katrina was "unfortunate" but not racist. She bends gender once again.

Katrina will have done what no neoliberal racist policy could do before. It will have emptied New Orleans of its very poor who are disproportionately black women with their children. Nevertheless, Bush pretends that armies can be compassionate and we are asked to believe that the same President who gutted the disaster recovery agency FEMA and denuded the infrastructure of this country now wants to make amends. If he really wanted to do so he would subsidize the non-profit agencies with a long history of serving the poor in Louisiana rather than his corporate backers. And he would insure that the black colleges Xavier and Dillard make it back to solvency. Xavier produces more future black doctors than any other undergraduate institution but doesn't have a large endowment or flood insurance.³² It will be a true disaster if the reconstruction of our Gulf coast looks like the reconstruction in Iraq, in racist and masculinist imperial form.

We should be reminded that the Iraq war is estimated at costing upwards of five trillion dollars. At present it costs \$5 billion a month. Congress readies itself to cut \$35 billion in the next five years by gutting Medicare, the health care programs for the poor, while the US heads toward a \$520 billion debt in 2008. None of this is simply about New Orleans or Iraq.

There are poor families dispersed in all US cities. New York with its multi-million dollar homes also is home to 50 percent of its people who live on household incomes of \$41,000; and 20 percent who somehow exist below the poverty line of barely \$19,000 for a family of four. "The top fifth of earners in Manhattan now makes 52 times what the lowest fifth makes – \$365,826 compared with \$7,047. For every dollar in these top ranks of the top fifth wealthiest, the bottom fifth made about 2 cents."³³ There are many disasters waiting to happen.

Single moms who are females of all colors find themselves more often in the army, or housed in shelters on our Gulf coast, than do other women. Yet, more females are also overseeing our abandoned cities and states as mayors and governors. More militarization means a larger mobilization of females on all fronts. Gender is more diversified on the one hand – women

are at many different locations of a masculinist hierarchy – and crushingly homogeneous especially among the poor. These complex formations of gender make it harder to name and see women as a collective force for democratic struggle. But given the way that militarism is now both resexing and regendering gender, it is crucial to figure this out.

Democracy cannot be achieved through the use of masculinist guns – whether males or females are carrying them. So I marched as a woman, wearing my pink headband with all its ironic flair – in honest recognition of the complexity of gender and its enormous political potential to create anti-racist feminisms – from Baghdad to Louisiana and Mississippi. We – feminists of all sorts, male and female alike – must bring this potential to the fore of the global anti-war/anti-militarist movement.

Notes

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- 4 For a full discussion of this point see Zillah Eisenstein, *The Color of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 39–66.
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5

Ungendering Feminisms and the Pluralisms of Sex

How to think about feminisms in 2007 and beyond? Feminisms are to be understood as critical and resistant lenses on the enforcement of gender on our sexual bodies. Gendering and its particular politics are always at the heart of the content or discontent. Gendering tells females, enforces on females, what a woman is or needs to be. This process disqualifies and excludes. Cultures do this differently, but each culture articulates this process. Different classes and races do this in particular ways, but each performs and requires this process. And this entire set of processes is never totally determined, so enforcement takes many forms, with always at least a chance for other possibilities.

I will explore here how the cacophony of gendered meanings today – on this militarized globe – further splinters the meaning of the sexes, their genders, and therefore feminisms themselves. Of particular concern to me are the dangerous forms of imperial/neoliberal feminism in the US, along with right-wing nationalist feminisms in third-world sites that manipulate this fluidity of gender on behalf of patriarchal masculinist systems of power.

My identification of imperial/neoliberal feminism in the US is to expose its complicity in establishing and authorizing the use of sex as a decoy like gender. This means it is often not easy to read the meaning of sex and gender and that this illegibility maintains a decoy status. I *also* want to expose its undermining of traditional gender arrangements by inadvertently uncovering the instability and malleability of sex to gender – and to race – that permits their being accessed and employed so diversely. This highly differentiated and diverse gendering, when and where it exists, should not be confused with degendering or ungendering patriarchal privilege. Rather, gender's rigidity is less homogeneous; patriarchy is more dispersed and diverse, the way racism renegotiated and differentiated the earlier homogeneous form of black slavery. The very contradictory posture – the intractability *and* malleability of sexed gender and raced and

gendered sex – outlines promise of a radically insurgent assault by feminisms across the globe against their neoliberal capture.

If gender were not malleable in the first place, it could not be used as a decoy so readily. Present-day decoys disprove biological and cultural essentialism, if even in reverse mode. Imperial decoys operate on behalf of neoliberal feminism and empire building while they also appear in imperialized nations. One can only wonder the full meaning and impact of women suicide bombers, or newly elected women presidents in Germany, Liberia, Chile, and so on. This may simply be a part of the unfolding global capitalist transition that transfers power from nation states to transnational capitalists while reconstituting masculinist privilege in sites elsewhere. National political spaces are abandoned by men and reoccupied by females.

So far, one's sex, as in Margaret Thatcher or Indira Gandhi, does not promise democracy. I do not mean to prejudge some of the most recent gender successes, but rather to say that we must be careful to scrutinize how they evolve. And some of this sorting will require careful attention to whether these successes are tied to insurgent women's movements and their mobilizations, or not. And whether females' presence in nation-states takes place in imperial or anti-imperial countries.

I explore the regenderings of racialized patriarchy in the recent US Supreme Court appointments, in the Maoist fighting forces in Laos, in Palestinian women's mobilization, and in African women's participation and activism in articulating feminisms. These are instances of US imperial patriarchy, and imperialized patriarchy outside the US, alongside its destabilization. At stake is the clarification of how many struggles for gender equality, in the end, disallow a renegotiation of sexual and gender freedom. When traditional forms of patriarchy are exchanged for more modern ones – like a female warrior/female torturer, or female secretary of state – this is not a win for feminism. Things are even more complex in instances like when Hamas wins 74 seats in the Palestinian parliament with women holding 6 of these seats. The gender politics is yet to emerge here.

I think it is less telling that Condi Rice has the job she has today – that she has access to this realm – than if she did not. In other words, the exclusion of women from certain spaces and dreams is not parallel to their inclusion in them. Inclusion and exclusion are not simple opposites. Inclusion allows a partial renegotiation of the gendering and racing of power, but not a power shift. Exclusion exposes the need for a power shift.

The tricky part is that there are many changes in the gendering and racing of power that are of consequence, but it is another story to assess the significance of these changes. If gender is always in process and morphing – the process of gendering gender and gendering race – it is important to assess and evaluate the changes in terms of their democratic consequences. The body resonates with a static quality, as it operates as a sign for racialized gender, and appears as less multiple than it is.

Yet, as technology shifts in digital form, as the body is more displaced, females more readily stand in for men, or for sites that were once only occupied by white males. Gender fluidity just may be a newly articulated version of this technological moment. Women occupy more and different sites – from the third-world factory to the first-world army.

This flux necessitates feminism's re-engagement with its origins. It seems fitting at the Association of Women in Development (AWID) International Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2005, that "Prima-donna", a music and dance troupe of Malaysian transsexuals, transgendered people, and MSM (men having sex with men) performed to open the identity borders to everyone. The plasticity and changeability of gender are put in full view. Sexuality is openly connected to gender choices.

Yet, gender also remains as an intractable dualism. Gender then operates in its own defense: sexual pleasures are individual and plural; and gender controls them. When sex is dualistic it is used to justify gender. The efficacy of sexual decoys derives from both the intractability *and* the fluidity of gender.

Using and abusing women for imperial power – either in established gender form and/or decoy status – is not good for females of all colors, for women, or for feminisms. Women's rights must therefore be interrogated and radicalized as a politics by the demands of a radically pluralized sexual and gendered and anti-racist agenda. This focus confounds and clarifies feminisms. Imperial feminism takes full advantage of these tensions.

Women's lives – especially given the plurality of sexed race and gender meanings – are more diverse today than hitherto and therefore are thought to be more equal as well. But the variety of women's lives and the constructions of gender meanings are more plural, but not more equal or just. Women in prison, in war, in *Fortune* magazine as multi-millionaires, in burqas being stoned, in chadors voting, in war rape, as torturers in war, create a cacophony of meanings. The militarized globe has resexed many sites without regendering them even though the very process of resexing them slightly shifts the actual gender relations.

So females occupy more and different sites of power and they also do so within the constraints of gendered and racialized hierarchy. Some sites remain more constraining than others. More women, over 100,000, are in US prisons in 2004 than ever before. Yet neoliberal and right-wing women occupy sites of empire building and wield power by doing so. Their power, however, is not used on behalf of feminisms across the globe but rather deploys sex, in racialized form, on behalf of imperial democracy. Social justice – for a majority of people on this planet – is not the end goal, and the language of individual freedom and diversity mystifies the power grab.

Both gender and race are fiction and real. Today the diversity within gender – more women are doing more things – loosens gender's tightest grip. Comparative differences and multiplicity are more readily in view. Alternatives become possible and maybe viable. While traveling in Cairo and Istanbul, I see young women walking side by side wearing tattoos, piercings, bare midriffs, and chadors. One young woman encased in the black burqa walks with several older women, who are dressed in Western garb. I see bright red nails and high spike heels and the abayya on the same young woman. In Ankara I see many young women wearing colorful headscarves as both an Islamic identity and as a criticism of US imperialism. Meanwhile the Turkish government bans headscarves from public places to represent their embrace of secularism and Western modernity.

Choice and possibility exist alongside encrusted habit and mores. So there is both more and less freedom; more possibility, and also less. Young women have many more choices today, and yet many real constraints remain in place. This confusion is politically efficacious.

The Bush administration announces Cristeta Cornerford, the first woman head executive for the White House kitchen, just a few days after Sandra Day O'Connor's female seat on the Supreme Court is parlayed for other concerns. Cyndi Sheehan who is the mother of Casey Sheehan, her son killed in Iraq, demands a meeting with President Bush and orchestrates a grassroots anti-war movement for several months while her husband files for divorce. She is a mom against the war; and he is a man standing for his country. We read of Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, the first Iraqi woman female suicide bomber who survives after her own explosives-packed belt did not detonate. And we learn that women make up 44 percent of the US's low-wage immigrant workforce. They now are often half of the immigrant workers flowing into large metropolitan areas. The economic success of

Korea and Indonesia depends on women's gendered labor in global factories. China's economic miracle depends on the millions of *dagonmei* – the exploited migrant working daughters – who leave the poor rural communities for the factories in the cities.¹ They are the newest proletariat and they are female.

The US ranks 17th out of 59 countries in a measure of the socio-economic gender gap between men and women. Sweden was ranked number 1; Egypt number 59. Measured more specifically on economic opportunity and health, the US ranked only 46th and 42nd, respectively. On a score measuring gender equality from 1 to 7, the US scored 4.4.² Obviously there is much that is changing in terms of gender and the gendering of labor, and yet many of the changes are less progressive than they are destabilizing. There is new fluidity and possibility to create feminisms across the globe, and with it democracies. And there are also the encrusted gender and racial inequalities that are being rewired in newer forms to resex the gendering of democracy for imperial and global capitalist concerns.

Democracy and with it feminisms are in the process of being hijacked. The terms are used but in vaporized form. This stage of racial and gendered decoys – Clarence Thomas, Colin Powell, Condi Rice, Janice Rogers Brown of the Federal Appeals Court – is part and parcel of today's mystification process. Identities – according to one's uterus – was/is only part of the story. Historical necessity is more fully trumping biological essentialism. Progressives of all stripes have long argued that race and gender, and less so, sex, are constructions. It has been less readily articulated, however, that if sex, gender, and race are always changing then feminisms and anti-racist politics must reinvent their radicalism accordingly.

Neoliberal/imperial feminism

Neoliberal or imperial feminism, which at present is both a contradiction in terms *and* also a poignant narrative, exploits the inadequacy of identity (essentialist) politics in its myriad forms. Imperial feminists believe that being a female and/or woman is not a detriment. They reject the view that women are denied access as a sexual class. There is no structural constancy or unfairness to power. They view their lives in privatized and individualist ways and use their own success and power to deny the claims of other feminisms. There is no consideration of the masses of women. Supposedly,

females if they try can succeed, except if there is a Saddam Hussein or the Taliban to keep you down. And there are historical precedents for imperial feminists speaking on behalf of women elsewhere. Church-going American women chose to help non-Christian women by freeing them from the misogyny of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, with no recognition of their own misogynistic practices.³

Imperial feminists speak on behalf of the US but in particular militarist voices today. Imperial feminism – spoken by male and female defenders of the wars of/on terror – uses women’s rights rhetoric to manipulate and disguise the antidemocratic politics of the state. Patriarchal, racialized, and class structures of inequality are silenced and e-raced. Their vision of women’s freedom is less about equality and more about privacy and individualism. Racialized sexual decoys are the practice while imperial feminism is the theory.

It does not quite work to name imperial women’s rights rhetoric feminist at all. And many of these women in the US would never identify as feminist. Yet they appropriate the language of democracy, in neoliberal form, on behalf of women, especially elsewhere. It is therefore imperative to locate their particular manipulations as a decoy form of feminism itself. Such a politics is not entirely new, but it poses new dangers because of the diverse present-day expressions of women’s exploitation on the one hand, and empowerment on the other. Neoliberal feminism just may be the ultimate deception, protecting fascistic practices in so-called democratic form.

Women’s rights discourse is then used to camouflage war. Neoliberal feminists embrace militarism and its masculinist constructions while supposedly constructing a compassionate female face for their conservatism. Karen Hughes is named Undersecretary of State in charge of “public diplomacy” with Islamic communities overseas. She is asked to improve the “flagging image” of the US abroad. She sees her role as helping to distinguish between mainstream and extremist Muslims and arrogantly does not even know Arabic. “We have a common interest in confronting terror and violence and hate and crime that is committed in the name of any religion and we want to isolate and marginalize those who would seek to kill innocents.”⁴ Hughes is sent abroad once again in 2006 to try and deflect the riots arising from the Danish anti-Islamic cartoons.

Females in the Bush administration operate on behalf of neoliberalism and its antidemocratic commitments. As neoliberals they embrace women’s

rights but not women's equal access to rights. Most of them believe in women's right to reproductive choice and think that abortion should remain "safe, legal but rare", meaning that it should remain available but with no assist from the federal government; as a formal right rather than as accessible choice. Hillary Clinton now aligns herself with this position. The more right-wing extremists in the imperial ranks believe that abortion should be illegal and that traditional forms of patriarchal heterosexism in marriage should be enforced. They openly oppose gay rights. Imperial feminism negotiates between its neoliberal and extremist factions; much like the Bush administration.

Recognizing the identifiable identity that is always more than singular is what makes non-imperial feminisms central to any construct of meaningful democracy. Women's bodies – their hormones, brain cells, vaginas, wombs, and breasts – must be recognized but not reified or essentialized. Feminisms must not be afraid of sexual equality and the similarity it imagines; and yet recognize the multiplicity and diversity of sexes and genders. Equality is subversive to patriarchy, and diversity is subversive to equality. Our bodies and ourselves are about possibilities, not givens. So feminisms must reject prohibition and embrace radical sexual deregulation. This opens democratic theory and practice to insurgent possibilities, instead of fascistic domination.

States and gendered decoys

Angela Merkel was elected the first woman chancellor of Germany in October 2005. She is fifty-one years old, married but has no children, says she chooses not to be a symbol for women or their changing role, and women did not vote for her enthusiastically. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected the first woman president of Liberia in the same year. The headline in the *New York Times* read: "Liberia's Harvard-Trained 'Queen' is Sworn In as Leader". Laura Bush and Condoleezza Rice headed the US inaugural delegation. I wonder what Laura was thinking as she sat there. After all, she says she is proud to be a wife, not a president. Yet Condi is pleased because it shows us all, like she does, what anyone can become. A woman who voted for Sirleaf says, "I want a better future. Maybe a woman can bring it."⁵ Sirleaf says that unlike some Western women she embraces the "stereotypical feminine roles as part of her appeal". Yet she is also referred to as Liberia's "iron lady" from her years in opposition politics, and her

time spent in jail.⁶ It is less recognized that a mass mobilization of women for democracy assisted her election.

Michele Bachelet was elected the first woman president of Chile in January 2006. Upon her election she appointed ten women to her twenty-person cabinet. Formerly she was Minister of Defense, as well as a pediatrician and public health worker, and she was imprisoned along with her father during the Pinochet regime. She is also a single mother, and an agnostic. Chileans believe that she can bring democracy to Chile.

Afghanistan had its first elections in 2005, and 68 of the 249 seats in the new parliament were guaranteed for women. These are more seats than women hold in the US Congress; and yet no neoliberal feminist thinks that Afghan women have more democracy than women in the US, or that Chilean women live in a more democratic country than the US. The gendering of politics is clearly taking new forms but what these changes mean is deeply contested.

Laura Bush, shortly before her husband was to choose his nominee to replace Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor, weighed in with her hope that it would be a woman. On the day of the announcement there was much speculation that the nominee would actually be a woman. Sandra Day O'Connor, responding to Bush's initial nominee for her seat, John Roberts, says that he is perfect, except for the fact that he is not a woman. One cannot but wonder what it means to be a woman in this particular context. Does being a woman simply mean being a female nominee? Or is there some sense that woman entails a cultural/religious/social meaning of gender? Maybe the answer is that it may mean both but only sometimes.

Anyway, there are so many different kinds of women: feminine, radical, liberal, black, lesbian, anti-abortion, Muslim, anti-feminist, feminists of all other sorts, athletic, verbal, and so on. When O'Connor and Laura speak of wanting a woman they are not thinking of a black lesbian antiracist feminist woman. They are probably not even thinking of a woman as liberal as Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsburg. Identities are as infinite as are political persuasions. Roberts's wife, Jane Sullivan Roberts, is described as feminist and anti-abortion and does pro bono work for "Feminists for Life". Hmmm ...

Gender decoys, as I have said throughout, are females in political drag and the drag allows us to think that they represent the best of democracy when they don't. Woman – whomever, whatever, the definition – plays a role of deception and lures us into a fantasy of gender equity. The point

here is that although the sex often changes, the gendered politics can and often does remain the same.

As decoys, the females in military uniform at Abu Ghraib let one think that females acting like men are what democracy looks like. As decoys they create confusion by participating in the very sexual humiliation that their gender is usually victim to. Flux and flexibility are the newest gender rules of racialized patriarchy for global capitalism.

It is crucial to remember that gender impinges on how we see and name the sexual body; and the sexual body is used to justify the very notion of gender. This is why a democratic Supreme Court needs a female who is also committed to creating a democracy that is regendered to be more fully inclusive and democratic. This entails a notion of women's rights that recognizes the need for access in multiple and diverse forms. Women of the Bush administration like Karen Hughes and Mary Matalin disagree. Although they might have wished for a new female justice, they were hoping that she would be like Clarence Thomas.

It is newly significant that Roberts is white, male and conservative. No female decoy even needed here. Roberts, a white male, is chosen to replace a white female and the first woman ever appointed to the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor. There is historical slippage here. In the early 1980s, Ronald Reagan felt it necessary to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court, and he did. At that point in time, after a full decade of feminist activism, there was political capital in doing so. He chose a conservative female as decoy for the court. Only now is O'Connor thought of as the center of the Supreme Court. She has become less conservative because of the right-wing justices appointed after her. She started on the right and became the center as the center moved to the right.

Two decades later there is no clear voice with political muscle demanding the appointment of a female/woman in whatever form. Interestingly, there was less push than in the 1980s for a female, even though many expected that the nominee would be a (conservative) woman. Bush didn't need to appoint a female like Reagan did because political times change like gender does. A white female is replaced by a white male because neoliberals say we have moved beyond the need for identity politics. And whiteness is completely racially privileged in the silencing of it.

To further muddy the waters, before Roberts was chosen as the nominee, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales was rejected by right-wing fanatics as a possible justice, because they thought he was soft on abortion.

Gonzales's role in authorizing the Bush administration's use of torture and wire-tapping in the wars of/on terror is ignored and he looks like a feminist to conservative Republicans. And abortion, in its narrowed version, becomes the legal arbiter of what is considered too much democracy.

As though this is not confused enough, Chief Justice Rehnquist dies, and Bush decides to have Roberts replace Rehnquist as Chief Justice, rather than O'Connor. Bush will find another nominee for O'Connor's seat. During his confirmation hearings Roberts refuses to answer much of anything. Liberals fret that he will unravel civil and women's rights. Roberts writes and speaks of "alleged" and "supposed" discrimination in wage gaps between men and women. He has opposed laws protecting the rights of girls and young women to have the same opportunities in sports as boys and young men. He has opposed various remedies for racial injustices – especially improving protection for the voting rights of minorities. He has a limited view of personal privacy. He once wrote of illegal immigrants as "illegal amigos" and when asked whether he would change that phrasing he said no. His judicial philosophy remains unclear.⁷ But he is said to be a brilliant scholar and thinker. His so-called brilliance gets him confirmed.

Bush's second nominee for O'Connor's position is Harriet Miers. This time a female is chosen to replace a female. But being nominated after Roberts, Miers doesn't seem as though she is chosen because she is female. Instead it appears that she is chosen because she is conservative and anti-abortion and will make the right wing happy. But Bush got this wrong. The right wing says she is not qualified, not smart enough. She is female and not brilliant. And in the first few weeks looks too incompetent, like a woman.

Miers is pummeled – by the right wing especially – for having no record, no substantial writings, no clear qualifications for the Supreme Court. She looks like a lightweight, just a dear and close associate of Bush for years, his personal legal counsel. Maybe this is just too wifely and womanly – too gendered – for the Supreme Court. With little to document her supposed conservatism, the right wing fears that she might not be extremist enough. They were hoping for established conservative females like Edith Jones and Edith Brown Clement, federal appeals judges in New Orleans; or Priscilla Owen or Janice Rogers Brown, who both faced long, protracted confirmation hearings for their appeals court nominations. Next, old papers are discovered that show Miers at one time was libertarian about women's bodies – that she thought that women should be

able to determine their own reproductive lives. These are old statements written when she worked in Texas, and no one knows if she still holds to them. But the right wing continues their mobilization against her and she finally withdraws her nomination.

Miers had been in charge of cleaning up the Texas State Lottery Commission. Her main claims to fame are her incredible loyalty to Bush and her diligent capacity for hard work. She is said to be meticulous about her work, but when pressed during confirmation hearings to have the content of this diligence clarified, little of substance was offered by her. She is of the era where a woman would need to be a cut above the men to make it into law school or find a job. She did both before it was popular for women to do so. She opened many doors that had been closed to women, but did it diplomatically, according to friends.⁸ She may not be a constitutional genius but she clearly is as prepared as Clarence Thomas was, or as smart as her boss. Nevertheless, she is raked over the coals, and her written response to the judiciary committee is returned as incomplete and incompetent.

It should be noted that Miers seems to be a typical woman, and not; she is both too womanly, and not gendered enough. She is too messy. She is female, but not married and she has no children. She has had a thirty-year relationship to Nathan Hecht, a justice of the Texas Supreme Court. They both attended law school at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and both were considered rising stars in the same law firm. Their relationship is described as “romantic at times”, but mostly they are said to be good close friends, with a special relationship. Their true love is their work, so they decided early on not to marry.⁹ She could not be more dutiful or loyal to Bush but all this is just too suspect for Bush’s right wing. So a female is nominated for the Supreme Court, while sexism plays a large part in the scrutiny she faces. Extremist Republicans think she is not conservative enough and even though they are a minority voice, they rule.

Miers’s loyalty to Bush should make her completely suspect, and not because it makes her too womanly, but because it makes her dangerous. At this historical period the Supreme Court will continue to play an important role in the wars of/on terror by being asked to authorize presidential powers. It seems inconceivable that Miers would not continue to authorize Bush’s requests that allow for the suspension of civil liberties for detainees and the continuation of torture as acceptable practice.¹⁰ But Bush’s next appointee, Samuel Alito, will probably be no better on this.

I wondered if Bush would appoint yet another female after Miers withdrew. I thought probably not – he did his duty initially and now is free to please his right-wing supporters more directly. Bush chooses Samuel Alito, a judge with a clear record. He has voted against abortion on several occasions. He dissented on the Supreme Court case *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* in order to support spousal notification as a requirement, a stance not taken by the rest of the Supreme Court. At Princeton he belonged to Concerned Alumni, a group that was against the admission of women and blacks. This time around we have a man’s man for O’Connor’s female replacement. In this instance, gender is silently encoded in its intractable, non-decoy, form.

Imperial democracy utilizes a masculinity that sometimes is resexed with females and regendered accordingly as females become more masculinized, and males become ‘girlie-men’. But manly men/males still also rule. Those feminists who believe in women’s rights to their bodies as fundamental to all democracies must reclaim and radicalize gender both inside and outside the US. This critical stance on behalf of women’s equality and justice must be extended to all present-day discussions of democracy – including, and especially, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, South Africa, and so on.

Diversifying while militarizing gender

This stage of the wars of/on terror demands much of females and women. Many of the demands are old: hauling water, collecting wood, working in global factories and as sex workers, maintaining family life. Other demands are newer and affect more women than ever before because of the increase in war-ravaged sites. So women are more often refugees and homeless, heading families by themselves, signing up for military duty. And there are more women in view like Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, and Karen Hughes. It is also true that gendered violence is more public and publicized as in the rapes in Gujarat and Sudan. First-world women are looking more powerful; women in third-world countries are exposed as more ravaged, desperate, and ‘victimized’. Neither picture is simply accurate about the gendered diversity, and, yet, they are true of the power differences between imperial and imperialized life.

Women in the US appear to have more power as Bush’s neoliberal “cowgirls” authorize and articulate Bush’s policies; meanwhile most

women in the US are struggling more to make ends meet. There is more pressure on women as they negotiate jobs and family simultaneously. Black women in the US find more of their husbands and sons, as well as themselves, behind bars. Women in Rwanda run their local communities because so many of the men were murdered in the decade-old genocide.

The whistle-blowers who brought down Enron are identified as women. The people speaking out against the corporate abuses of Halliburton in Iraq – their false ledgers and doctored bills – are also women. And yet, significant players in the Abu Ghraib scandal were also female, from high-ranking Janis Karpinski to low-level Lyndie England. So clearly this moment of war capitalism chooses to differentiate patriarchal privilege in newly differentiated and diverse ways for and with women. Women appear to have achieved equality as a few individual females are paraded in the political spotlight, while the world as a whole is more militarized and less democratic as a result. Karpinski writes that she was, in the end, still an outsider in a man's military. According to her, the military higher-ups – men's men – used her as a scapegoat and hung her out to dry alone. Only she – of top-ranking officers – was held accountable for Abu Ghraib.¹¹

Women in the US are a part of imperial power whether they choose this or not. Some are more in charge than others, but almost all, even if inadvertently, enjoy the privileges of empire. Given the stark constraints of egregious class inequalities, working-class women are often forced into the most overt aspect of this imperial reality, the military. Women and men of color, who are disproportionately poor, most often have no other choice but the armed forces.

Meanwhile, right-wing women of privilege speak on behalf of women's rights in war-torn countries. This is a different kind of patriarchy than either feudalism or early capitalism needed. Global capital needs a more diverse face *within* its system of gender. The freedom of capital to flow needs less homogenized racial and gender restrictions. Global capital now differentiates within the system of gendered racism in more individuated modern, diverse, and complex form. Racism is also pluralized by diverse color, with the brown Muslim enemy and the South Asian digital workforce newly in view.

The structural underpinnings of racialized masculinity are more diverse than hitherto – especially in terms of class privileges – and they are also left to operate more freely given the growing privatization of public spaces. With less and less of a public – both in terms of governmental responsibilities and oversight of the corporate realm – families and markets are each

overwhelmed by the newest demands of global capital. Downsizing and restructuring realign the very relations between the family and the economy; between the military and civilian life; between private and public domains. People are left to fend for themselves more while the US government makes new wars.

Women in countries like England, France, and Spain are beginning to speak out against these wars. These women also share similar positions in the service economy of the globe and occupy working- and middle-class jobs. These women do not rule the world but they do not suffer like the women of war-torn countries such as Palestine, Rwanda, Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan. These women in poorer countries live militarized lives as refugees, as civilian combatants, as mothers trying to protect their families, as anti-war activists. Small numbers of these women and girls are also actively soldiering.

In order to understand this patriarchal moment of imperial militarism I need to multiply my viewing to the plural sites across the globe that are affected differently by the punishing and exclusionary policies of the US. Women are simultaneously defined as a universal and specific class – they provide the sustenance of everyday life – in every country, but they do this differently: as warriors, as anti-war activists, as mothers, as laborers. This polyversal reality creates a very complex nexus of engendered power that is differentiated along class and racial lines.

Militarization flows to and from these multiple differentiated locations. As such gender looks more fluid, more variable, less structured in congealed form. These modern forms of patriarchy conceal the structural content of sexual and gender inequality by means of the mystifying language of freedom and democracy. Supposedly there is more choice in this re-ordered system of masculinist privilege.

Imperial patriarchal gender

Imperial moments grab hold of memory and smother it. Mother's Day is marketed amidst the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with little remembrance of its origin as a holiday. Julia Ward Howe, in 1870, claimed the Day as a strike against war.

Bill Clinton appointed Madeleine Albright as the first female Secretary of State in large part for her hawkish and anti-communist record. She stands as an early example of a gender decoy for militarized global capital.

She mainstreamed the language of women's rights into foreign policy in order to justify the 1991 Iraq war. As a result, women's rights rhetoric became a part of militarization for women and men. Her imperial form of women's rights makes women's issues central to democracy; and gender apartheid criminal and not cultural.¹² Yet she had little problem with the decade-long economic sanctions against Iraq which were responsible for the deaths of thousands of women and children. Her formalistic and narrowed rights focus articulated an imperial stance for privileged women. Meanwhile, her militarist attitudes and practices challenged 'the' traditional notion of womanhood. Masculinism in both its traditional and its modern patriarchal forms counts on this tension between diverse females and the homogenized gendered woman.

'The West' is often described as embracing "gender equality" while Muslim countries are depicted as non-democratic and patriarchal. Muslim extremism – particularly its treatment of women – is cited to depict countries like Pakistan as misogynist; and us as not. Pakistan itself says it embraces 'women's rights' as a way of looking more democratic without decreasing the power of its military. Women's rights are parlayed back and forth as barter here. This fault-line obscures the facts that there is no Equal Rights Amendment in the US, and that, as of 1997, 33 percent of elected government seats in Pakistan are reserved for women; even while a significant number of the poor remain women and children. It belies the facts that women's rights during the Bush administration – especially in terms of reproductive rights, abortion, health care, access to jobs – have decreased. And it distorts the reality that Iraqi women are losing rights because of the war more than they are losing rights to Islamic practices.

Laura Bush misrepresents this record when she speaks on behalf of women's health and reminds women of their risk of heart disease. Gender politics is seriously in play here. She instructs women to eat well and exercise as though health is a personal responsibility, with little regard for those who cannot afford to do either. Health insurance is not relevant in her mind and her world. She then travels to Africa to show the rest of the world that we are a caring and helping people. She weighs in on the issue of the Supreme Court nominee to replace Sandra Day O'Connor, and asks her husband to remember the women.

In the meantime the US is responsible for deepening the 'extreme' Islam in Pakistan, and Iraq as well, with dire consequences for their women. According to Ayesha Khan we have authorized the dictatorship in

Pakistan by working with them in the 'war on terror'.¹³ The US enables despotisms in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the name of freedom. We support military regimes and this militarization is becoming more a part of life in the US as well. The gendering of these political divides is at the center of political dialogue.

Kavita Panjabi writes that communal fascism is a majoritarian identity in India at this time. A kind of fascist populism put gender violence against women in open view in the riots and massacres in Gujarat in 2002. "Fascism in Gujarat has been premised on a violent eroticized militancy that is integrally masculinist." Public rape and gender humiliation defined the terror of these pogroms. Panjabi argues that the rape of women – condoned by right-wing women – was publicized as a new kind of politics. Violence was gendered; and, moreover, the gendering of violence was key to the atrocities directed specifically towards Muslim males and females.¹⁴ Gendered violence was practiced not simply towards women, but towards males and females. Rape was a form of gendering male and female alike. Who plays the part of whom in this gendering is fluid.

The violence against women in Guatemala is said to have surpassed that of any other country to date. It appears to be a politics of intimidation with an awful message: "that women should abandon the public space they have won at much personal and social effort and shut themselves back up in the private world". In what is termed Guatemala's 'femicide', more than 1,600 women were killed between 2001 and 2004. The government has taken little action to investigate and stem the tide of this gender-based violence. In these instances gender appears more homogeneous. Victims are chosen because they are female and living outside the boundaries of traditional patriarchal womanhood.¹⁵

Gender politics defines this militarized moment in the US as well. The 2004 presidential election presented Bush as the forever masculinist cowboy. This macho status stood in for his lack of military service. John Kerry had the veteran's credentials from Vietnam but that war was so messy for masculinity that Kerry did not get the bump he needed from this. Kerry tried to mobilize the veteran's vote but somehow Bush held onto his image as an effective war president. It should be remembered that Howard Dean, who truly mobilized a section of the US public with his anti-Iraq war stance, was quickly feminized as a 'screamer', like a hysterical woman. The media kept showing him yelling energetically to mobilize for the next primary and read it as a man out of control: too much heart and not enough

head. No surprise that Judy Steinberg, Dean's wife and a doctor, was pathologized as well. She was just too ordinary: like most women, too busy with her job to campaign. Patriarchy runs deep here; and the actual biological sex of the body does not tell the whole story. Bush stands before us and says 'bring 'em on'. Frank Rich sums up the lunacy: "Only in an election year ruled by fiction could a sissy who used daddy's connections to escape Vietnam turn an actual war hero into a girlie man."¹⁶

Then Reagan died and the whole country was asked to mourn as though he was a great man and president. We are asked to not remember that he is/was responsible for enabling the very terror networks of today in his Cold War policies against the Soviets. His policies nurtured the most extremist factions of Islamic countries, especially in the Afghan war with the Soviets. Yet it appeared like the entire country was in mourning: wanting to embrace a leader who seemed more in charge.

I remember how inept Reagan was, an actor, a pretender-in-chief. In the official script Nancy Reagan remains the perfect, dutiful wife. We are told that theirs was a true love story. That they lived for each other, idolized each other. That she spent the last ten years of her life caring for him in adoring fashion. Alzheimer's claimed Reagan's life and this truly is a very sad story. But this story is taken over to tell another – the story of how women, gendered as wives, shall remain loyal and devoted. Never mind that it helps to be rich with millions to spare.

Gay marriage and gender fluidity

Marriage and family, and therefore masculinist privilege located here, are in flux. The traditional family and its gender constructs remain both static and changing. Marriage authorizes, institutionalizes, and codifies the meanings and relations of gender: man and woman, husband and wife. Despite Bush's right-wing right-to-lifers and their glorification of 'family values', only one quarter of households in the US now include two parents and their children. About one third of women in the US are single today, and many of them are now choosing to bear and raise children alone. The multiplicity of gender choices is creating an institutional crisis for marriage. Fewer people marry, people marry later, and half of all marriages end in divorce. Obviously, marriage needs all the assist it can muster.

It is more than interesting that in the midst of the heightened militarization of the US and the war in Iraq, gay marriage promises to continue to be

a major challenge to traditional notions of patriarchal heterosexual marriage. Its legalization in Massachusetts in 2005 was just the beginning of this process. Yet the military remains a last bastion of homophobia where it remains legal to discriminate against homosexuals. One might remember that Bill Clinton early on in his presidency tried to change the military's anti-gay regulations. He quickly reversed course when challenged by right-wing Republicans, leaving the policy as one of: don't ask, don't tell.

A decade later, gay marriage is on the political agenda. Gays want and need the same rights as heterosexuals when it comes to health care insurance, life proxies, rights to children, et cetera.¹⁷ Yet I sometimes wonder why gays would want to board a sinking ship. Sinking or not, gays want the legal standing of the family, and the rights it articulates for those who occupy its space. I cannot help but wonder again: maybe it is that gays have demonstrated alternative family relationships that work and heterosexuals have followed their lead by choosing not to marry. Get the gays on board with marriage, and get heterosexuals back on track.

At issue is the place of sex in relation to the gendered relations of family and marriage. If marriage can sustain itself in patriarchal form without heterosexism, then maybe so can the military. Although gay marriage seems to be a progressive, democratizing move towards a more encompassing notion of civil rights, it is also possibly not that. Gay marriage just might be another aspect of militarization in another guise. Marriage will regulate and discipline gays' lives as it does the lives of heterosexuals. And the imperial state will invade the bedroom from a new entry port.

There are some similarities to the decoy status of women's rights discourse in this instance. Assimilation is not the same thing as liberation. "Equality for queers inevitably means equal rights on straight terms."¹⁸ Rights discourse presumes an unequal structure to begin with although it demands an equality – meaning sameness – that can be destabilizing of established privilege. At this point in time it remains to be seen if gay marriage will be an accommodation, or a subversion. Imperial democracy is incredibly adept at appropriating rights and calling it democracy.

It is significant, if not remarkable, that issues of gay rights keep bursting forward. Even Vice-President Cheney was forced to publicly recognize that his daughter Maureen is gay. She directed his 2004 campaign. Both he and Lynne act protective of their family and daughter although neither has ever spoken publicly against the President's homophobic administration. Dick got testy with both John Kerry and John Edwards for bringing up the

issue of his gay daughter in the election, as though he wants to forget about it, and as though they are playing dirty. Maureen was not 'outed'; but in some sense Dick, as the father, and Republicans, as his party, were. The politics of sexuality continues to spill out as imperial democracy militarizes and represses itself.

Despite everything, same-sex marriage became a wedge issue in some states in the 2004 election. Proposed state constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage are said to have increased the conservative voter turnout in the states with such proposed amendments.¹⁹ Here we see imperial heterosexist repression successfully in action.

Bush's cowgirls

Laura Flanders speaks of the Bush women as "an extremist administration's female front". Bush's cabinet originally had five women; only one had children, two were unmarried, and two were in childless marriages. Interesting data.²⁰ Early on in the presidency, Laura Bush was very much the traditional wife and mother, although we saw little of her with her daughters. She was the enabler in chief of her recovering alcoholic husband and his two daughters who struggle with their own drinking problems. By his second administration, Laura becomes an activist, traveling outside the country on behalf of women's rights. She tries to make her husband look kinder and gentler while he wages war. She embodies gender fluidity, as did Hillary Clinton as first lady and then as New York senator. Interestingly, Hillary became more manly and aggressive as Bill became more humiliated and womanly. Laura has become more acute as her husband becomes more inept.

Bush's cowgirls orchestrate his wartime strategies. They live a life that is beholden to earlier struggles for sexual equality and civil rights, while they disclaim connection to these movements. Condoleezza Rice says she has gotten where she is because she was brought up to depend on herself and work hard. At the same time she acknowledges the civil rights movement when she tries to gain acceptance for the continuance of the Iraq war. In these instances she readily uses the civil rights movement as proof of how hard it is to build democracy; that even the US had a long process of struggle to achieve democracy for all its citizens. And she offers herself as an example of the success of democracy. She speaks about her childhood, defined by racism, in Alabama to celebrate how far she and the US have

come from all this. She nudges fledgling democracies to work hard, like we have, to make it work.

Even though one of the four girls killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church years ago was her childhood friend, she lived in a protected bubble in Birmingham, Alabama. Although she says she looks forward to race-blind days, she seems divorced from the deep feelings of pain tied to racism.²¹ She testified on behalf of the Bush administration at the 9/11 hearings and she acted brisk, rigid, precise, and unemotional. She has sacrificed family to be counted as a loyal player even if sometimes in neo-mammy form.

Condi Rice, like lots of rich white girls, was an incredible classical piano player in her youth. She later becomes a Soviet specialist although she never saw the Soviet collapse coming. She was a provost at Stanford University and oversaw the decline of affirmative action hiring. She served on the National Security Council during Bush senior's administration and became a board member of Chevron. After 9/11 she is criticized for ignoring crucial information about Al Qaeda as National Security Advisor. Even so, she was promoted to Secretary of State. She uses her black gendered skin to authorize and legitimize a politics of extreme war. And then she turns around and says she prefers Republicans because they treat her as an individual, not as a member of a racial group, or any other kind of group. Her gender and race are in play here at the same time that they are continually misidentified.

As a black woman Condi Rice has different options than the other white Bush cowgirls. Most of them are married; several have children. She instead remains a single woman. Even though almost every picture of her views her long slender legs, there is no man (or woman) in her life, just George W. She assumes a presence often as a little girl; what Patricia Williams has called a "racialized prurient prudishness".²² This allows her to occupy a space close to the President without creating racial or sexual discomfort; she remains either the child, or the mammy, and he the father or the son. She is called the warrior princess and replaced Colin Powell, who is deemed too much of a girlie-man. Maureen Dowd calls her a "bachelorette workaholic".²³

But other times Condoleezza Rice depicts the gender multiplicity inherent in her decoy status. She wears high black boots, and coats that often sport military buttons and fashion, and she appears more dominatrix than prudish. Other times she is described as more diplomatic than mili-

tarist, and yet she continues to defend the newest forms of extreme interrogation without hesitancy.²⁴ She asserts that we are winning the war in Iraq and that democracy will triumph. A statement by her is read to the delegates at the “Beijing + 10 Commemoration”; it states that the US “is committed to working in partnerships with other nations to enlarge the freedom and empowerment of women”.²⁵ At the same time Iraqi women’s rights in the new constitution are gravely threatened in the name of Shari’a law.

Condi parlays her womanly status, and also denies it. The French received her and were said to be “charmed”. She was referred to as “Chère Condi” in *Le Monde*. Headlines proclaim that Condi “attempts to seduce Paris” with her pumps, pearls and accessories.²⁶ Her classy style almost makes her white as she feminizes the new militarism with a variety of gender codings.

Comparisons are regularly drawn today between Condi and Hillary. Some have even speculated that they could run against each other in the 2008 presidential election. Their similarities range from their favorite designer – Oscar de la Renta – to their favorite Ferregamo shoes, to their love of power and their manipulations of gender politics. Both present a variety of genders, alongside their structural constraints. So they often are masculinized as stiff, and pert, and desexualized: Condi with no husband in sight so far and Hillary with a husband she no longer lives with full-time.

Condi and Hillary are more similar than they are different, and yet not quite the same. Hillary supports Condi’s war. Hillary still had not renounced it in November 2005, even as others in Congress had begun to speak out critically. She denounces unwanted pregnancies and remains against gay marriage. She is described as moving toward the center and as carving a centrist position even though she has never been anything other than this, a neoliberal Democrat. She is asked by the Pentagon to join a select panel that is considering improving military readiness, and she ranks among the dozen most conservative Democrats in the Senate given her voting record.²⁷ Hillary is the perfect gender decoy. She is depicted as too liberal, too feminist, too critical of women who just make cookies. In the process she desexes gender while regendering sex.

Karen Hughes – Bush’s closest female confidant – is very married. She *sort of* left the White House after the first administration in order to do better by her young son and husband. She describes the life of assistant to the President as fabulous, but too consuming. She opts for her mommy-

and-wife role, but not completely. She still continues to travel regularly to Washington to help craft the gentler, kinder, more compassionate Bush. She parlays her knowledge as a mom and woman to soften Bush's crass masculinism. Bush recognizes how important his moms are, chiding a senior official demanding early-morning meetings with: "Don't run off my mothers." Hughes uses her insights as a woman living inside patriarchal gender to articulate the imperial agenda. And she uses religion, and her belief in God, to authorize her stance. She thanks her Bible group at the start of her book, *Ten Minutes from Normal*.²⁸

Hughes, as a neoliberal feminist using women's rights discourse to make war, spun the Afghan war as though it would liberate women. She writes: "I thought focusing on the plight of Afghan women and girls was a way to highlight the cruel nature of the people we were up against."²⁹ It is significant how Hughes *et al.* on the one hand choose to ignore the increased violence in Afghan women's lives today, and on the other hand use the violence to justify the continuation of war.

Hughes pretends to be normal: religious, married, and at home, focused on family. But she has never been simply "normal", by her own description. Yet she deploys this notion of normal to regulate and discipline women, in general. She normalizes her life of faith and family even though this flies in the face of her own choices, and the necessities of most women today. Only wealthy women can take care of their families without a paying job; and most women can never achieve the job she occupies anyway. But it is Hughes's job to militarize compassionately the discourses surrounding women's lives. When asked about the March for Women's Lives organized to protect women's reproductive rights, she responds: "I think after September 11th the American people are valuing life more and realizing we need policies to value the dignity and worth of every life." She continues, that such policies are needed as we face a terror network that devalues life, even the innocent and their own.³⁰ She militaristically likens both abortion and terrorism to the killing of innocents. Her anti-abortion stance becomes one with the wars of/on terror.

Hughes is an effective decoy. She says she loves Bush and is devoted to him. She uses her station to activate his agenda and loves the power bestowed upon her. Both he and she use her gender to soften and disguise the cruelty of his regime. Her gender democratizes her extremist politics because she seems like lots of women. She works hard. She loves her family. She thinks women are talented, maybe even more so than men. She likes to

do sports and keep physically fit. She is torn by the demands of her life. She wants time to cook and do the things she enjoys. She has lots of energy. These traits that connect with the gendering of most women's lives democratize Hughes and allow her a disguise for politics in another form.

Hughes is the smooth-talking mom who makes war on Iraq and continually speaks against the terror of "killing innocents". She travels to Saudi Arabia on her goodwill mission in September 2005 thinking that everyone wants to be like Americans, especially like American women. So she was a bit caught off-guard when Saudi women – obstetricians and gynecologists – let her know that many of them happily chose the wearing of the abayya, the headcovering, that Hughes just considered problematic.³¹ Hughes, who manipulates and parlays gender meanings on her own behalf, does not seem to recognize gender pluralism elsewhere. She was ill prepared to meet with Turkish women who made clear to her that so long as Iraq is under US occupation they cannot talk about cooperation between women in the US and Turkey. Hughes sees herself and the US as a savior, and these women in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey do not want to be saved by a neoliberal feminist politics of imperial domination. Imperial notions of gendering and gendered war stand in stark contrast to their countries' needs and their needs as females and women.

The gendering of politics is war in yet another form. Gender exists in recognizable forms and does not. So even Mary Matalin, former assistant to Vice-President Cheney, has taken a break to be a full-time mommy to her two daughters. She starts her book, "I only care about my daughters" and "there is no greater love than the love you have for your children".³² She wants to slow down and put her family above all else.

She rails against feminism. Feminists want to *be* boys and men, and she just wants to be able to *do* the things boys and men can do. "I just wanted to have the same fun boys had." She is extremely critical of what she terms the victimology of feminism ... and the way feminists deny nature and the difference between men and women. "We're different from stem to stem ...". She embraces gggrrrl power for her daughters in imperial fashion, as though those who can will succeed.³³ She supports Bush's policies and his wars and I know her daughters will not have to fight them. They could maybe even grow up to be the President who makes more war.

Matalin's selfishness and insularity from within the family unit also articulate a neoliberal feminism. She is feminist in that she thinks the sky should be and is the limit for anyone, female or male. But she is neoliberal in her

complete individualism and denial of constraints. I wonder whether she thinks abortion needs to be legal for her daughters, or if abstinence will be enough to protect them.

As I mentioned earlier, in late September 2005 the new TV show, *Commander-in-Chief* hit the air. Obviously someone thought that the US public is ready to think about a female president. It is a series that stars Geena Davis as MacKenzie Allen, the first US female president. The series simultaneously militarizes the presidency and resexes it. Davis became president, in the first show, by accident. She is vice-president when the president dies. The accidental nature of her presidency makes a female president real and not real. She was not actually elected so her femaleness is not completely destabilizing.

In the first show we see the elected president on his deathbed asking MacKenzie to step aside and let the Speaker of the House take over as next in line. He tells her it would not be fair for her to take office because she was picked as his vice-president so that he could get the woman's vote. He tells her that she does not share the president's politics, and is too liberal. She thinks about it, and almost decides to step aside. But then the Speaker meets with her and again tells her she had initially just been a piece of theatre and that the Islamic world will never take her or the US seriously, because she is just a woman. By now MacKenzie is insulted, as a woman. She does not like being treated like a bag of hormones – by either her home country or the Muslim world. She quietly but forcefully decides to become the next President of the US.

In the first place, it is a sign of the militarized times that the series is called *Commander-in-Chief*. The first episodes depict an imperial presidency in white female face. MacKenzie sends in the marines to rescue a poor, oppressed African woman threatened by Shari'a law with death for adultery. The president is tough on terrorists but says she won't countenance knowing of torture. She says that freedom is "our gift to the world". She is presented as a "wife, mother and leader". She tells the press not to "mess with her three kids". Her husband struggles unhappily with his 'first husband' status. There is much discussion of what to call him. I am sure lots of people watching the show are wondering about Bill Clinton. In the meantime sex and gender trump each other in confused forms.

Geena Davis plays the role of a president who is competent, strong, and also flexible and thoughtful. She negotiates and compromises, like a woman; and is steadfast and tough, like a man. The storylines are very

closely aligned with the 'real' world and yet the politics is played out as TV soap opera. The lines of real and simulacra are fully blurred. TV is real, and nothing at all like reality. While other countries elect female presidents, we have one on TV. The series is canceled after a brief season.

Gendering gender in testosterone elections

All the women I know across the globe believe that they should have gotten to vote in the US 2004 election. They say they live with the consequences of Bush's policies so they should get to choose. And if the globe could have chosen, Bush would have lost.

Election signs read: "W" – from George Walker Bush – "stands for women". But "W" stands for war and world domination, not women. How can "W" stand for, or on behalf of, women when the Republican party thinks that the best way to put someone down is to call them a girlie-man? The masculinist stance of the Republican party is at an all-time arrogant high. As soon as John Edwards was picked as the vice-presidential candidate Bush quickly responded: I didn't pick my vice-president because he's a pretty face, but because he can do the job. The subtext here: we don't need a pretty face – like a woman or a fag – who can't get the job done.

Vice-President Dick Cheney mocked his vice-presidential rival at the Republican convention. The intended meaning: Democrats are like pretty girls, ineffective and waffling. Edwards is regendered as a pretty woman in order to negate him as manly – competent and strong, like a man. His gender becomes disembodied while his sex is regendered. Their whiteness silently constructs the racialized meanings here. The Republican convention rhetoric depicted the Democrats as an ineffectual party trying to make a kinder and more sensitive foreign policy, as though kindness makes you a wimp ... like a woman ... not manly ... not capable of being commander-in-chief; unable to fight a war on terror. The Republicans use gendered language to humiliate and undermine. Women are sissies, men rule. Democrats are like women. It is significant that this takes place when none of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates are even female.

This contemptuous tenor made it almost impossible to think and talk and be understood. This hyper-militarism uses women as gender decoys to confuse and mystify the realities of power. At the Republican convention the office of the president was reduced to the status of commander-in-chief ... the wars of/on terror silenced everything else that deeply matters. In a

total inversion of the real, Bush, who refused to serve in the Vietnam War, was presented as the manlier man; and Kerry who actually fought is demasculinized.

It is hard to believe that the phrase “‘W’ in George W. stands for women” was ever deployed in the first place. “W” does not stand for most women here. And it does not stand for most females in countries devastated by the imperial politics of the US wars of/on terror, or in the maquiladora factories, or in the Nike plants in El Salvador or Bangladesh, or China. But even more problematic is the way this phrase disassociates women from the rest of humanity, and genders them while doing so. Women and men are more similar than different and not different in the ways that masculinism says they are. Women and men, and males and females share common differences and different commonalities. But the “W” genders. It is meant to separate and discipline women from men.

Women are affected by Bush’s policies – in ways like men, and then in specific ways as female. This doubled visor/vision cannot be seen from the standard of masculinism, because male privilege universalizes the site of gender from the site of manhood. Patriarchy establishes the male visor as the single site and excludes women and makes them invisible while doing so. Females must specify their own situation as part of the larger construct of womanhood along with racial and class identities. They are a part of a sexual class and a part of humanity simultaneously. Human rights and women’s rights bespeak these different negotiations.

Bush’s record on war, the environment, health care, jobs, et cetera is bad for almost all men and women. Men and women are dying in the Gulf. Men and women are coming back maimed from the Gulf. Men and women are incarcerated and suffering in our prisons. War is bad for all humans. Environmental destruction is bad for all humans. Cancer kills and devastates all humans. All humans need health care. All humans need a good education. All humans want a fair wage and a good job.

Tax cuts for the rich mean there is less for all the rest of us. A trillion-dollar war in Iraq means there is less for the necessities of life: our schools, our hospitals, our medical system, our monies for scientific research, our roads, and airports, and bridges. There is then less for everything else as well. The cost of the war in Iraq could cover health care for the 43 million people without any in the US. Instead we lack a public health program. People would be able to get the drugs they need. AIDS would be a different disease because its treatment would have a different orientation:

prevention rather than surveillance. We could have state-of-the-art public schools throughout the country, but do not. Our environment would not be self-destructing. We would not have to stop eating fish because the waters are contaminated.

All the above affects women in particular ways, and yet none are simply best understood as only women's issues. AIDS affects all people. We have an AIDS epidemic in our prisons and there is no program in place to distribute condoms. Condoms are an issue for men and women and they are needed in the prisons to stem the spread of AIDS inside and outside the prison. This is of particular note to black women because many black men are leaving prison infected.

AIDS is a world epidemic and the US refuses funds in Africa to programs that provide abortions to women with AIDS. Both here and abroad these policies are devastating to humanity as a whole and specifically to women, when black women in the US account for 70 percent of all new AIDS cases in the US last year. Stephen Lewis, former Canadian Ambassador to the UN and currently the UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, states that for the past twenty years the numbers of infected women have grown exponentially in Africa. Now almost 50 percent of new cases worldwide are women, and in Africa the percentage is 59 percent rising to 75 percent for women aged 15–24 years old. These women die agonizing deaths and yet nothing is being done. Lewis says, “when the rights of women are involved, the world goes into reverse”.³⁴ Bush's policies are killing black and African women while Condoleezza Rice hangs out at Camp David and advises Bush on national security.

Meanwhile, when Vice-President Cheney and John Edwards were asked in their election debate about the crisis levels of AIDS among African American women in the United States, neither one of them claimed to know anything about it. Even though black women are thirteen times more likely to die from AIDS than their white counterparts, neither candidate seemed troubled by their ignorance. I was thinking: how could they not know? How could they not apologize for not knowing? How could they think that this was not important enough to know?

Bush's AIDS policies fantasizing abstinence represent an extremist right-wing zealotry that is creating a health crisis across the globe. Most of the 15 billion dollars promised by Bush for Africa, in an early State of the Union address, has not been spent because the programs cannot pass the sexual litmus test of his administration. When I attended the World AIDS

conference in Bangkok, 2004, there were signs everywhere asking Bush to lift the gag rule and distribute the funds that he had promised.

Abortion law and availability are in continuing jeopardy. In November 2004, Congress passed a \$388 billion spending bill that allows health providers, including health insurers, public or private hospitals, clinics, and pharmacists, to refuse any involvement of any kind in abortion. Now, one's employer can even deny abortion coverage.³⁵ Bush covers up his anti-woman policies – with a female front. All five cabinet women in his first term were known conservatives or neoliberals, especially Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, Secretary of the Interior Gale Ann Norton, and Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman. Bush's cowgirls obscure the reality of his anti-democratic politics, and carve a pictorial of a militarist womanhood as both normal and necessary.

All of Bush's cowgirls have been openly hostile to women-friendly movements of all sorts including affirmative action, and activist government intervention to end women's discrimination. Laura Bush spoke of democracy at the 2004 Republican convention and how hard it is to create. When she needed to talk about women and women's lives being better under her husband's watch she chose to speak of Afghanistan and Iraq, where she misrepresented the gains made by women and silenced the realities of war. Meanwhile the women of both countries are suffering enormously given the chaos and war in their countries. Although there are new opportunities they remain limited to middle-class and urban women. In Afghanistan warlords are in control once again. Only 10 percent of registered voters were women from the cities. Most women fear going outside, whether to work or to vote.³⁶

Although violence towards women and Islamic extremism continues to be daunting to Afghan and Iraqi women, they also are founding women's shelters in Baghdad and Kirkuk. They continue to struggle creatively even though life for women in Iraq is deeply troubled. For many, life feels like it is going backwards. Now most women cover themselves in scarves and cloaks, something they did not do under Saddam. Most who voted in Afghanistan wore the burqa, the blue body wrap that once was used to symbolize their oppression.³⁷ The daily violence does not move them towards democracy but back inside their homes. Strangely, the hijab protects them more than American-style democracy while they lose rights that were formerly their own.

Most starkly, President Bush's request for \$87 billion for Iraq had no mention of funding for women's programs. He failed to endorse UN

Resolution 1325 calling for women's inclusion in peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts. He refused to ratify CEDAW (the UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women), which is basically a global bill of rights for women guaranteeing their education and rights in the workplace. In all, 177 countries around the world have signed the CEDAW treaty. The US stands with Iran and Somalia against it.

Instead Bush has granted \$10 million in loans to several groups, including the Independent Women's Forum (IWF) to sponsor an "Iraqi Women's Democratic Initiative". The IWF was started by Lynne Cheney and Midge Decter, who were also supporters of Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court. The IWF has lobbied in the United States against the Violence Against Women Act, disputes the factual validity of the wage gap, has opposed efforts to strengthen the enforcement of the Equal Pay Act, and challenges the need for Title IX to protect opportunity in sports for girls and women.³⁸

Indeed, things are not good for women back home. Bush's policies undermine gender rights for women. Shortly after Bush took office he closed and downsized numerous government offices focused on women's interests and rights in the realm of work. Especially troubling, he closed the key office of the Women's Bureau in the Labor Department. Because of this, it is hard to find data on wage-earning women and wage discrepancies because the tracking is no longer being done. This dismantling of the Women's Bureau was done at the same time that Bush's cowgirls were speaking on behalf of the Afghan war and Afghan women's rights. Females in his administration are his cover.

The legal basis for equal opportunity for women at work has been vaporized and the equal pay initiative has been ended. The Department of Labor under Bush has repealed the regulations allowing paid family leave for those needing to care for sick children or elderly parents, and has initiated cuts in childcare. This has undermined the government-funded pre-school Head Start program for low-income children and made cuts in federal programs supporting after-school activities. Bush closed the White House Women's Office which was established in 1995 charged with coordinating policy initiatives related to women's lives.

Also: Attorney General Ashcroft appointed two members to the National Advisory Commission on Violence Against Women who have called for its demise; the administration has de-funded a majority of battered women's programs; and it has failed to respond to initiatives

which focus on the need for gun control as a part of dealing with domestic violence.

In spite of the problem of sexual harassment and rape in the military the administration has limited the role of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women. A Bush appointee, Catherine Aspy, says of women in the military that they are unmarried teenage mothers using it as a welfare home – a charge that is factually untrue.

In the realm of judicial appointments the administration has selected nominees who do not support equal protection under the law; who oppose protection in sexual harassment; who undermine sexual discrimination legislation; who wish to overturn *Roe v. Wade*; who reject core civil rights doctrine. Bush has become well known for appointing males and females who are hostile to a women's right to reproductive choice. David Hager was appointed to head the Federal Drug Association – and does not believe in birth control. He was forced to quietly resign after his former wife documented allegations of continual sexual and emotional abuse involving repeated nonconsensual painful anal sex by him.³⁹

Bush degrades sex and sexual equality in his attempt to mollify anti-imperial feminist claims for democracy. His politics of chimera continues to travel across the globe. Bush says he removed the Taliban and Saddam Hussein and ignores the horrific realities of these war-torn countries. A few schools have reopened in Afghanistan, but it is too dangerous for most girls to attend. Saddam is gone but most women's lives remain filled with fear.

Bush cut off funds to the United Nations Population Fund in all 142 countries in which it operates because of its connection to China and its abortion policies. Meanwhile the plans for midwife training in Algeria, a center to fight AIDS in Haiti and a maternal mortality reduction program in India all collapsed. Bush has banned the use of US aid in family planning programs not committed to abstinence. Meanwhile 500,000 women die in childbirth each year. Another 100 million suffer malnutrition, and 60 percent of girls across the globe cannot attend school. The Bush administration policies punish the most vulnerable, and the language of compassionate conservatism covers over this unconscionable crude use of power and empire.

When I travel elsewhere – to Korea, India, Cuba, Pakistan, and Egypt – the women I meet in these countries are clear that the only way their lives will improve is if the lives lived in their country improve and for that

to happen the imperial policies of the Bush administration must end. They ask why women and feminists in the US cannot do a better job in saying no to Bush's policies of war and greed. They say: after all, you are a democracy.

Just in case this is not perfectly clear by now: I like girlie men and women and wish the Democrats were more girlie. Girlie people take into account the specifically gendered and racialized experiences and radically pluralize their viewings with these insights. This brings me back to where I started. Bush's war has militarized women's rights rhetoric for authorizing war. Females and women have been militarized and masculinized in this process. The horrors of Abu Ghraib bespeak the gender bending and confusion of this war. Women have become both decoys and actors as this administration continuously remobilizes for war. Hatred is written with and on female bodies. The same party that ran a convention trying to humiliate the Democratic party as pussy-whipped women is the same administration that knew of the torture and humiliation at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and Afghanistan. Women in the US must stand with the women across the globe against our own humiliation and theirs.

Bush won the 2004 election despite the fact that the US is losing the war in Iraq, despite the fact that there were no weapons of mass destruction; despite the fact that over 360 tons of explosives were stolen under US watch; despite the fact that a group of eighteen US soldiers said that they would not comply with their orders because they did not have the proper tanks; despite the repeated kidnappings and beheadings. Despite all the facts, Bush won. And female bodies were used to cover up and manipulate these truths. There is little comfort in the fact that by 2005 the US public had begun to criticize Bush and his war, because the Democrats are too scared to become the girlie people they need to be.

Hillary Clinton ups the ante on decoy politics from within the Democratic party as she carefully disavows commitments to feminism. Both Condi and Hillary do the bidding of imperial democracy for their parties, while Renel Marc Gerecht, a former CIA Middle East specialist, says that in 1900 women didn't have the vote in the US either. And he says: "I mean, women's social rights are not critical to the evolution of democracy."⁴⁰ The problem is not simply Bush, or the Republicans, but neoliberal forms of gendered masculinity often in female face.

Gender decoys allow democracy to parade around in drag. Hillary didn't bake cookies, was disciplined and no-nonsense, while Bill was

depicted as out of control: too much food, too much sex, too much talking, just like a woman. Laura Bush is the teacher: educated and focused and a non-drinker. She is the devoted wife but the brains in the couple. Bush rides around in a cowboy hat and males seem macho and silly. The resexing, but not the degendering of the privatized nation of global capital is in process.

Dislocating imperial feminism

It is really difficult to know in what ways Afghan and Iraqi women's lives have changed for the better, if at all, since the initial demise of the Taliban and the removal of Saddam Hussein. In both instances aspects of tyrannical regimes were removed, but neither regime was fully destroyed. More troubling is what has been reconstructed in their place. In Afghanistan the Taliban has gained a new hold with dire consequences for women's and girl's lives. Some of the initial changes were overstated to begin with, especially for women living in rural areas. Horrible crime and poverty still are the predominant realities alongside the presence of US forces. The lives of women are still highly militarized as they continue to live in a war zone, many as refugees.

In the 2003 Afghan constitution there was no mention of women's rights. Yet in the 1964 constitution women had a right to education, equal pay for equal work, and freedom to vote.⁴¹ The newest Afghan constitution now disallows discrimination of any kind; yet "no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam".⁴² However, it is a political issue who decides the appropriate interpretation of Islam here. Ninety-nine percent of Afghan women are Muslim, and while many of them are devoutly religious they also believe that their rights as women are available to them in the Quran.

The Peshmerga Force for women, founded in 1996, are a Kurdish militia group who defended Iraqi Kurdistan, a northern sector of Iraq, as a self-rule enclave. These women, five hundred strong, supported the US invasion to oust Saddam and faced death to do so. In both Iraq and Afghanistan there have been rich histories of women's activism – yet females are more often than not presented as passive. Yet veiling, in whatever particular form, was not a traditional and established part of Afghan women's lives. The history of the chador, or hijab, or burqa is instead a history of the gendering of Islamic and/or Muslim women.

The simplistic and distorted notions of homogenized gender exist across cultures and their cultural dialogues. It is not often recognized that much of the impetus for the women's liberation movement of the early 1970s in the US was Vietnamese women who led the anti-colonial struggle of their country. There is an unrecognized debt to the anti-colonial struggles of women's groups in Vietnam. Both the National Liberation Front and the Women's Union of North Vietnam were significant in this dialogue. Vietnamese women like Nguyen Thi Binh were an inspiration to US women. Modern Vietnamese feminism had its birth in the anti-imperialist struggle of women against colonialism.⁴³ And this struggle also affected parts of the US women's movement's sense of its own liberation.

Vietnamese women's activism and leadership during the war was embraced by US feminists in different ways at the time. Liberal feminists stood in support of the Vietnam War early on, while socialist feminists actively worked against US imperialism. Their anti-colonialist politics defined their notion of women's liberation. This positioning needs rearticulation today as a counter to neoliberal politics.

There are similar lessons to be learned from Afghan and Iraqi women while they work out the meanings of women's freedom and equality within the dialogue of a progressive Islam and a non-imperial practice of women's rights. This dialogue goes on while buses carrying women who are registering voters are bombed and the very issue of women's voting rights is militarized. Meanwhile gender is corporatized by million-dollar beauty programs. L'Oreal and Clairol fund these programs which are to assist Afghan women in becoming 'businessmen'. Sorayya Nawabi, a mother of six, is looking forward to taking the course.⁴⁴ The process is global. China's beauty industry exceeded \$24 billion in 2004.

Bush claims that the liberation of 25 million women in Afghanistan and Iraq ensures democracy in these countries. He never clarifies the meaning of liberation or democracy. Instead he just says that every woman in Iraq is better off because the rape rooms and torture chambers of Saddam are forever closed. But rape and torture continue both in old and new form. And Islamic extremists have shot women activists in the streets. They came for Zeena al Qushtaini because she dressed non-traditionally and supported two children as a single mother with a full-time job. When her body was found her head was covered with a scarf, and she was in a black robe, neither of which she ever wore.

Yet thirty-six of the members of the transitional government in Iraq were women, which is 16 percent of the Governing Council. And the Organization for Women's Freedom (OWF) led by Yanar Mohammed fights against the extremism of Shari'a law in the new constitution. Many women in Iraq are in the army and worry that new laws could ban them from these jobs if their husbands do not approve. In a *Newsweek* poll conducted in Iraq in 2005, 94 percent of women said they wish to secure legal rights for women, 84 percent said they want the right to vote, 57 percent thought there should be no restrictions on women's employment, 95 percent thought there should be complete educational opportunities, and 80 percent thought there should be unlimited participation by women in national councils.⁴⁵

US military women fighting in Iraq have their own take on the war, as letters written by several young women who have died in combat show. One woman writes: "Life here has been very crazy the last week or so ... please pray for us; this is some scary shit ... love you forever". From another: "I wish I could go home. The Iraqis are killing everyone. This place is hell. I don't know how we got here. Is the Lord punishing me? What did I do wrong?" And, yet one more: "In the past week, I have seen things that I hope very much to forget, but their memories will stain my mind forever."⁴⁶

The militarization of females' lives takes other discordant forms. Half of the 300,000 child soldiers in the world are girls. They are located in Indonesia, Burundi, Iran, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Turkey, Guatemala, and El Salvador, to name just a few. They are members of armed opposition groups and have often joined them to escape forced marriage and rape. Some seek protection; others enlisted with few other choices.⁴⁷

From yet another standpoint, Women Living under Muslim Laws, in a statement made to the World Social Forum, 2005, says people across the globe must unite against the fascism of all extremist fundamentalisms. They target right-wing Islamists as the major fascist threat to today's democracy. WLUML urges progressives not to confuse right-wing fundamentalism with religiosity. Extremist fundamentalist atrocities unduly silence people, physically eliminate dissidents, writers, journalists, poets, and musicians and create terror-filled lives.⁴⁸ WLUML demands a democratic and anti-theocratic people's movement committed to the ending of violence against women. From this perspective, Islamist fighters must not be confused with national liberation movements, or resistance fighters, but recognized as right-wing militants, very often supported by the US.⁴⁹

WLUML has no choice but to stand against the ‘global war system’ in Egypt, Turkey, and throughout the Middle East.

Nancy Hatch Dupree reveals that Afghan women’s activism and their feminisms are both recognizable and of their own sort. Their history dates back to the 1920s. Their identities are a mix of traditional, cultural and modern facets. There are many rural activists who have not been exposed to the West. They construct a feminism that embraces their traditional culture but in modern ways. Women are expected to maintain family solidarity – which exists cross-culturally. War has demanded that women birth many children, yet many of these women are now refugees and migrants, not members of traditional households. They don the hijab and chadri at different historical moments for different political reasons while embracing their cultural acceptance of their own “dignified modesty”.⁵⁰

A polysexual ungendering of democratic feminisms

It is truly difficult to sort out how things change, and don’t, and the way gender shifts impact feminisms themselves. While looking and wondering to see “the meaning of agency” within its own “grammar of concepts within which it resides”, Saba Mahmood argues that freedom is not a universal desire. I disagree, and although I do not think the Western individualist notion of freedom is universal, I do think that the desire for freedom, in a variety of meanings, traverses the globe. The desire is not natural but it is possibly what makes us human. There are differing notions of freedom, which is not the “naturalization of freedom as a social ideal”, but rather the politicizing of its necessity.⁵¹

Given global travel and technologies it is easier for many of us to see each other without visiting and traveling. This assists the building of larger and more complex human communities. And anti-racist feminist communities both speak and ask for radically diverse understandings of gender, and sometimes sex.

But it is also true that women are more economically diverse given the stretch of global capital. So women are more diverse, and more fluid, and less equal. Through this change the site of gender can also more easily act as a disguise and decoy. This historical context both exposes diversity and captures it for imperial purposes at the same time.

Neoliberal feminism that uses women’s rights on behalf of empire building rather than women’s liberation manipulates the political landscape

today. This newly privatized and individualist viewing of women's lives focuses on opportunity rather than equality. With such diversified expressions of masculinist gendering and genderings of other sorts it is difficult to articulate the differing modes of feminism without becoming either culturally relativist or imperial and universalizing. We need to learn how to truly love and respect enormous differences without giving up on anti-racist feminist demands for social justice. All this is not easy.

The first lady of Egypt, Suzanne Mubarak, declared 2003 the year of Egyptian women. She laid out a four-point program: yes to education, no to early marriage, no to early motherhood, no to female circumcision.⁵² Queen Noor of Jordan criticizes the high per capita expenditure on arms while women are illiterate and 75 percent of the people are poor. Women in Morocco, Jordan and Turkey demand more control over their lives. And yet right-wing anti-feminist and neoliberal feminisms exist across the globe: in Iran, Turkey, the US, and so on.

Palestinian women have had their feminism defined in and against war from the start. They have often been denied the status of gendered women. At checkpoints they are routinely denied passage, or delayed, even when pregnant and in transit to hospitals in Nablus. Rula Ashtiya was forced to give birth on the ground, covered in blood, as her husband cut the umbilical cord with a stone. Her baby died later that day. The occupation militarizes Palestinian women's bodies; they are de-feminized by Israelis and then sometimes regendered in patriarchal forms by Muslim customs.⁵³

Palestinian women often say that they have never had the option to distinguish their struggle against patriarchy from the struggle against colonialism. For them there has always been the "dual battle" against the "obstacles of occupation and the challenges of patriarchy". Their battle, similar to many anti-colonial women's struggles, has been on two fronts: feminism and nationalism, with their particular stance focused against Zionism. Their agenda has always been to improve society as a whole, which requires the demasculinization of the nation. It is a community-oriented feminism that fights for the betterment of all Palestinians, but especially women because their burdens are greater.⁵⁴ Black feminists in the US have long spoken of this "two-ness".

Socialists in Spain say they will make women's equality a high priority in the next years. In Rwanda women occupy many public offices after the horrific genocide that left millions dead, many at the hands of machete-wielding women. The hardliners in Iran's parliamentary elections in 2004

seek to roll back progressive reforms affecting women's dress, the right to divorce, the right to work, and some of those leading this effort are female themselves. Meanwhile, nearly two thirds of Iran's population is under thirty, and more than 60 percent of Iran's university students are women who want jobs and legal rights.⁵⁵ Women in Iran, many of whom are Muslim, will not be easily stifled.

Patricia McFadden writes as a feminist "who loves being an African". She says that Africa's future lies with the political activism of women's "inclusive notions of democracy, human rights, dignity for all, respect without humiliation; integrity and the celebration of the human body as a totality". She struggles against the militarization of her continent and works towards "making Africa a more women-friendly, African-friendly space".⁵⁶ Bernedette Muthien of South Africa writes critically of the hetero-patriarchal polarizing of genders and demands a rethinking of "the violences of post-colonial patriarchal homophobia."⁵⁷ Her liberatory visions of sexual and gender choices is at the heart of her radically democratic commitments.

Idan Halili, a nineteen-year-old Jewish Israeli, is the first woman conscientious objector in Israel. She claims the right to resist mandatory military service on the basis of her feminist beliefs. She identifies the male supremacy of the Israeli army, and its culture of sexual harassment and marginalizing of women, as antithetical to her beliefs. Defending these, she stands against the use of violence and is imprisoned.⁵⁸

Iranian women wearing the hijab demonstrate to support Iran's nuclear program outside a uranium conversion facility in Esfahan, Iran, August 2005. These are hardly passive women. They actively embrace Iran's militarist nuclear program. Plural genders parade across the globe with tattoos, bare midriffs, ankle chains, chadors, black and blue burqas and high heels. The varieties of genderings are endless both as decoy and as promise.

Wangari Matthai in her acceptance speech for the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, thanked the committee for expanding and broadening the concept of peace to embrace environmental concerns. She accepted the prize on behalf of the people of Kenya and Africa, "especially mindful of women and the girl child". She spoke of the importance of democratic governance, human rights, and the protection of our environment as all intertwined. And she claims that "there can be no peace without equitable development, and there can be no development without

sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space". She makes a call to all leaders, especially those of Africa, "to expand democratic space and build fair and just societies that allow creativity and energy of their citizens to flourish".⁵⁹ It is significant, but not essential, that she speaks with a female body.

For Valentine Moghadam feminism today is a response to global capital and Islamic fundamentalism – a rejection of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchal fundamentalism. She documents the amazing transnational feminist networks that are at work challenging the demands of this militarist moment.⁶⁰ Such a design demands an end to privatization and privatized lives and a commitment to the creation of public responsibility using newly equitable sexual and gendered notions of freedom and justice.

Patriarchal gender formations are threaded through global capital and Islamic extremism, and I think that feminisms across the globe are both the instigator of the response and the response itself. This means that democracy and its relationship to feminisms need to be at the core of any renegotiation of a sexually free and racially diverse conception of justice for all. This means an end to militarization as a form of modernization and a recommitment to humane living arrangements that do not ossify sexual bodies or their diverse gender potentialities. Males and females will instigate these changes without a masculinist engendered narrative.

This radically democratic world will be inhabited by a variety of males and females with newly just gender formations. The fluidity of sex and gender allows malleability that proves the static/homogeneous versions of man and woman wrong. It is too fitting that the obscene and greedy politics of this militarized global capitalist racialized patriarchal moment that demands gender malleability, also exposes its own fallibility.

Although this present moment, with its cyber-technologies, can more readily exploit female bodies for the building of empire, it also has the potential to accelerate its own undoing. The very same system that has created a variety of gendered decoys – from girl laborers and soldiers to female presidents and secretaries of states – proves the point that gender and its sexed body are not homogeneous. Although the task is daunting, there is new possibility in this diverse gendering of the globe. There is a promissory for social justice and meaningful democracy, and it lies with a degendered and polysexed belief in non-racialized socialist feminisms for today. So there is much reason for hope; and there is much work to be done.

Notes

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Index

- 'abayya', 115
- abortion issue, USA, 104; anti-abortion politics, 75, 114; availability under threat, 120
- Abrams, Yvette, 29
- Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, 33, 34, 35-6, 40-4, 53, 55, 58-9, 63, 71, 101, 105, 123; rape allegations, 37
- affirmative action law, 72; higher education, 75; undercut, 71, 73
- Afghanistan, 6, 12, 25, 29, 42, 50, 56-7, 104, 123; anti-Russian jihad, 14; elections 2005, 100; girls' schooling lack, 122; militarized, 22; 1964 constitution, 124; prisoner violations, 37, 51, 71; war costs, 85; war on, 1, 18, 40; women, 43, 106; women voters, 9, 125
- Africa, 14, 59; AIDS crisis, 87; women's activism, 94
- African Americans: higher education, 74-5; women, 89, 105
- African American Women Army Corps, 22
- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), 85, 88
- al-Jamadi, Manadel, killing of, 58
- Al Qaeda, 52, 54, 112
- al Qushtaini, Zeena, murder of, 125
- al-Rishawi, Sajida Mubarak, 96
- Albright, Madeleine, 38, 104, 106
- Algeria, midwife training, 122
- Alito, Samuel, 103-4
- Ambuhl, Megan, 34-5
- Amnesty International, 72
- Ankara, headscarves, 96
- Annan, Kofi, 43, 87
- anti-Islamic cartoons, Danish, 98
- Arafat, Yasir, 31
- Argentina, women soldiers, 21
- Ashcroft, John, 52, 121
- Ashitaya, Rula, 128
- Aspy, Catherine, 122
- Association of Women in Development (AWID), 95
- Bachelet, Michele, 100
- Bader-Ginsburg, Ruth, 100
- Baghdad: women, 87; women's shelters, 120
- Bagram detention centre, Afghanistan, 34, 54
- Bakke decision 1978, 73
- Bangkok, AWID International Forum 2005, 95
- Bangladesh, Nike plants, 118
- bandwidth, military, 56
- Barkawi, Tarak, 14
- basic social services, US cuts, 52, 85
- Baton Rouge, women, 87
- Baudrillard, Jean, 51
- Bechtel, 61, 64
- 'Beijing + 10 Commemoration', 113
- Black Widows, Chechnya, 31-2
- Blackwater Security Consulting, 62, 85
- Blair, Tony, 44
- Blanco, Kathleen Babineaux, 82
- Boeing Corporation, 64
- Bosnia: Serb rape camps, 28; war rape, 27, 34
- Boyd, Lakerisha, 81

- Bragg, Rick, 29
 Branfield, Gray, 63
 Brody, Reed, 53
Brokeback Mountain, 27
 Brooklyn, Detention Center, 37
 Brown, Janice Rogers, 39, 97, 103
 Brown, Michael, 83
 Burnham, Linda, 44
 burqa and Afghan women voters, 9
 Burundi, girl soldiers, 126
 Bush, Barbara, 83
 Bush, George H., 112
 Bush, George W. administration, 10, 12, 14, 39, 61, 64, 83-4, 87, 90, 103, 112, 114, 117-18, 121; AIDS policies, 119; educational reform, 60; judicial appointments, 122; "ownership society" rhetoric, 50, 52; research findings censorship, 53; "right-to-life" policies, 88, 109; tax cuts, 85, 118; torture use, 102; wiretaps rationale, 49; women members, 98, 101, 113; women's rights rhetoric, *see* women's rights
 Bush, Jeb, 19
 Bush, Laura, 17, 39-40, 83, 99, 100, 107, 111, 120, 124
 Butler, Judith, 5
 Bybee, Jay S., 54
- Cairo, women, 96
 Cambone, Stephen, 43
 Campbell, D'Ann, 22
 Campus Watch, 76
 Catherine the Great, 38
 CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women), 121
 Central Command Area, sexual misconduct, 29
 Chao, Elaine, 120
 Chechnya, women suicide bombers, 30
 Cheney, Dick, 10, 52, 58, 61, 64, 79, 83-4, 110-11, 115, 117, 119
 Cheney, Lynne, 77, 83, 110, 121
 Cheney, Maureen, 110-11
 Chevron, 112
 child soldiers, girls, 126
 Chile, 14, 94; Presidency, 100; women soldiers, 21
 China: *dagnomei*, 97; inequality growth, 11; Nike plants, 118; oil needs, 60
 Churchill, Ward, 78
 Civil Rights Act, Title VI, 76-7
 civil rights movement, US, 69, 111
 civilian deaths, war, 61
 civilian protection, war justification, 23
 Clariol, 125
 Clarke, Richard, 52
 Clausewitz, Karl von, 10-11, 28
 Clement, Edith Brown, 102
 Clinton, Bill, 106, 110, 116, 123
 Clinton, Hillary, 99, 111, 113, 123
 Code Pink, 88
 Cold War, Third World deaths, 14
 Columbia University, Palestinian faculty members, 78
 Columbine High School Massacre, 1
 'comfort women' Japanese army, 28
Commander-in-Chief, 116
 condoms, US prisons need, 119
 Congo, militarized rape, 72
 Congress Party, India, 11
 Cornerford, Cristeta, 96
 "corporate imperialism", 62
 Croatia, women soldiers, 21
 Cuba, 14; women, 122
 Currah, Paisley, 5
- Danner, Mark, 53
 Darfur, rape, 27
 Davey Smith, George, 4
 Davis, Angela, 19
 Davis, Geena, 116
 Dean, Howard, 108-9
 Decter, Midge, 121
 detainees, nakedness, 57
 Dillard College, 90
 Dimock, Wai-chee, 12
 displaced people, 2

- 'diversity', neoliberal hijacked, 70, 73-4
 Dowd, Maureen, 112
 Dubois, W.E.B., 81, 87
 Duckworth, Tammy, 30
- Eagleton, Terry, 32
 East Timor, rape threats, 9
 economic class, extremes, 8
 Edwards, John, 110, 117, 119
 Egypt, 115, 128; gender gap rating, 97;
 WLUMI, 127; women, 122
 Ehrenreich, Barbara, 41
 El Salvador: girl soldiers, 126; Nike plants,
 118
Elephant, 1
 Elmaghraby, Ehab, 37
 England, anti-war women, 106
 England, Lynndie, 34-5, 42, 105
 Enloe, Cynthia, 19
 Enron corporation, 51, 53; whistle-
 blowers, 105
 equality discourse, 73
 Equal Rights Amendment, 107
 essentialism, 9-10; 'anatomical', 5;
 gender, 57; identity politics, 97;
 women, 7-8, 42
 'extraordinary rendition', 57
- Fallujah, 39, 62
 Fast, Barbara, 34, 42
 Fausto-Sterling, Anne, 3-4
 Federal Drug Association, 122
 Federal Emergency Management Agency
 (FEMA), 83, 90
 feminism: anti-racist, 91; imperial, 95, 98-
 9; Islamic, 89; neoliberal, 93-4, 97,
 114-15, 127; socialist, 125; transna-
 tional networks, 130
 Flanders, Laura, 111
 'flexibility', 101
 flood protection, budget cuts, 84
 Fonda, Jane, 25
 Fort Bragg, domestic violence, 24
 Foucault, Michel, 11-12, 28, 70
 France, anti-war women, 106
- Freud, Sigmund, 13
 French Quarter, New Orleans, 86
- Gates, Henry Louis Jr, 75
 gay marriage, 5-6, 109, 113;
 Massachusetts legalization, 110
 gay rights, 99
 gender: confusion, 27, 41; constructions
 of, 8; decoys, 38-9, 42, 100-1; differ-
 entiations shift, 11; equality fantasy,
 37; fluidity, 6, 10, 26, 93-5, 106, 111,
 130; 'gap', 97; gendering, 3-6;
 nuanced hierarchies, 22; politics of, 12,
 25, 107-8, 113; racialized power
 relations, 18; resexing, 18; violence,
 23; Western "equality", 107
- Geneva Convention 1949, 54
 Gerecht, Renel Marc, 123
 Germany, 94; first woman Chancellor, 99
 Ghandi, Indira, 94
 'ghost detainees', 54
 Gonzalez, Alberto, 53, 101-2
 Graner, Charles, 35
 Green, Danielle, 33
Grutter v. Bollinger, affirmative action case,
 74
 Guantanamo, prison camp, 37, 53, 56, 63,
 123; Afghan war trainers, 43; detainee
 abuse, 49, 51
 Guatemala: girl soldiers, 126; violence
 against women, 108
 Guinier, Lani, 75
 Gujerat, rapes, 104
 Gulf War 1991, 18, 27, 56, 63, 107
- Hager, David, 122
 Haiti, anti-AIDS project, 122
 Halili, Idan, 129
 Halliburton, 61; Balkans profits, 64; Iraq
 corporate abuses, 105; Louisiana
 contract, 85; war profits, 53
 Hamas, women, 31, 94
 Hamilton College, 78
 Harman, Sabrina, 34
 Harvard University, 5, 75

- Hassan, Margaret, 44
 Hecht, Nathan, 103
 Hedges, Christopher, 9, 24
 Herbert, Bob, 57
 hijab, the, 120, 127
 HIV/AIDS, 118; aid conditionality, 119;
 US infection rate, 72
 Hobbes, Thomas, 24
 Homeland Security, 19
 homosexuality: war rape, 28; Abu Ghraib
 subtext, 34
 honor revenge, rape form, 29
 hormones, 3-4
 Howe, Julia Ward, 106
 HR 3077 initiative, academic surveillance,
 76-7
 Hughes, Karen, 6, 40, 90, 98, 101, 104,
 113-15
 'human nature', 24
 Human Rights Watch, 53-8
 human rights, US violations, 72
Human Stain, The, 1
 Hurricane Katrina, 68, 84, 89, 90; Bush
 spin, 82; feminine gendered, 79-80;
 poor black women, 81; sexist
 narrative, 83
 Hussein, Saddam, 2, 40, 43, 51, 88, 98,
 124
 Idris, Wafa, 30
 illiteracy, women, 128
 imperial democracy: fear focus, 51; sex
 deployment, 96
 Independent Women's Forum (IWF), 121
 India: 'communal fascism', 108; inequality
 growth, 11; maternal mortality pre-
 vention project, 122; publicized gender
 violence, 23
 Indonesia; gendered labor, 97; girl
 soldiers, 126
 inequality, life expectancy, 84
 International Criminal Court, US non-
 recognition, 71
 international humanitarian law, 57
 interracial marriage, 6
 interrogations, private contractors, 63
 Iqbal, Javaid, 37
 Iran, 50; CEDAW non-recognition, 121;
 democracy rhetoric, 104; Eshafan
 uranium conversion facility, 129; girl
 soldiers, 126; women university
 students, 129
 Iraq, 1, 6, 9, 12-13, 18, 22-5, 29, 56-7,
 59, 88; corporate power grab, 50;
 democracy rhetoric, 104; detainee
 abuse, 49; economic sanctions against,
 107; elections 64; PMFs in, 62; recon-
 struction, 61; Transitional
 Government gender composition, 126;
 US military prisons, 35, 51; US
 weapons-of-mass-destruction claims,
 52; US women soldiers, 21
 Iraqi women, 32, 43, 106; freedom loss,
 33; suicide bombers, 2; activism, 89;
 rights rhetoric, 87; voting rights, 125
 Islam: culture, 32; extremist, 107, 120;
 right-wing, 126
 Israel, 76; army, 31; conscientious
 objection, 129; militarized, 22; suicide
 bombings, 30; women, 39
 Ithaca College, 79
 Jackson, Andrew, 12
 Japan, women soldiers, 21
 Japanese Americans in World War Two:
 treatment of, 68; women soldiers
 (Nisei) 21-2
 Jefferson, Thomas, 12
 Jewish women, Nazi period, 28
 Johnson, Shoshanna, 27, 41-2
 Johnson-Sirleaf, Ellen, 99
 Jones, Edith, 102
 Jordan, 57; Queen Noor, 128; women,
 39; women soldiers, 21
 Kabul, women, 87
 Karpinski, Janis, 6, 34, 36, 42, 55, 105
 Kenya, 129
 Kerry, John, 26, 108, 110, 118
 Khalid Shazia, 29

- Khan, Ayesha, 107
King Kong, 1
 King, Rodney, 38
 Kirkuk, women's shelters, 120
 Klein, Naomi, 61
 Korean War, casualties, 56
 kotex, introduction of, 9
 Kozol, Jonathan, 68, 73
 Kramer, Martin, 77
 Krieger, Nancy, 4
 Krugman, Paul, 52
 Kuwait, 29
- L'Oreal, 125
 labor, disembodiment, 44
 Laos, US terrorism, 14
Last Samurai, The, 1
 Lawson, William, 59
 Lebanon, women suicide bombers, 30
 Lewis, Stephen, 119
 Libby, Scooter, 58
 Liberia, 94; Presidency, 99
 Lillie, Frank, 4
 Lockheed Martin Corporation, 64
 Louima, Abner, 38
 Louisiana, 83-4, 87; black colleges, 90;
 poor women, 80, 82
 Louisiana Rape Relief, 86
 Lynch, Jessica, 27, 29, 41-2
- Mahdi Army, women marchers, 9
 Mahmood, Saba, 127
 Mai, Mukhtar, 29
 Malaysia, 59
 Mamdani, Mahmood, 14
 Management and Training Corporation, 57
Manchurian Candidate, The, 1
 Maoist movement Nepal, women soldiers,
 21
 maquiladora factories, 118
 Marable, Manning, 72
 March for Women's Lives, 114
 market idealization, 59
 marriage, 109; gay, see gay marriage
 Matalin, Mary, 40, 101, 115
- Matthai, Wangari, 129
 McCain, John, 58
 McCotter, Lane, 57
 McFadden, Patricia, 129
 Medicaid/Medicare, cuts, 88-90
 mercenaries, 61, 63
 Merkel, Angela, 99
 Mexico, women soldiers, 21
 Meyerowitz, Joanne, 4
 Middle Eastern programs, university, 76-8
 Miers, Harriet, 102-4
 Miles Foundation, Connecticut, 24
 militarization: budgets, 72; 'camouflaged',
 20; everyday life, 19; gender shifts, 11;
 women, 8, 17
 military spending, global ratios, 19
 military wounds, amputation, 56
 Miller, Geoffrey, 43
 Mills, C. Wright, 19
 miscegenation laws, 6
 misogyny, religious, 98
 Mississippi, 83, 85, 87; poor women, 80,
 82
 Moghadam, Valentine, 130
 Mohammed, Yanar, 126
 Moore, Brenda, 21
 Mora, Alberto J., 49
 Morocco, 57, 128
 Moscow, theatre siege 2002, 32
 Mother's Day, 106
 Mozambique, US terrorism, 14
 MSM (Men having Sex with Men), 95
 Mubarak, Suzanne, 128
 multiculturalism, corporatist, 74
 Musharaf, Pervez, 29
 Muslim women, US military rape, 36
 Muthien, Bernedette, 129
- Nandy, Ashis, 13
 Nasiriyah, Fedayeen, 27
 National Advisory Committee on Violence
 Against Women, 121
 National Association for Advancement of
 Pre-Born Children, 75
 National Liberation Front, Vietnam, 125

- nature/nurture divide, 4
 Nawabi, Sorayya, 125
 neoliberalism, 13-14, 71
 Nepal, 2; Maoist movement, 21
 New Orleans, 87; class/racial cleansing, 86; Lower Ninth Ward, 85; militarized response, 89; reconstruction politics, 90; romanticized, 83; Superdrome, 82
 New York City: income inequality, 90; prisons, 71
 Nicaragua, 14; US terrorism, 14
 Nike, global plants, 118
 Nixon, Richard M., 77
 Nobel Peace Prize 2004, 129
 North Korea, 57
 Northrop Grumman corporation, 64
 Norton, Gale Ann, 120
- O'Connor, Sandra Day, 74, 96, 100-2, 104, 107
 O'Neill, Paul, 51-2
 O.J. Simpson trial, 38
 oil, competition for, 60
 Organization for Women's Freedom, Iraq, 126
 Owen, Priscilla, 102
 Oyama, Susan, 4
- Pakistan, 107; earthquake 2005 victims, 84; US support, 108; women, 122
 Palestine: Hamas women parliamentarians, 94; militarized, 22; women, 30-1, 106, 128; women suicide bombers, 2, 30
 Palme Wilson, Valerie, 58
 Panjabi, Kavita, 108
 Pashmerga Force for women, Iraqi Kurdistan, 124
 Patriot Act, 51
 patriotism, think tank determined, 76-7
 Penn, Sean, 83
 Perle, Richard, 52
 Piestewa, Lori, 27, 41
 Play Station, 19
 political commerce, war, 10
- poverty: gendered, 82; US racialized, 68
 Powell, Colin, 6, 37, 41, 69, 97, 112
 pre-emptive strikes, culture of, 18
 Princeton University, Concerned Alumni, 104
 prisons, USA, 18-19, 68, 71; AIDS epidemic, 119; HIV rates, 72; racial composition, 41, 81; sexual humiliation, 71; women numbers, 96
 privatized military forces (PMFs), 62-3
 publicized gender humiliation, 23
- QualCommco, 61
- race, 70, 79; constructions of, 8; gendering, 95
 racism, 71, 93, 105; Alabama, 111; structural, 80; US World War Two army, 22
 rape, 104; Abu Ghraib allegations, 37; Bosnia, 34; New Orleans Superdrome, 86; public, 23, 108; South Africa, 29; victims, 2; war strategy, 12, 27-8, 40, 72
 Reagan, Nancy, 109
 Reagan, Ronald, 49, 77, 101, 109; 'New Right' administration, 14
 Red Army, women in, 22
 Red Cross, 37
 refugees, African applicants for USA, 68
 Rehnquist, William H., 102
 Republican Party, 77-9, 117
 Rice, Condoleezza, 6, 17, 34, 37, 41, 43, 58, 69, 83-4, 94, 97, 99, 104, 111-13, 119, 123
 Rich, Frank, 109
 rights discourse, 110
 Roberts, Jane Sullivan, 100
 Roberts, John, 100-2
Roe v Wade, 122
 Rose, Jacqueline, 13, 31
 Rove, Karl, 79
 ruling class, global market, 69
 Rumsfeld, Donald, 26, 37, 43, 54-5, 60
 Russia, women soldiers, 20

- Rwanda, 12; massacres, 23; women in public office, 128; Tutu women raped, 28; women, 105-6
- Sanchez, Ricardo, 36
- Sanchez, Tracie, 32
- Saudi Arabia, US support, 108; women, 115
- Schlesinger, James, Abu Ghraib report, 55
- segregation, US public schools, 68, 73
- Serbia, mercenaries, 63
- sex, disembodiment, 44; identity, 4-5; sexuality, 3
- sexual humiliation: publicized, 23; torture technique, 34, 37, 54; US prison tactic, 71
- shakhidiki*, 32
- Sheehan, Casey, 96
- Sheehan, Cyndi, 96
- Sierra Leone, militarized rape, 72
- Singer, P.W., 62
- slavery, 81-2, 93
- Somalia: CEDAW non-recognition, 121; girl soldiers, 126; Halliburton profits, 64
- Soros, George, 52
- South Africa, 14, 129; mercenaries, 63
- South America, 59
- South Korea: gendered labor, 97; women, 122; women soldiers, 21
- Southern Methodist University, Dallas, 103
- Spain, 33; anti-war women, 106; women prioritized, 128
- Stanford University, 112
- state sovereignty, 70
- Stein, Gertrude, 26
- Steinberg, Judy, 109
- Stepford Wives, The* 27
- Sudan, 2; girl soldiers, 126; militarized, 22; publicized gender violence, 23; rapes, 104; women, 106
- suicide bombers, women, 30-2
- suicides, soldiers, 24
- Summers, Lawrence, 5
- surveillance, 12
- Sweden, gender gap rating, 97
- Syria, 57; intelligence officers, 30
- Taguba, Antonio, 37, 55
- Taliban, the, 2, 40, 88, 98; initial demise, 124
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, 85
- Tenet, George, 52
- Texas State Lottery Commission, 103
- Thatcher, Margaret, 38, 94
- Theweleit, Klaus, 25
- Thi Binh, Nguyen, 125
- think tanks, right-wing, 76
- Thomas, Clarence, 38, 69, 97, 101, 103, 121
- Tiger Forces, US Army, 25-6
- torture, Bush defense of, 54
- Triple Canopy company, 62
- Turkey, 115, 128; girl soldiers, 126; headscarf ban, 96; WLMUL, 127
- Uganda, militarized rape, 72
- UN (United Nations): Population Fund, 122; Security Council Resolution 1325, 9, 121
- universities: right-wing monitoring of, 76-9; of Colorado, 78; Michigan Law School, 74
- USA (United States of America): abortion law restrictions, 88; anti-terrorist rhetoric, 18; Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 52-3, 58, 123; conditional aid, 122; Congress, 39, 100; death penalty, 72; Defense Advisory Committee, 122; Defense Department, 62; dissent criminalization, 49; infrastructure cutbacks, 84, 90; Labor Department Women's Bureau, 121; Military, see US Military; National Guard 18, 89; National Security Council, 112; police state, 10; poverty, 11, 90; Presidential election 2004, 20, 108, 117; prisons, see

- prisons; Senate, 58; Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, 77; September 11, 2001, 23, 51, 68; Supreme Court, see US Supreme Court; torture authorizing moves, 53; unipolar power, 18; Vietnam defeat impact, 25-7; war of/on terror, 17; World War Two Iraq rhetoric, 13
- US military: anti-gay regulations, 6, 50, 110; domestic violence, 24; 82nd Airborne Division, 58; gender composition, 29; inner-city school recruitment, 60; Iraq casualty count, 56; Iraq war costs, 1, 84-5, 90, 118; Military Police Corps, 32-3; Naval Academy, 24; Navy Seals, 58, 62; pay rates, 11, 59; privatization, 37, 50-2, 60, 62-3; racial composition, 27, 69; recruitment numbers fall, 6; self-policing, 44; sexual harassment, 122; spending on, 19; working-class women in, 2, 20-4, 35-6, 40-1, 105
- US Supreme Court, 101-4; affirmative action reviews 1989, 73; appointments, 71, 94
- USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), 50; demise, 18, 59
- veiling, Afghanistan, 124
- Veneman, Ann, 120
- Victor, Barbara, 30-1
- Vietnam, war on, 1, 18, 20; casualties, 56; US defeat impact, 25; US veteran suicides, 24; US women soldiers, 20, 125; US war death toll, 26
- Violence Against Women ACT USA, lobby against, 121
- violence, gendered, 89
- Wal-Mart, 41
- war, 7; civilian casualties, 24; 'digital', 55-6, 60; economies, 11; language/ metaphor, 19, 23; money-making, 61; normalized, 10, 13, 24, 28; politics of obedience, 12; privatized, 50
- Washington September 2005 march, 87-8
- weapons, world trade in, 18-19
- White House Women's Office, closure, 121
- Whitney, Oprah, 83
- Williams, Patricia, 112
- Wilson, Joseph, 58
- Winter Soldier*, 26
- Witmer, Michelle, 6
- Wolfowitz, Paul, 37, 52
- women: African American, 22, 80, 87, 89; economically diverse, 127; majority AIDS victims, 119; military, 2, 20-4, 35, 40-1; prisoners in California, 19; single mother numbers, 109; suicide bombers, 2, 30-2, 94, 96; US black prisoners, 68; US low-waged/poor, 84, 96, 105
- Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML), 126-7
- women's liberation movement, Vietnamese inspired, 125
- women's rights, democratic imperialist/militarized rhetoric, 2, 6, 12, 14, 17, 32-3, 40, 88, 98, 113-14, 123
- Women's Union of North Vietnam, 125
- Wood, Carolyn, 34
- Woolf, Virginia, 7-8
- working poor, militarization of, 11
- World AIDS conference, Bangkok 2004, 120
- World Social Forum, 2005, 126
- World War Two, women combatants, 22
- Xavier College, 90
- Zapatero, Jose Luis Rodriguez, 33
- Zionism, 128