

## **Contra Plantation, Prison, and Capitalist Annihilation: Collective Struggle, Social Reproduction, and the Co-Creation of Life-Giving Worlds**

Keywords:

autonomy; resistance; decolonization; social reproduction; Zapatista; capitalism

Abstract:

This article demonstrates that the quotidian domain of social reproduction is fertile ground, and a key political terrain upon which to struggle, for revolutionary change. Drawing from personal attendance at an array of Zapatista gatherings as an member of the autonomous media and listener; empirical evidence offered by decolonial feminist researchers sanctioned by Zapatista *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*; as well as both the critical perspectives and collective action(s) of the Zapatista women; I propose that the Zapatistas are inspiration par excellence of an autonomous place-based social movement that is co-creating the gender just social relations and inclusive life-giving culture its members desire to be a part of. In doing so, the article illustrates how anti-capitalist resistance, the practice of mutual aid, and Indigenous worldviews can galvanize pluralistic critical mass, animate pathways out of structural violence, and transform the world.

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*The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the (capitalist) economy... but to liberate us both from the (capitalist) economy and from the type of individualization that is linked to the (capitalist) economy. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.*

-Foucault (1983, 216)

*Or we can agree to struggle together, as different as we are, against the patriarchal capitalist system that is assaulting and murdering us... ...Yes, now we are really going to begin building the world we need and deserve.*

-Words of the Zapatista Women  
(First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle 2018)

*There is nothing more subversive and irreverent than a group of women-from-below saying to others, and to themselves, 'We.'*

-Don Durito (Marcos 2005)

### **Introduction**

Colonialism penetrates. Land and lives, territories and cultures, as well as bodies and

psyches are target. With the dual end of domination and accumulation as motive, the preferred means have been dehumanization, dispossession, enslavement, exploitation, humiliation, disappearance, and death, to name a few. In short, alienation followed by annihilation. For over 500 years, the fanatical contempt, rapacious greed, and unadulterated violence of colonialism has been codified and globalized to such a magnitude there is virtually no geography it has not shattered or (dis)ordered. Indeed, the world and modernity as we have come know and exist in each, have been (re)arranged and compartmentalized via colonial worldviews. Along with their arbitrary hierarchies and attendant exercises of illegitimate authority and control.

Correspondingly, to speak with accuracy about colonialism is to recognize its inseparability from capitalism and patriarchy. Not to mention distinguish the racist character that define them as inextricably entangled social structures, cultural institutions, and systems of biopower. Gender and melanin-levels taken in vain, patriarchal colonial-capitalism has constructed its “others” and has set about damning them as it pleases. It is paramount, here, to recognize that these condemnations and desolations of lives, cultures, and histories occur in places. That is, whilst global in scale and resonance, the machinations and aftermaths of colonialism are unquestionably situated, unique, and particular, albethey interconnected. Thus, historicized and geopolitically-contextualized analyses are necessary towards confronting, preventing, and finding solutions to the ongoing structural and slow violence of colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal social orders.

And when it comes to seeking and discussing said solutions, a focus on resistance and alternatives as well as interdependence and relationality is vital. History shows us there is nothing tender or humble, nor playful or joyous about the institutions, discourses, states, and economies (i.e. relationships) that have been imposed by colonizers, capitalists, and the cultural mores established by patriarchy. This simply means it is urgent to start centering these emotive and humanizing aspects of life in the alternatives and solutions we pursue. Meaning, if we are to advance humanity towards freedom (hooks 2014), redemption (Marley 1980), and pluralistic harmony (Escobar 2018) in the here and now, might it prove instructive to look and listen to those groups who are actively building “cultures of dissent” and “re-envisioning and reshaping communities” (Mohanty 2003, 215) whilst caring for one another and having each other’s backs? Similarly, what could we learn if we pay close attention to those places where “a politics of collective action... is cultivating new forms of sociability, happiness, and economic capacity... through a mixture of creative disrespect and protective caution” (Gibson-Graham 2006, xxxv)? And finally, if we take seriously Federici’s (2012, 3) assertion that

...it is through the day-to-day activities by means of which we produce our existence, that we can develop our capacity to cooperate and not only resist our dehumanization, but learn to reconstruct the world as a space of nurturing, creativity, and care...

might we then recognize that the terrain of social reproduction, inclusive of our everyday interactions and concern (or lack thereof) for others, is a key site of political struggle for radical (‘from the roots’) transformation?

In finding merit in all of preceding queries apropos escaping the maelstrom of capitalist-misogyny into which humanity has been plunged, my concentration for this article focuses on the

power relations operating at the nexus of gender and social reproduction. Specifically, the oppressive and exploitative colonial realities and concurrent intensifications of patriarchal domination that were inflicted upon Indigenous Maya women in what is now Chiapas, Mexico over 500 years ago (Hernández Castillo 2002; Olivera 2005). And, by extension, the socially reproductive labour and socio-territorial struggles for liberation they were respectively tasked with and took up. It is with the hope of finding answers to the questions posed above, then, that the thrust of this articles advances by placing center the emancipatory politics, collective mobilizations, and everyday practices of the Zapatista *compañeras*.<sup>1</sup>

## Research at ‘Point Zero’: Conceptual Framework and Positionality

My first major aim with this piece is to contribute to the corpus of literature, primarily being spearheaded by autonomist, anti-racist, and socialist feminists, that takes seriously and responsively grapples with the quotidian power relations and gendered politics of social reproduction (Collins 2002; Gibson-Graham 1996; hooks 1990; Jones 1949; Luxton and Bezanson 2006; Parreñas 2000; Roy 2003). More expressly, I am proposing<sup>2</sup> that social reproduction be more intentionally foregrounded as a strategic site of anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and anti-heteropatriarchal struggle for structural (politico-economic and socio-cultural) transformation. In defining social reproduction, I am in accord with anti-(neo)liberal feminist scholars (Bhattacharya 2017; Federici 2012; Fraser and Pettifor 2018; hooks 1990; The Kilombo Women’s Delegation 2018), who in contextualizing it within our prevailing (neo)colonial, capitalocentric, and patriarchal status quo suggests it is all of the activities, both inside and outside the home (e.g. kitchens, bedrooms, schools, hospitals, community centers, parks, streets, fields, *milpas*, etc.), that (re)produce both daily life and, unavoidably, labour-power/exploitable workers.

In situating my political-intellectual stance on social reproduction as a matter of praxis, I further draw from Federici (2012, 2-3), who in identifying it as a critical terrain upon which to fight for revolutionary change, explains:

Reproductive work is undoubtedly not the only form of labour where the question of what we give to capital and ‘what we give to our own’ is posed. But certainly, it is the work in which the contradictions inherent in ‘alienated labour’ are most explosive, which is why it is the *point zero* for revolutionary practice, even if it is not the only point zero.

With this notion of social reproduction as my conceptual anchor, another objective I have is to demonstrate that the efforts of the Zapatista women, in particular their mobilization of a ‘politics of collective action’ (Gibson-Graham 2006) and struggle at ‘point zero’ (Federici 2012) via a

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<sup>1</sup> *Compañeras* is the Spanish term of affinity/camaraderie/solidarity used by Zapatistas. ‘*Compa*’ for short. There is no precise translation because it is a polysemic signifier (e.g. companion-comrade-coworker-accomplice-friend). Given the gendered nature of Spanish, it is expressed as *compañero* (masculine), *compañera* (feminine), and more recently *compañer@* or *compañeroa*, a political move the Zapatistas make to hold space for people of all genders/identities.

<sup>2</sup> In adhering to the Zapatista principle ‘To Propose, Not Impose,’ I refrain from engaging in the prosaic, oft-masculinist, academic convention of ‘arguing.’

commitment to *lekil kuxlejal*<sup>3</sup> (Mora 2017) are transforming their culture, social relations, and reality writ large by (re)valuing social reproduction. That is, they are co-creating, and collectively organizing dignified life-giving world they want to be a part of ‘from below.’

Furthermore, I indite this analytical narrative not only as a means to induce optimism and incite action, but also, so that scholars might be inspired to find merit in and make more concerted efforts to legitimize the acuity and insights of non-state-captured, non-credentialed organizers and anti-systemic organic intellectuals. That is, to recognize rural peasants who are labouring and living at ‘point zero,’ a la Fanon (1963) and other scholars engaged with grassroots social movements (Altieri and Toledo 2011; Marcos 2018; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2012; Mora 2015; Speed and Forbis 2005), as valid/citable sources of knowing and knowledge production. I disclose here that my motivations eschew liberal ‘good intentions,’ as well as abjure both careerist and canonical aspirations (de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Lindsay 2013; Morrison 1988; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012).<sup>4</sup> Antithetically, the convictions underpinning this article emanate from the inspiration, imagination, creative vision, (Indigenous) resurgence (Simpson 2008), and quite simply hope that I feel the Zapatistas represent for the world.

My time and experiences in their autonomous municipalities stems from over two decades of following the movement and annual treks I have made to Chiapas each of the past five years (with visits ranging in timespan from as long as nine months to as short as ten days). These trips have been a result of responding to global calls sent by the Zapatistas for participation in events, seminars, and gatherings in Chiapas. Upon replying, I typically received an invitation and permission to attend as either a member of the autonomous media or a listener. Here, I should note that conducting formal ‘research’ in Zapatista territory is a multifaceted, complex, oft-not possible endeavor given they are targets of a state-sanctioned counter-insurgency and approval necessitates permission from a region’s respective *Junta de Buen Gobierno* (Council of Good Governance). Thus, in respecting the Zapatista’s privacy, autonomy, and entitlement to ‘ethnographic refusal’ (Simpson 2007), I have never even sought permission to conduct research. The first-hand observations, stories, testimonials, and communication that appear in this article will thereby be what Zapatistas have allowed delegates and members of the independent media to share. Or, it will be sourced from materials, statements, and communiques the Zapatistas have released and made public. Readers will also notice instances of direct quotes from Zapatistas. These accounts will draw from wide-ranging empirical scholarship conducted by scholars and writers who have sought and received permission from the *Juntas*.

Thus, while I have stayed in the *caracol* of Oventic for consecutive weeks over a period of months, camped in the countryside at a few differing Zapatista villages, and have worked, played, and spoken with a number of Zapatistas in person, I will not be quoting any of them directly in this piece. Unless, again, it is from a gathering, event, or conversation I was invited to in which consent was volunteered or granted (e.g. *La Escuelita*; *Homage to Galeano*; *Worldwide Festival*

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<sup>3</sup> Tselal term meaning living a dignified life, communally and reciprocally, through a recognition of our interdependence and the dynamic interconnectedness of the spiritual, physical, and material, as well as natural and supernatural worlds. See *Kuxlejal Politics* (Mora 2017) for a more nuanced and extensive overview of the term’s polysemic meaning, practice, and depth.

<sup>4</sup> I concur with Morrison that ‘canon-building is empire building’ (whatever the discipline), and Rivera Cusicanqui who demonstrates that academic knowledge production is politically-loaded, structurally-privileging/exclusionary, and oft-supremacist (e.g. equivalencies in wages, career opportunities, academic capital, and proximity to professional networks/editors/publishers/colleagues/conferences/etc. of scholars in/affiliated with institutions in the Global North versus the Global South).

*of Resistances and Rebellions; Critical Thought versus the Capitalist Hydra; Comparte por la Humanidad; Conciencias por la Humanidad, etc.*). My personal and political approach to what I have participated in, seen, and been exposed to in Zapatista territory, in short, has been to enthusiastically attend those gatherings to which I have been invited. And subsequently, to share information and stories, on the terms and preferences of the Zapatistas, if permission is granted. Otherwise, to put it simply, I just let them be. Some stories are not ours to tell.

In the interest of addressing critiques that the information Zapatistas disseminate about the movement is biased and filtered, I would respond by querying what narrative or information released by any group, organization, or institution, be it state or otherwise, is ever unbiased, nonfiltered, objective, or politically neutral? Moreover, and to their credit, the Zapatistas are plausibly one of the most hospitable, welcoming, open, and transparent rebel movements the world has seen (Zibechi 2013). Relatively speaking, of course, and to the degree that it does not compromise their safety and well-being. Notably, there are several activists, academics, and journalists who have carried out formal research in-and-with Zapatista communities over the past three decades (Altamirano-Jimnez 2013; Baronnet, Bayo, and Stahler-Sholk 2011; Cerda Garcia 2006; Gilly 1997; Harvey 1998; Hernández Castillo 2010; Klein 2015; Marcos 2018; Mora 2017; Rosset and Martínez-Torres; Ramírez and Carlsen 2008; Speed and Forbis 2005; Stephen 2002). Many of whom are guided by decolonial politics and authorized by Zapatista communities. This vibrant body of literature has not only been instructive and insightful for me, but also provides rich and consensual details of what select processes and realities are like within certain communities. Thus, given that first-hand accounts, *in situ* scholarship, and ethnographic fieldwork/‘homework’ (Mora 2017) has indeed been approved and carried out in Zapatista territory in some circumstances, I am relying upon it, in addition to my own experiences (qualified), as empirical evidence.

Admittedly, and a point in need of reiteration (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018), is that academics have quite an extensive (colonial) track record of researching and analyzing Indigenous people and the conditions they face. Such fraught scholarly undertakings are dangerous because they can further subject already besieged groups to more acute forms of exposure, orientalist tokenization, extraction, and expropriation. In many cases, research of this form and function is carried out by the most well-meaning of researchers, yet still results in erasures, mutings, distortions, and plagiarisms of Indigenous voices, epistemologies, and ontologies. Not to mention reassertions of (neo)colonial power and non-Indigenous privilege. It is with these complexities in mind that I suggest probing the Zapatistas as a clinical case study or fetishized ethnography would be committing a discursive act of violence against them. Thus, I write not with the purpose of placing the Zapatistas under an analytical academic microscope, but to share their approach to resistance, collective organizing, and social reproduction as of result of having been invited as a listener and autonomous media member to some of their gatherings. Another motive behind drafting this paper, is to propose that the politics, practices, and principles of the Zapatistas might be something to consider embracing within our own local geographies, communities, and even universities.

Candidly, given there are no Zapatistas-at-large<sup>5</sup> in the academy, I consider it paramount and historical-political necessity, to traffic as much *Zapatismo* into orthodox knowledge

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<sup>5</sup> sans ‘aspiring’

production and mainstream Westernized education as possible, in as responsible, conscientiousness, and decolonial of a manner as possible.<sup>6</sup> That is, from my vantage point, mindfully amplifying the ethics, intuitions, and story arcs of the Zapatistas is exigent because of the concrete alternatives and real prospects they offer us with respect to changing, and making more compassionate and rebel, the world. And finally, in placing social reproduction on the frontline of emancipatory struggles for gender justice and cultural transformation, I hold firm that it should neither be approached as an apolitical topic that gets catalogued as a passing academic fad, nor treated as an immaterial or fringe concept that is dismissed as something to be ‘dealt with later.’ Because, indeed, labouring at ‘point zero’ has existed since time immemorial, as well as comes with both material consequences and lived ramifications. More pointedly, it is as thankless and exhausting, as it is punishing—especially for a rural peasant woman.

### ***Peasant Woman’s Burden: (Reproducing) Everyday Life***

*Women will have exactly the same place as men, not in the clauses of the constitution, but in the life of every day: at the factory, in the schools, and in the assemblies.*

-Fanon (1963, 163)

Over the past half-century, rural peasant women have been subjected to unprecedented levels of corporate-driven, state-sanctioned, global capitalist policies of economic liberalization, free trade, privatization, and austerity (Chattopadhyay 2014; Altamirano-Jimnez 2013; Rosset, Patel, Courville 2006). For them, the yields entail escalating experiences of displacement, dispossession, indebtedness, poverty, precarity (low-waged seasonal/temporary/contracted work), and hazardous working conditions (Benería, Berik, and Floro 2015; Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2012). Neoliberal knock-on effects such as these are also coinciding with state rollbacks to social welfare spending, as well as sweeping cuts to government subsidies and regulations that safeguard and conserve the environment (Heynen, McCarthy, Prudham, and Robbins 2007; Peluso and Lund 2011).

Resultantly, rural women engaged in informal or subsistence living are confronted with seemingly insurmountable structural barriers regarding their prospects of straightforwardly accessing essential and indispensable social services (e.g. healthcare, counseling, shelters/safehouses, educational training, childcare, legal aid, etc.) (Benería, Berik, and Floro 2015). The costs of these systemic obstacles generate detrimental public health issues that disproportionately affect women. These include high vulnerability rates to malnutrition, injury, exhaustion, disease, infection, and chronic pain, in addition to increased chances of infant mortality and maternal death (Kuhlmann and Annandale 2012; Kwan 2016). Rarely considered too, are the spikes in, and prolonged experiences of emotional despair, affective turmoil, and deteriorations in psychological well-being (e.g. undue stress, anxiety, despair, angst, etc.) these barriers induce (Saxena, Thornicroft, Knapp, and Whiteford 2007).

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<sup>6</sup> This is a complex statement given my positionality. I welcome constructive feedback and continue to discuss these politics with Zapatista education promoters when possible. Importantly, I neither speak for, nor represent the Zapatistas. All mistakes/errors are my own.

Disaggregated gender analysis on the agrarian Global South reveals that rural women are far less likely to find jobs in formal (agricultural and non-agricultural) employment than both men and urban women (WomenWatch 2012). Peasant women thus assume a higher risk of working without labour protections, adherence to worker's rights, and even (officially-recognized) support from trade unions (Deer and De Leal 2014). Furthermore, while women across the board continue to be underrepresented in politics, governance, and decision-making at every level of society, when compared to urban women, as well men in general, rural women face inordinately higher degrees of exclusion (Benería, Berik, Floro 2015; FAO, IFAD, ILO 2010). Tellingly, as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Rural Women reports, 'With only a few exceptions, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men for every Millennium Development Goal indicator for which data are available' [emphasis added] (WomenWatch 2012).

Time poverty, the amount of time spent per day undertaking socially reproductive work without having any other choice other than to do so, is another indicator of structural inequality rural women experience. Gender-focused labour studies inclusive of countries in the periphery specify that when both waged and unwaged work are taken into consideration, rural women work an average of 16 hours per day, roughly two hours more than men, which over the course of a week means they are labouring a total of 12 hours more in aggregate (IFAD 2016). In the midst of accruing all these overtime hours, yet being compensated nothing for them, rural peasant women must also navigate, daily, infrastructure problems, mobility constraints, limited social networking opportunities, and exposure to the elements (Grassi, Lamberg, Huyer 2015; IFAD 2011). In many underdeveloped (post)colonial rural settings, it is not uncommon for the oft-distant infrastructure to be of relatively poor quality or low standard (Arora 2015; Lyon, Mutersbaugh, and Worthen 2017). This means the (free) domestic labour peasant women are performing (inclusive of household chores, caretaking, food preparation, fetching water/wood/fuel/supplies, etc.) is typically being carried out either in the absence of, or with only marginal access to, adequate equipment, information, technology, transportation, training, and even camaraderie.

Further vulnerabilizing rural peasant women are the perils they inherit with respect to the ecological aftermaths, and requisite political fallouts, of human-induced climate change (Carr and Thompson 2014; Lambrou and Nelson 2010). These consist of environmental degradation, deforestation, sea level rise, crop failure, soil erosion/acidification, resource conflict, water shortages, famine, ecosystem disruptions, species dislocation/extinction, and disasters that result from extreme weather events (flooding, drought, mudslides, cyclone/hurricane damage, water shortages, contamination, famine, etc.) (Klein 2014; Nixon 2011). Correspondingly, the well-being, livelihoods, knowledges, thoughts, and ideas of peasant women in the periphery remain some of the most neglected, if not ignored outright, areas of foci that exist in terms of state support, international aid, development agendas, policy-consultations, and even university outreach programmes (La Rose 2004; Tuck and Yang 2013).

Paradoxically, countless professional (read: liberal, 'well-intentioned,' bourgeois) organizations (e.g. NGOs, think-tanks, self-anointed 'socially responsible' corporations, etc.) and state entities that are purportedly engaged in 'development work' and efforts to abate or eliminate structural inequality, endemic poverty, and social vulnerability—are not listening to the very people whom 'development' has historically and continues to land squarely upon/smash (Choudry and Kapoor 2013). From a neocolonial state-capitalist perspective, this is logical, proof

the system works just fine, and business-as-usual (EZLN 2015). However, for anyone harboring sincere yearnings for the fruition of workable alternatives and sustainable practices that will cultivate, preserve, and stimulate healthy ecosystems, social harmony, and cultural vibrancy, it is indeed a cruel irony that by-and-large the segment of society who is arguably the most experienced with all these, the rural peasantry (Fanon 1963), continues to go dismissed and ignored.

A final interlocking set of indicators illustrating the co-constitutive products generated by the machinations of neoliberal logic and neocolonial policy noted above is that if analyzed carefully, one can discern that the vast majority of all this robust, yet damning, data typifies the life circumstances of only certain kinds of women. That is, those who are rural; working class or poor; racialized (of colour) or Indigenous; neither formally 'educated,' nor professionally credentialed; and living in the Global South or peripheral North. Indeed, the capitalist patriarchy that is our global economy appears to have a premeditated pattern, as well as preferred target. Not coincidentally and in parallel, all of the above-listed empirical evidence profiling the yoke of drudgery that a rural peasant woman has foisted upon her, as we will see in the sections to come, was directly applicable to Zapatista women.

### ***Prelude to an Uprising***

*That is what we Zapatista's want,  
and it's what we want for the whole world:  
that there be no rulers, that there be no exploiters,  
That we as Indigenous people not be exploited.  
-Compañera Selena (EZLN 2015, 104)*

Prior to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation's (EZLN)<sup>7</sup> uprising that took the international media by storm on New Year's Day 1994 (the day NAFTA was ratified), Indigenous people in Chiapas lived during what is referred to as the *acasillamiento* (EZLN 2015). This era, which saw numerous differing iterations over multiple generations, dates back to the invasion of conquistadors and the imposition of the *encomienda* (commissioned plantation) system (Olivera 2007). It is defined by the capture and enslavement of otherwise free people as indeterminately-indentured peons who are subjected to the authority of rural *caciques* or *hacendados* (landowning, ruling-class, bosses/overseers) and tethered to *fincas* (agrarian commercial estates) or *ranchos* (market-oriented livestock operations) (Rus 2010). And while the *acasillamiento* started gradually disbanding during the 1940s up through the early 1980s, a time during which only a few sequestered *fincas* still operated under the system, the impacts it had on the minds and bodies of Indigenous people remained. Miriam (EZLN 2015, 89), a Zapatista *comandanta* (commander), provides a general depiction of what life for women was like during the *acasillamiento*:

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<sup>7</sup> The EZLN is a politico-military organization inclusive of a hierarchy, strict rules, discipline, and armed insurgents/soldiers. It is distinct from the more horizontalist Zapatista bases of support and movement-at-large. Significantly, the army is community-sanctioned and comprised of freely-associating volunteers and is fighting to eventually put down their weapons/for peace.

They [colonizers] stole our land and took our language—our culture. This is how the domination of *caciquismo* (local despotism) and landowners came into being, along with our triple exploitation of humiliation, discrimination, marginalization.

While Miriam’s words capture how stifling life under patriarchal-colonialism and the plantation for Indigenous women was on the whole, to get a more detailed sense of the travails and protracted misery to which they were exposed, the devil is in the details (of the everyday).

For the five centuries preceding the implementation of Zapatista Women’s Revolutionary Law (WRL) in 1993 (whose origin comes in the next section), it was not uncommon for an Indigenous woman’s day to begin at four in the morning and end around 10 at night (EZLN 2013a).<sup>8</sup> What occurred during that roughly 18-hour stretch was what many of us would consider unremitting and underappreciated, physical and emotional, hard labour. Labour rendered unseen because it was Indigenous women performing it. And because it was being completed in-and-around, as well as for, the home/family. As Federici (2012, 45) notes, ‘behind the sudden interest for housework lies the old truth that this work remains invisible only as long as it is done.’ Correspondingly, the only attention paid to the domestic work women were doing — was if it were *not* completed. Which if were the case, often resulted in punitive repercussions.

Sweeping the floor, tidying the house, fetching water, gathering wood, starting a fire, preparing coffee, mixing *pozol* (fermented corn drink), and cooking breakfast were amongst the first tasks. After the men had their fill and set off for the fields, the morning work continued. Feeding children, grinding corn, kneading, pounding and flattening *masa* (dough) to make tortillas, washing dishes, hand-laundering clothes, hanging them to dry, and trekking to the timber to find, cut, and lug back more firewood followed. Sowing, weeding, picking, reaping, threshing, shucking, sorting, or winnowing varying grains, fruits, and vegetables ensued thereafter, as did weaving, mending, sewing, embroidering, and hemming clothes. Shelling coffee beans and grinding salt occupied long stretches of the day, and a mere handful of one or the other was what hacienda bosses ‘paid’ the women (EZLN 2013). Miriam (EZLN 2015, 89), offers a glimpse of their abandonment:

The fucking bosses had us as if they were our owners; they sent us to do all the work on the haciendas, without caring if we had children, husbands, or if we were sick. They never asked if we were sick; if we didn’t make it to work, they sent their servant or slave to leave the corn in front of the kitchen so that we would make tortillas for them.

This process was repeated over the course of the day, oftentimes with an infant wrapped tightly in a sash and slung snugly against their back. Interruptions to the day’s monotonous toil<sup>9</sup> took

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<sup>8</sup> This remains the case for countless Indigenous peasant women across the world. Even given the implementation of WRL, Zapatista women also still perform many of the tasks mentioned. The overall context, sharing of workloads, and devaluations which there were offered have all changed considerably though.

<sup>9</sup> I am not arguing here that reproductive labour is inherently ‘monotonous toil’ in-and-of itself. To do so would be reductive and insulting given any and all of it can be quite meaningful and rewarding. However, I would suggest that a scenario in which it is devalued/dismitted, coerced, performed under threat, and coupled with an essentialist and hierarchical gender regime—that it does become ‘monotonous toil.’

the form of caring for, cleaning up after, fielding questions from, and perhaps reining-in one of the many curious and wandering children who were (solely) under their mother's keep.

A woman nursing, teaching, washing, and having anywhere from six to ten children over the course of a generation had become a familiar scene in the rural countryside. Marriages were arranged and compulsory, regardless of what desire a woman felt in her heart. Psychological abuse and physical violence were also not uncommon, even normalized to a certain degree (EZLN 2013a). Women rarely left the home, and if they did, they were subject to ridicule and reprimand. Miriam (2015, 90) describes the demeaning mockery:

Years passed and women suffered like this. And when our babies cried and we nursed them, we were yelled at, made fun of, insulted physically; they said that we didn't know anything, that we were useless, that we were a bother to them. They didn't respect us and they used us as if we were objects.

Although recognizing that women were oppressed, men in their communities rarely contributed to reproductive labour.<sup>10</sup> This stemmed from the imposition of colonial-patriarchal gender regimes, coupled with the pervasive *machismo* that was fusing with the capitalist impulse to deem economically (re)productive/waged labour, individual ownership, and work outside domestic spaces more substantive and valuable than socially reproductive work. Guadeloupe (EZLN 2013a, 18), an education promoter, details the progressive incursion and confluence of liberal notions of property/possession with male domination:

Women, upon the arrival of private property, were given as gifts. It passed to another level and what is now call patriarchy arrived, with the plunder of women's rights, with the plunder of the earth – *it was with the arrival of private property that men began to command*. We know that with this arrival of private property three great evils took place, which are the exploitation of men, the exploitation of women, and the exploitation of all, but of women more. As women we are exploited by this neoliberal system. [emphasis added]

In further explaining the complex dynamics regarding how colonial gender regimes were internalized within Indigenous communities, Miriam (EZLN 2015, 92) describes how the men, who although opposed to the denigrating and abusive ways that plantation overseers treated Indigenous women, mimicked similar patriarchal behaviours, habits, and modes of thinking:

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<sup>10</sup> My aim here is not to vilify or stereotype Indigenous *campesino* men as a static monolith. I am also not suggesting that all Zapatista men were averse to social reproduction. Rather, the analysis of men's oppressive attitudes/behaviours appears because it is a central aspect of the women's stories that indicates just how much influence colonialism has on gender relations. It is also evidence of the dueling patriarchies faced by Zapatista women (i.e. Euro-colonizer plantation patriarchs and the authoritative/*machismo* attitudes that Indigenous men from their own communities picked-up or had escalated). I also mention the entitled behaviors of men so that men readers of this piece might pause for reflection. Of significance, is just how self-reflexive some Zapatista men have been in identifying patriarchy as present, real, in need of overturning, and is something they are complicit with (EZLN 2015). There is perhaps an important lesson to learn here for men in the radical left, especially academia, about not only recognizing male privilege, but performing emotional labour and sacrificing time (often tacit expectations of women).

...once they [Indigenous men] were living in the communities, those ideas that came from the boss or the *acasillado* were brought in. *It's as if the men drug these bad ideas along with them and applied them inside the house.* They acted like the little boss of the house. It's not true that the women were liberated then, because the men became the 'little bosses' of the house. ...the *women stayed at home as if it was a prison.* [emphasis added]

That is, men refused to do 'women's work,' and willfully defended not having to via essentialized sexist rationalizations. The taken-for-granted patriarchal tradition of men not lowering themselves to the level of a woman thereby served as a convenient justification to deride and confine women to the private sphere. The captive isolation women experienced, as well as the absolution from domestic work men granted themselves, was chalked up as 'natural' due to purported, albeit erroneous, 'biological differences.'<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, women did not venture far from the house, unless to sow or reap. They worked seven days a week, they held no tenure, and they were allowed neither to organize, nor get an education. 'There were no Sundays (i.e. rest), and there was no land,' as one *compa* expresses.<sup>12</sup> Community decision-making, public undertakings, and civil affairs were off limits. Their experiences of state institutions, if allowed in, were characterized by epithet, neglect, or threat, even of nonconsensual sterilization (Olivera 2007). Women's voices were deliberately silenced, their ideas unheard. They were taught to cast their eyes to the ground and keep their heads down; that they should not exist (EZLN 2015). Oppression, worthlessness, and misogyny were overtly imposed, and more subtly, internalized. Being an Indigenous peasant woman was a life-sentence of parochial oversight, obligatory deference, and hard labour. It meant subservience and discipline, which were expected and administered within the confines of the domestic spaces to which they were consigned. Indeed, the rhythms, routines, and repressions of a woman's daily life mirrored those of both a plantation and prison.

### ***Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Law***

*It is time to fight, we need to fight  
because we cannot stand this situation any longer.  
-Comandanta Ana Maria (1994)*

In addition to the stripes the Zapatistas<sup>13</sup> have earned in the eyes of anti-capitalist left, one can also contend their communities serve as a paragon of intersectional feminist analyses, politics, and praxis, despite the fact that they do not identify as 'feminists.'<sup>14</sup> Intersectionality is

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<sup>11</sup>This logic is by no means unique to the Zapatista context.

<sup>12</sup> *La Escuelita*, August 2013.

<sup>13</sup> The Zapatistas admit to being neither a blueprint, nor model to follow. And my recognition of the *compas* is antagonistic towards fetishizing the work they, as Indigenous women, are doing on behalf of life/Earth. Equally important, is my stance that their struggle neither be romanticized, nor glamorized as it is just that - a struggle. One that has been, in part, marked by pain, loss, grief, and suffering.

<sup>14</sup> I am by no means pinning the term 'feminist' onto the Zapatistas, rather, am drawing a comparison given that aspects of their resistance appear similar to certain currents of feminist praxis. The Zapatistas refuse labels largely because they consider those categorical options offered by modernity to be 'traps' (*Comparte por la Humanidad* July 2016). Thus, static ideological

reflected in the words of *Comandanta* Esther (2001), one of the early stalwart commanders of the EZLN, who encapsulates the interlocking oppressions of Indigenous women when she asserts: 'We have to fight more because as Indigenous we are triply looked down upon: as Indigenous, as women, and as poor.' And fight against these manifold subordinations is exactly what they did.

Markedly, in March 1993, a covert decade after the EZLN was formed, and nine months prior to their declaration of war against the Mexican state and global capitalism, both the EZLN and their civilian bases of support implemented 'Women's Revolutionary Law.' It was a landmark moment in the battle being waged by women against the abuse, non-participation, and reproductive unfreedoms they were experiencing (Marcos 2018). In principle, the edicts of WRL are the direct result of peasant women gone rogue, collectively. In practice, the revolutionary laws function as mechanisms of both empowerment (for women) and accountability (for men).

The account of what unfolded when the laws were announced reports that *Comandanta* Susana, an EZLN commander, carried with her into a community assembly the cumulative sentiments of thousands of Indigenous Zapatista women. Upon reciting the demands of the women to a hushed and alert crowd, the men in the room started getting restless and worried. The women, on the other hand, growing with enthusiasm and confidence, began applauding (Sub Marcos 2002). Subcomandante Marcos (now Galeano) writes that when Susana concluded reading the proclamations aloud, the men were left 'scratching their heads,' while the women 'were singing' (Sub Marcos 2002, 69). He finishes matter-of-factly with: 'The EZLN's first uprising was March 1993 and was led by Zapatista women. There were no casualties, and they won.'

Whilst the writings of by Subcomandante Marcos should be taken with a grain of salt and always cross-checked with realities on the ground, the fact remains that Women's Revolutionary Law became decree. And it was done so via the collective action and organizing of the Zapatista women. That is, the *compas* had thrown down the proverbial gauntlet against both the normalized violence that was imperiling them, and the long-standing devaluation of their labour and lives. Remarkably, in the midst of clandestinely strategizing for the armed revolt that would eventually come to fruition on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1994, tactical discussions of guerrilla warfare and military maneuvers took a backseat to those of women's realities, social reproduction, and bodily autonomy. And even though not initially well received by many men, the laws were eventually taken up, with the substance of the decrees asserting women's rights to equal participation, individual agency, and, quite simply, dignity (Newdick 2005). Issues surrounding representation, recognition, safety, reproductive work, and sexual autonomy feature prominently too.

Broadly speaking, WRL codifies and concretizes a woman's right to involvement and self-determination (Altamirano-Jimnez 2013). More specifically, the laws mandate that women hold key positions in the guerrilla army (the EZLN), are equitably represented in the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, take part in agro-ecological projects/work outside of domestic labour, are freely able to enter/exit relationships, can choose when and how many children they will have, are supported in speaking out against/seeking justice for domestic abuse, and have the latitude to

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brandings are limited, and when imposed, colonial. For their orientation towards feminism, consider Marcos' (2005) statement: 'Feminisms in Mexico are often submerged in practices that follow quite mimetically international feminist theories and priorities. We are inserted into the dominant global international feminist discourse, and a certain sort of feminist movement in Mexico is derivative of the US movement... Often, they have little to do with the context of indigenous women's feminist practices.'

develop their own alternative-economic cooperatives (e.g. weaving, handcrafts, etc.) (Klein, 2015). Additionally, one of the more pathbreaking generative upshots of WRL is how it exposed the inextricable links that patriarchal modes of thought/action have with capitalist rationale and derisions of social reproduction. That is, under market/profit logics, because 'women's work' in domestic spaces (i.e. household chores, nurturing, teaching, etc.) is typically neither attached to a wage, nor understood as revenue-generating, its misplaced depreciation is inevitable (Federici 2012). It is fundamental to state here that domestic labour's first belittling stems from the sexist belief that because it is generally being performed by women—it is not of as much value. Meaning, patriarchy is a system of domination that can exist unto itself, although rarely does, and when operating alongside racial capitalism, is further entrenched, metastasizes, and can become internalized.

Along these lines, WRL, too, was an intervention made by the Zapatista women against structural forces and cultural norms that were debilitating their respective senses of self-worth and emotional well-being. Valentina (EZLN 2013a), an education promoter, succinctly attests to the psychological ramifications women endured when she states: 'the capitalists had us believing their ideas; their story that women are not worth anything.' Relatedly, on International Women's Day 2018, at their 'First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle,' a Zapatista organizer explains:

I saw that whereas before we women only had our houses and fields, now we have schools, clinics, and collective work projects where we women operate equipment and guide the struggle. We make mistakes of course, but we're moving forward, with no one telling us what to do but ourselves. And now I see that we have indeed advanced—even if only a little bit, we always manage to advance somehow. Don't think it was easy. It was very hard, and it continues to be very hard. Not just because the fucking capitalist system wants to destroy us: it's also because we have to fight against the system that makes men believe that we women are less than, and good for nothing (EZLN 2018).

The testimonies above illustrate how the symbiotic relationship of patriarchal authoritarianism and capitalist modes of thinking not only foreclosed women's life chances and took physical tolls, but that the effects were equally deleterious to their individual psyches, personal mental health, and the social psychology of the communities (Watkins and Shulman 2008). The statements also indicate that the realm of social reproduction (e.g. houses, fields, schools, clinics, etc.) served as the fundamental site of where the Zapatista women would collectively struggle for dignity and change. And as was witnessed at the beginning of the section, the *compas* response to the untenable patriarchal capitalist realities they had levied against them, was a *¡Ya Basta!* (Enough!) and uprising of their own.

### ***Outcomes and Critiques***

*To women everywhere, we are saying, 'Let us fight together.'  
...we are inviting all women to fight, so that we (all women)  
will not continue to suffer.*

Prior to WRL, the consequences wrought by heteropatriarchal social relations were relegating the lives of women to quarantine and discipline, in matters of both work and love. The fallouts were commensurately *discursive* (i.e. sexist stereotypes framing women as weak, incapable, histrionic, irrational, etc.) and *material* (i.e. socio-spatial boundaries constraining women to the household, private sphere, kitchen/laundry, child-rearing/reproducing, etc.), with the biopolitical corollaries dually-manifesting themselves as: 1) violence being perpetrated against women, which had become accepted as commonplace; and 2) the banal entrenchment of male entitlement(s) (e.g. to land, marriage, bodies, sex, *not* performing domestic labour, etc.). With the implementation of WRL, then, the Zapatista women were directly, unapologetically, confronting both culturally-embedded expectations and structurally-entrenched practices of (hetero)male supremacy. The revolutionary laws thus functioned as a political tool the women could brandish to disrupt retrograde gendered conventions that were limiting their movements and ability to participate (Sierra 2001). Likewise, the laws served as a moral appeal and policy check they could use to confront misogynistic behaviours that were unduly regulating their lives and encroaching upon their freedoms.

While sometimes criticized for appearing to draw from Western ideals, liberal human rights discourse, and (misguidedly-presumed) static/archaic Indigenous traditions, at its core, WRL and its empowering upshots are confronting both unequal gendered power relations and the structural repression of women (Marcos 2005; The Kilombo Women's Delegation 2018). Indirectly, and perhaps more subtly, WRL is also championing a dynamic and evolving Indigenous ontology that promotes reflexively engaging in mutuality and reciprocity, as well as identifying with a collective subject (Speed and Fordis 2005). These contrast with liberal worldviews imposed by colonizers (e.g. those of modernity, the Enlightenment, classical liberalism) that reify people as disparate and atomized actors whose individuated notions of 'self/identity' are thought to be definable independent of the social and ecological relationships they exist within. This is of tremendous consequence given the primacy that is afforded to the Zapatista's (Indigenous-rooted) relational interpretations of '*Kuxlejal*' 'collective life-existence' (Mora 2017). Coercively restricting a person's ability to participate in or contribute to the community would be dehumanizing. That is, given their cosmovision privileges (1) relationality and accountability to the community/collective; and (2) socio-territorial intersubjectivity (the interdependency, interconnectedness, and 'subject'hood' of all people, animals, land, nature, ecosystems, etc.); WRL protects Zapatista women from being severed from either. Hence, is safeguarding their dignity and ability to be fully human.

In light of this, WRL was not only a declaration of individual rights, but more fundamentally, a transformative instrument of socio-cultural change that has radically reconfigured gender relations. Put differently, in the hands of the *compas*, the laws are a defensive shield they can raise to protect themselves from the physical and psychological violence women disproportionately absorb. And more proactively, a weapon they can wield as women against chauvinistic norms and behaviours that prevent them from embracing the pursuits, relationships, and emotions of their desire (Klein 2015). In transparently addressing the

politics surrounding issues of bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom, Sofia, a health promoter, explains<sup>15</sup>:

...*compañeras* decide who they marry, they are no longer forced. Youth are now involved in every area so they talk and meet each other and spend time together. Who they love is up to them. There is family planning and birth control. This depends upon the community and family but is not common everywhere. Some things are an uphill battle. There are 'bad' customs and 'good' customs. We try to change the bad ones and learn as we go. This is the situation and our struggle.

...I can say that women do now choose their partner and how many children they will have. This is a success.

*Comandanta* Rosalina (EZLN 2015, 95), too, discusses the groundswell of confidence women were being imbued with around the time WRL was being marshalled through the communities:

We were poorly treated, humiliated, and unappreciated because we never knew that yes, we did have the right to organize, to participate, to do all types of work. No one gave us an explanation of how we could organize to get out of exploitation.

...Little by little we came to understand and in this way moved forward until 1994 when we came into the public light—when we could no longer stand the mistreatment of those capitalist fuckers. There we saw that it was true that we [women] did have courage and strength, just like the men, because we could face the enemy without fear. This is why we are ready for anything this evil capitalist system tries to throw at us.

...we lost our fear and timidity, because we now understood that we [women] had the right to participate in all areas of work.

As Rosalinda indicates, under the dark clouds of a protracted, alienating, and bleak patriarchal-capitalist reality bereft of colour and joy, WRL was nothing less than an emancipatory 'politics of collective action' (Gibson-Graham 1996) through which rural peasant women could organize together, empower themselves, and reinvigorate their lives. Moreover, it was a project and process that enabled and emboldened them to build a 'culture of dissent' (Mohanty 2005), leverage their common voice, and shed much-needed light upon as well as begin severing at the roots the maltreatments and subjugations they were enduring.

### ***Together and Side-by-Side***

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<sup>15</sup> *La Escuelita*, August 2013

*We must act as if it is possible to build a  
revolution and radically transform the world.  
And we have to do it all the time.'*  
-Angela Davis (2014)

Women are rarely offered fair and equal recognition for the foundational roles and crucial work they take on in social movements and liberation fronts (Marcos 2005). Despite this, they have historically been and will continue to be the backbone of struggles against systemic repression and for structural change. As the women of *La Via Campesina* (LVC) articulate:

Women have had a key role in pushing forward the political and organizational strategies for the future... ..against the looting, the devastation, the death and the oppression caused by entrepreneurial and colonial capitalism (2013).

Identifying with this conviction and recognizing this fact prior to even LVC stating it, with the installation of WRL the Zapatista women were able to trigger discussions in their communities about the gendered imbalances and inequities of social reproduction, as well as spur efforts forwards apropos securing more autonomy, involvement, and self-efficacy for themselves as women (Speed, Castillo, and Stephen 2006). Up to that point, women in the bases of support had historically been devoting a grossly unequal and unrecognized amount of time, effort, energy, and emotional labour to the day-to-day upkeep and nourishment of their rural villages, as well as the insurgency-at-large. Given this, the *compas* felt it necessary to rethink and transform the way reproductive work was being performed, as well as valued (EZLN 2013a).

Notably, despite the fact that many of the men were (and sometimes still are) reluctant to accept WRL, upon being reminded that resistance for Zapatistas advances *juntos y a la par* ('together and side by side'), they ultimately agreed to adopt and abide by the statutes. This is due to a shared recognition that any struggle against colonialism and capitalism, is necessarily a struggle against patriarchy.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the Zapatista women were implacably relentless and indefatigably steadfast in animating the merits of WRL was also a driving force. This dynamic is accentuated by Alejandra, a health promoter-in-training, who when disclosing what tactic was most effective in convincing men to get on board with WRL explains: 'We weren't going to put up with their shit anymore.'<sup>17</sup>

And while *machismo*, gendered divisions of labour, and double standards have not been wholly eradicated from Zapatista communities (Klein 2015), the imposition of WRL did unsettle pervasive sexist notions of what work women 'naturally must do' (i.e. socially reproductive labour), as well as the specious and regressive ideals about what was assumed women were 'incapable' of doing (e.g. governing, generating ideas, solving problems, offering opinions, working outside of the home/domestic sphere, etc.). Speaking candidly about the gender relations operating within Zapatista communities, as well as even giving a bit of credit to Zapatista

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<sup>16</sup> Critical Through versus the Capitalist Hydra, May 2015

<sup>17</sup> *Comparte por la Humanidad*, July 2016

men for eventually coming around on WRL, *Comandanta* Dalia offers her frank assessment of the current situation:

Even though our men were bastards before, we knew how to get them to understand. There are a few that still act like little assholes sometimes, but at least now it's not all of them. The majority now understand. (EZLN 2015, 98)

Accordingly, it is not uncommon to now hear Zapatista men speak to the value of, as well as see them engage in reproductive work, emotional labour, and even the forgoing of indulgences. That is, one significant offshoot of the women's collective organizing has been unified agreement to refrain from using alcohol and drugs. A community policy that is now supported and enforced by the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*. This sacrificial pledge was not made out of sanctimonious piety, but because alcohol has historically been used as a weapon of colonization against Indigenous communities. It also has the tendency to, as María a health promoter notes, 'put people to 'sleep' and lead to abuse.'<sup>18</sup> Since its inception, the decision to abstain from alcohol has resulted in less violence against women, less emotional abuse, less debt to landowners, and an overall improvement in the health and security of Zapatista communities, individuals, and even the environment (Klein 2015).

Zapatista women are also now more involved than ever in positions of responsibility and decision-making, not to mention taking the lead on projects related to independent media/political communication, food sovereignty/agro-forestry, education, medicine, healthcare, reproductive justice/birth control, land 'recuperation' (land recovered from *hacendados*), weaving/artisan cooperatives, and even public relations (EZLN 2018; *Los Tercios Compas* 2016; Speed 2006).<sup>19</sup> *Compañera* Lizbeth (EZLN 2015, 101) attests to the advances the Zapatista women have made in expanding their contributions to, as well as (re)valuations of reproductive work within the movement:

We women are already participating in all types of work, such as in the area of health, doing ultrasounds, laboratory work, pap smears, colposcopies, dentistry, and nursing; and the three areas of midwifery, bone-setting, and medicinal plants.

We are also working in education as *formadoras* (teacher trainers) and coordinators, and education *promotoras* ('education promoter/teacher'). We have women broadcasters and members of the *Tercios Compas* [Zapatista media team]. We participate in *compañera* collectives, in women's gatherings, and youth gatherings. We are also participating as municipal authorities, which includes many different kinds of work, and we women do these tasks. We are also working in the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* as local authorities, and as board members for the *compañeras'* businesses.

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<sup>18</sup> *La Escuelita*, August 2013

<sup>19</sup> For example, *Los Tercios Compas* ('The Third Compa' or 'The Odd Ones Out'), the independent media of the Zapatistas: <https://www.masde131.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Compas7.jpg>

... we can tell you clearly that this work is hard, it is not easy... but these tasks are how the people rule and the government obeys. We now see this as our culture.

In effect, the *compas* have reconstructed the daily rhythms of both their villages and the insurgent body politic. This is made patent given that women are now regularly involved in all aspects of community life, political organizing, and autonomous governance. More broadly, by placing social reproduction, gender justice, communal intergenerational activities, and collective work-reflection at the forefront of their resistance, the Zapatista women have arguably, in a span of only three decades, turned centuries of seemingly intractable patriarchal oppression on its head.

In claiming this, I should offer a caveat noting that the form and function of WRL is complex, heterogeneous, and manifested unevenly across differing communities and zones. As well as that not all of the 'bad customs' *vis-a-vis* gender relations have been entirely eradicated (i.e. that patriarchy has not been eliminated in totality). However, what has emerged as a result of the Zapatista women's collective dissent and action on the terrain of social reproduction is their ability to question, to speak, to make choices about family life, to claim respect, to live free from abuse and scorn, to demand their partners be co-responsible for domestic tasks and childcare, to work and receive fair pay, and to participate in governance regarding decisions being taken about political organizing, community matters, and public events (EZLN 2018, Sierra 2001). And while they modestly admit to still having a 'long way to go' in terms of wholly toppling masculinist supremacy and *machismo*, it is conceivable to say that the gains they have made 'in the face of the capitalist hydra' towards (re)valuing reproductive work and effecting gender just structural change, as well as advancing both women's collective empowerment and emancipation, are not only amongst the world's most evolved—but effective.

## **Conclusion**

*Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.  
On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.*  
-Arundhati Roy (2003)

In this article I have attempted to demonstrate that the everyday sites and spaces of social reproduction is fertile ground, as well as a crucial political terrain upon which to struggle, for revolutionary change. The place-based evidence I laid out to do so draws from personal attendance at a host of differing Zapatista events and encounters; content offered by decolonial feminist writers approved by Zapatista communities to conduct research *in situ*, as well as both the voices and collective organizing of Zapatista women. Moreover, on account of the evidence at hand, I propose that the Zapatistas can be seen as inspiration par excellence of an autonomous social movement that is co-creating the gender just social relations and inclusive politically conscious culture its members want to be a part of. In addition, I have illustrated how anti-capitalist resistance, the practice of mutuality, and Indigenous worldviews that promote interdependence and interconnectedness can galvanize a diverse and heterogenous critical mass, animate pathways out of structural violence, and transform reality/ies.

To end, for over thirty years now, the Zapatistas have been forging ahead via *preguntando caminamos* ('asking while walking') on three revolutionary fronts where countless other left activist, academic, and advocacy organizations have faltered for decades, if not generations. From my vantage point, these three fronts can be summarized and explained by pointing to a trifecta of the most ubiquitous axioms found across their rebel territories.

- ❖ *Queremos un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos* ('We want a world where many worlds fit'): They are breathing life into an aspirational alternative pathway out of structural violence that hinges upon pluralistic inclusion, the construction of autonomy, and rejuvenates an Indigenous worldview that focuses on dignity, interdependence, and intergenerational connection;
- ❖ *Para todo todos, para nosotros nada* ('Everything for everyone, nothing for us'); They practice and privilege mutual aid, humility, and care for others whilst simultaneously cultivating a collective subject, culture of dissent, and political consciousness in their day-to-day life;
- ❖ *Cuando una mujer avanza, no hay hombre que retrocede* ('When a woman advances, no man is left behind'): They have placed women at the center of their movement and have revalued social reproduction due to the recognition that colonial-capitalist modernity has not only disproportionately targeted women, but also has dismissed and devalued work that reproduces society, which women were typically tasked with.

Markedly, these principled adages, a veritable prefigurative rebel poetics of autonomous socialist-feminist struggle (and selflessness), are given substance through the organized daily praxis of the Indigenous Maya who take up the mantle of becoming 'zapatista.' And in light of what has been unfolding across the autonomous municipalities of the Chiapan countryside for the past three decades, they confirm that alternatives rooted in 'mutualism, reciprocity, moral economy, sovereignty, and solidarity' (Scoones et al. 2017, 11) not only exist, but can provide viable pathways out of patriarchal darkness, colonial oblivion, and capitalist ruin.

Bearing in mind the Zapatistas, as Indigenous Ch'ol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolobal, Mam, and Zoque peoples, have been one of the primary targets of over half a millennium of the unrelenting infiltrations and provocations of racial capitalism, as well as a repressive and negligent state (in addition to the paramilitary shock troops it funds), the strides they are making with respect to building 'another world' and women's collective empowerment are nothing short of miraculous (Ramona 1997; EZLN 2005). This is neither coincidence, nor accident. Because upon becoming familiar with the clandestine genealogy of the Zapatistas (Ramírez and Carlsen 2008), their stunning underdog upset seems like a foregone conclusion. They are, after all, the reascent embodiment of Zapata's rallying cry for 'Land and Freedom,' and contrariwise, the abhorrently-labeled (yet grossly underestimated) 'dirty barefoot Indians' who declared war on both a belligerent government and (racist) neoliberal capitalism (EZLN 2015, 94).

Equally impressive, is that in the midst of sustaining their ongoing insurrection, the Zapatistas; dispossessed, reviled, persecuted, 'shit on,' forgotten, and quite literally made into

the 'poorest of the poor' at the time of their resurgence in 1983 have shielded their self-determination and independent systems of education, healthcare, participatory democracy, food sovereignty, and solidarity economics from dependency upon any state, corporate, or supranational entity/funding (Speed, Castillo, and Stephen 2006; Vergara-Camus 2014). And now, nearly a quarter-century after the armed uprising of the EZLN, they continue to carry out their construction of autonomy and 'non-metaphorized' decolonization, collectively, with a healthy dose of militant yet whimsical irony (Tuck and Yang 2012; Di Piramo 2011; Olesen 2007). Notably, rebel Indigenous women, and the socially reproductive labour and care-work they do each day, are at the heart of both the movement, as well as the life-giving world they are creating.

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