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"Feminist Politics of Connectedness in the Americas"

JULIA ROTH

Abstract:
Feminist practices and theorizing in the Americas is usually referenced alongside national or regional narrations. Moreover, feminisms are often presented in form of containered divisions, on the one hand separating feminist politics from anti-racist or class struggles, and, on the other hand, different feminisms such as white, Amerafrican or indigenous, or working class feminisms from one another. By contrast, this paper argues that much can be gained from focusing on the connected histories and genealogies of feminist politics in the Americas. In the interest of a more complex imaginary of social movements and the social inequalities they address, the paper traces a transregional and an intersectional perspective, according to which axes of stratification such as gender are transnationally linked and always also and always already marked by other axes like race, class, or citizenship/nationality.

This paper elaborates on feminist practices and politics along the line of four very different spotlights of constructions of inter-American sites of feminist entanglements:
1. Abolitionism, Transnational Solidarities, Imperial Feminism (1840-1880)
2. Feminists and/in the International Conferences of American States (1880-1948)
3. The Latin American and Caribbean *Encuentros* (since 1981)
4. En-Racing Gender, En-Gendering Class in African-American, Chicana, Indigenous and Caribbean Feminisms

1. Abolitionism, Transnational Solidarities, Imperial Feminism (1840-1880)

US-American suffragist, women's legal rights advocate and author Doris Stevens was the first woman who intervened at an International Conference in Havana in 1928. In her address to the conference, Stevens opposed separatist politics regarding women's rights in the Americas and emphasized the necessity of transnational solidarity among feminists:

> We do not believe that the men of North America are called upon to be tender protectors of the women of Latin America. We do not look with approval upon this attempt to divide women. Our subjection is world-wide. The abolition of our subjection will be accomplished by world-wide solidarity of women.
>
> ("Address" 21)

Feminist practices and politics on the national or local level have been varying from context to context in the Americas providing a historically constituted wide spectrum of differing feminist movements and positions. However, as Steven's statement shows, since the oppression and structural exclusion of women was

experienced as universal, feminists from early on also sought transnational alliances in order to fight for common goals on an international level. Already before official international feminist meetings were held and feminists started intervening in international conferences, feminists had been exchanging ideas and strategies across and beyond national borders in the Americas.

Despite the doubtless broad spectrum of multiple, overlapping stories of the movement, Forestell and Moynagh describe the story of the so-called first wave of feminism as one "of national distinctiveness within an international cause" (Forestell/Moynagh, "General Introduction" xix) and as "one of the first international social movements." (Moynagh, "Volume Introduction" 3). Particularly in the US and Britain a specific characteristic of early organized feminist engagement is its close intertwining with the abolitionist movement against slavery. Both of these movements share an implicit transregional dimension, since co-operations between British and US anti-slavery women's societies existed from early on (ibd. 17). Both the exclusion of women and the system of slavery pointed at the contradictions implicit in the declaration of human rights as applying only to non-enslaved European men (owning property). British women's rights advocator Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the most radical thinkers in the abolition campaign and she included an anti-slavery message in her 1793 *Vindication on the Rights of Women* (see Shepherd 147), stating that the institution of slavery was the ant-thesis to the doctrine of natural rights. Women were among the first abolitionists, even though they were often not accepted or given a voice or vote in abolitionist circles. Following Gabriele Dietze (2013), abolitionism forms the backdrop against which feminism unfolded in the US, and feminism actually emerged *from* abolitionism.[1]

The saying goes that the fact that their experience of being refused the participation in the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, fueled the conviction of US feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott to found the Women's Movement at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 (see Moynagh 18), an event marked by transnational events such as the simultaneous US-Mexican war. Most works on the emergence of the feminist movements in the Americas focus on the Seneca Falls meeting and the US. However, abolition also had a deep inter-American dimension, since several feminist movements and practices emerged at the same time, while others pursued feminist aims long before the term or the movement. A relational lens brings into view a much broader perspective on the relational dimension of both movements. Women abolitionists fought the slave trade and plantation slavery also in the West Indies and Latin America.

Morevoer, as Verene Shepherd (2008) emphasizes, the sole focus on institutionalized abolitionism (and feminism) blinds out the impact of enslaved women and Caribbean supporters of abolitionism, who usually go unmentioned in most official accounts and historiographies:

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1 As Dietze (2013: 45) points out, a fact that is seldom addressed intraditional history is that the abolitionist movement was divided over the "women question."

> Indeed, the established tradition of writing separate histories of black resistance and of British anti-slavery has been challenged by scholars […] who offer a new understanding of abolition as product of the interaction between developments within Britain and events in the colonies. […] The first resisters were enslaved black women whose owners had taken them from the Caribbean to Britain, from the sixteenth century onwards[.] […] White women became involved in campaigning against the trade from the 1780s onwards[.] (146)

Shepherd points at the crucial fact that in contrast to abolitionists, who fought for the end of the slave trade, but not the system of plantation slavery and the economic profits tied to it, black Caribbean women involved in anti-slavery opposed both, the trade and the institution. Following Shepherd, enslaved women in the Caribbean had been opposing their dehumanization, exploitation and enslavement from the outset.[2] In various ways in form of practices ranging from restraining their daughters from missionary schools, and continuing to confronting violent and sexploitative masters, to maroonage, participation in abolitionist groups and protest songs, they resisted the system all the way from the slave ports of the African West Coast throughout the existence of the regime of slavery.[3] All over the Americas (above all in the US, the Caribbean, Central America and Brazil), numerous enslaved women also ran away and lived as “cimarronas” in maroon societies or in hiding. Shepherd point at the active resistance of women against their enslavement, shipping, abuse, and exploitation: “From what we know of the female role in the trade and slavery, it is safe to assume that women, who formed about thirty-eight per cent of each shipment, participated in these anti-slaving actions.” (2008: 135) And further: “There is overwhelming evidence that enslaved women did not give their bodies for reproduction or productive labor willingly, neither did they accept passively the use of their bodies from brutal forms of enslavement […]. [T]he records are full of examples.” (2008: 139)

The following tokens – which were very widespread during the abolition movement in the United States – illustrate different calls (or strategies) for solidarity, but also different gendered positionings to be found in the specific context of abolition:

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2 Shepherd (2008) points out that there have been numerous “recognized rebel women who embodied the spirit of black women’s resistance to systems of domination,” among them: “Grandy Nanny, Elizabeth Ball, and Ann Guy of Jamaica; Nanny Grigg of Barbados; Alida of Suriname; Tula of Curaçao; and Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs and Sojourner Truth of the United States.[.]” (134). Dietze (2013) lists some black female abolitionists in the US such as Sarah Douglass, Sarah Forten, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth and relegates to Shirley Yee’s overall view in *Black Women Abolitionists* (1992).

3 See Shepherd 137.

Image 1:
Am I Not A Woman and A Sister (Anthony Benezet, Some Historical Account of Guinea [London, 1788]

Image 2:
Am I Not A Woman And A Sister?
Lydia Maria Child *Authentic Anecdotes of American Slavery (*Newburyport, Mass., 1838)

Image 3: Am I Not a Man And A Brother? from the Annual Report of the Edinburgh Ladies' Emancipation Society (1867)

The first vignette with the banner "Am I not a Woman and A Sister?"[4] calls attention to the relation between the struggle for abolition and the fight for equal rights for women. Particularly the hierarchies within feminist circles and between differently positioned women played out from the start, despite endeavors to fight for universal rights under the dictum of "global sisterhood". The image depicted in the vignette hints at the hierarchies between women, since, caused by intersecting axes of inequality in the context of colonialism and enslavement, being gendered as "woman" meant something very different for enslaved and indigenous women than for white women. Respectively, the vignette also illustrates the necessity of enslaved and black abolitionist women to address the more privileged white women to gain their solidarity and form strategic alliances based on their shared oppression and the presumed shared "sisterhood". Since white bourgeois Western women of wealth and from powerful countries dominated international meetings due to their privileged status regarding mobility enabled through imperialism, Moynagh speaks of the "imperial legacy" of hegemonic feminism (4). In addition to structural asymmetries with regard to access, mobility, and thus representation and participation, Moynagh emphasizes the Occidentalist posture of many European and US-American feminists who saw their positions as universal, demonstrated a great interest in liberating oriental women (6) and felt they could speak for and represent all women: "Many of the European and American feminists who articulated their conviction in universal womanhood also gave evidence of a conviction in the superiority of Western political institutions, values, and beliefs, and in the notion that feminism itself originated in the West." (Moynagh 5) A relational perspective as Shepherd (2008) suggests brings into view also resistant practices by enslaved black women in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas occurring long before institutionalized feminism came up:

> Long before the year 1851, at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, where Sojourner Truth asked, 'Ain't I a woman?' and spoke the truth about women's rights;

4 In the 1830s this emblem was used on printed matter and on artifacts associated with women-only, or 'ladies', anti- slavery associations. It echoed the motto, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother', adopted in 1787 by the founders of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

> long before 8 March 1857 in New York, when garment workers protested inhumane working conditions (and later gave inspiration for International Women's Day); and long before 1977, when the United Nations proclaimed International Women's Day, rebel women in the African Atlantic used a variety of strategies to eradicate, or at least destabilize and subvert, systems of domination. (134)

The second token also points at – from the start transnational – related struggles of feminism and abolitionism. It further points at what Dietze terms a transition "from alliances to rivalries" between anti-racist and feminist struggles, as already indicated when early (non-enslaved) feminists spoke of the "slavery" of women and compared the situation of women to that of enslaved workers, thereby blinding out their racial and class privilege. The fact that the enslaved woman kneeling down we see on the token is depicted as white, being greeted by a white, supposedly free, women – incorporating simultaneously the figure of justice – indicates this problematic analogy.

In a similar, way, the third token depicts an enslaved woman side by side to an enslaved man, displaying the solidarity of black women with black men based on the shared experience of enslavement and racist oppression, which differs from the binary opposition made out by white feminists. The "racial/colonial order" (Shohat/Stam 2012: 5) and the related shared dehumanization of enslaved women and men have produced different alliances between African-American men and women than between white men and women.

African American abolitionist Sarah Parker Remond in a speech she delivered in Liverpool in 1859 pointed at the fact that while white women focused on equality and expanding their sphere to the public and professional realms, black Women (in the US) were excluded from humanity and thus also from the same gender system, a fact that they shared with black men. She thus seeks recognition of black people's humanity and gender:[5]

> I appeal on behalf of four millions of men, women, and children who are chattels in the Southern States of America, Not because they are identical with my race and color, though I am proud of that identity, but because they are men and women. The sum of sixteen hundred millions of dollars is invested in their bones, sinews, and flesh — is this not sufficient reason why all the friends of humanity should not endeavor with all their might and power, to overturn the vile systems of slavery. (Parker Remond 1859, n.p.)

Bridging world-systems and decolonial analyses of the capitalist world-economy (Mignolo, 2000; Wallerstein, 1974) with feminist perspectives, María Lugones coined

5 Gabriele Dietze speaks of the operation with "two different gender orders" for white and enslaved black women (2013: 61). For the United States, Dietze (2013, in English 2010) makes out a "racial quartet" of hierarchical positions along the lines of race and gender (white male – white female – black male – black female) marked by rivalries ranging from abolition to the Rape-Lynching-Complex and the Hillary-Clinton versus Barack-Obama presidency campaign. In his elaborations on president Evo Morales in Bolivia, Andrew Canessa (2008) shows how Morales' indigenous masculinity places him in a complex network of what – following Dietze's picture – one could see at least as a "racial sextet" (including constructions of indigenous masculinity and femininity).

the term ‘modern/colonial gender system’ to refer to the co-constituency of gender and the related colonially established intersectional positions:

> Colonialism did not impose precolonial, European gender arrangements on the colonized. It imposed a new gender system that created very different arrangements for colonized males and females than for white bourgeois colonizers. Thus, it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing. (Lugones, 2007: 186)

Both constellations – the differences between women and respective rivalries between bourgeois white and enslaved black women and the racist and inhumane treatment black women share with black men – point at the ways in which gender in the Americas has from the start been constructed alongside multiple interrelated axes of stratification such as racism and sexism. In her essay “Grounding with my sisters”, Keisha Khan-Perry emphasizes the respective international dimension and characteristic of black feminism:

> [B]lack women in Latin America are necessarily engaged in an international struggle because their histories, experiences, and cultures are international in form. [...] Third world women and women of color have always been concerned with cross-national issues of labor exploitation, imperialism, migration, and racialized gender.
>
> (Perry 2009, n.p.)

As Perry’s quote indicates, black feminisms in the Americas in particular have from the outset been marked by a transnational character due to the experience of enforced mobility through colonialism and the enslavement trade and hence multiple axes of oppression. Bemoaning that feminist theorizing is usually located in the US, and that Latin American and Caribbean black feminists are mostly left out of the picture, Perry calls for an Inter-American approach to Amerafrican feminisms which would pay credit to the always already transcultural character of black diaspora movements due to their transnationally related histories. The genealogy of feminist practices detailed above demonstrates the benefit of a relational perspective for bringing into view the region’s entangled, or “shared and divided” (Randeria 2006) histories and thus actors, practices, flows, and spaces that are rendered invisible through a national or one-dimensional analysis. The so-called feminist “first wave” in the Americas was despite the differences mentioned earlier characterized by a discourse and politics of “global sisterhood.” This “tension between the ideal of inclusiveness and the reality of exclusiveness” (Moynagh 4, cf. Rupp 1997) also predominated the feminist interventions and later organization in the frame of transnational conferences of American states, during which feminist groups performed and practiced a politics of joint forces in order to achieve their common goals.

2. Feminists and the International Conferences of American States (1880-1948)

On a more institutional level, the participation, or intervention, by feminists from South and North America in the International Conferences of American States in the late 19th and early 20th century (1880-1948) provide an illustrative example with regards to transnational – and, more precisely, inter-American – feminist practices and politics. With the population growth of the main urban centers in Latin America at the end of the 19th century, educational opportunities for women had increased. Governments throughout the Americas started supporting women's education during these decades, although the form and aim differed decisively. Women were in growing numbers employed as teachers, and in emerging journals, they voiced a feminist critique of gender inequalities and promoted women's rights. The Organization of American States' report underlines the important role of teachers for the women's rights movements: "Female school teachers formed the nucleus of the first women's group to articulate a feminist critique of society, protesting the unequal legal status of women and their limited access to education, as well as political and economic power." (OAS 2016: n.p.) Prior to the first official feminist conferences, feminists from Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil, many of whom were teachers/*maestras*, discussed 'social problems' such as childcare and maternal welfare, or the access to education during the American Scientific Congresses.[6] Early feminists soon realized that organizing on the national level was not sufficient, since gender inequalities were omnipresent throughout the entire hemisphere. They thus sought to participate and gain a voice in international congresses and institutions, particularly at the Pan-American level (see OAS 2016, n.p.).

The First International Conference of American States took place from October 1889 to April 1890 and resulted in the International Union of the Americas (later the Pan-American Union, today Organization of American States/OAS) with its headquarters in Washington D.C. Already between 1826 to 1889 representatives of some or all of the independent states (except Canada) discussed issues such as juridical questions and common defense in the frame of various meetings.[7] Since women were structurally excluded from such events, early feminists organized their own meetings.[8]

6 The American Scientific Congresses took place in Buenos Aires in 1898, in Montevideo in 1901, in Rio de Janeiro in 1905, and in Santiago in 1908 – which was also the first Pan-American Scientific Congress.

7 The following four Latin American Conferences, which took place prior to the Pan-American Conferences, were highly influential in the campaign to create the Pan-American Union: The Congress of Panama on June 22, 1826 in Panama City, initiated by Venezuelan political and military leader Simon Bolivar who intended to unite all of Latin America together in order to prevent invasion by the United States and other major powers at that time. The Second Latin American Conference, December 1847 to March 1, 1848 in Lima, Peru provided a response to two threats: the fear of Spanish designs upon South America's west coast and the US incursion into Mexico. The Third Latin American Conference in September 1856 in Santiago was called because the Latin American countries feared the United States regarding their want of more territory. The fourth Latin American Conference on November 1864 in Lima failed in its attempts to make any agreements regarding the intervention that had taken place by mostly European powers.

8 Organization of American States, "Our History", www.oas.org/en/about/our_history.asp.

In 1910 over 200 women from Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina met for the first Congreso Femenino Internacional in Buenos Aires discussing topics in accordance with international feminist discourses of the time – ranging from access to education to international law to social legislation to protect and support working women. At the second Pan American Scientific Congress in Washington D.C. (1915-16), women were officially excluded and allowed only at the galleries. Consequently, Latin American and US American feminists organized a parallel Pan American Women's Auxiliary Conference at the ballroom of the Mayflower hotel (see OAS 2016). Besides their great diversity in background and personal political orientation, the participants had issues about which they could agree. Alongside feminist topics like the education of women or social welfare, their meeting constituted issues aiming at social justice and equality. The first Pan-American Women's Conference in Baltimore in 1922 could already count on a continuing organizational structure and resulted in the foundation of the Pan American Association for the Advancement of Women.

With the increasing attempt to build a pan-American alliance as expressed in the so-called Monroe Doctrine of 1923, the US sought to counter European hegemony and colonial rule and ensure the independence of the (former) colonies.[9] During the first conference after the First World War, the fifth International Conference of American States in Santiago in 1923, feminists pushed for the insertion of feminist issues of broad social reform into the program. Since women were generally excluded from these conferences, feminists attended the Santiago meeting as "unofficial" delegates, resulting in a resolution recommending that women be appointed as official delegates to future inter-American conferences. Moreover, feminists put their politics on the agendas of the international meetings: "From this point on, gradually, but irreversibly, feminist discourse was to affect inter-American conferences." (OAS 2016, n.p.)

However, there were again no official female delegates allowed at the next International Conference in 1928 in Havana. Nevertheless, women from throughout the hemisphere had traveled to Havana, where the Alianza Feminina Cubana and the Club Femenino de Cuba hosted their meetings.[10] The feminist presence forced the inclusion of women and of their claims on the agendas of inter-American meetings and the modification of the context of inter-American relations (see OAS 2016, n.p.). After a month of protest, they were given a voice at the conference – for the first time during a session of a Pan American conference. In her above-mentioned address to the conference, chairwoman Doris Stevens claimed that women's rights were human rights and opted for the ratification of the Equal Rights Treaty: "For, you see, no man,

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9 In his speech, on which the doctrine is based, US president Monroe stated that any further European attempt to colonize the Americas would be seen as an act of aggression to the entire region to be confronted by US intervention.

10 The participants of this conference were representatives of the Consejo Feminista Mexicana, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Federção Brasileiro pelo Progreso Feminino, the National Women's Party of the United States, the Ligue Feminine Haitienne, the Club de Madres of Buenos Aires, and many more.

no group of men, no government, no nation, no group of nations–ever had the right to withhold from us the rights we ask today. We ask to have restored, rights which have been usurped. These are human rights." (Stevens 11).[11] Stevens reminded her audience that since the idea of equality and equal rights was an (US) American one, the countries of the continent were obliged to implement an equal rights treaty for women's rights: "It is fitting that the American Continent should be the first union of republics to be asked for an equal rights treaty. The demand for women's rights was born on this continent." (13).

The feminists in Havana successfully lobbied for the creation of an officially designated body, the IACW/CIM, reflecting a growing cooperation between feminists of North and South America. This fist worldwide governmental organization dedicated to the rights of women was charged with the investigation of the status of women in the 21 member states. The IACW/CIM's first meeting in Havana in 1930 was joined by representatives from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and the United States (chair) who drafted a resolution for the World conference for the Codification of International Law against any distinction based on sex relating to nationality.

The Equal Rights Treaty brought in during the gathering was ratified by only four member states. Nevertheless, the organization succeeded in bringing feminist issues to the center of political debate throughout the hemisphere. In addition to domestic agendas, feminists active at the inter-American congresses took strong stands on international issues. They supported the principles of nonintervention, the resolution of conflicts through arbitration, and the rights of small nations, opposed the United States occupation of Nicaragua and protested the dismissal of the Haitian representatives.

The seventh International Conference of American States in 1933 in Montevideo should be the first inter-American Conference at which women had an official presence, both within the Inter-American Commission of Women and as members of national delegations. The Convention on the Nationality of Women adopted during the convention stated "There shall be no distinction based on sex as regards nationality" and served as a model for the Convention on the Nationality of Women that was subsequently adopted by the League of Nations. Only four countries signed the world's first Treaty of the Equality of Women (Cuba, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay) which was not approved by the conference (see OAS 2016, n.p.).

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11 Through the IACW/CIM created in Havana, Stevens was active in working with Latina feminists. At the Seventh Pan-American Conference, held in 1933 in Montevideo, Uruguay, the women presented the first report ever to study in detail the civil and political rights of women in each of the 21 member countries. Their proposed Treaty on the Equality of Rights for Women was rejected by the conference. Next, Stevens presented studies showing the disparity between rights of men and women. For example, in 16 countries of the Americas women could not vote at all, in two countries they could vote with restrictions and in three countries they had equal enfranchisement.

The next International Conference of American States in 1938 in Lima was dominated by the US' effort to unite the hemisphere in the event of war. Since the Inter-American Women's Commission had never been supported by the US and in the atmosphere of the late 1930s was seen as secondary, the IACW was disestablished as an autonomous entity during the conference and re-casted from an independent women's commission to a subsidiary unit of the inter-American apparatus. Nevertheless, feminists in Lima passed the resolution that "Women have the right to the enjoyment of equal civil status" which was incorporated into the plans for the United Nations (Mexico 1945), where IACW representatives insisted on putting it into the opening paragraph of the UN charter.

Early feminists in Latin America recognized that there were advantages in addressing the question of women's rights in an international forum and that the leverage provided through this inter-American body was crucial to the expansion of political and civil rights in their own societies. The IACW/CIM was instrumental in pushing for the debate the issue of female suffrage at the national and international levels, and gradually – over the next thirty years women throughout the Americas won the right to vote and stand for office. (OAS 2016, n. p.) When the IACW/CIM was founded in 1928, women could only vote in Canada (since 1918, except Quebec) and the United States (since 1920). Between 1929 (Ecuador) and 1964 (Belize), women of all of the OAS member states were granted suffrage.

Despite their formal marginalization, the Inter-American Commission for Women (ICWA/CIM) kept on initiating and pushing public debates on the status of women in the Americas. During the 1930s and 1940s, the institution collected data and published and distributed numerous studies on gender inequalities.[12] The ICWA/CIM turned into an umbrella organization representing various women's organizations in the Americas providing them a forum for their efforts to fight for equality. The continuous engagement of the IACW/CIM had a decisive impact on this slow but irreversible process:

Delegates of the ICWA had a decisive impact on the creation in 1946 of the Commission of the Status of Women at the United Nations. Feminists organized the Primer Congreso Inter-Americano de Mujeres in Guatemala City in 1947. The meeting

12 In 19 of the American countries, women did not have equal custody over their children, including in seven US states and only two countries allowed joint authority for women of their own children. None of the Latin American countries allowed women to serve on juries and 27 US states prohibited women from participating in juries. Divorce grounds in 14 countries and 28 states were disparate for men and women, and a woman could not administer her own separate property in 13 countries and two US states. After reviewing the data, the conference approved the first international agreement ever adopted concerning women's rights. The conference also passed the Convention on Nationality which established that neither marriage nor divorce could affect the nationality of the members of a family, extending citizenship protection to children as well. The Roosevelt administration then argued that the women's task was completed and the IACW/CIM should be abandoned. In order not to bow to US pressure, the Conference did not vote to continue the IACW/CIM, but instead voted as a unit, with the exception of Argentina, to block the US proposal. (see OAS 2016, n.p.)

was opposed to he Río Pact[13], and was in 1948 established as part of the organization of American States.[14]

In the course of the renewal of the Inter-American system through the adoption of the Charter of the Organization of American States in Bogotá in 1948, the conference also adopted the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political and Civil Rights to Women, as well as the Organic Statute of IACW/CIM and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Men.

With the expansion of the OAS through a growing number of members after 1967, the IACW/CIM also expanded, particularly through the joining of the Caribbean island nations until 1990 (Belize and Guyana). Women in the Caribbean had long been involved in political debate and public discourse on the national and local levels Respectively, Caribbean delegates soon played a decisive role also in the IACW/CIM, adding their particular experiences and perspectives on issues ranging from gender violence to civil rights. Once the suffrage was won, the organization focused on economic and social rights, adding e.g. a wider acceptance of the "double working day" most Latin American and Caribbean women had to face (OAS 2016, n. p.). For that matter, the IACW/CIM launched numerous educational and income-generating projects for women.[15] The IACW/CIM's 1994 development of a work plan resulted in the Plan of Action presented at the UN Women's Conference in Beijing 1995 and focused on participation in decision-making structures, education, the elimination of violence, and the eradication of poverty.[16] In 2000, the first Hemispheric Ministerial

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13 The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance - an attack against one is to be considered an attack against them all; known as the "hemispheric defense" doctrine.

14 Forestell/Moynagh see a caesura after WWII, after suffrage was no longer the central feminist claim. The authors describe the decade to follow as one of the diffusion of topics and the interruption of transnational co-operations, and Human Rights become predominant to feminist claims. (see xxiii)

15 During the1976-1985 Regional Action Plan for the Decade of Women in the Americas, the IACW/CIM carried out a technical cooperation program in 30 OAS states, a number of which were directed at indigenous women. The IACW/CIM's 1986 Plan of Action for Full and Equal Participation by the Year 2000 set guidelines for equal economic opportunities, elimination of discrimination, equal participation and systematic inclusion in national development plans.

16 In January 2014, the UN declared the years 2015-2024 the decade of afrodescendant people. The network Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora (Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean Women and Women of the Diaspora) was founded 1992 as a space of articulation to fight against racism, sexism, and poverty, and to push forward the empowerment of black women. Currently, the Red of Afro women consists of 250 organizations located in 25 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. See more e.g. the comment by the coordinator of the Cono Sur region of the on the forms of organization by afrodescendant women in Latin America during the last decades: www.awid.org/es/noticias-y-an%C3%A1lisis/mujeres-afrodescendientes-organizandose-en-america-latina#sthash.MjULp3TS.dpuf. The UN also supports the regular symposia by Black Women: simposio internacional de mujeres negras (UN):
www.aeapa.es/mujeres/. For a mapping of organized black women in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Diaspora see: www.mujeresafro.org.

Meeting on the Advancement of Women was held in Washington D.C., approving a draft for an Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (see OAS 2016, n.p.)

Since they were excluded from leadership and confronted with androcentric structures which positioned them as Other within their countries, it is characteristic for feminist groups in the Americas that the transnational arena had from the outset held a special appeal. One can say they continued to create an imagined community of interests based on (but not reduced to) gender, a transnational space of political entanglements directed towards abolishing inequalities. Whereas the so-called "first wave" of feminisms in the Americas was, thus generally dedicated to a politics of "global sisterhood" in order to claim basic human and civil rights, feminist claims and positions diversified gradually in the course of the so-called "second wave" during the following decades. Parallel to such a politics of solidarity for achieving most basic rights, feminisms in the Americas have from the outset been marked by different forms of hierarchies such as the mentioned "imperial feminist" legacy.[17]

In order to pay credit to the manifold forms of feminist practices of resistance and opposition and interventions, it is therefore crucial to take into account particularly also the non-institutional, informal, artistic and activist forms of feminist politics and organizing in the Americas.

3. The Latin American and Caribbean *Encuentros* (since 1981)

Even more than the prior Civil Rights era, the period of the 1980s feminist politics was characterized by an increasing diversification of positions and struggles. During this time (since 1981) the non-state/"extra-official" gatherings known as Latin American and Caribbean Feminist *Encuentros* started to be held. Following Sonia Álvarez et.al., the first decade of the *Encuentros* was marked by the negotiation of politics and the production of feminist identities. Conflicts emerged predominantly between so-called *feministas* (who sought autonomy from other social movements) – and *políticas/militantes* (who promoted the *doble militancia* as feminists within other movements). Representatives of Brazil's emergent black movement moreover voiced neglect of racism.

The *Encuentros* have been providing a key arena for collectively reimagining feminism and its relationship to a wide range of struggles for recognition and social justice. They have helped forge "imagined" Latin American feminist communities (and these soon included diasporas, Chicancas etc.). The gatherings have been serving as critical transnational sites in which local activists have refashioned and renegotiated identities, discourses, and practices, distinctive for the region's feminisms. The *Encuentros* have provided and constructed critical sites of negotiation grounded in

17 See St Hill 2011 for a "strategic universalist feminism", questioning the "relevance and value of holding 'difference,' especially as it relates to culture and nationality, central to feminist theorising on gender inequality in the contemporary Caribbean." (191).

solidarity – or at least in strategic alliances or what Gayatri Spivak has termed "strategic essentialism."

The *Encuentro* held in San Bernardo in Argentina in 1990 was characterized by the simultaneous presence of feminists from a wide spectrum and of formalized region-wide nets, e.g. the Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Network and lesbian networks. The gatherings and *Encuentros* of the 1990s were characterized by the experience of the dictatorships in many Latin American countries and the important role of women's movements in overturning the authoritarian regimes throughout the region. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina are but the most prominent example. The decade was also marked by the neoliberalization of economies, but also the Forth UN World Conference on Women (after 10 years) in Beijing.

One of the most important achievement influenced by of the politics of the Encuentros so far was the 1994 ratification of The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as the Convention of Belém do Pará, an international human rights instrument concluded within the Organisation of American States (OAS), which calls for the establishment in the Americas of mechanisms for protecting and defending women's rights, and for combating violence against women.[18]

In 1999, the eighth *Encuentro* in Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic, was characterized by the formation of a new generation of feminists constituted by largely urban youth influenced by the 1994 Zapatista uprising, the students' movement, and university women's studies programs. The meeting was marked by a greater diversity in participants and topics diffusing the conflict between *autónomas* and *institucionalizadas*. The gathering was the first *Encuentro* with a presence of hundreds of Afro-Latin women from the United States and Black women from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (fewer) and from several South American countries. This increasing diversity was also reflected in the gatherings' manifold and diverse topics. Women who identified as indigenous, however, remained almost absent from the *Encuentro* in Juan Dolio.

Largely, the participants of the *Encuentros* put emphasis on the prospects for forging alliances across regional feminist movements based on minimum common values and goals. During this gathering, participants also introduced a transversal axis intended to recapture the "cultural-symbolic-relational" elements of feminist practice and to foster creative, dynamic and innovative forms of interaction. Thus, the participants sought to give equal importance to form and content as well as to arts and "culture" as privileged venues and pushed for new models of communication and sociability. The feminist *Encuentros* thus contributed to the important discourse on forms of participation, representation, and, more generally, knowledge production. It is therefore also crucial to consider different feminist practices, politics and forms of theorizing.

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18 The Convention of Belém do Pará ratified by 32 of the 35 States of the OAS (Canada, Cuba and the United States of America are not parties).

4. En-Gendering Race, En-Racing Class in African-American, Chicana, Indigenous and Caribbean Feminisms

The feminist movements of the Civil Rights Era in the US fought one of the strictest and most openly segregated racial regimes creating the most blatant inequalities, These movements impacted on movements throughout the Americas, and they are comparatively well-studied. Yet, there is a strong bias in feminist theory and historiography to focus on the United States, and on the most visible, mostly white (and often bourgeois) feminism(s). As Safa observes, "Afro-descendent women's organisations are now found in virtually every country in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, [...]. [...]. [In] Brazil, [...] and on the Atlantic coast of Central America [...]. ...] (s)tatistical data by race and gender is still lacking in all areas [...]. ...]. Nevertheless, Afro-descendent groups are beginning to challenge the old *mestizaje* paradigm based on *blanqueamiento* or whitening [...]. .]" (Safa 51). Following Benita Roth (Roth 2009), however, feminist struggle was never solely practiced by or limited to 'bourgeois' white women, as hegemonic feminist theorizing might suggest. By pointing at the "whitewashing" of the so-called Second Wave feminism, Roth claims that the Chicana/Latina and Black Feminist movements in the USA have not formed as a reaction to white feminists' ignorance and racism, as many narrations have it. Rather, different feminisms emerged around the same time in dialogue with and as a reaction/part of leftist male movements and feminist movements and mutually influenced each other. Distinct feminist groups have formed simultaneously along the lines of singular-gender oppression versus multiple oppressions. Moreover, all throughout the Americas, non-white and working-class women have been intervening into the politics of feminists focusing solely on gender oppression in organized form from as early as in the 19th century.

In sum, interventions and theorizing by African-American and Chicana feminists, working-class and Communist feminists, and lesbian and queer feminists contributed enormously to an interlocking understanding of different inequalities. African-American feminist groups such as the Combahee River Collective, the Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, Angela Davis, Toni Morrison, Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, the Zapatista Women of Chiapas or the collective Afrocubanas, to name but a few, claimed a perspective sensible to the interlocking and simultaneous articulation of different axes of oppression – which Western feminists today label "intersectionality"[19] – by pointing at hegemonic feminism's blind spots with regard to classism, racism and heterosexism/heteronormativity.

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19 The paradigm of intersectionality serves to describe and analyze the ways in which socially constructed categories of difference interact to create social hierarchy. The concept is based on the notion that social categories like ethnicity, gender, nationality or class cannot be conceptualized in isolation from one another, but have to be considered in their intertwinings and entanglements. The concept intersectionality has been established in the context of African-American feminist legal and social studies and was inspired by the claims of social movements, in particular by African-American, "Third World" and socialist feminism. For "intersectionality" in the Americas, see Roth 2013, Roth 2015, Viveros Vigoya 2013, Wade, Urrea Giraldo, Viveros Vigoya 2009.

Marisa Belausteguigoitia emphasizes the value of perspectives by women of color to question binaries, since their experiences are necessarily based on multiple poistionings and axes of discrimination. She further underscores the value of the contributions by indigenous feminists at the southern border of Mexico, as well as by Chicana feminists to the North, who, as she highlights "represent many borders as limits which function not only to separate, but also to connect." (14, Translation JR). [20]

Simultaneously, Chicana feminists like Cherríe Moraga, Ana Castilo, or Norma Alarcón from their – manifold, but also specific – positions pointed at their multilayered experiences and identities, marked by several cultures, languages, gendered and racialized discourses and historic traumata. They have offered alternative perspectives and promoted the recognition of alternative knowledge and epistemes. Chicana politics have been decidedly Inter-American from the outset. Most famously among them, Gloría Anzaldúa coined the concept of the "Borderland" as a concrete physical space (the US-Mexican border), but also as a "Chicana identity" based on being located between various cultures for ambiguous spaces and identities between the established binary categories. Anzaldúa defines the – implicitly inter-American, or, rather, transnational – "Borderland", or "Borderland identity" as a new form of creating and understanding knowledge. She introduced the concept of *Nepantla* (*border crossing)* – a Nahuatl term Anzaldúa applies for alternative epistemes and new forms of knowledges and of seeing the world – which defines a space and a speaking position for hitherto marginalized Chicana and Latina voices. Her concept also provides the basis for numerous decolonial approaches.[21] At the same time, *Nepantla* stands for a new epistemology (237). In a similar vein as Anzaldúa, feminist activists and theorists, particularly those from non-hegemonic positions, during the Civil Rights Movement and the second half of the twentieth century have implicitly criticized the unjust geopolitics of knowledge.

Caribbean feminist artists and thinkers have been stressing the close entanglement between these racialized, gendered and classed hierarchies with the global inequalities produced by colonial hierarchies and the legacies of enslavement and the persistent "North-South" exploitation (see e.g. Lugones, Wynter). Caribbean feminist interventions such as the volumes *Engendering History*: *Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (1995), *Daughters of Caliban* (1997), *Afrocubanas* (2011), and *Engendering Caribbean History: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (2011) administer a rich tradition of practices of resistance and negotiation and an intersectional and

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20 Roth underscores the fact that feminist organizing in the US "in some other feminist communities of color, for example the Native American community, was delayed and made relatively difficult by competing loyalties and overall political circumstance." (Roth 2004: 3).

21 See e.g. Aníbal Quijano's and Walter Mignolo's reference to "Border Thinking" (e.g. in Mignolo's subtitle to his book *Local Histories, Global Designs*). The Modernity/Coloniality group around Walter Mignolo, Fernando Coronil et.al. from 2000 to 2003 published a journal titles Nepantla: Views from the South (see https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nepantla/).

"multichronotopic" (Shohat) awareness to thinking new forms of conviviality and connectedness.

However, all over the Americas, contributions by Black, Chicana, and indigenous feminists are oftentimes marginalized or rendered invisible and seldom quoted in feminist contexts. In her essay "The Groundings with my Sisters: Toward a Black Diasporic Feminist Agenda in the Americas",[22] Keisha-Khan Y. Perry hence follows an "attempt to [...] restor[e] [...] the transnational black feminist possibilities in the Americas" in quest for new forms of connectedness and solidarity. Afro-Brazilian feminists have thus pointed at the fact that for them, the Third United Nations Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa (2001),[23] has been just as important as the UN Women's Conference in Beijing (1995) (see Caldwell 2007), and that their NGOs[24] (such as Mulheres Negras Brasileiras) have contributed immensely to the internationalization of their local debates on how to deal with the legacies of coloniality and enslavement, thereby negotiating between their political organizing at the local level and diasporic feminist action on a global scale (see Perry 2009, n.p.; see also dos Santos 2007).

Trans-border and trans-boundary solidarity is, of course, not limited to African-American and Amerafrican feminisms. Latin American feminist groups like the collective Mujeres Creando in Bolivia provide another example of alliances between differently positioned women from urban lesbians to rural poor women.[25] Indigenous feminisms are often marginalized all over the Americas. It is noteworthy that, while black feminisms enjoy a comparative visibility in Canada, the US (see Gunn Allen 1986) and the Caribbean, Indigenous feminisms have remained largely invisibile. In contrast, in Mexico, Central and South America it is rather the other way round, and white feminists increasingly seek collaborations with indigenous women, while black

22 Under the subheading "Groundings with my Sisters: Why Solidarity, and Why an Hemispheric Solidarity?"

23 Safa further underscores the importance of the 2000 Santiago declaration, in which Latin American states explicitly recognized Afro-descendent populations as victims of racism who had been denied rights to equal participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries. She states: "Santiago and the build-up to the Third UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances, held in Durban, South Africa in September 2001, engendered considerable activity in the Latin American and Caribbean region, particularly in Brazil." (Safa 49)

24 Safa names two major national feminist networks active by the time of the Durban conference in 2001: the *Articulacao de Mulheres Brasileiras* (AMB) (Alliance of Brazilian Women) and the *Rede Nacional Femenista da Saúde, Direitos Reprodutivos e Sexuais* (National Feminist Network for Health, Reproductive Rights and Sexuality), which "assumed a racial perspective on gender and published demographic data on Afro-descendent women for the conference." (Safa 55)

25 For different feminisms and different feminist solidary alliances, see e.g. Suárez Návaz and Aída Hernández 2008, Espinosa Damián 2009, Espinosa Damián, Dircio Chautla and Sánchez Nestor 2010, Espinosa Damián and Lau Jaiven 2011; Espinosa Miñoso, Gómez Correal and Ochoa Muñoz 2014; Castillo, Dudley and Ochoa 1999.

women are marginalized. All of these groups are also not free from conflicts, as for example, poor and rural women often do not feel represented by the more visible and better equipped mostly urban and well-educated feminists and hence sometimes form their own groups, or consciously withdraw or keep away from feminist organizing on the official or institutional level. It is therefore crucial to take a look also at the "extra-official" alliances and meetings organized by feminists, including the related conflicts precisely about the role of feminism – e.g. whether feminism should focus on gender inequalities or seek broader social alliances and more inclusive struggles. From the early 1980s on, the Latin American and Caribbean feminist gathering referred to as *Encuentros* detailed above provided such a forum and fostered new modalities of transborder activism. The diverse feminisms that have marked the hemisphere make a claim for creating knowledge and community/solidarity and look at cultural practices and artefacts as sites of respective politics of knowledge production and circulation for including and reaching a wider spectrum of contexts and experiences. Belausteguigoitia (2009: 12) stresses that the overcoming of persisting inequalities on the level of knowledge and the production of theory, a dialogue requires the critical reflection of disciplines, and, respectively, disciplinary histories, methodologies, and their entanglements with colonial power structures.

5. Outlook: Alternative Modes of Feminist Knowledge Production

Like their predecessors at the Inter-American Conferences, the politics and the coalitions of the participants of the Encuentros and many other feminist forms of organizing are rooted in entangled histories of sexual oppression and engendered exploitation, stigmatization, and violence, and in blatant forms of institutionalized racism as a legacy of colonialism, the transnational slave trade and plantation slavery.

Current Eurocentric feminist discourses on "Intersectionality" mostly ignore that the "interlocking systems of oppressions" they theoretically seek to render problematic have been the lived experiences and the object of struggle and resistance by feminists of Color for more than a century in organized form, and in multiple non-organized ways for centuries before that (see e.g. Shepherd 2008). Feminist politics from the Americas tie what the concept of "intersectionality" implies back to the radical roots it originated in, thus providing a lens for the overlapping and multichronotopically entangled character of categorizations, positions and hierarchies a diverse context such as the Americas requires. The outlined genealogy of entangled transnational and intersectional feminist politics in the Americas provides the background for means of imagining feminist epistemologies otherwise.

In a similar vein, Ella Shohat has emphasized the necessity to rethink disciplinary borders and conceptual boundaries that "continue to reproduce the discursive, overlapping quarantine of interconnected fields of inquiry" (2002: 69) and underlined the importance of combining area studies and postcolonial feminist perspectives for a more relational, entangled perspective. Alissa Trotz emphasizes that other societies can learn from Caribbean experiences and practices of transnationality in that sense in order to contribute to

> a mode of analysis that questions both the discreteness and the equivalence of place, focusing our attention instead on tracking how power is spatialized, on the gendered flows and relations that constitute the uniqueness of each place and that also differentiate and hierarchize across and within them[.] (7)26

A relational (and intersectional) perspective on feminisms (and their diasporic workings) as pursued in this article, helps bring into view and thus widens the scope toward thinking new analytical categories and spatialities in the Americas and include an intersectional perspective sensitive also to the "translocational positionalities" (Anthias 2006). As my spotlights have demonstrated, on a more general level feminist or gender politics and practices provide a particularly valid realm for conceptualizing entanglements in the Americas, since they have from the outset been based on an interrelated understanding of inequalities, but also of solidarity, often beyond national, social, cultural boundaries and borders.

An approach attentive to related feminist histories and inequalities also serves to question the myth of "separateness" and "pureness" often unquestioned in hegemonic feminist discourses – from which we can learn also in our societies increasingly threatened by rightwing backlashes at large.

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26 Trotz draws on the "'power-geometries' that feminist geographer Doreen Massey (1994) refers to" (7). Similarly, Helen Safa emphasizes the value of Amerafrican feminist movements and recalls that "social inclusion need not be based on homogenisation, but on an appreciation of the existing racial and ethnic diversity in Latin American and the Caribbean. The roles that women play in these Afro-descendent movements argue for a greater concern for gender and racial equality in the quest for greater social justice in the region." (63) Violet Barriteau highlights the relevant contributions by black feminist theorizing and problematizes its "relative absence in our intellectual and activist work" (26) and Perry claims the reinforcement Amerafrican feminist solidarities.

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