

PREFACE

‘Attentiveness only deepens what it regards’
– Jane Hirshfield, *Nine Gates* (Harper/Perennial, 1997)

We could say that this book began in the town of San Miguel de Allende in the state of Guanajuato, in Central Mexico during the summer of 2005. Nearly 200 scholars and activists from 13 countries gathered for a conference organized by the Center for Global Justice, to discuss the impact of ‘globalization’ on women and their families. In the spirit of mutual respect and collaboration across boundaries, borders and continents, we engaged in dialogue and critical questioning, seeking long-term strategies and solutions to global crises, inequalities and injustices. Over the course of nine or ten days, there were sixty presentations focusing on women’s participation in neighborhood associations, community organizations, alternative trade organizations and labor unions, and on overcoming obstacles to building alliances throughout the world. At breakfast on one of those days, Ligaya Lindio-McGovern—who was to become my co-editor on this project—and I, remarked about the quality of the presentations and the research, wondering if there was a plan for publishing conference ‘proceedings.’ When we inquired, one of the conference organizers, Cliff Durand, simply said, why don’t *you* do it? Cliff suggested that I write to Richard Harris, the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Developing Societies*. Cliff put in a good word for us and Richard said the Journal would publish some of the essays in a special issue on ‘women and globalization,’ provided that Ligaya and I were willing to act as guest editors and select and edit the articles. One and a half years later, in January 2007, the special issue was published.

Since then, we have found the special issue to be especially useful in teaching about global issues, feminisms and research methods. I teach advanced undergraduate courses in sociology (political economy), cultural anthropology and women’s studies at a small, private liberal arts college in New Jersey. Most of my students are ‘non-traditional students,’ that is, they tend to be older than the typical college student. Many are women of color from low-income and ‘working class’ families; often they are single parents and have multiple significant others to care for including children of their own, elderly and infirm parents and younger siblings. Their families come from the south of the United States or from Newark, New Jersey and the surrounding towns; others have their roots in Peru or Ecuador, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, the Philippines, Korea or Nigeria. Many have endured a lot of hardship in their lives. Fre-

quently, they have had less than the best educational preparation for college and/or speak English as a second or third language, and many work full-time to support their families. Somehow they find their way to Bloomfield College and settle in for a few years as Sociology majors with aspirations to pursue careers in teaching, nursing, urban planning, the law, or human services. Many are committed to returning to their communities to offer services and opportunities that were not available to them as youth.

Like the stories of the women included in the articles of the special issue, my students' stories of struggle and sacrifice shape the foundations of their identities, but many are not yet aware of that; nor are they generally aware of the relationship between their own struggles and those of women throughout the world. Instead, at the beginning of every semester in my Senior Research Seminar (my department's version of the Senior Thesis), my students look anxiously at the syllabus and the required reading list. Most are terrified about the prospect of writing a thesis. They all know they must pass this course in order to graduate. They are nervous that they do not know enough about what is happening in the world. Many are not convinced that global issues are even relevant to their lives. What does the IMF, World Bank or World Trade Organization, for example, have to do with them? How can deregulation in Peru, the privatization of water in South Africa, the dollarization of Ecuador's currency, violence against women and girls in India, the freezing of wages and undermining of labor unions in Colombia, child labor in Haiti, Mexico or China, labor export policies of the Philippines, or unemployment and domestic violence in Argentina, possibly affect their lives? However, once we begin reading the essays, watching key documentary films together and discussing these issues, they start to make the connections and their worlds slowly expand. They begin to see how macro-economic policies, structures and institutions affect the life choices and experiences that real people have. With encouragement, most choose to write their senior thesis on their own country of origin or their own heritage, researching the impact of 'global capitalist penetration' on their families and communities, or, for example, on the relationship between 'welfare reform,' poverty and domestic violence. They interview family members about their decisions. Why did they leave Peru or Ecuador? What were conditions like when their parents decided to leave Haiti and come to the United States? What were their experiences as children in Korea or the Philippines or Nigeria? How were their families affected by de-industrialization in Newark or Jersey City, and by cutbacks in the provision of social services? In seeking answers to these questions, students become teachers. They teach us all about their worlds, our world.

Hence, when Richard Harris suggested to us this past winter that de Sitter Publications, Canada was interested in a book version of the special issue, both Ligaya and I jumped at the opportunity. I tracked down and contacted the authors of the essays we had decided to include, and all of them enthusiastically agreed to revise and update their essays. And, at Ligaya's urging, we reconceptualized the work: instead of merely examining the impact on women and their families, of the neoliberal policies that accompany global capitalist penetration, why not concentrate on women's resistance to those policies? While many of the articles in the journal had touched upon women's resistance, not all of them had. So here was an opportunity for all of us to refocus our attention in a way that was consistent with what has been transpiring globally during the past five years. That is, there has been a shift in struggles for survival and petitions for social justice, a number of victories in the 'anti-globalization' movement, the continued development of local alternatives to capitalist exploitation, and an increase in transnational strategies to address global inequalities. This book is the result.

Needless to say, we have been truly inspired by our collaboration with all of our contributors—their graciousness in accepting our suggestions, their trust in our editorship, the sharing of their excitement about the work they are engaged in, and especially about providing spaces for women's voices to resonate and to teach us all. To quote poet and 'woman warrior,' Audre Lorde, "The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation...because in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing, that is growth." It has been an incredible and humbling experience to communicate across continents, with scholars and activists living and working in South Africa, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Spain, India, Australia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and across the United States. We know that policymakers, NGOs, scholars, activists and our students will appreciate being able to reflect on the lives and experiences of women and their families globally; they will all be inspired by women's resistance to global capitalist penetration. For clearly, as we turn our attention outward, we also deepen our knowledge of ourselves. We can think of no greater gift than this and we are grateful to all who have made it possible.

Erica G Polakoff
July 2010

‘Third World feminisms run the risk of marginalization or ghettoization both from mainstream (right and left) and Western feminist discourses’.
— Chandra Mohanty, *Feminisms Without Borders*

Before I came to the conference on Women and Globalization in San Miguel de Allende, to present a paper on the Filipino women’s resistance to neoliberal globalization, I already had in mind to put together an edited book that would focus on globalization and Third World women and their collective struggles. This idea was part of my response to my discontent about the invisibility of Third World women’s experiences in the mainstream literature on globalization that I reviewed both for my teaching and research. Such invisibility, I thought, perpetuates their marginalization, exploitation and oppression, and work that will bring visibility to their experience is not only an important dimension of scholarship, but also part of being engaged in social justice movements. I was especially moved as I listened to the testimonies of the grassroots women who participated in the conference, such as the Mexican woman who worked in the maquiladora industry about the exploitation and the company’s control of her labor that degraded her human dignity, and her struggle with others for social justice and labor rights. I found affinity with her given my Third World origin and being a Filipina who also embodies the experience of neo-colonialism that capitalist globalization perpetuates in the Philippines. I recalled memories when I joined peasant women, workers, urban poor and other activists from various sectors, some even from other countries, protesting in the streets of Manila and carrying a huge streamer with the slogan, “Oppose Imperialist Globalization”. I thought that her Mexican experience and that of other Third World women must find a place in texts to raise scholarly awareness of our oppression. It was this quiet passion that sustained me in co-editing with Erica the special issue of the *Journal of Developing Societies*, titled *Women and Globalization*, and this book into which that journal has evolved. I suggested its new title, *Gender and Globalization: Patterns of Women’s Resistance*, to capture and emphasize the agency and struggles of women that not only invite us to participate in seeking a more humane and just world, but also spark rays of hope to sustain us in the difficult struggle.

As neoliberal globalization fails to deliver its promise of greater progress for the impoverished, the production and dissemination of knowledge to understand better its dynamics—so we can be better informed to organize policy-oriented collective action to change the global inequalities it produces—becomes even more urgent. Such production/dissemination of knowledge would be better served through collaborative efforts so as to bring multiple voices of women, men and children experiencing the structural violence of neoliberalism in differ-

ent social, cultural, historical, and political contexts. Sometimes putting together an edited volume like this can be an appropriate way to bring together these multiple voices. Such collaboration can be a way of creating intellectual communities that are engaged in the world that they write about, creating new ways of knowing the world where hierarchies of knowledge production and the culture of individualism that global capitalism promotes are deconstructed. After all, individualism that is antithetical to cultures of cooperation, collaboration and community necessary in combating the structural violence of global capitalism permeates academic circles and institutions and it becomes part of the hidden curriculum that some of our students may imbibe. However, as publishers turn more to single-authored books as a cost-saving measure, partly due to the economic crisis, collaboratively bringing together multiple voices of communities of struggle and resistance through edited volumes can be challenging. That is why I highly value and I am thankful for Richard Harris of the *Journal of Developing Societies* (who also graciously agreed to write the Foreword in this book), and Shivu Ishwaran of de Sitter Publications for creating the opportunity for us and our wonderful contributors to put women's experiences into texts that can be widely disseminated. I would like to heartily say, that this book is not only *about* the women we write about. This book is *their* book. They are co-editors, they are co-authors of the world we write about. Without their struggles where they put their flesh and blood on the line there is no resistance to write about. It is for this reason that I pledge a donation from the small royalty from this book to the women's movement in the Philippines I wrote about in this volume.

As well, I found the articles in the special journal issue from which this book evolved useful in my graduate course on Globalization, Development and Social Policy and in my upper level courses like Sociology of Development, and Collective Action and Social Movements. The journal issue complemented the more theoretical and sometimes polemical texts on globalization, or texts that minimally touch on women/gender and globalization. Students often need more concrete illustrations of alternatives to neoliberal policies and how people actually engage in bringing about change. This volume will be useful as well in disciplines other than sociology, such as political science, international studies, women's studies, area studies, political economy, and labor studies. It complements my other co-edited volume (with Isidor Wallimann), *Globalization and Third World Women: Exploitation, Coping and Resistance* (2009, Ashgate Publishing), that others and I have also used in teaching and research.

Ligaya Lindio-McGovern
July 2010