Putting Antisemitism on the Anti-Oppression Agenda in Women's Studies and the Feminist Community
Nora Gold

An Embodied Integrative Anti-Racist Feminism
Roxana Ng

The Politics of Naming Feminisms: The Debate Continues...
Njoki Wane

February, 2004
To celebrate the 20th anniversary of CWSE’s Popular Feminism Lecture and Discussion Series, five panel presentations took place during the 2003-2004 academic year:

TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINISMS*

Bonnie Burstow, Frieda Forman, Didi Khayatt

FEMINIST RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY

Himani Bannerji, Paula Bourne, Margrit Eichler, Helen Lenskyj

INTEGRATIVE ANTI-RACISM AND FEMINISM*

Nora Gold, Roxana Ng, Sherene Razack, Njoki Wane

THEORIZATION OF WOMEN’S RESISTANCE IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS*

Shahnaz Khan, Angela Miles, Shahrzad Mojab

FEMINIST CULTURAL REPRESENTATION*

Kathleen Gallagher, Pam Harris, Philinda Masters

*Copies of audiotapes of these panels are available from CWSE.
Putting Antisemitism on the Anti-Oppression Agenda in Women's Studies and the Feminist Community

by Nora Gold

First of all, thank-you for inviting me be here as part of the Popular Feminism series and the 20th anniversary celebrations of this Centre. Some of the previous speakers have talked about the early days of feminism here at OISE, and I too was around back in 1985. I was doing my PhD in social work next door, but I took all my electives here, and at the time felt that this Centre was a real haven for me, and I still feel this now. So thank-you.

Today I’m going to talk about antisemitism. As a Jewish feminist who has been thinking, talking, and teaching about anti-oppression for many years, the connections and parallels between antisemitism, anti-racism and other forms of oppression are very obvious to me as they are to other Jewish feminists. However, non-Jewish feminists or feminist scholars have not always seen this connection as clearly as we have, and I’m hoping today to make some of these connections clearer to you all.

We are living now in a time period that is viciously antisemitic. I am sure that many of you have heard about some of things that are happening to Jews around the world. But let me begin by giving you a little bit of background, for instance about what’s happening in Europe, just so you get some sense of the current international climate. In Belgium a group of thugs beat up the chief rabbi, and kicked him in the face, calling him a dirty Jew. Two synagogues in Brussels were fire-bombed; a third was sprayed with automatic weapons fire. In Britain a Yeshiva student reading the Psalms was stabbed 27 times on a London bus. “Antisemitism and its open expression,” wrote Petronella Wyatt, a columnist in The Spectator, “has become respectable at London dinner tables.” She quoted one member of the House of Lords as saying: “The Jews have been asking for it and now, thank God, we can say what we think at last.” In Germany a rabbinical student was beaten up in downtown Berlin. In Ukraine they smashed the windows of the main synagogue. In Greece Jewish graves were desecrated. And so on. The list goes on and on. Every time I present on this topic, I think there won’t be any new such incidents to report, but there always is, this never stops. In Istanbul several months ago, two synagogues
were bombed in the same day, killing 24 people, and injuring 300. The situation in France is the worst of all. In Paris there have been about 10-12 anti-Jewish incidents per day. The statue of Alfred Dreyfus in Paris has the words “Dirty Jew” painted on it. Religious centres and synagogues have been fire-bombed. The walls in the Jewish neighbourhoods of Paris have been defaced with slogans proclaiming, “Jews to the gas chambers” and “Death to the Jews.” A girl in Aix-en-Provence was accosted by three masked men who called her “dirty Jew” and carved a Jewish star into her arm. I wish I could say these examples are unusual. But they’re not. This kind of thing is happening constantly. This is the flavour of the climate right now. Simon Wiesenthal, who has been working since World War II to bring Nazi war criminals to justice, recently said that the current climate of verbal violence and slurs against Jews is worse now than it was in Austria in the 1930s.

Canada of course is part of the world. Antisemitism has always existed in Canada, beginning with the very settlement of this country during the colonial period. However, Canadian antisemitism has taken different forms at different times. Prior to World War II, for example, there were entrance quotas to universities, and Jewish doctors were not allowed to practice in Canadian hospitals, even as interns. There was social exclusion from recreational, sports, and social clubs and many of our major cultural institutions. And, of course, during the war itself we had an immigration policy that kept out the Jews who were fleeing from Nazi-occupied Europe. Fortunately, this kind of institutionalized antisemitism is no longer with us. However, we now have a new kind of antisemitism. Before discussing the differences between the two, it should be noted that the old and the new antisemitisms are very similar conceptually, and very linked in their belief systems. Both assume not only the inferiority of the Jew, but the sub-humanity, or even non-humanity, of the Jew. For example, Jews have often been referred to as animals, such as dogs or vermin (the latter being a Nazi favourite). Both also assume the inherent evil of the Jews. People who hold these views also have images of the Jew that are completely paradoxical. For example, Jews are super-human but sub-human; weak, but they run the world. They’re overly cerebral, but they’re overly lascivious, etc. But this is not problematic because, according to Langmuir (who, in my view, is the scholar of antisemitism who best understands this phenomenon), neither truth nor reality have anything to do with antisemitism. Langmuir (1990) distinguishes between the usual kind of xenophobia which derives from direct contact between different groups, and in this sense (even though it sounds completely
oxymoronic) is a reality-based kind of ethnic prejudice, and another kind that is not. To describe this second kind, he uses the term “chimera”:

The ancient use of chimera to refer to a fabulous monster emphasizes the central characteristic of the phenomenon I wish to distinguish from xenophobia. In contrast with xenophobic assertions, chimerical assertions present fantasies, figments of the imagination, monsters that, although dressed syntactically in the clothes of real humans, have never been seen, and are projections of mental processes unconnected with the real people of the outgroup. Chimerical assertions have “no kernel of truth.”

In other words, to Langmuir, antisemitism as we know it is not about real Jews; it is about mythical ones. And therefore the phenomenon of antisemitism says nothing at all about Jews, but much about antisemites, and their psychological need to displace and project the unwanted (dirty, evil) parts of themselves onto an external image, hate it, and in this way be rendered guiltless, pure and clean. There are obvious parallels here to some men’s misogynistic projections onto women. Taking Langmuir’s ideas one step further, Smith views “the Satanic Jew” created through projection as “a socially constructed enemy.”

Now in terms of women, Jewish women, of course (like women of other diverse groups), experience dual oppression - here because of the intersection between sexism and antisemitism - and also multiple oppression related to being lesbian, women of colour, poor, old, and/or disabled. In my most recent research, I conducted a national study of Canadian Jewish women and their experiences of sexism and antisemitism. (The results of this research will be coming out any day now in *Women’s Studies International Forum.* The first phase of this study involved focus groups with 47 women from Toronto and Montreal, the data of which was analyzed qualitatively, and Phase Two involved a random sample of women from across the country, the data of which was analyzed quantitatively. The Canadian Jewish women who took part in my study were exposed to very frequent verbal violence as both women and as Jews. They were exposed to many insults and derogatory jokes about them as Jews, and they also experienced the more “extreme forms of antisemitism.” Because they were Jewish, more than 20% had been harassed, 10% experienced vandalism at their home or office, 12% did not get a job or promotion they were qualified for, and 9% were physically assaulted as Jews. Among many other questions, I asked these women what they saw as some of the similarities and differences between sexism
and antisemitism, and if there was one that they thought of as worse. If they compared these two forms of oppression, which did they experience as more frightening? In the focus groups, antisemitism came through as being much more frightening than sexism. It was seen as a threat to physical survival (one woman said simply, “they want us dead”), as opposed to sexism which to them was about being second-class, denigrated, and exploited, but did not generate the same level of fear. And it is worth noting that in this sample 61% of the women considered themselves feminists, so this is not a group that made light of sexism. In an interesting parallel, one of my colleagues told me that in work that she did, she heard some First Nations women say that for them racism was much scarier than the sexism they had experienced. This is consistent also with Phase Two of my study: Although the Jewish women in my research experienced about ten times as many sexist experiences as antisemitic ones, their mental health was related only to their experiences of antisemitism. The women who said they had had many antisemitic experiences in their lives also had significantly higher scores on the Beck Depression Inventory than the rest of the women in the study. Yet no such relationship was found regarding sexism.

It is also important to point out that this research was done before the beginning of the second intifada in the Middle East. Things are much worse in terms of antisemitism in Canada now than they were then, and it is virtually certain that the results obtained would be even harsher now. In Canada (as in the rest of the world), the number of antisemitic incidents has recently increased dramatically, going up 60% in just one year (from 2001 to 2002). According to Abella (2002, 1994, p. 53), “In a sense the old institutionalized antisemitism has been replaced with a new kind, which is the growing acceptability of anti-Jewishness among intellectuals, students, academics, the media, and politicians, a form that is more subtle but no less pernicious.” This new antisemitism now manifests itself in harassment of, and violence against, Jews, vandalism of Jewish property, verbal slurs and hate speech, antisemitic stereotyping of Jews (such as “All Jews are rich and powerful,” or “Jews control the media,” both of which are obviously not true), antisemitic myths involving historical inaccuracy or distortion (e.g., Holocaust denial or trivialization), Jews being portrayed as the killers of Christ and/or Christian children, and anti-Zionism. Before going any further, I want to define the term anti-Zionism.

Anti-Zionism, a uniquely modern form of antisemitism, is categorically different from merely being critical of Israel’s domestic or foreign policies. Many people (among them Jews
and Israelis, myself included) are very critical of the policies of Israel’s current government. To explain a little about where I’m coming from, I have spent most of my adult life on the Israeli left. I’ve been involved with the peace camp in Israel, the general peace camp and also the feminist peace camp there, which is different and in some ways more radical. I have demonstrated with the left, I’ve supported various projects bringing Jewish and Palestinian women together in Israel, and for 3 years I was part of a dialogue group here in Toronto between Jewish and Palestinian feminists. I am appalled, I am extremely distressed, by the policies of the current Israeli government, and I oppose it in the strongest possible terms. However, this is not anti-Zionism. Anti-Zionism is not about disagreeing with policies. Anti-Zionism negates Israel’s intrinsic right to exist, which is a direct extension of the antisemitic belief that Jews do not have a right to exist or survive, something which one does not apply to any other country or set of individuals. For example, who would ever think to question Canada’s right to exist, despite the fact that it is beyond the shadow of a doubt a racist society (not to mention sexist, heterosexist, ageist, and ableist)? So this is not to simplistically to defend any or all of Israel’s current political actions, nor is it to say that any criticism of Israel is tantamount to antisemitism. But I am identifying one new form of antisemitism which nowadays passes on the left as antisemitism in a politically correct guise. Please note that the member of the House of Lords cited above did not say, “the Israelis have been asking for it”; he said, “the Jews have been asking for it.” And the Europeans shouting slogans or writing graffiti about dirty Jews, Jews to the gas chambers and death to the Jews are not critiques of Israeli government policy; they are antisemitism.

To return to the academe: It is a terrible and tragic irony that at the present time the new antisemitism thrives especially well in the academic environment. The academe is one of the places it is most at home, and the universities in Canada are currently among the most frightening and dangerous places for Jewish students and faculty. In spite of this fact, antisemitism is virtually never included when anti-oppression is taught. This is the case in Women’s Studies, it is the case in my field, social work, and it is also the norm throughout all the social sciences and humanities. This invisibility of antisemitism is not a neutral thing. In the words of Evelyn Torton Beck, a Jewish lesbian and feminist psychologist: “Jewish invisibility is a symptom of antisemitism as surely as lesbian invisibility is a symptom of homophobia,” and it must be addressed. The main implication of all this for the field of Women’s Studies is that the
dual oppression and multiple oppression experienced by Jewish women need to be recognized and taught about in Women’s Studies programs and in the feminist community at large. It means taking seriously the oppression of Jewish women, and finding ways to actively support them. Within the classroom, antisemitic incidents are now occurring with increasing frequency. Jewish women often feel silenced both as students and as faculty. One woman in my study said that she used to be able to call the feminist movement a safe place for her, but that sadly, this is no longer the case.

In the context of teaching, feminist educators need to begin adding content on Jewish women to their educational agendas. As with everything else, this content should be taught not in isolation, but interwoven with what is taught about all the other intersecting oppressions. For example, case examples used in class could include a 60-year old Jewish lesbian, a disabled Jewish girl, or a Jewish welfare mother who emigrated a few years ago with her children from the former Yugoslavia. In addition, feminist educators need to challenge the two main stereotypes about Jewish women: JAPs (Jewish American princesses) and Jewish mothers, both of which are both sexist and antisemitic. Other antisemitic myths and stereotypes also need to be challenged, such as those referring to Jewish characteristics (e.g., Jews being pushy, vulgar, dishonest, materialistic, caring only about “their own”), Jewish influence (“Jewish money controls the media”), and Jewish wealth. Similarly, antisemitic myths may include historical inaccuracies or distortions (such as Holocaust denial or trivialization), Jews being portrayed as the killers of Christ or Christian children, and anti-Zionism. Any remarks reflecting these myths or stereotypes must be dealt with at the moment they occur in the classroom, hallway or whatever. Such comments should not be allowed to pass as personal opinion. They are as personal as any other racist remark, and there is no room for them in a program of Women’s Studies.

From an administrative point of view, creating an inclusive feminist environment would translate into not scheduling exams or other academic events on the Jewish Sabbath or on Jewish holidays, and would also mean including Jewish women on panels on multiple oppression, such as Women and Diversity panels at International Women’s Day celebrations, and other public feminist events (which now virtually never occurs). Finally, in terms of activism, feminist scholars and educators need to struggle against antisemitism with the same passion and
commitment that have been brought to the struggles against sexism, other forms of racism, homophobia, and all kinds of oppression. Given that antisemitism is now rife not only on the right as it historically was, but also on the left (for once the right and left agree on something!), feminist activism is essential to address the dual oppression experienced by Jewish women as evidenced in this research. One goal of this work is, of course, to decrease the frequency of sexist and antisemitic experiences that Jewish women experience, as well as to reduce the damage to their mental and psychological health. However, in the long term, we hope for much more than diminished sexism and antisemitism for Jewish women. We hope for the eradication of antisemitism and sexism, and all other forms of oppression, from the world.

References


When Paula asked me to be part of this panel to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of *Popular Feminism*, she told me in an email message that it was to be a ‘retrospective’ for me and other panelists ‘to reflect upon how you have integrated your life and work as a feminist and how being part of OISE and the larger feminist community has affect your work’ (July 4, 2003). Her instruction provided the starting point of my reflection. My paper has two parts. The first part describes my experience and perception of OISE as a graduate student and as a faculty. The second part outlines my conceptualization of an embodied integrative anti-racist feminist approach to education which I have been refining in the past 25 years.

**My Years at OISE (1978-2004)**

To explain how I ended up at OISE as a graduate student in 1978, I have to go back a bit further. I graduated from the University of British Columbia (UBC) with a M.A. in Anthropology in 1975, vowing never to be part of the academy due to my negative experience there. I got a job as a community researcher in Chinatown, and became active in getting the Vancouver Women’s Research Centre (WRC) off the ground. Through the WRC, I was

---

1 This paper was presented as part of the 20th anniversary celebration of *Popular Feminism* panel on ‘Integrative Anti-racism and Feminism’ of the Centre for Women’s Studies in Education (CWSE), The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, February 2nd, 2004. I thank Paula Bourne, the director of CWSE, for inviting me to this event. Her sustained effort in maintaining CWSE is gratefully acknowledged.

2 This was documented in a recent paper I wrote entitled, ‘Anti-racist feminist challenge to mainstream and malestream knowledge’ prepared for the Workshop on Feminist Challenges to Knowledge held at the University of Toronto, November 14, 2003.

3 The WRC is a community-based feminist research organization founded by eminent sociologist Dorothy Smith to train women’s groups in British Columbia how to research their own communities. We began with women’s experiences and sought to situate them in the
immersed in the second wave feminist movement and developed and honed my research skills. What I saw, working with other women working with immigrants in Vancouver, was the invisibility of immigrant women’s lives. Not only was their experience subsumed under that of immigrant men; they were deemed irrelevant in society.\(^4\)

I returned OISE to do my doctoral study with a singular, and perhaps rather ambitious, purpose: I wanted to put immigrant women on the social and scholarly maps of Canada. As we see from the publications and public attention given to immigrants in general and immigrant women in particular, I was successful in accomplishing this goal.\(^5\) I owe much of this success to the emerging immigrant women’s movement that was gathering momentum in the late 1970s, and to feminist initiatives occurring at OISE during this time.

OISE in the mid- and late 1970s and the 1980s, at least in my perception as a graduate student, was a hotbed of activism, with feminist activism being a key component. There was a permeability between what happened in the community outside and the debates and activities happening inside the Institute. Social issues and debates around them were what fed the thinking and theoretical formulations that went on inside the walls of OISE. There was always another cause to fight for or fight over in theoretical and practical terms, be it the self-determination of Quebec, solidarity with people in Latin America, or racism within the feminist movement. OISE was renowned at that time for its leadership in critical and progressive thinking, and feminist scholarship and a feminist culture was an integral part of this reputation.\(^6\) Not only was OISE political economy of the larger society. Although the WRC has undergone many changes over the years, it is still operating in Vancouver.

\(^4\) When we did the first project on immigrant women at the WRC, we found only one report written by the YWCA. Now, I cannot keep up with the amount of literature in this area.

\(^5\) I don’t mean to say that I single-handedly put immigrant women on the map. But I was part of a growing group of activists who were instrumental in building a separate immigrant women from the feminist movement locally and nationally.

\(^6\) This legacy is still alive and well, as I discovered in a recent presentation to the Ulyssean Society (a non-profit group of women and men in their middle and later years, founded in 1977, to lead the creative life) in Toronto. My talk (with my colleague Kiran Mirchandani) on garment production and the re-emergence of sweatshops in Canada generated much excitement and debate. One woman who was having trouble with what I said piped up: “I know you people
one of the few places in Canada where feminist scholars and scholarship were highly visible due to the presence of feminists such as Alison Prentice, Margrit Eichler, Mary O’Brien and Dorothy Smith. More importantly this feminist presence translated into a culture, especially in the Department of Sociology in Education, where feminism was respected and accepted as normal, rather than deviant and marginal.\textsuperscript{7} This visibility was bolstered by the establishment of the Women’s Research and Resource Centre with Frieda Forman at its helm, and Resources for Feminist Research, a feminist journal that is still being published today.

Critical feminist work was encouraged. I was supported to develop my work intellectually and professionally (albeit not without critical feedback from faculty and other students). My activism in the community (and by this time I had become quite involved in the emerging immigrant women’s movement in Toronto) was seen as a credit, rather than as a deficit. In this climate, I thrived.

My years as a graduate student at OISE (1978 to 1984) were perhaps some of my most productive years theoretically and politically. What was key in making ‘immigrant women’ a field of study was my 1980 formulation, counter to conventional academic thinking at that time, that ethnicity and race, and therefore the category ‘immigrant women’, are socially constructed. They are not given. This insight was informed by feminist formulation and the invention of the term ‘gender’ to describe relations between women and men. The task for the analyst, then, is to discover the institutional and social determinants that produce immigrant women as a social category in Canadian society. Thus, analytically, ‘immigrant women’ is not a term that simply references particular individuals; more importantly it indicates a social process whereby people are transformed – made into – immigrant women. Concomitant with my theoretical and empirical work in this emerging field, I also began to formulate how to develop an integrative analysis of gender, race and class.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7} I am speaking here from the perspective of a graduate student. In the eye of the administration, feminism might be an aside, but certainly students didn’t feel this on a day-to-day basis. What was amazing, contrary to my experience in UBC, was that students felt they were important!

\textsuperscript{8} Up to the early 1980s, gender, race and class were treated as separate analytical
The groundwork I established at OISE as a graduate student stood me in good stead as I went from region to region, just before and after I graduated, in search of employment. My work on immigrant women preceded me in each place I landed. I was welcomed by immigrant women’s groups in Saskatoon, Kingston, Fredericton, and other places, and I worked with women all over the country to launch local, regional and national organizations while continuing to refine my scholarship on immigrant women, immigrant women’s organizing, and related fields. To sum up, I owe much of my productivity and creativity in this period to the feminist culture and climate at OISE, which nurtured and supported my intellectual and professional development.

In 1988, I was offered a faculty position specializing in gender, race and class analysis in Sociology in Education at OISE, and I returned as a faculty after teaching around the country mostly as an itinerant professor. Apart from the substantive field mentioned for the position, the advertisement also indicated that preference would be given to someone who could make links between the academy and the community. Given the lack of scholars meeting these requirements in Canada at the time, I was one of the two short-listed applicants offered the position. My experience as a faculty member, however, was dramatically different from that of a graduate student.

As the first women of colour faculty specializing in gender and race with an activist record, I became the lightening rod for everything having to do with the politics of racism, anti-racism, sexism, and feminism in the institution. My performance in teaching, research, and outreach activities were measured against expectations (some entirely undisclosed to me) and standards which an ordinary human being could never meet. I say ordinary because I assume that a super woman can at least meet some of these unspoken but nevertheless real expectations. Unfortunately, to everyone’s dismay, I was ordinary! To give an anecdote, someone posed this question after my presentation during my job interview: ‘How do you propose to eliminate racism at OISE?’ – a question that related only tangentially to my presentation. I answered flippantly but truthfully: ‘It depends on how good the early retirement package is.’ Both the question and the answer are revealing, because they indicated precisely the expectation OISE domains. See some of my writings (e.g., Ng 1981, 1989, 1998 - in Appendix) for detailed discussions.
members had for this position and the personal and professional costs for the individual who
filled it. My experience as faculty at OISE is not unlike that of a Chinese daughter: I was given a
lot of responsibilities and no authority to make anything happen.

Nevertheless, I accepted the job with trepidation and packed up my bags for yet another
transcontinental move. For several years, I did my best to promote anti-racism and a scholarly
program on gender, race and class. For example, we formed the Anti-racist Network, an informal
group of faculty, students and staff concerned with and working on issues of race and racism.
Later, as George Dei and Sherene Razack joined the faculty rank, we managed to institutionalize
anti-racism into the formal structure of OISE and set up the Centre for Integrative Anti-racism
Studies (CIARS). But progress was slow before we gained a critical mass of faculty of colour. 9

More profoundly, and this is a good lesson for those of us wanting to take on and change
institutions, during those early years I became the target of everything that worked badly or went
wrong with anti-racism. What was most painful was that the attacks did not only come from the
conservative elements of the institution, but from faculty and students who claimed to be
feminist and anti-racist. I became sick, and went through a period of contemplation and soul
searching that led to a profound shift in my thinking, teaching, and practice. I became acutely
aware of the inadequacy of feminist and anti-racist, in fact any kind of progressive, ideology and
politic, that take up issues only intellectually without attention to emotion, body and spirit. This
is what I wrote in 1998, when I was struggling with a different – more integrated and holistic –
way of being in the world:

...the exercise and maintenance of power takes multiple and complicated forms. I have identified
three major power axes in the classroom: that between the classroom and the larger academic
institution; that between the teacher and the students; and that among the students. Thus,
although a faculty has formal authority as a representative of the university, this authority can be
challenged by students in the classroom. For example, a minority woman faculty may be
challenged more than her (white) male colleagues because she is relatively powerless in the larger
society. Faculty whose teaching does not conform to the expected convention in terms of content,
style, and so forth is challenged more. Sexism, racism, class privilege, ability, etc., are operative in
interactions among students as well. What is important to point out is that power is enacted never
as mere intellectual encounters. All intellectual encounters are exercised through confrontations of

9 I am happy to say that we are achieving this critical mass, and are beginning to
make our presence felt in the university through our scholarly and professional activities.
bodies, which are differently inscribed. Power play is enacted and absorbed by people physically as they assert or challenge authority, and therefore the marks of such confrontations are stored in the body. Each time I stand in front of a classroom I embody the historical sexualization and racialization of an oriental female, even as my class privilege, formal authority and qualification ameliorate some of the effects of this signification. My presence is a moment in the crystallization of the historical and contemporary contestation of ideas and practices that are constantly changing. That is, my physical presence in the academy in turn challenges the sexist and racist construction of the archetype and stereotype of an oriental female. It is indeed the encounters of bodies, not only of intellect, that give dynamism to the process of teaching and learning. As we engage in critical education, this dynamism is what excites us at the same time that it makes us sick when we go against the grain (Ng, 1998).

The early 1990s, then, was another turning point in my work. Apart from developing an integrative analysis of gender, race and class, I was struggling with another kind of integrative approach, one that is capable of bridging the body-mind-spirit divide in theory and practice. I was really searching for an integrative praxis, not just an explanation or description of the relationship between theory and practice. The central question for me was: ‘How is it that the oppressor and oppressed co-participate in acts of oppression?’ To make a long story short, the conclusion I arrived at was that there was a disjuncture between our way of thinking and way of being in the world, because there has been in the history of western liberal and radical education a progressive and systematic privileging of the mind/intellect over the body, spirit and emotion. This has led to a bifurcation of our consciousness: what we think is not necessarily how we act. Put in another way, although we have learned to think critically, dominant ways of being are so normalized that we are ‘programmed’ to act in ways that reproduce and sustain oppression.

**An Outline for an Embodied Integrative Anti-racist Feminism**

In the remainder of this paper, I will outline what I consider to be an embodied integrative anti-racist feminist approach and politic. Time does not permit a detailed discussion.

10 I am by no means the first person to ask this question. Indeed, Fanz Fanon’s theorization has been central in post-colonial formulations of how colonial ideologies impact on the colonized (Fanon, 1963, 1967). I have found Foucault’s notion of normalization (Foucault, 1990) and especially Gramsci’s formulation of hegemony (Gramsci, 1970) instructive in helping me think through this problematic.
So I have provided you with a genealogy of my writing that traces the development of this line of thinking (see Appendix).

I begin by making a distinction between anti-sexism/racism versus non-sexism/racism.\textsuperscript{11} Non-sexism/racism is an approach that suggests that sexism and racism can be made irrelevant, that is, the notion that we are all people or that we should all be treated equally. It is an individualistic approach that attempts to rid individuals of sexism and racism without attending to the systemic operation of oppression in our lives. Here’s a quote from Terri Wolverton. This is what she said when she discovered the difference between non-racism and anti-racism in one of her consciousness-raising groups:

I had confused the act of trying to appear not to be racist with actively working to eliminate racism. Trying to appear not racist had made me deny my racism and therefore exclude the possibility of change (Wolverton quoted in Briskin, 1990: 14-15).

An embodied integrative anti-racist feminist approach entails at least three elements. First, it acknowledges explicitly that we are all gendered, racialized and differently constructed subjects who do not participate as equals in interactional settings, and that unequal power relations permeate all social interactions. It recognizes that racism as well as sexism and other forms of oppression are systemic in the society we live in, so we cannot cleanse ourselves of them just by good will. When I say that sexism, racism and other forms of oppression are systemic, I refer to the fact that certain ways of thinking and doing things have become normalized or naturalized so that they become common sense; they are taken for granted and therefore not open to interrogation.\textsuperscript{12} An example is the current notion that Chinese immigrants are not discriminated against because they are rich. Another example is the targeting of Muslims as criminals and terrorists after 9/11, which is being inscribed in our legal system and in the media. Nora Gold’s work (in this collection) on anti-Semitism is yet another illustration of how racist thinking has become ‘ordinary’ and ‘normal’. And of course, the historical and continuing denigration of Canada’s aboriginal peoples pinpoints precisely how their inferiority has been normalized since colonization.

\textsuperscript{11} I rely on Linda Briskin’s (1990) distinction here.

\textsuperscript{12} See Gramsci’s theorization on ‘common sense’ versus ‘good sense’ and his theory of hegemony for detail (Gramsci, 1970).
Second, in addition to developing critical analysis intellectually, we need to disrupt common sense ideas and practices, and reflect on how we ourselves participate in social encounters by adopting the dominant and normalized ways of being. How are we ‘programmed’ to not question those in authority, or treat only white male subjects as authoritative, for instance? Joanne Wong, a student who took my course on ‘Toward an integrative approach to equity in higher education’\textsuperscript{13}, questioned my unusual curriculum design, which incorporated eastern meditative exercises into the class as part of our reflective practice. The exercises and materials did prompt her to reflect on her skepticism of me and the course content, however. This is what she wrote when we presented on our individual and collective learning in a conference:

> Although I deemed an Asian professor to be a symbol of society’s final acceptance of minorities as worthy of integration with the West, I, at the same time, found it difficult to accept her as a Chinese feminist with influence. ... Isn’t it strange how we embrace the very ideals that we at the same time reject?\textsuperscript{14}

In developing an embodied way of learning, I found it useful to reach back into my history and incorporate Taoist philosophy and the practice of Qi Gong\textsuperscript{15} to facilitate our reflection. This is because in Taoism, theory and practice, as well as mind, body and spirit, are not bifurcated as in western scientific traditions (see Ng, 1998, 2000). Introducing this philosophical tradition and its accompanying exercise form into the graduate curriculum serves to disrupt normalized practices of graduate studies by raising questions, not to mention eyebrows, about how we come to treat learning merely as an intellectual exercise when in fact

\textsuperscript{13} The course was offered as a special topics course in Theory and Policy Studies in Education in the fall term of 2002. It provoked so much debate that a group of us (myself and four students) are still meeting to write about our experience and learning in the course.


\textsuperscript{15} Qi Gong is a form of breathing and meditative exercise developed in ancient China over 2,000 years ago. Its medical and martial arts application in contemporary China has been legendary. When I first began to practise Qi Gong over ten years ago, people, including many Chinese people, thought I was a freak. In the last five years, however, it has become popular as an exercise form in Canada and has become much more accepted as part of the new age movement. There is also a revival of it in the Chinese community.
learning involves our mind, emotion, body and spirit.

Finally, what is important to stress is that eliminating sexism, racism and other forms of oppression requires that we reflect on how we unwittingly participate in courses of action that implicate us in the perpetuation of acts of oppression. This reflection must be situated in a larger collective vision of an alternative social arrangement to the one we have at present. Thus, an embodied integrative anti-racist feminism goes beyond simple reflection. I have said that it is a praxis. More profoundly, it is a project of change and hope. It goes beyond inserting ourselves into existing social and institutional arrangements and securing our positions within these arrangements. Ultimately, it is a transformative project – it requires that we envision a society free of oppression and that we change ourselves and society to achieve this vision.

References


Appendix: Genealogy of an Embodied Integrative Anti-racist Feminism

by Roxana Ng


1995 Teaching against the grain: Contradictions and possibilities. In R. Ng, P. Staton and J. Scane (Eds.), *Anti-Racism, Feminism, and Critical Approaches to Education*. Westport: Greenwood Publishers Inc., p.129-152.


2000 Revisioning the body/mind from an eastern perspective: Comments on experience, embodiment, and pedagogy. In B. Miedema, J. Stoppard & V. Anderson (Eds.),


The Politics of Naming Feminisms: The Debate Continues…

by Njoki Wane

“Ours is a spiritual tradition... Our storytelling is our theorizing...an introduction into theory is an introduction into spiritual, political struggles for peace and freedom” Joy James

Background of my feminism

- Involvement with Education for Maasai Girls in Kenya - trying to make sense between their indigenous ways of living and Western models of Education

- What choices they have without basic educational skills and my commitment to a literacy program

Coming to OISE to pursue the Maasai project from a development model

- Courses, Feminist Courses - Issues Discussed - The Problem without a Name

- My interest in Women and Development - Drifting to the Center for Gender Studies - Esther Basrup, If Women Counted by Marilyn Waring, Third World Feminism

- Changed my topic to examine the Role of Kenyan Women in Knowledge Production and Specifically Indigenous Knowledge - and situated my discussion in African Feminism

- Working with Freda and Peggy - the comfort level

Articulating my anti-racist feminist pedagogy - Rethinking my take on feminism in relation to how I could theorize it in a more indigenous ways that are very specific to Black women living in Canada. - My conversations with Dorothy Smith, Paula Bourne let me to believe that more than ever before, there was a need for a Black Canadian Feminist Theorizing.

What were my objectives?

1. To develop working definitions of Black Canadian feminisms
2. To examine the relationship, similarities, differences between and among Black Canadian feminist thought, Black American Feminist Thought, Anti-Racist feminist thought, other forms of feminisms.

3. How does this body of work contribute to feminist theorizing and specifically to Anti-Racist feminist thought?

4. To establish what had been done in this area and what needs to be done.

5. And to ask this question, what is in a name?

6. Create a space for dialogue with students, other scholars interested in understanding, acknowledging and responding creatively to flaws of feminisms.

7. To provide space to articulate on the context or background to the multiple oppressions Black women have faced, survived and fought against. In addition, to acknowledge the importance of utilizing interlocking systems of domination models rather than frameworks that continues to eclipse or fragment Black women.

8. At a personal level, one of my commitments is to lay claim to the vast contributions made by Black Canadian women to our society. There is undivided focus, a distinct force or power in Black Canadian feminism, that makes the lived experiences of Black women relevant to the theorizing of Black people's lived reality.

9. How do we begin to challenge hetero/sexism within Black communities?

10. How can we rupture some of the popular hegemonic images of Black women?

What has happened so far?

1. Familiarizing myself with the complexity of feminisms and especially Black Canadian feminisms.

2. Need for a commitment to move feminist debate to a level where, individually or collectively, we acknowledge the need for more inclusive, yet, unique and culturally specific, accessible and transparent forms of feminisms.
3. The importance of naming, because by so doing, you highlight the historicity, the specificity and the uniqueness of the feminisms in question. And by naming you acknowledge the fluidity of feminisms.

4. In addition, I challenge my students to look into the historical background of their people and establish the role, the contributions etc played by women in shaping the fundamental principles of their specific society. By doing this, we get to acknowledge those unmarked graves, or those voices that are not acknowledged in our own classrooms, research or feminist scholarship.

5. Identifying the need to highlight some of the forms of resistance that Black Canadian women employed to fight different forms of oppression and how they are applied to the Contemporary Canadian context.

6. Another area that I have tried to make sense of within Black feminist Theorizing is the impact of violence. When one thinks of the word violent or violence, images of cars and buildings being blown up, or persons physically injuring another, come to mind because they fall within the very static and rigid definition offered by Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary, where violence is defined as "a use of physical force so as to damage or injure." This definition is fixed, and does not encompass how years of oppression may have a damaging impact on an individual's emotional, spiritual and psychological well being. In other words, using Black Canadian feminist lenses contextualizes the impact of historical violence on Black communities and especially Black women, makes sense of how violence is reproduced and perpetuated, visibly and invisibly. So, how can we move beyond pathologizing violence in Black communities, without negating Black people’s experiences or more specifically Black women's experiences? And how can Black Canadian feminist theory, resist or counter spirit injury or spirit murder?

Uprooting the seeds of division amongst Black women and Black Canadian women is essential in order to collapse the boundaries that were created by colonial masters or imperialistic structures. In other words, it is necessary for us to interrogate and unlearn internalized oppressions because they all too often lead to the psychological, emotional and physical abuse of our children, other women and ourselves as well. It is therefore necessary to engage in a critique
of self and encourage the examination and evaluation of our social status, values, beliefs, privileges and oppressions. Divisions among women will not be eliminated until we assume responsibility for uniting, by learning each other's cultures, sharing our knowledges and skills and gaining strength from our diversity. There is a great need to carry out research and write about what keeps us apart and what we can do to overcome our separation. When we learn about each other's differences, we will come to appreciate and celebrate what might otherwise have been perceived as unachievable. However, it is important to note that communicating across differences does not negate the need for constructive criticism and also to acknowledge the existence of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and classism. In fact constructive criticism and ongoing dialogue are crucial components of Black feminist theory and practice. It is imperative that we engage in critiques that are designed to enrich rather than diminish our own and each other's lives.

“As women committed to a common goal or goals scattered across the globe, we can form a powerful circle that will collapse all screens, which threaten to obscure our eyes from the beauties of the world” Ogundipe-Leslie

Finally, I would like to discuss the concept of mutual stretching.

• Knowledge comes from the earth, we need to pass it on, that is we need to maintain a thread that weaves our experiences with our ancestral knowledges.

• The rituals of a gathering - creating a safe environment - confidentiality and trust are established - this principle, more than ever before, is very important to establish if are to succeed in mutual stretching. Through mutual stretching women share their stories in a nonjudgmental environment. The outcome is creating a circle of unity.

• In summary, Black Canadian feminist scholarship is not an end in itself, but rather an interrelated pedagogy that may be applied to work towards greater social justice for all people. I believe that one cannot focus meaningfully on issues of race and ethnicity without recognizing the way these intersect, overlap, and sometimes contradict people's experiences and perceptions of race, class, gender, sexuality etc. The intent therefore of
this body of scholarship is to enable ourselves to see people from different cultural backgrounds as individuals with their own abilities, interests, strengths and struggles.

_The story began long ago...it is old. Older than my body, my mother’s my grandmother’s. ...For years we have been passing it on... The story never really begins nor ends, even though there is a beginning and an end to every story..._

Trinh T. Minh-ha