Twenty Five Years of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*:

A Conversation with Cynthia Enloe

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Abstract

Cynthia Enloe's book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* brought a new approach to the study of war, conflict and political economy, an approach informed by and starting from a feminist curiosity. Such a starting point allows for recognition

of the diverse, often disregarded gendered dynamics of militarization. A feminist curiosity facilitates making visible the politicization of everyday life via what Enloe calls a bottom up approach to research and investigation. This account of a conversation between feminist scholars draws attention to the means by which researchers exercise the sociological imagination in their work on militarism and war; the theorizing of gendered militarization; the role for feminist activism around conflict and sexual violence as well as solidarity politics; and the life cycle of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*.

Keywords: Enloe; feminism; labour; gender; militarism; war; activism.

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Introduction

Cynthia Enloe's book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* has revolutionized how we think of conflict and militarism by insisting that scholars of violence and war recognize that the 'personal is international' and that the 'international is personal' (1990: 195; 2014a: 343). Enloe's simple observation about the relationship between the international and the personal has encouraged us to look in seemingly strange and uncommon places as we seek to understand the militarization of politics and society. It also facilitates a recognition and understanding of the politicization of everyday life and that a research process from the ground up, of the everyday, allows for recognition of that which is often rendered invisible. As two feminist scholars who are interested in the everyday politics of conflict and peace, we spoke to Cynthia about the ongoing relevance of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, which she has revised and updated for a new version to mark its 25th anniversary. We were curious to ask Cynthia about how to exercise the sociological imagination in our exploration of contemporary and historical militarization; how a feminist curiosity can lead to effective theorizing about our gendered worlds; and the unexpected life cycle of the book.

Enloe's insistence that we examine the relationship between the personal and international means that we need to examine conflict from the ground up rather than simply focusing on the international. Conventional debates about the location of military bases, for example, tend to focus on the geopolitical problems that dictate where these bases are placed, the strategic importance of maintaining a military presence in a particular part of the world or concerns about the erosion of state sovereignty. In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, by

contrast, Enloe argues that we cannot really understand military bases without looking at the seemingly normal, routine and everyday interactions that take place on and around these installations. A feminist analysis of a military base would need to take seriously the lives of sex workers, whose bodies are not only used by the troops stationed there but also subjected to a raft of rules and regulations designed to limit the spread of sexually transmitted diseases amongst the soldiers (1990: 81-84; 2014a: 166-167; see also Moon 1997). It would also need to take seriously the lives of those women who have been sexually assaulted by members of the military and the groups that work to help and support those affected. Likewise, Enloe argues that we also need to understand how the presence of these bases works to re-adjust the local economy, re-shape race relations within the community and re-configure the sexual politics of a society. In other words, her feminist curiosity asks us to unearth those voices that have been silenced, those experiences that have been rendered invisible and those lives that have been marginalized.

In the revised and updated edition of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, Enloe seeks to uncover new manifestations of militarism that have arisen alongside or displaced the old. She continues to tell us about the experiences of the women who work at the peripheries of these bases, the women that serve in the military and the women that continue to suffer the violent effects of conflict and war. She has traced the emergence of new bases as the contours of international politics are reconfigured, with, for example, the appropriation of the former French colonial base in Djibouti by the United States, the resurrection of old military bases in the Philippines, the expansion of AFRICOM from its headquarters in Italy and the emergence of new bases for remotely-piloted drones (2014a: 128; 130-1; 168). But Enloe also points to the myriad of ways in which women have sought to resist the devastating effects of violence and war, highlighting the

work of Syrian feminists, Iraqi feminists and Afghan women – along with the transnational network of activists – that is so often overlooked in debates about war (see 2014b). By not paying attention to the personal lives of those affected – particularly women – we cannot grasp how these *international* social, political and economic relations are often negotiated and maintained within everyday interactions between the military and the community. The trouble is, Enloe argues in the first edition, 'if we employ only the conventional, ungendered compass to chart international politics, we are likely to end up mapping a landscape peopled only by men, mostly elite men' (1990: 1). Moreover, there is a danger that we will fail to see just how much power is required to sustain the international system in its present form.

The new version of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* – like the old - invites us to take seriously the lives and experiences of ordinary people as we seek to understand the violence that surrounds us, but it also urges us to look at how these violent practices often depend upon the reproduction of certain gendered assumptions about roles, behaviours, structures and power itself. In so doing, it is an essential text today as it was twenty-five years ago, providing the scaffolding and specific points of empirical inquiry into issues of militarism, war, conflict and political economy. In our conversation, we were keen to ask Cynthia Enloe about where her feminist curiosity has taken her in writing and re-writing *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, on why she wrote the new edition, the new stories and new impetuses behind it. In directing our awareness to the ability of patriarchy to reinvent itself, Enloe warns of the need to continue to investigate the social and political with a feminist curiosity. Her groundbreaking scholarship is key in sociological, anthropological, political geography, and international relations considerations (among others) of gender,

labour, militarism, and war, and indeed, as discussed below, Enloe herself dismisses disciplinary boundaries. If patriarchy is constantly reinventing itself and is persistent in its shaping of violence and responses to violence in our contemporary world, then it is incumbent upon us to better understand its strategies, nature and effects. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* has for twenty-five years assisted us in this understanding. What follows is an edited transcript of a conversation that was a public event at the University of Auckland on July 29, 2015.

Anita Lacey: *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* has had an extraordinary multi-disciplinary impact. It challenges us to look beyond the high-politics that dominate the international agenda to what you have described elsewhere as the 'margins, silences and bottom-rungs' (Enloe 1996: 187). But we were wondering if you could tell us a little bit about the book's origins. Was there a specific moment or event that led you to start researching and writing *Bananas Beaches and Bases* and what were you trying to achieve with the book?

Cynthia Enloe: Well there was a very particular moment when I started writing *Bananas* and it is actually very embarrassing, so let's start with some embarrassment. I got my PhD at University of California, Berkeley, back in the sixties, when Berkeley was a very radical university. But this was also the glorious sixties in which nobody in an academic setting – *as in, nobody* – talked about feminism. So whatever you think was radical about the sixties, it wasn't because

anybody in academia was really taking apart sexism, let alone patriarchy.

I actually started my academic life as a student of ethnic and racial politics, and I continue to be very interested in this area. I did my fieldwork and dissertation in Malaysia, tracking the country's ethnic politics. I had a Fulbright and thus reassured the authorities that I was researching the politics of education, because the Malaysian government was quite vigilant as to what foreign researchers were looking at, the fraught politics under the rock of ethnicity. Fortunately, the politics of education just happened to be very salient for understanding ethnic politics too. In the decade after my PhD, I wrote – and this is an embarrassing figure, certainly not a figure to celebrate – six books without any feminist curiosity at all. I didn't deny feminism and I didn't deny gender, but I was stupid - I just didn't know where to look.

I really came of age academically in the middle of the US-Vietnam War. By this time I was at my second post, at a small university outside Boston called Clark University, where I still am today. Here's the moment when I first realized something was missing. I can really picture it: there was a Vietnam War teach-in as the US was extricating itself militarily from Vietnam. Our campus was and it still is a very progressive campus; the students get involved in things and we have

lots of teach-ins, which is just great. At this particular teach-in, there was a guy in my department, a very nice guy, whose name was Charlie. Charlie was the only one on our faculty who had actually been a draftee, who'd been a conscript in the US military sent to Vietnam. It was quite wonderful that he was willing to speak at this teach-in. Charlie was talking about his experience as a very ordinary soldier in Vietnam and he was very critical. He described the Vietnamese women whom soldiers individually could hire to do their laundry. And in the language of American militarized racism, soldiers like Charlie called them "hooch girls", with hooch referring to a small house. Sitting there, I thought, what if one sees the whole Vietnam War through this woman's eyes? Not only the US Vietnam War, but also the earlier French Vietnam War?

This was the 1970s, and I was already teaching a few women's studies courses, but I hadn't yet had the guts to write anything myself. I was being pushed by some of the students to do a couple of small pieces, but once I began thinking about what international politics might look like from the point of view of women such as the Vietnamese laundress, I started to think about where else women could be found in increasingly internationalized politics. At this point I was doing a lot of work on political economies, and I started to become interested in Carmen Miranda, the wonderful Brazilian comedienne

and singer who was on the original front cover of *Bananas*, and is again featured on the new edition's cover.

I also began to think about the politics of rubber. When I was in Malaysia, I lived in a brand new apartment where the cement was almost still wet, located right next to a rubber plantation. I watched rubber tappers every morning, early, early, early in the morning. So I began thinking about the international politics of Dunlop, about what a big rubber producer might look like from a rubber tapper's point of view. Of course, I didn't know the answer. I started doing the research because I realized I didn't know.

Thomas Gregory: I guess this could be seen as an early example of your feminist curiosity, which has been key to both your approach and the approach of so many feminists examining global politics on a human scale. There has always been something very different and very exciting about the way you approach the study of international politics, especially when compared to more mainstream methodological approaches. Can you tell us a little more about this feminist curiosity and what it means to practice or embrace it?

Cynthia: I first started using the term feminist curiosity when I was giving a series of lectures in Tokyo in 2003. They were organized by the Gender Studies Institute of Ochanomizu University, which is one

of the historic women's universities in Japan. The series was held in a big science lecture theatre with lots of blackboards, so I was in heaven! The lectures were being translated live; I tried to speak for three minutes and then the translator would translate into Japanese. But it was translating on the fly because I don't write out my talks, as you undoubtedly now know. I became very conscious of both language and translation. I have worked with translators in numbers of different languages and I'm so in awe of what they do. But I realized I wanted to find a phrase, a phrase that made sense in at least two different languages, but a phrase that also gave a sense of what I was up to in these talks. The phrase I started using in Tokyo was 'feminist curiosity.'

So it was out of the 2003 lectures at Ochanomizu that this phrase was born, but it does refer back to the earlier questions I was posing for myself: What if you looked at the Vietnam War from the vantage point of the woman who is shining GI Joe's shoes? What if you tried to make sense of the globalized rubber industry by taking seriously the experiences of men and women tapping rubber trees? I think the idea of a feminist curiosity is empowering because it suggests that what makes you a feminist are the questions you might ask, not just the answers you offer. It also allows us to be more candid about what we don't know. For example, think about Rachel Carson's ground-breaking book *Silent Spring* (1963). It was full of questions:

Who develops those pesticides? Who tries to keep that chemical a secret? She was always asking because she wanted to know and she hoped that that her readers would want to know, not because she automatically knew the answers (see Seager 2014). I believe in curiosity, because for a large part in my own early academic career I didn't have it. I really try to think back, how did I manage *not* to ask a single question about women in local politics, national politics, international politics, for so long? And I went to a women's university. I did my undergraduate studies at Connecticut College for Women but, even there, I didn't ask or learn anything about any suffrage movement anywhere!

Thomas: One question that seems to pop-up in all your work is "Where are the women?" On the surface, this seems like a fairly straightforward and innocuous question, but asking it can be so revealing. What is your experience pursuing this kind of question?

Cynthia: Doing feminist research felt so new to me. Even though I was chugging along in my so-called career, I was really a novice when it came to feminist research. When I was a student of racial and ethnic politics, I used to map the ethnic and racialized divisions of labour in a particular industry. Take me to a factory and I wanted to know who did what at which machines. I watched those rubber tappers in Malaysia back in the late sixties and I thought: why in

multicultural Malaysia were the rubber tappers always ethnic Indian Tamil Malaysians? Why weren't they Chinese Malaysians? Why weren't they Malay Malaysians? So I had already done my "academic push-ups", asking division of labour questions during my ethnic and racial studies.

In the time before starting to research *Bananas* I had already done about seven years work on the racial and ethnic makeup of militaries for my book *Ethnic Soldiers* (1983), which is still one of my favourite books. Although it includes virtually no feminist investigation, I learned so much about the politics of creating and justifying divisions of labour by researching scores of militaries. Who's in the Air Force and who's in the Navy? Who is in the officer corps and who's in the rank and file? Who thinks this division makes sense?

Tracking any division of labour is a good way of starting serious gender analysis because it provokes one to ask, "Where are the women?" If any of you are gearing up and doing your own "push-ups", just ask the division of labour questions: Who by class, race, ethnicity, gender and age is where? And then try to figure out who put them there, who benefits from them being there but not somewhere else. Then ask: what do these people do there, wherever this "there" is? What do they think about being there and not someplace else? And now you are off and running!

Anita: By the time that you re-wrote *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* for the 25th anniversary edition, your feminist curiosity is firmly in place. As you mentioned, you can't not see gender when you study international politics. Was there anything that surprised you when you went back and re-wrote the book all these years later?

Cynthia: I should start by admitting that I didn't re-write it at my own initiative. This is probably true for a lot of you - when you've done some work, you kind of pass it on and hope that other people will look at your work and then run with it. One of the things that I have been very excited about is that there are now a lot more books on international politics of domestic work – although not enough, there's still room for more! Christine Chin (1998) and others have really done some really fabulous work; there are more, but not enough books on the gendering of military bases; there are more, a lot more, but still we need more on the gendered politics of globalized garment factories. So I thought that I had done my kind of start-up work, now other people can go and write even smarter books about it. But my wonderful editor at the University of California Press, Naomi Schneider, took me out for lunch and said, "Cynthia, I hate to bring this up, but the people upstairs were wondering if you would be willing to write an up-date". Now I've been very lucky and published with the same publisher, with two or

three exceptions, since I started doing feminist work. I have also been lucky enough to have had a feminist editor, Naomi Schneider, all this time. This is no small thing, and Naomi deserves a lot of credit. Over lunch she said that publishers have to keep publishing new editions of a book, otherwise they won't be adopted in university courses. I know this and I know that this is what editors these days are supposed to do. Naomi and I are also longtime friends, so I was honest. I told her, "Oh Naomi, you know I don't want to do that. I'm onto the next project". Not to close the door, she said, "Couldn't you just look at it when you get home and think about it?"

Now what publishers mean by an update usually is merely adding a new Introduction and maybe a new Epilogue. Then they can package it as a new edition with a new ISBN number. This is what they do with a lot of textbooks. But I started re-reading the original *Bananas* that evening – I hadn't really read it in ages and I thought: I don't write like that anymore. My sentences are different now, these days I try so hard to be clear. The material also needed updating. It's not that I regretted the early edition, but I felt that I couldn't get away with just writing a new introduction and a new epilogue. For instance, the whole of the garment industry, the international gendered politics of the garment industry, had to be re-positioned to make it relevant to today's readers. Likewise, the international politics of the banana industry had to be re-positioned, for instance to take

account of the huge global grocery store chains such as Carrefour and Tesco. And military bases have really changed since *Bananas* was first published in 1989; US basing strategies have changed, many fewer with family housing, so that chapter also needed to be re-positioned. Of course, by getting me to reread the original and to start thinking about these changes, Naomi had gotten me, hadn't she?

I had the University of California Press send me a scanned version because I didn't even have the original version of *Bananas* on my computer, if you can believe it! I then started over. I would say that the "new" 2014 version of *Bananas* is about 80% new, sentence by sentence. Of course, I didn't want to lose some of the juicier original stuff. The gendered history of Thomas Cook, the travel company, is just so juicy that I couldn't let it go. Likewise, for the histories of blue jeans and of diplomats' wives and, of course, of the "Chiquita Banana" logo.

What was surprising for me is that the process of re-writing *Bananas* made me really self-conscious about my own writing. You know, how do I write now, how did I write then? How do I think about the people who are reading my book? I am very lucky to be in touch with feminists in a lot of different countries, so I think about Ayse in Istanbul reading anything of mine. I think, "OK, let's get up to speed here, this has got to pass muster when Ayse reads it or when Insook

reads it in Seoul". I didn't really have this in mind as much when I was writing the original, even though I did have on my mind in the 1980s the Filipino feminists and British feminists and Canadian feminists I was working with back then.

Anita: Cynthia, you speak about some of the "juicy bits". Are there any particular favourites in either the new or old edition of *Bananas* because of the stories they evoke for you?

Cynthia: I don't necessarily think about my favourite bits, but you know how some images just haunt you? Whenever you think of something, you viscerally have a feeling and visually in your head you have an image? For me, it's the Tazreen Garment Factory fire in December in 2012, just outside Dhaka, Bangladesh. I see those charred sewing machines and hear the interviews with the Bangladeshi women who worked inside the factory. Most garment factories are not in long low buildings, they are in multistory buildings, which will "pancake" down on top of each other when they collapse, such as how the Rana Plaza factory building did in Bangladesh just several months after the Tazreen fire. I see the ruins of Tazreen and Rana and I think of the women who worked in these dangerous factories. The images and the voices stay with me.

The other image always with me is of Carman Miranda. I think about how, when I was a kid, she was a really popular Hollywood comedienne, and now I think of what I've learned about her since. She really sticks in my head too. But stories, I really believe in stories. I know we are all taught to be theorists, but no matter what your theory is we build our theories out of stories, and we should be honest about it. I don't think stories are the opposite of theory. There are individual stories that are the building blocks of larger theoretical explanations. A theory has to explain more than a single incident. I'm always surprised when someone calls me a theorist. I think I am most comfortable being called an investigator or an analyst. But, mostly, I think of myself as a teacher. That's the best.

Thomas: It is interesting that you are so reluctant to embrace the title of theorist because *Bananas* has completely redefined how we theorize conflict and war, allowing for gendered 'stories' and storytelling to drive our theories. Can you tell us then what led you to write the book and who you wrote the book for?

Cynthia: Well oddly enough, I didn't write it for the discipline of International Relations! Maybe that's the secret to its success! Everybody who reads books knows that after the title page comes the most interesting page in the book and that is the page that gives the history of the publishing of the book. It is where you learn if it has

been translated, it is where you learn where the first edition was published, who published it first, whether or not is it the same publisher now. Always look at the back of the title page and you can glean all sorts of information. You can also find the author's date of birth, which is interesting enough for age, but also for understanding more about their political generation!

If you look in *Bananas*, you will see that I didn't initially write the book for a university press; I wrote it for Pandora Press, which was a feminist press in London. Virago, which is probably the best known of the 1980s-90s British feminist presses, along with the Women's Press, Pandora and several other smaller presses, really helped fuel the second wave of Britain's women's movement. While I was in London doing research, I became pals with several of the editors at Pandora. They asked if I wanted to write something for the press. In response, I said to Candida Lacey and Phillip Brewster, who were the team at Pandora, "Well, I kind of have this idea, but I'm not sure what it's going to turn into." This was going to be only my third feminist book, and I really wanted to write it for a feminist press, in order to be part of the movement. Pandora was a trade press rather than an academic press, so as soon as I agreed to write *Bananas* for Pandora I didn't think of myself as writing a strictly disciplinary book. I mean, you always hope that your buddies in academia might

stumble across an enticing trade book, but I didn't imagine that it would get adopted for so many courses.

Maybe my experiences with *Bananas* can offer an insight into the politics of publishing. After I was virtually finished writing the Pandora edition of *Bananas,* the about-to-be published manuscript was picked up by University of California Press for its US rights. Once it came out in the US with a UC Press imprint, *Bananas* took on a completely a different life because our colleagues tend to assign books published by a university press for their courses. If it had just stayed a Pandora Press book, how many people teaching introductions to IR would have adopted it? Zippo. So the fact that many students have since read it is due to the work of Naomi Schneider, the editor who saw the Pandora manuscript and asked if she could co-publish it at the University of California Press.

The economics of publishing mean that small presses, like Pandora, often need a co-publisher who will share the cost of printing. Candida, my editor at Pandora, called me to say that they'd had a nibble of interest in the manuscript from the University of California Press. Initially, I said no, because I didn't write this book for a university press. But I asked her to see if UC Press could be persuaded to keep the picture of Carman Miranda on the cover that Candida and I had already chosen but which at that point did not

look like any other university press book. Covers are very political. Try to keep control of your covers. I also wanted to be sure that they couldn't change a word, they couldn't dress it up to be "more academic." And Naomi, whom I didn't know at the time, got her people at the University of California Press to agree to both requests. That's the real politics of the publication of *Bananas* and its subsequent journey into classrooms.

Anita: One of the concepts in the book that seemed to really resonate with me and so many others is this idea that the personal is international and the international is personal. Can you explain what you mean by that?

Cynthia: Well, of course, it is a play on the second wave slogan, "the personal is political." It's really a theory, a theory as a bumper sticker. I often think that any good theory should be able to be condensed so it can fit onto a bumper sticker. The key theoretical assertion of the second wave - that the personal is political – is very disturbing. For it means that power relations infuse your personal life. That's very upsetting, and it should be upsetting. Recognizing that disturbing reality was the revelation that prompted many women to become part of what we now call the "Second Wave." I came of age as a feminist during this period and so had gradually taken this explanation on board.

I always find it very hard to write "Conclusions." Authors think, by the time readers have gotten to the last chapter of a book, "They should have gotten the point by now!" So I was on a treadmill at my gym trying to work out what was going to go into the conclusion of *Bananas*. I didn't want to repeat what I'd already said in the substantive chapters. I really didn't want them just to read about women banana workers, I also wanted them to read about women as diplomatic wives, military prostitutes, garment workers and flight attendants. I didn't just want them to read my "blah, blah, blah" at the end either. But I was on the treadmill and all of a sudden, there on the treadmill, it really came to me: one of the things that is least recognized in international politics is that the politicization of personal life, or what is sometimes called "domestic life." It is the politicization of domestic, personal and private life that is the pillar that holds up the international system. That was not something that I was ever taught at university, and it was not something that I knew until, in the years prior to *Bananas*, I first had started looking at military wives for a chapter in what would become my book *Does Khaki Become You?* (1983) (It later morphed into a book called *Maneuvers* (2000).) For the first time ever, in the early 1980s, as I investigated military wives, I realized this: if I don't understand the marriages of male soldiers with civilian women - imagined by their countries as "military wives" – then I don't really understand

militaries. And that's the understanding that kept blossoming as I dug into the surprising gendered global politics of bananas, tourism, bases, diplomacy, nationalism, garments manufacture and domestic workers. It was this understanding that I wanted to make boldly clear in *Bananas*' conclusion.

Now there are actually two parts to this conclusion. The idea that the personal is international can be kind of used as a bit of a whip with which to chastise women: "How come you don't know more about the Syrian War?" "How come you don't know more about the inner workings of global capitalism?" In other words: "Get with it, women, get with it, girls, learn more about foreign policy!" That's "the personal is international" bit. But what I am really arguing is more analytically radical: that "the international is personal." That is saying that if you want to make sense of the Syrian War, for example, then you have to watch women as refugees, watch women as civil society activists in Homs and in Aleppo. It is saying that you may think you know a lot about international politics simply because you can distinguish between several militias fighting in Syria, but you can't really claim to understand international politics if you don't know how marriage works internationally or how ideas about femininity become a pillar holding up the international global economic system. And that's a very different argument than, "Girls, pay attention to foreign affairs because they have impacts on your lives." So, of the

two conclusions, I hope that taking seriously the likelihood that "the international is personal" is the most productively upsetting.

Thomas: So where is your feminist curiosity leading you at the moment? Where is a good place to start looking for signs that the international is indeed personal?

Cynthia: One of the things that I realize that I know so little about is the gender politics of refugees. I really need to understand the genderings of refugee camps, the genderings of women's lives who are turned into refugees. If I don't really understand how a woman is turned into a refugee and then how she copes with the politics of being turned into a refugee, I won't be able to really understand wars and their complex aftermaths.

I think the other thing – and this is because I have been lucky enough recently to be in the presence of Syrian women activists who are still in Syria – that I haven't really taken into full enough account is the extent to which there are women civil society activists in the middle of wars – not just after wars, *but in the middle of wars* – trying to make alliances, trying to rebuild social trust, trying to find some-ways to re-create and create civic life when the entire fabric of social life is being shredded. And since investigating the gendered causes of the 2008

financial crash, I've also become very interested in women inside banking.

Anita: And finally, I thought a nice way to round-off this part of the conversation would be to talk about your advice for feminist scholar-activists, particularly in the Aotearoa, Pacific and Australian contexts?

Cynthia: Well, you probably don't want some American [to give you advice, rather, what I've learned from New Zealand, Pacific and Australian feminists is how complicit one can be in militarization without being overtly militarized. New Zealand seems way down the militarization scale when compared to the United States and Russia, right? But that doesn't mean, New Zealand feminists have warned me, that militarism doesn't exist here. My understanding – and again, this is from listening to feminists in New Zealand – is that the country today is being led by its current policy-makers towards more and more militarized views of its place in the world. And that is something one needs to monitor and to avoid becoming complicit in it. To avoid such complicity, feminist local activists are urging and need to make alliances with other Pacific women. I understand that the New Zealand's military is joining joint Pacific exercises with the US military. Is that pretty new? Can you date it? What is going on here?

When policymakers talk about national security – always put the "national" in quotes, always put the "security" in quotes – then think about whether this policy is new. If it's new and if it's a new way of using power, then think about what is being done in your name. If New Zealand is joining joint maneuvers with the US military to enhance its "national security", then that's worthy of public conversation. And a feminist conversation includes asking: "What is this doing to New Zealand diverse masculinities? And what is it doing to diverse New Zealand women's senses of security and their ability to make genuine alliances with women's rights activists in other Pacific countries? What's it doing to the lives of women inside the military and to the lives and identities of those New Zealand women who have become military wives, what's it doing to ideas about women's security? That's enough to keep you going for a while. But you have to e-mail me and tell me what you discover together. I'm very greedy!

Audience: I wanted to ask a question about rape around military bases. It seems to me that rape is often passed off as a kind of unfortunate, unintended consequence of placing military bases in a particular community. How can we change the conversation to recognize the systemic nature of this problem?

Cynthia: I think one of the great accomplishments of feminist activists – often academically-trained investigators working for NGOs like Oxfam and WILPF – is to highlight the incidence of rape around all sorts of military bases and during military operations. We are really indebted to a network of feminist investigators who began doing very rigorous research during and in the aftermaths of the Yugoslav Wars and the Rwandan Genocidal War in the 1990s. Until then, it was imagined that sexual assault, as you say, just goes along with loot, pillage and rape. To underscore this patriarchal conventional dismissal, I began writing it as one word: "lootpillageandrape". It was discussed routinely as if rape were as natural as the sun coming up. We now have learned, of course, that sexual assault during armed conflict is not at all "natural," it is the result of decisions. But it took feminist investigators and feminist analysts to show that sexual violence is *made to happen*.

Once you show that something is "made to happen", then you can look and see *who makes it happen*, whether it be in the US Revolutionary War or in the Russian Revolutionary War or in the Chinese Revolutionary War or in World War II or in World War I - or in peacekeeping operations today. Furthermore, if there are sexual assaults somebody did the assaulting. There has to have been perpetrators. Even today, it is much too common for UN officials to talk about rape without talking about the rapists, as if rape just falls

from the sky. Nobody should ever try to string together a sentence that has rape in it but doesn't talk about the rapist! It shouldn't sound as though rape is without agency, as if it is without an actor and without the possibility of accountability.

The other thing we've learned from all these wonderful investigators is that you have got to follow the breadcrumbs of accountability up the chain of command, yet not just the formal chain of command. So yes, be interested in the rapists: Who are they? In what settings and with who else? What do they think they were doing? But we also need to watch who supervised them, who guided them, who advised them, who trained them, who commands them, who gives then license, who dismisses allegations against them.

For these sorts of careful feminist investigations to be conducted, large international NGOs have had to change. Their senior leaders and their donors (each often deeply masculinized) have had to start taking seriously women's experiences of violence, start seeing women's rights violations as human rights violations. This means that there are gendered histories still to be written of such important organizations as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Refugees International. Similarly, to understand what promotes and what derails investigations of sexual assaults in militarized settings, we need

feminist, historically-curious analyses to be written of the UN Peacekeeping Office, of the UN Security Council and of the UN Secretary General's Office. True, there is a lot of valuable work still to be done to answer your good question!

Audience: You have spoken about your own feminist awakening and you have also worked alongside feminists around the world. But how can this feminism be transmitted without undermining local cultures or getting caught in a potentially violent conflict between feminism as an idea and more traditional cultural values?

Cynthia: I think you do have to be very respectful. If you realize that you're asking new questions, raising new understandings, think about what will surprise your readers or your listeners, what will worry them or what they even will find offensive. Then try, usually in one-on-one conversations, to raise these things in a way that they can be heard. There is a time for outrageous action, there is a time to dress up in costumes to occupy buildings, and there is a time to do sit-ins. Sometimes you actually have to take direct action in a way that just makes people ask questions they just never have wanted to ask! But along with that, there is the kind of everyday politics of trying to talk – whether it's with your parents or with your room-mate or with your best buddies – about things you know they don't want to talk about. But you build these skills. It is a like the teaching we do every day in

our classrooms; you can't teach if you don't respect your students! You have got to find ways to be both respectful and engaging, you have to listen, but also to push the envelope.

And you don't have to be a teacher, you can write letters to the editor. I find sometimes letters to the editor are often the best part of a newspaper! You can write blogs and zines, and you can also just have conversations. Sometimes it feels like real political work to have a conversation with an otherwise good friend who really doesn't see something you think they need to see. Try out your political effort with them and see what they are most offended by, see what they are most surprised by and see if you can keep the conversation going. It is a real political skill to do this - and we often try to avoid it, right? It's harder than writing a blog. But avoiding having that sort of conversation because it can feel so awkward is one of the reasons why patriarchy persists.

This notion of culture is also wielded in ways to silence people. I don't mean to suggest there isn't such a thing as culture, but our culture is often treated as if it were frozen. But cultures are always in motion, otherwise they can't survive. Nonetheless, those who benefit from patriarchal relationships say, for instance, "You cannot make domestic violence a question of international human rights norms because it's part of our culture". When I hear someone trying to

wield an allegedly frozen national or ethnic culture this way, I always think: what are they actually try to protect? They wave the flag of national sovereignty - by which they really mean state sovereignty - in order not to ask questions about their own male privilege, about their own system's dependence on women's subordination.

Audience: Your research provides an insight into the lives of women working in garment factories, as sex workers and domestic servants, but I was wondering about the role of the academic as a researcher. How difficult it is to access these women? How do you really incorporate the international as personal when researching people who may be vulnerable or at risk?

Cynthia: You need a lot of patience, compassion, and stamina. You need to identify who is most affected by a particular policy or action, but you must also be very careful – for example, you don't ever interview people at their workplaces. You also need to build trust. For example, Alexandra Hyde has just finished a great dissertation on research conducted on a British Army Base during the Afghanistan war (see Hyde 2015). It's a dissertation about how military wives cope and how they strategize. It's very interesting, it's about something most researchers would shy away from. But she spent a lot of time building trust, working closely with the same group of women for a long time. So, see if you can build enough trust so

people will gradually start talking to you about things that are really risky for them to talk about.

Audience: You have talked a little about the process of re-writing *Bananas*, but what was the most interesting thing you read about international politics as you went about re-writing the book?

Cynthia: One of the things that struck me about re-writing *Bananas* is that patriarchy really is sustainable. But I was also struck by how much new women's transnational activism is going on. So I read reports by domestic worker activists. I didn't know there was an international network of domestic workers led by Brazilian and Filipino domestic workers and they have really taken on the International Labor Organization. Reading works by these activists made me realize two things: first, patriarchy is constantly being updated in order to perpetuate the privileging of certain forms of masculinity and, second and simultaneously, women are figuring out new transnational ways to create political alliances. Both!

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