



# ANGRY WOMEN WIN

## Resistance Special Edition      Free/Donation

In this issue we show struggles around the world against gender oppression and for freedom to be in control of who we are, what happens to our bodies and how we live. These struggles are not usually distinct gender issues, but are intertwined with resistance to capitalism and the State. They are part of the general movement to create a world without exploitation and oppression, a society in which the individual can be what they want to be in free association with others. We call this anarchist-communism.

## The Rich get Richer, the Poor have Children

*Ireland's policy on abortion is barbaric and inhumane. Here's why.*



What would you do if the condom broke? If the morning after pill wasn't available? If you were pregnant as result of rape? If you found out your much-wanted pregnancy wouldn't survive past birth? If you looked around at your life and realised you weren't ready to be a parent? What if you lived in a country where abortion is against the law in almost all circumstances?

Welcome to Ireland in 2014. The 1967 Abortion Act was not extended to Northern Ireland, and even if women living there travel to mainland England, they are still not allowed to access an abortion on the NHS but must pay privately. In the Republic of Ireland, abortion is still governed by the 1861 Offence Against the Persons Act. Much noise was made of the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act, which came into effect in January 2014 and supposedly allows abortion in cases where a woman's life is at risk, including from suicide.

Even in the extremely limited circumstances under which abortion should be permitted, it is virtually impossible for

women to access. As I write this, there have been a string of media frenzies about abortion in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In May, a High Court ruling decided not to disrupt the status quo and continued to deny women resident in Northern Ireland NHS abortions, even if they came to England, after the mother of a 15 year old girl questioned her need to ration food and sell things to raise the required funds to travel and pay privately for an abortion. And last week it was learned that a young refugee, pregnant as result of rape and suicidal in her desperation not to bear her rapists child tried to get an abortion in Ireland and instead was given a caesarean section 25 weeks into her pregnancy.

### State Denial

While it is shocking that a state would deny a 15 year old or a raped woman an abortion, it is not surprising. I work with Abortion Support Network, a grassroots charity that raises funds to help women forced to travel to access a safe, legal abortion. We do this because we know that making abortion against the law or restricting it in any way does not stop or even decrease abortion. It simply ensures a two-tiered system under which women with money have options and women without money have babies.

Let's be clear. Abortion Support Network does not hear from the "average" woman needing an abortion. Most women who need abortions have things like credit cards, bank accounts, family they can reach out to for help, jobs. ASN only hears from the women who are extremely desperate. While there is no typical woman who contacts ASN, there are three things they all have in common: They are pregnant. They don't want to be pregnant. And they are poor.

Asked to talk about the worst case I'd ever heard, I'm at a loss: is it the refugee who was raped and tortured by prison

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guards before escaping to Ireland only to find herself pregnant but unable to obtain a visa to travel for an abortion, or the 17 year old girl who was considering taking her own life after becoming pregnant as a result of a violent rape? The woman overcoming a recent bereavement and suffering from severe depression whose prayers were literally answered when she had a miscarriage rather than needing to travel to England, or the mother of four trying to figure out how to crash her car badly enough to induce miscarriage but not badly enough to permanently injure herself or cause death?

These women are forced by circumstances - usually a combination of draconian abortion laws and poverty - to take what should be a personal and private decision and share it, and many uncomfortable personal details, with a complete stranger. And no matter how nice we are on the phone, or when a woman is sat in our kitchen with her cup of tea, and of course it's lovely that volunteers are willing to open their homes to strangers and isn't it great that the sisterhood is alive and well the fact that this close, intimate relationship is necessary is very, very wrong.

A woman who has looked at her life and decided that now is not the time for her to take on the responsibility of another human being should not have to go on a 3 hour bus journey, or get on a plane, or take a ferry, or pawn her jewellery, or lie to her mother, or take out a £600 loan that she needs to repay £900 for, or sleep in her car.

And then there are the practical considerations. Pretend for a minute you are pregnant and need to travel for an abortion. Here are some of the questions you will wind up asking:

- Do I have a current passport or other accepted form of photo ID?
- Do I need a visa to travel to England?
- Can I get a visa in time to still get an abortion?
- Do I have enough money to pay for the abortion and the travel?
- Why don't airfare special sales ever apply to the times when women needing to travel for an abortion need to go?
- What story can I tell the person who will watch my children while I am away for 18 or 36 or 72 hours?
- Do I have the money for child care?
- Can I tell my partner or my family that I am pregnant or will they pressure me to have the baby?
- How far along am I?
- At what point in pregnancy does the cost of an abortion go up?
- Can I tell my GP I am pregnant or will he tell my husband/ mother/ neighbours/ boss?
- Will having an abortion impact my getting my existing children out of foster care?
- How many maxi pads will I need for the trip home?
- Since this was a wanted pregnancy with fatal foetal anomalies and I want to have a funeral, can I put foetal remains in my hand luggage?
- Where can I go for advice?

This last one is a big one. There are rogue crisis pregnancy centres all over Ireland and N Ireland (and England for that matter) but very few that give practical and unbiased information about all of a woman's choices. And these places are generally in urban or city settings, meaning that women in

more rural parts of the country often have nowhere to turn for advice and information other than the internet - if they have access to the internet - and have you ever tried googling "abortion"? I can't tell you the number of women who watched "The Silent Scream" before calling us.

### Location, location, location

A woman's location is also a huge part of her ability to access an abortion. It's one thing if you're in Dublin or Belfast, but from Galway or Enniskillen or Derry, a 5 minute surgical procedure can wind up taking up to three days - and how are your childcare options looking now?

Finally, all of the obstacles placed in front of women forced to travel for abortion care - and especially the economic obstacles - mean that women travelling for abortions are very often later in term. For instance, less than 1.4% of abortions performed in the UK take place between 20 and 24 weeks gestation. I'd say at least 7% of the women who contact us are at that point - and this is usually because they have been trying to access information about their options and been trying to raise the money to travel. Sadly, in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the US there are many cases where by the time a woman raises the funds and get to the clinic, she is over the legal limit for a termination - sometimes by as little as one day.

Here are some things that women have done while trying to raise funds for their abortions:

- Sold the car
- Sold wedding rings, engagement rings, heirloom jewellery
- Not paid rent
- Skipped lunch for a month
- Chased packages of birth control pills with bottles of gin
- Not bought Christmas presents for their kids
- Cut off the electricity
- Drunk floor cleaner

Since we opened in 2009, ASN has heard from 1500 women. 1500 women who ranged in age from 51 down to 13, who were in or escaping abusive relationships, had serious mental or physical health issues, were carrying wanted pregnancies with fatal foetal anomalies, women and families with children unable to afford more. On 12 June the UK Department of Health published their report on Abortion Statistics for 2013. These numbers showed a reduction in the number of women from Ireland and Northern Ireland travelling to England to access a safe and legal abortion - 4,481, down from 4,887 - the lowest reported number since 1969. They do not include the women who come to England and give the address of a local friend or family member, the women who travel to other countries to access abortions, or the hundreds - if not thousands - of women who obtain early medical abortion pills online from Women on Web. These numbers also do not capture the women who cannot travel for reasons of cost, or childcare or anything else.

The law as it stands fails all women in Ireland. But when you make abortion against the law, or restrict it in any way, women only have options if they have a passport, a credit card, someone to watch their kids, and the £400 to £2000 it costs to travel and pay privately for an abortion. Other than ending patriarchy and changing the beliefs of people who can't seem to grasp that choosing not to have a child at a particular point in your life, or ever, is in itself a valid, moral

decision that is, to put it bluntly, not their business, there are interim solutions. Ireland's Abortion Rights Campaign and Northern Ireland's Alliance for Choice are fighting tooth and nail for law reform, while groups like Speaking of I.M.E.L.D.A (Ireland Making England the Legal Destination for Abortion) take less traditional approaches to raising public awareness

and helping women access abortions.

**Mara Clarke is the Founder and Director of Abortion Support Network.**

Please visit: <https://www.abortionsupport.org.uk/>

## The Struggle Continues in Spain

In welcome news from Spain an attempt by the government to deny the right to abortion on demand has been abandoned in the face of heavy opposition from the people and campaigning groups.

The Minister of Justice Alberto Ruiz Gallardon had pioneered a bill to end access to abortion except in the case of rape or if there was a threat to the physical or mental health of the mother. In addition the bill proposed that a termination be based on the opinion of two doctors.

The bill had been part of the centre-right Popular People's party's program since 2011 when leader Mariano Rajoy promised to overturn previous legislation which gave women the right to terminate pregnancies of between 14 and 22 weeks. The governing People's Party is strongly tied to the Catholic Church which had championed the bill. There has been little reportage of the bill in British press - astonishing considering it would be the most draconian law on abortion in Europe.

As the proposals took shape the usual demonstrations were called against them and took place on an almost daily basis. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Madrid in February 2014 displaying placards with the slogan "MPs and rosaries, out of my ovaries".

New and more creative forms of struggle also emerged with the fight against the bill. One activist was Yolanda Dominguez, a visual artist based in Madrid who had been involved in campaigns in the past. These included Fashion Victims in which she exposed working conditions in Bangladesh.

She urged action against the bill saying:

*"Enough of telling us what to do with our bodies, and when it has been moulded by and for others, transformed into an object and used as merchandise, we must prove that it is our property".*

### Material Girl

During protests hundreds of women turned up at the Chamber of Commerce in their towns to register their body on the register of commerce as material goods, usually used for cars and planes.

Some employees of the chambers of commerce were put out by these applications but nevertheless accepted this move and gave them receipts and certificates. The women's aim was to underline the fact that their bodies belong to them and to add ironically:

*"Because patriarchal society tends to make us believe that this body is a piece of merchandise, it is then normal to inscribe it on the commerce register, with the aim of certifying that it is our property".*

At Burgos in Northern Spain, women chose St. Valentine's Day to turn up, en masse, at the Chamber of Commerce to register:

*"Description, from head to toes, of all my members, without forgetting my organs and especially my uterus and my*

*reproductive apparatus, all of which representing my unique and unreproducible person".*

Scientific and medical organisations such as Spanish Society of Gynecology and Obstetrics (Sego), the Spanish Society of Perinatal Medicine (Semepe), the Spanish Association of Prenatal Diagnostics (AEDP), the Spanish Society of Psychiatry (SEP) and the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry (AEN) also took a stand against the Gallardon bill, saying that they were not consulted.

All these organisations pointed out that the Gallardon bill would lead to a "psychiatrisation" of a problem which has nothing to do with the psychiatric discipline. As the SEP says: "To put an end to or interrupt a pregnancy cannot be considered as a pathological situation from the psychiatric point of view, and to predict with exactitude the risk of mental illness of a previously healthy person would have serious scientific "limits"". Segó, with a membership of thousands, considered that the bill had not been submitted to a rigorous debate.

Polls suggested that seventy to eighty per cent of the population were opposed to the bill and gradually this caused rifts within the People's Party as MP's concerned about being re-elected, were pushed into opposing the bill.

Finally in September 2014, in the face of massive protests and wholesale opposition from the populace the government has cracked. Prime Minister Rajoy has announced the abandonment of the bill and its architect Gallardon has resigned claiming he will be unable to turn watered down proposals into law.

This episode is a victory for mass campaigns against government intervention into women's lives. Much like the poll tax it shows that mass opposition can sometimes have an effect on government.

Having said this, the government have still pledged to reverse current laws and force 16 and 17 year olds to gain their parents' consent for abortion. This effectively takes away the power of a young person to make decisions about their own, and gives it to someone else. It also forces them to reveal a traumatic issue to the very people they may for a variety of reasons most want to keep it from.

**To borrow a slogan from one demonstration, La Lucha Continua! ("the struggle continues")**





# Editorial



The society we live in today is based on divisions between different groups of people. There is a group at the top who have the main benefits, power and freedom because of their ownership of most of the world's resources. Other groups find their lives limited and controlled. Individuals are born into a particular social class, the working class, which affects how much money they have, the conditions they work and live in and even their health. The concept of 'race' is another way of dividing people and has been the source of some of the most barbarous acts committed by human beings, such as the slave trade and the holocaust.

In this issue of Resistance, we focus on another way that society oppresses and divides us: gender - the division of humans into men and women. Similar to 'race', gender is considered to have a biological basis. Most people, apart from the most fanatic racists, now accept that 'race' as a biological category does not exist. There may be differ-

ences in some superficial features such as skin colour, but these are so trivial that there is no point in talking about distinct races. However, the biological differences between male and female are more obvious and seemingly more important: the two sexes have different physical roles in producing children. This biological difference has been the basis of thousands of years of oppression, discrimination, stereotypes and limited expectations. Females have been the main losers, but men are also restricted by their assigned roles.

Therefore, if we are going to create a better society we need to free ourselves from the straightjacket of the categories we are placed in. This means abolishing class (through getting rid of capitalism) and fighting racism. However, what about gender? We certainly want to get rid of patriarchy - the domination of men over women, but what about the categories of 'man' and 'woman' themselves?

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## Battle with The Legal System

*A queer single parent, a survivor of domestic violence and an anarchist from the desolate north, shares her views on the legal system and the effect recent changes in legal aid have on survivors.*

In April 2014 changes came into effect which meant fewer people were able to apply for legal aid support, particularly in family and custody disputes.

The law now states that in family law disputes a survivor of domestic abuse must provide evidence of violence having occurred, a fraught and difficult process.

Fear of legal fees can be a significant barrier for survivors of domestic violence who wish to divorce, settle financial disputes or who are going through child contact proceedings.

Leaving a violent partner is difficult enough without the worry that you may lose your home, possessions or children due to high legal fees. Surprisingly, some aspects of these changes were actually welcomed by survivors as they also widened the remit for evidence which can be used to prove domestic violence and therefore claim legal aid.

Evidence of non-molestation orders, letters from support

workers such as women's aid and evidence of ongoing criminal proceedings are able to be used as evidence to claim legal aid, but domestic violence is complex. Unfortunately, many still think that domestic violence is characterised by the 'battered woman'. In reality, it is a complex web of financial, sexual, emotional and physical control and abuse. Most of this cannot be 'proven' and therefore the perpetrator cannot be convicted, and without legal interventions and convictions domestic violence cannot be proven.

Many of my fellow survivor friends have all said the same thing:

*'It's almost as if you need to be hospitalised before you are believed'.*

Black eyes and broken bones are a much easier signifier of abuse for people to recognise publicly, but when you are told that you are insane, fat, ugly or useless every day; when you are stopped from leaving the house or seeing your friends and family; or threatened with violence if you don't have sex, this is not visible..

This is what legal folk call 'tit for tat'. This means the perpetrator denies their actions and no-one can prove otherwise.

Why would you be awarded legal aid for something that is just your word when even your closest allies are doubting you?

### No-one Believed Me

Even though I had a letter from my women's aid worker, a non molestation order, criminal convictions against him and many other parts of the criteria the process of applying for the legal aid was lengthy and distressing. Having to drag out paperwork that you don't want to re-read, to explain the abuse in detail to the solicitor so that they believe you, and experiencing the flashbacks which take back years of self confidence and trauma survival is deeply traumatic. All so that you can prove to a stranger that you were actually abused.

No-one believed me then and again no-one wants to believe me now, because they don't want to give me free legal support. They would rather I paid.

In many cases it is the perpetrator who has the financial advantage, as throughout the violent relationship a key aspect is to make the victim dependent by encouraging them not to work or otherwise persuade them to hand over their financial affairs. This means that when court proceedings begin, the perpetrator may well be able to afford legal support and the survivor unable to, furthering the imbalance of power and perpetuating the means of abuse.

In my situation, the perpetrator was able to claim legal aid due to having no income. This can play two ways, it may dissuade the perpetrator from making applications to the court, or conversely it may mean they may represent themselves. This can work against the survivor as it means being questioned, interrogated and accused directly by the person who abused them. This has severe psychological effects, which is what the perpetrator wants.

I have been dragged through the courts for almost 5 years now due to criminal proceedings against the perpetrator, trying to obtain non molestation and prohibited steps orders, and now in the family court he has finally made an application for child contact which he is proceeding with. He has been trying to do this on and off for years but keeps withdrawing the application.

I imagine that agreeing child contact arrangements is difficult enough after an amicable relationship breaks down, but when domestic violence is involved the process is traumatic and the results can be catastrophic. Understandably, many survivors do not want the perpetrator to have any contact at all. I decided to deny contact based on the following reasons:

I felt he was doing it not to see our child but to gain information to stalk and harass me.

I believe due to direct threats that he has made that he will either abduct or seriously harm our child.

He is using the legal system to yet again to gain some control over my financial and emotional state.

He lost his rights to parenthood when he abused me.

A child witnessing domestic violence is in fact being abused themselves and can suffer for many years as a result.

I believe that these are all valid reasons to deny contact, yet he has a legal right to seek it whether it be direct, indirect,

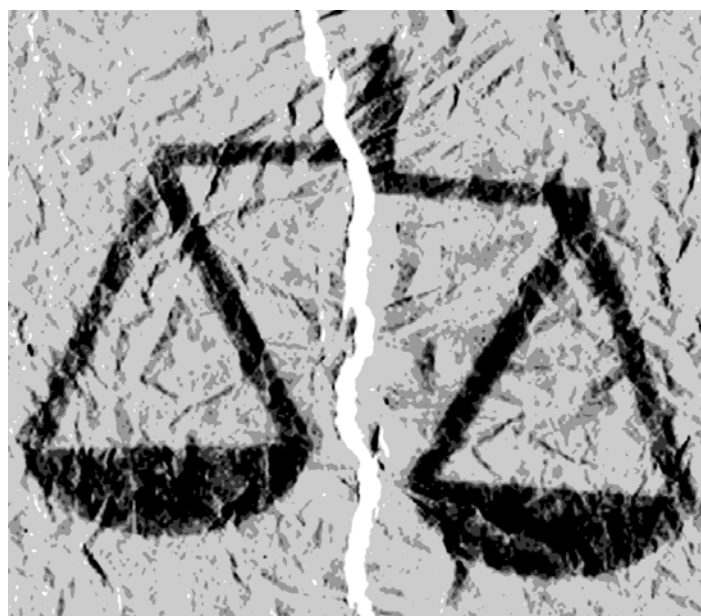
supervised or unsupervised. In other words I believe that through the legal system he is able to continue to abuse me. Cases are assessed on the best interest of the child which is in principle great, but in reality a system which still believes that a child having two parents is paramount to that child's rights is always going to work in a way that favours a Thatcherite view of the family. This means that contact can be given to abusers based on the fallacy of the nuclear family and puts children and survivors at risk of further abuse and even death.

Family cases are long, very long, and in turn very expensive. My current bout has been going on since January 2014 of this year and there is not even a slight end in sight (August 2014). If I were paying for this then I would owe the solicitors several thousand pounds. I don't work as a result of PTSD due to the domestic violence, but even if I wanted to work it would not benefit me as all my wages would go to legal fees. This means that I am on benefits for the foreseeable future whilst the perpetrator is able to continue working and earning money without the threat of sanctions and the debilitating poverty that comes with benefits. I am poor because of him. I cannot work if I am to keep my child safe from him. He is still in control.

But the legal aid that I receive would mean nothing without the support of organisations like Women's Aid, HALT, Behind Closed Doors and Rights of Women. It is these people who counsel me, support me to make the decision that is best for me and my child, who listen to me at midnight when I can't sleep because of panic attacks and flash-backs, that make me feel like I'm not alone, that give me a support network of other survivors, who give me safe refuge to stay and who make me believe that I made the right decision to leave and the right decision to fight for what is best for me and my child and make me believe that I am strong.

These are the people that deserve £300 an hour yet these are the ones who are facing cuts, redundancies, privatisation to the highest bidder and who will be working into old age and still be poor.

Legal aid is fantastic but it is these people who have saved my life and people in the legal profession could learn so much from them.



# Ukraine: Women speaking out



Ukraine is like many other post-Soviet countries: a patriarchal, reactionary, police state, where spiritual ties still hold strong. Women are still humiliated and ridiculed. We are not taken seriously, we go unnoticed, and we are silenced using a variety of repressive tactics.

Censorship is like a witch hunt. It displaces "objectionable women" by demonstrating the so called "weakness and folly of the female sex". The sensors slyly justify fascist stereotypes using the language of "femininity". We are forced to apply great effort in order for our struggle to be heard.

When I was approached to write about feminism in Ukraine, I asked working women and students from different cities to share their points of view anonymously, because I see women speaking out to be the most important step in demolishing Patriarchy as an authoritarian structure.

## My Own Story

I am a musician. My music contains themes of feminism, anarchism, and self-hatred - inspired by my own memories as a half-Jewish girl who grew up with an abusive step-father - a Slavic patriot and Kremlin military agent. I write and post on social networks about feminism, anti-fascism and anarchism, and with the help of friends I translate articles, organise film screenings and hold discussions on social, anti-capitalist, anti-fascist and LGBTQIA themes. I host DIY art events and concerts and take part in street protests. I am polyamorous and polygamous, which is considered absolutely unacceptable in Ukrainian society. Also unacceptable is the presence of anarchist discourse in your music, or the composition of any meaningful texts where there is even some display of individual thinking. Women over thirty are excluded from public spaces because they are not considered young and attractive enough for Ukrainian men, who dominate in all areas of society and dictate their own terms.

At best I am ignored, at other times unknown authors post caricatures of me. I receive threatening and insulting letters and phone calls, my activities are devalued publicly in a variety of ways, and sometimes during concerts there is a clash with nationalists.

It is difficult to imagine any kind of relationship based on mutual help and friendship in such an authoritarian police society. This society has absorbed the most repressive qualities and practices of the Soviet regime, including nepotism, elitism and informing. Those who are poor are unseen and often suffer from loneliness and isolation, particularly

have health problems due to radiation exposure after the Chernobyl accident; I have my friendships with others who are oppressed and devalued, including disabled, LGBTQIA, drug addicts, orphans and homeless people; and I have experience of poverty, toil, and living in isolation in this country. In view of all this, I see no other way forward than to protest, to struggle against authoritarian structures and to spread the propaganda of anarchism in my art. I dream of a kinder society of free people, where it is possible to love and be happy. As for the other women, I will let them speak for themselves.

## Simferopol

The walls of this cage were born together with me, simply because I'm a woman.

An art project is passed on to someone else, simply because he's a man, and they aren't even ashamed to admit it, and you are left standing in your cage, swallowing the insult.

An act of violence is committed against me by a supposed friend, who threatens to repeat it if I tell anyone, and now the bars have grown into my skin, and I've nearly lost my voice.

From my childhood to the present day, nothing has changed, and so I prefer simply to turn my back on the world of men, there are plenty of those who are willing to live for them, according to ancient rules, ignoring their cages, like in a surreal zoo.

But I'm never going back again.

## Kiev

Even before I started reading articles about feminism, I lived with a constant sense of injustice. It was everywhere - at home, at school, in the street, amongst friends, all over the world. I realised that being a woman in today's world is very difficult; it means constant humiliation and violation of your rights.

Ukraine is very far from feminist ideas, it is very difficult to stand out and be noticed, and the institution of the traditional family exasperates everything. When my mum found out that I was dating a girl, at first she thought I was ill, then she said, it's just "the idealism of youth". Eventually she concluded that I just haven't found the "right" guy yet.

I got the same thing with feminism. I was told that in the modern world it's impossible, or that it's all in my imagination. I find it really offensive to hear this from my family and friends. At our University, feminism is treated as extremism, it is difficult to find any feminist criticism in our library. In our university there are very few men and boys, and they are treated like kings. Male teachers consider their own views and thoughts to be absolute truth and convincing them otherwise is much harder for the girls than it is for the boys, who the teachers treat as their equals.

## Kiev 2

I prefer to not use the word "feminism", even if its very essence, its very obvious kindness cannot be doubted. The term probably originated in counterbalance to violence, disguised behind a clever looking face, carrying numerous labels. So it became necessary to hang signs over even the most natural of things, so that even the smallest of patriarchal minds might conceive of the existence of those in disagreement with them.



The desire to dominate is a sign of weakness. People tend to oversimplify far too much. Too lazy to think, they invent patterns and theorems to turn complex life problems into 3rd grade algebra puzzles.

I have always thought of these “people” as clowns, or more precisely, not thought of, because why should I think about all sorts of nastiness. But I began to notice that some of these people are among those very close to me. And that hurts. The global system of humiliation affects so many, and you seem to lose friends in the war.

Personally, I formed my opinions about gender at an early age, when I was taught that I should be a princess (but at the same time a housekeeper), that boys shouldn't dare to hit me, but ought to load me with presents and carry my bags, while I revel in my own beauty ... and of course, that it's simply inconceivable for me not to have a husband and children in the future, I mean, it just wouldn't be in order.

So I decided that being a girl - sucks. Then I calmed down and began to ignore gender role assignments. I was completely satisfied with my undefined (by all accounts) gender.

Everything is much simpler than people make out. When humiliating you, they begin to manoeuvre with clever words, remind you of God, natural laws, the nation, like a miserable slug that can only absorb; they try by all means to protect their imagined dignity. When they say, “Well, you're a woman,” you say “so what?” then they begin their empty, but “smart” sounding arguments, or more often they just reply “what do you mean, so what?”, failing to understand the nonsense of their words.

How can my genitals hinder me from becoming a scientist? How can slender hairy male legs be normal, but at the same slender hairy female legs, “disgusting”? It is simply stupid.

### Vinnitsia

I think that the problem that exists in Ukraine is not unique, it's the common heritage of all post-Soviet countries. You could say it's “The Slavic Tradition” with sayings such as “to beat, means to love”, “love your wife as your soul, and shake her like a pear tree” and so on. This shockingly patriarchal belief system is tightly ingrained in society and can be seen in everything from the anecdotal generalized family model of the “alcoholic husband and housewife” to the commonly shared conviction that an unmarried woman over 25-30 is a terrible failure.

Sometimes this all seems to me like something from the distant past, as my current circle of friends are creative, young, and open-minded people, but all it takes is for me to go and stay with my relatives, or to go and visit the village, and it all comes back to me. Recently one of my many distant relations customarily referred to as Aunt, aggressively put it to my mother that I most definitely need to find a husband while I'm still 20, “When she's 30, no one will want her” she exclaimed.

In the village where my grandparents live they had some friends, also a married couple. The husband was an alcoholic, and he gradually accustomed his wife to drinking, who living in such a home environment slowly drunk herself out of control. The husband regularly brought drinking company home and she also drank with them, but as it was her responsibility to take care of the smallholding, which she had become incapable of doing, her husband regularly beat her. I still remember my childhood impression of that woman, with

her battered red face and broken mouth, out of which came a terrible stench. In the end she was poisoned by chlorine, which had somehow ended up in a vodka bottle. In the villages cases similar to this are not uncommon, the overall situation is quite unpleasant, it's especially scary to see how young people inherit an example from the older generation, as if to say “it has always been that way” means, “it has always been good”.

Currently, I am a student in Art College and so primarily I would like to tell you about things there. At first glance it appears to be a progressive, creative society, but still there are many problems. For example, even though the vast majority of students in the Faculty of Graphics are female, during painting and drawing lessons the attention of male teachers is primarily focused on young men, who are taken more seriously. Teachers approach girls more to flirt than to say anything constructive about their work. It's terribly annoying as are the large number of unfunny jokes the likes of “ah, what do you need all these classes for, the sooner you go and get married the better”. In the first years this isn't so obvious, but as time goes on it becomes more and more noticeable. Anyone who has ever been in the company of professional “honoured” artists will know that they are appallingly chauvinistic. Most members of the “Union of Artists of Ukraine” are elderly people, women are in the minority and they often play a secondary role.

In general, our society is burdened with stupid and ridiculous traditions. It's hard for me to imagine how many generations will need to pass before we can fully drive them out and how much effort that will take.

### Odessa

“What is the ideal age to get married?” – Similar headlines leap from the covers of Fashionable Magazines. From the moment that puberty arrives, parents are already trying to marry their daughter off to a suitable husband. All parental care eventually comes down to successful bargaining. Family gatherings turn into interrogations for young girls: “Is there a boy in mind?”, “So when's the wedding?”, or “I would like to be able to see my grandchildren before I die, so hurry up now, don't delay.” We are constantly instilled from a young age that there is nothing more beautiful than motherhood. So when you meet a pregnant seventeen year old schoolgirl, you can only sympathize. After all, women who believe that having a vagina and spewing babies is the best thing that could happen to them must be very unhappy.

### Kharkov

Many among us, it seems to me, have absolutely no idea what equality and equal rights are, so that even the most outrageous injustice can be perceived as normal.

### Nikolaev

I grew up in a patriarchal society. I am constantly silenced and “put in my place” in a variety of underhanded ways by men of varying status and by women infected with sexism and patriarchal thinking.

I know from experience what it is to be depreciated because of my gender; I'm a lesbian. In Ukraine, the Orthodox Church actively shapes public opinion, poisoning one part of the population against the other. As soon as the LGBT community start to declare their rights, immediately from all sides crazy Orthodox church goers begin to howl.

I am just sick of all those Orthodox priests on the TV, bubbling

over with saliva and telling us about our sins, I'm sick of all that hellish thrash burlesque. The Orthodox Church is one of the nurseries of homophobic thought in people's minds, and many LGBT people pay with their lives for this.

In Orthodox countries, millions of LGBT people suffer all sorts of abuse, from physical to moral and right up to murder. I read a true story about Orthodox parents who booked a "corrective" rape of their daughter. And not only LGBT suffer

from humiliation, stigmatization and violence, but all women, because in the Orthodox tradition and culture the woman is subject to the man, she is a second-class person, she is more of a sinner and less valuable. All we hear is: "sin, sin, sin, death, death, after death ..."

**LGBTQIA = Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual.**

## Free Women of Spain

*The story of Mujeres Libres (Free Women) an organisation of thirty thousand women that emerged in the Anarchist movement in Spain in 1936.*



Spain in the 1930s was a society riddled with ideas of male superiority and the cult of machismo.\*

Spain had a mass anarchist movement organised in the Anarcho-Syndicalist union, the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) which at its height organised as many as two million members, the specific anarchist organisation the FAI (Federacion Anarquista Iberica), the Libertarian Youth (FIJL) which organised many young workers and the various free schools and ateneos which organised literacy programmes, as well as free libraries, plays, and general education. The aim of the Anarchists in the Civil War was to emancipate all and institute a free society, without exploitation or hierarchy, where each person worked according to ability, received back according to need and had equal power and a direct say over social and political life.

Women entered the CNT when the CNT started organising in the textile industry. In addition, the CNT also began organising among domestic servants and maids, where girls as young as ten were employed by the middle classes and the rich. Some women came to the fore in the early days of the CNT and were inspiring figures for emancipation and for anarchism. However, traditional macho values were still very dominant in Spanish society. This included in the Anarchist and Syndicalist movement which, whilst it talked about the emancipation and liberation of all and the end of hierarchies, in practice held back the liberation of women. It re-created old structures which oppressed women without challenging them.

Illiteracy and lack of education were big problems for working class women in Spain as they were for the whole of the working class.

### Triple Enslavement

Some women activists of the anarchist movement, including Lucia Sanchez Saornil, Mercedes Comaposada and Amparo Poch y Gascon did not want to wait for the Revolution to free

everyone before they acted. They started a magazine, *Mujeres Libres*, which proved to be hugely popular. Its aim was to educate women "and to provide them with information about politics so they could become involved in anarchist activities, and it also served to give women professional training so they would have better employment opportunities". Soon the magazine linked up with other anarchist women in other parts of Spain and they began to think about creating a women's organisation. Their aim was to fight against what they saw as the triple enslavement of women, enslavement to ignorance (lack of access to education and literacy), enslavement to capitalism and hierarchy, and enslavement to men.

One of the key ideas was the need for women to organise in a specific organisation to combat ideas of sexism and machismo in general AND in the anarchist movement. They concentrated on the connections between class, cultural and sexual oppression.

They worked for integration of women into the workforce through apprenticeship and employment programmes, the education of women and consciousness raising so that women could feel confident and assertive, through propaganda tours, radio, travelling libraries, the struggle against sexist behaviour including in their own movement, the development of crèches and childcare centres in the neighbourhood and in the workplace, the development of hospitals with birth and postnatal facilities.

The emergence of *Mujeres Libres* was an important development. All at once women began to question their role in an extremely oppressive society.

*Mujeres Libres* failed to have a complete view of sexist division of labour where often women were confined to domestic roles and the rigidity of sex roles where women bore the sole responsibility for raising children. Abortion and birth control were not discussed as much as they should have been, though if the Spanish Revolution had not been crushed by the forces of General Franco this might well have come more to the fore. They did insist on the need for an independent women's anarchist organisation and refused to disappear into the various committees and sub-committees of the CNT.

The History of *Mujeres Libres* is extremely important if we want to move forward and destroy hierarchies in every sphere of life.

***Machismo* - "a strong sense of masculine pride...[with] the supreme valuation of characteristics culturally associated with the masculine and a denigration of characteristics associated with the feminine." Merriam-Webster Dictionary**



# Made in China: Gender and Resistance in the 'Factory of the World'

In May of this year, 50,000 workers went on strike in the Taiwanese-owned Yue Yen shoe factory in Dongguan. Dongguan is part of the Pearl River Delta (PRD), a major industrial centre for export factories near Hong Kong. This may be one of the biggest strikes in the PRD so far - but it is only the tip of the iceberg.

Over the past 20 years there have been thousands of actions taken by the migrant workers, who make up the main body of the workforce in the PRD. Women make up the majority of this workforce and, though reports of the strikes are gender-neutral and talk only about 'workers', will certainly make up the majority of strikers. It's impossible to discuss the new Chinese working class without considering the different situations in which men and women find themselves, and the affect this has on their role in strikes and other acts of resistance.

Migrant workers have been coming to the PRD since the early 1990s, when the Chinese government opened China up to market forces and encouraged foreign investment. For a variety of reasons, most of these migrants are women, especially on the assembly lines. Bosses think that young women are more 'docile' and able to put up with the tedium of the work and the patriarchal family system means that girls have no future in rural areas, as the son generally inherits the family farm. As a result many young women are eager to leave the countryside for a new life in the city. As one young woman said: 'There is nothing to do at home, so I went out'.

## Horrendous

The wages and conditions for many young women are horrendous. One woman's story (Chang: 2010) gives an idea of what it was like. Min arrived in Dongguan in the mid-1990s. Like many others, she had a relative already living there who helped her begin the job hunt. It wasn't difficult to find a job. She started work for an electronics firm, living in a dirty, smelly dormitory with 12 other girls she didn't know. Shifts lasted 13 hours with a couple of breaks, though she often worked weeks without a single break. Min earned about 50 dollars a month. She had thought it would be fun working on an assembly line, chatting and laughing with the other women. But she soon learned this was not the case: talking on the job was forbidden.

What happened next in Min's story gives some indication of the acts of resistance that may have led to the big strikes we are seeing in China today. Min had difficulty coping with the tedium of the assembly line and would often talk and take toilet breaks. One day, when she was told off, she walked off the line in protest. Completely unexpectedly, the boss started being nice to her and promised that if she stayed she would get her back wages and hinted at a promotion. However Min replied: 'Your factory is not worth wasting my youth on' and said she would stay only 6 more months and expected all the pay she was owed. She left 6 months later, straight into another job as a low level clerk.

These acts of resistance have been noted by a number of writers who have spent time with the 'dagonmei', or 'women working for the boss'. Despite the factory system of control and domination, they have managed to find ways to resist and as in Min's case, many are willing to speak out and leave. Clearly, the women have not turned out to be as 'docile' and easily controlled as the bosses had hoped! There is a high staff turnover, with many women going back to their villages to get married. This labour shortage has helped the workers to gain some bargaining power. Once workers win one small victory, it will hopefully build their

confidence, leading to bigger and bigger actions.

It is hard to gain a complete picture of the role of women in the strikes. Women will certainly constitute a major part of the strikers as they are the assembly line workers. A strike at a Honda factory in Zhongshan in 2010 where women made up the majority of the workforce won a significant victory with pay concessions as well as winning the right to choose their own representatives for collective bargaining rather than having to rely on the official trade union. According to the China Labour Bulletin, the strikes in 2013 occurred in factories with a largely female workforce. Women were particularly active in communicating information about the strikes and spreading the word by internet and mobile phone. However, their actual role during the strikes remains unclear.

The recent strike at the Yue Yen factory indicates that whilst women may make up the majority of strikers, the leaders are still men. In fact, according to one report on Reuters (Ruwitch 2014) it was the managers who started the strike. They were mainly concerned that the company had not been keeping up on its social insurance contributions. It was more senior workers, most likely to be all men, who were in a position to be concerned about this issue.

Women, therefore, have two struggles on their hands. Not only are they experiencing the worst of the conditions and wages, they also may be sidelined by male workers (who are often more senior, skilled and better paid) in the struggles themselves. It is difficult to become a leader in these strikes in a patriarchal society.

The women often do not remain in urban areas long enough to become more embedded in a social movement because they are pressurized by their parents and by society as a whole to return to the village and marry. Increasingly, however, once women have been to the urban areas and experienced the relative freedom that exists there, they are resisting the pressure to return. Instead, they find ways to escape the assembly line, taking courses and involving themselves in other projects. Despite this they may not have the options available to men, and one of their escape options may be into prostitution.

It is important that as anarcho-feminists, we seek to understand the complexity of what is going on. We cannot simply see everyone as 'workers' but need to actively consider the role gender plays. It is clear that all workers of all sexes are determined to fight their exploitation but women have their own battles to fight - to ensure they play an equal role in all struggles.

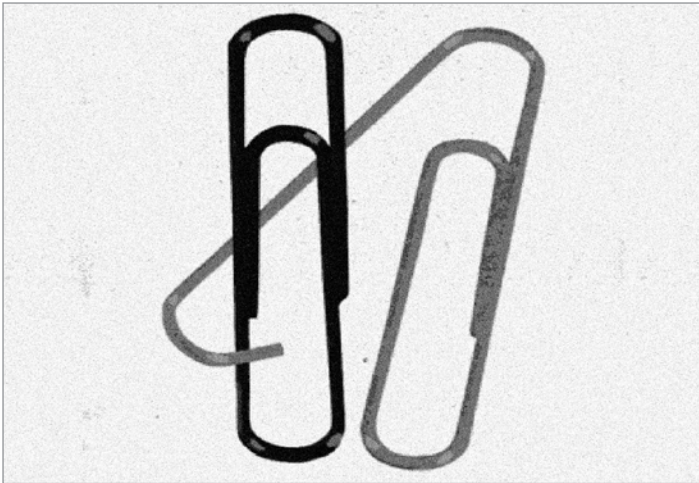
Ruwitch (2014) **In China, managers are the new labour activists**  
Link: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/06/01/uk-china-labor-strikes-idUKKBN0EC10720140601>

Chang (2010) **Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China** - Spiegel & Grau



# “He’s like that with everyone”

## *Sexual harassment at work*



An IFOP (Institut Français d’Opinion Publique) poll released in March 2014 says that one woman in five has experienced sexual harassment at work in the course of her career. Clearly, this study underestimates the number of women harassed. Not a deliberate underestimation, but more because many women who undergo sexual harassment will not recognize it as such. Practical case study - in the restaurant

Yesterday, in the restaurant where I work, one of the chefs came to see me, and, by way of greeting, said “Say, have we already slept together? It’s possible that I don’t remember. “

Earlier this month, a customer came to the counter and looking straight into my eyes and without any warning said to me, “I love full-figured women “.

After my third month of work, a group of customers made up of men in their thirties, all dressed in smart suits , left me a charming note on a napkin and a 10 Euro tip. The note which must have appeared sweet to them read, “For your beautiful breasts.” This is my daily lot as a waitress, I am sure I am not alone.

So yesterday I cracked. Not having the “right” to tell customers to get lost (apparently this doesn’t build customer loyalty), I decided to challenge the chef. I informed him that no, we have not slept together, and that, that will never happen, I asked him to change his tone when he speaks to me. He left annoyed. With that, my manager, who had been there at the time, took me aside and started to justify his behaviour:

“Don’t get me wrong, it is like that with everyone. You know, it’s kind of his way of saying hello. “

I then said two things. Firstly, I didn’t take it wrong, I won’t tolerate a supervisor sexually assaulting me verbally, which is exactly what happened. Secondly, no, this is definitely not a way of saying hello. Her reply left me speechless, “But you know, he’s not your boss, you can tell him to get lost if you want.” The internalisation of sexism

At that moment I realised that to argue with my manager was useless. For her a woman must accept this type of sexual harassment if it comes from a boss, if it’s linked to making profit, if it comes from a dominant person. I remembered her social class - from the bourgeoisie, and mine, from the working class.

We do not have the same feminism or the same interests. Her main interest is in making money out of the business through my working hard and not complaining, my interests lie in fighting against being exploited by her and other owners, and fighting against sexism. In this case of sexual harassment at work, the two are linked.

If my boss or my manager allows sexist behaviour towards me, it is not only because I am a woman, but also because I am a waged employee under their control. Like any boss, they know I need this job to live, that speaking out will carry the fear of losing my job, the fear of not being believed and fear of the shame that society will pin on me.

The economic aspect to sexual harassment at work is reflected in the fact that some men also experience this type of oppression at work. While they are a minority given the number of women harassed, even their existence demonstrates that it is a matter of economics and power in the workplace as well as sexism. Return blow for blow

Answers do exist in the struggle against this linked economic and sexual exploitation. Sexual harassment at work is an offence. The law protects employees, public officials and trainees against it. Some unions in France such as the CGT, have established hotlines to help survivors to enforce their rights resulting from the law of August 6, 2012. The first step is to realize this type of behaviour is unacceptable. Don’t make excuses for those who use their dominant status to abuse and exploit others. We are taught to accept sexual harassment as a necessary inconvenience during employment, and this has been internalised by a majority of employees, this must be fought at every turn.

*Bertille Salvador Segui, Group of the Federation Anarchiste of France*

## Transgender tipping point, but what are we tipping into?

Things are looking up for trans\* people, in the west at least. In the UK, the 2010 Equalities Act gave us some protection from discrimination, in the US, trans\* healthcare will finally be covered by insurance and Medicare, in Denmark people can now self-determine their own gender without having to ‘prove’ a thing. All over Europe the law is slowly changing, discrimination starting to recede and trans\* communities are growing not just in confidence, but also in number as the previously closeted come out and into their own.

The credit for all this goes to a huge number of trans\* groups

and individuals who’ve been battering at the walls for many years. With few allies or resources we’ve won important rights for ourselves. Those of us transitioning now owe a huge debt to our fore-sisters and brothers for all the work they have done to make our lives easier.

As Time magazine put it we are at a tipping point, where the uphill struggle becomes a downhill sprint. And for many of us this is, perhaps, the most dangerous time of all.

In August, Stonewall, the UK’s biggest Lesbian, Gay and

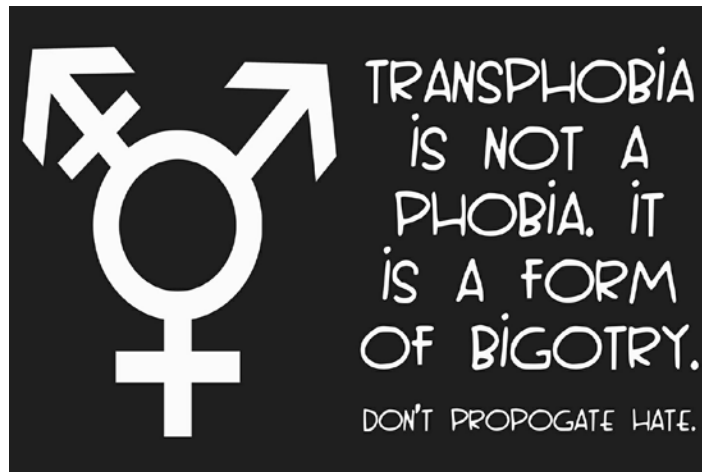
Bisexual campaigning organisation, invited a group of prominent trans\* people to a meeting. There Ruth Hunt, Stonewall's new chief executive, apologised for Stonewall's previous exclusion of trans\* people. She also offered to let us come in from the cold. The process of opening up Stonewall to trans\* people has begun.

All of a sudden trans\* activists can see glittering prizes. The money to sustain our organisations, access to law makers and researchers, the lobbying clout of a large and well-funded non-profit. With so many of our lives still blighted by discrimination, poverty, poor access to healthcare, housing and all the rest of it, no one is going to turn down these opportunities for real improvements in our lives.

However, the chance at equality on offer here is the same chance taken by the gay community over the last few decades. We will gain rights only to the extent that we accept the 'responsibilities' of capitalist society. We will become respectable only to the extent that we reject the unrespectable and mimic the values and actions of a society that, deep down, will still hate us. For this tolerance we will sacrifice all those who can't be tolerated.

The early signs are that any alliance with Stonewall will mean staying silent about sex work as they do. A quiet betrayal of

trans\* sex workers and the many cis sex workers who have supported us over the years. And this is just a beginning. The politics of respectability always means cutting ties with your unrespectable allies. Instead of grounds for alliance, our associations with the mentally ill, sex workers, the homeless and others become liabilities to be dumped. And as always the most vulnerable members of our community will be hit hardest.



## Who are the Angry Women of Liverpool?

### *"Two things should ye know of the Angry Women..."*

In 2007, a group of women from the Liverpool Social Centre Collective had a meeting. They were angry about a lot of things: feminist issues being ignored or dismissed by other groups they organised with, women being unable to attend meetings for lack of childcare, and women who got as far as attending meetings and making their points facing criticism for being "too angry".

The initial group - nearly all identifying as anarchist feminists - started out as the feminist core of the social centre. They held meetings in which they could talk freely, organise, offer solidarity and support to challenge sexism in other meetings, run educational sessions to combat sexism in activist groups, and put together practical policies and processes to make radical spaces safer, more accessible places for women to meet and organise. They soon realised that these meetings were too useful, and too much fun, to end when the specific problems they'd been addressing had been solved.

The group took on the name Angry Women of Liverpool when its members decided to open monthly meetings to women from beyond the social centre collective. AWOL began organising public meetings on some of the themes that had been emerging from their freeform discussions: women in comics, Silvia Federici, Buffy, Wages for Housework, the Bechdel test, Joanna Russ, pornography, Buffy vs. Twilight, street harassment, body hair... from the serious to the bizarre, usually segueing into the geeky and the hilarious, rarely staying on topic for long, AWOL meetings were a chance to bring the kind of feminist discussion that was happening on the internet into a real life social space with tea, cake and the potential for action to grow out of discussion.

At first, AWOL's meetings were for women only. The space for women to be angry without censure was necessary in order to organise. Women only meetings meant more time spent discussing feminist issues and preparing actions, less time explaining that there were issues and justifying the need to

act. As time went on, the group decided to keep the first hour of the meeting as a women only space for organising events and actions, but opened the discussion part of the meetings to "feminist-friendly folks" of all genders. Many AWOL regulars felt under pressure to educate the men in their lives (and their political groups) about feminism. Inviting men to meetings was a great way to bring the genuine on board and filter out the time-wasters.

AWOL were clear from the start that the "women" in "women only" included trans women, and that feminism had to be intersectional. A feminist group that failed to include working class women, women of colour, trans women and women of all ages, sexualities and abilities would only compound the problem of activist groups that failed to include women.

The group quickly gained a broader range of members with political affinities spanning the full spectrum of the left, though the ethos of AWOL has always remained implicitly anarchist. While there is some crossover and plenty of collaboration with other Liverpool feminist groups, especially Merseyside Women's Movement, there is a general understanding that MWM take the peaceful marches and the campaigns to reform Council policies, while AWOL takes the direct actions and incites the mobs that confront pro-lifers and street harassers (though both kinds of action usually involve members of both groups).

Women are taught to suppress and hide their anger, told that it makes us irrational and means we've lost control. AWOL has always believed that anger can be constructive, channelled and focussed, forged into a useful tool, burned as a source of energy. Anger means a healthy connection to the world around you, it means you're paying attention.

**AWOL meets in Next to Nowhere, 96 Bold St., Liverpool (ring basement bell) on the first Monday of the month. 7pm women only, 8pm all genders and none. See <http://angrywomen.wordpress.com> or contact [awol@riseup.net](mailto:awol@riseup.net) for more details.**



# Young single mothers fight social cleansing in East London

The 'Focus E15 mothers' campaign is an inspiring and effective campaign that has directly challenged the housing policies of the government and private capital. Social housing has been decimated and developers build for the rich, whilst building a token amount of 'affordable' housing, which is not in fact affordable for the majority of Londoners.

The E15 mothers have suffered as a direct result of these policies. Due to a shortage of social housing, they were housed by the East Thames Housing Association in the Focus E15 hostel for young people who need support. However, local government cuts forced them out. In their words from their Facebook page:

On the 20th of August 2013 mothers were issued eviction notices from the housing association East Thames to be out of our flats by 20th October 2013. East Thames explained that Newham council had cut £41,000 of funding leading to the evictions. We questioned east Thames as to what would happen next we were simply told: "I don't know, we will have to wait and see". We were all referred to Newham Council's Bridge house (housing office) and were all registered officially homeless. We were told to look for private rented accommodation in MANCHESTER, HASTINGS AND BIRMINGHAM! This meant we would have no support network... our children wouldn't know their families. We decided to FIGHT FOR WHAT'S RIGHT!

Their determination has led to a campaign that has gathered support from many different groups and individuals; the 'mothers' are seen as representing the kind of struggle that should spread across the country- against the cuts, against developers and against social cleansing. In addition, it has made demands for what we would like to see: more social housing built and an end to the gentrification policies that are turning East London, and many other working class areas, into enclaves for the rich and middle class professionals.

The campaign is organised and led by the women themselves. Though they have outside support from activists, it is their campaign and they determine its direction. Single mothers are often demonised by the press as if the absent fathers bear no responsibility. It is the women who have to make a life for themselves and their child in very difficult circumstances.

In the current climate of austerity, the obstacles are enormous. This is what is so inspiring about the E15 mothers campaign; they have not let themselves be demonised or pushed around because they are single mothers. They are fighting for what we should all have as part of a normal life- a place to live that is near family and friends, that is of good quality and truly affordable.

The campaign has been largely successful in that all the 29 mothers have now been rehoused in accommodation in the borough. This was the result of a militant campaign that involved not just regular public stalls but demonstrations and occupations. They have not stopped campaigning because of the apparent victory. They realise that they and many others still have a struggle to wage. They are now in private rented accommodation with rents only guaranteed for a year. They have now extended the campaign to address the housing issue in general, lending their significant voice and experience to a wider campaign for social housing.

Recently E15 Mothers went on the offensive again with their Open House Occupation of four homes on the Carpenters Estate in Stratford where Newham Council has decanted many tenants from council housing there and left empty flats in a borough crying out for social housing.

[www.facebook.com/pages/Focus-E15-Mothers](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Focus-E15-Mothers)



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