February 2017 Dialogue: Building an Intersectional Feminist Movement beyond the Pink Hat

In this movement moment when millions of white cis-women are becoming mobilized and radicalized in opposition to Trump, how can we push the movement to organize beyond white middle class cis-women issues and towards racial justice? What common and historical patterns of white feminism should we make conscious and disrupt -- now and for the long haul? As a collective, we have particularly investigated how "white womanhood" is used to justify systems and patterns of harm especially against POC, while also holding space for our queer and TGNC experiences in that conversation. How do we make space for complicated relationships to one-dimensional narratives of "womanhood" in ways that still promote accountability? And, conversely, how do we encourage folks on the cis-gender female end of the spectrum to actually investigate their conditioning into their gender roles as a way to support them in beginning to understand and subvert these dominant practices?

Readings:
(Note: this list of readings focuses on the women's march as a recent event that offers larger patterns and learnings, but our discussion will be much broader than this event alone.)

Our Cynicism will not Build a Movement. Collaboration Will.- Alicia Garza  
Why I'm Skipping the Women's March on Washington - Jamilah Lemieux  
Pussy Don't Fail Me Now: The Place of Vaginas in Black Feminist Theory and Organizing - Crunk Feminist Collective  
The Women's March Left Trans Women Behind - Evan Greer  
Disability Rights are Conspicuously Absent from the Women's March Platform - Emily Ladau

Notes:
• what was opening for me to bring me into this movement
• how do we actually build mass mobilizations across difference  
• frustrating to have white womens feminism be the main focus again  
• Meager defense of civil rights we have to do- how can we fight that defense without having to reify the bigger system of capitalism  
• Standing rock syllabus- the immigrant rights movement reifies colonial logic by reinforcing the state as determiner  
• Aversion to women's march and also such a big movement moment and noticing all my judgement come up, some that is definitely justified.  
• how to have complicated relationship to gender, femininity and the word women, while still staying engaged political.  
• Many of us dismissed the woman march- example of white privelege and white feminism, yet as it got closer and saw people engaged, not that it got there, but it was good to see how they responded and people showed up.  
• Evan Greer as a trans woman taking time to send feedback to the organizers and then they did respond an engaged.  
• Bridge building between white led enviro orgs and more radical POC led community groups and non-profits. Lost of questions about how to hold myself internally to be effective. Also many white women coming to me asking what to do.  
• How to have conversations with people through my internalized sexism and homophobia as a queer person.
• Trumps patriarchy poked a lot of white women and what came out of them was what's there and we as organizers have the opportunity to engage it in a constructive way.
• Practice more nuanced observation within myself when dealing with these kind of issues.
• White feminism and its problematic history totally getting dismissed =.
• Crunk Feminist piece - difficult work of naming things clearly and dealing with critique while not throwing anyone out.
• White cis-women are focused on being a huge force in the women's march and yet don't want to erase women of color
• Felt endearment to the hat cause it did do something for a lot of people - as an opportunity to connect and make something by hand and get them out there. That this time is so mobilizing. Went to the march and didn't recognize people that I knew, refreshing.
• Who was patient with me as I started to have new awarenesses. So much opportunity for folks at all different levels.
• The more I try to investigate notions of privilege and oppression, the more I don't know
• Woman's march - really complicated feelings leading up and didn't go, but then conflicting feels afterwards. Felt resentment, frustrated, angry. Partly all these white women in my life reaching out assuming I was going and then felt shame having to explain to them why I was critical.
• Also felt like its good that this is the first thing that many of these women are doing.
• Im from the south, and knew a lot of these women who went to the march were the same people who didn't care when protestors were being harmed in Ferguson.
• Feminist education
• Affluent white feminism - people to do not freedom, they just want to go one step back to where wealthy white womens bodies are not attacked.
• How to politically engage women showing up to these political issues.
• Question that even if these women are supported there aim will remain the same.
• IN Oakland, most of the signs were not about women but about all the other issues Trump dredged up.
• Why one goes to the march?
• This is an historic march and it is because never before that I knew of have women marched to fight patriarchy. Not necessarily just for a particular issue, but an assault on women's body in general.
• At least in Oakland there was a lot of people
• What moves people to want to do something? Safety pin debate. Depending on how bad things get we may need to wear things to communicate or color that makes you feel powerful and collective in public space. Black Bloc, Zapatistas.
• Feel that the women's march platform is intersectional after getting so much feedback, hoping that the platform will be used as an organizing tool for the people who just came out.
• Disability studies is new to people in my cohort and we need to make space for that because where else will people learn.
• Mass outrage for certain peoples lives and I feel outrage for what isn't there.
• The muslim ban is towards the 7 countries that Obama has been bombing, and yet silence on that end.
• Heartbreak, hold that with mindfulness.
• Linda Sarsour and palestinian activists resurrected a jewish cemetery and my first reaction was anger that this got so much publicity and love from Jewish community amidst the erasure of palestinian and arab lives. Feel heartbreak that I cant appreciate it all, I cant let it be. Felt sad that I couldn't celebrate that.
• Peoples claims about the rise of anti-semitism, and it is my own view as a white jew, where Im just like come on.
• Impulses saying stop centering yourself
• “they come for you in the morning they will come for me at night”. What does it mean to have each others back? If I show up for you will you then recognize and support me
• Bringing in complexity,
• Option A- you recognize how your oppression is linked everywhere and you work to dismantle it. Option B- you liberate yourself and then go back to sleep.
• Welcome to the deep perpetual place of angst, let it motivate it
• Classic labor organizing perspective, you don't judge people where they are at you just systematically keep coming back. Institutional structural support that when one organizer gives up they turn to their organizer and here where
• Not that many white liberal anti-racist groups who focus on gender justice in the nation.
• White Noise is set up to do that work
• There has been a call from POC for a long time for white people to organize other white people, but I don't know where to even meet and connect with people.
• Right now old school white supremacy and patriarchy is on the scene so there is so much ripeness to engage, doesn't have to be a super advanced nuanced conversation.
• How encouraging and critical am I supposed to be when engaging with people?
• Clear line of when you give up on people. Im surrounding by very conservative and fundamentalist people, when do you give up on people.
• Many people I had to cut off, and I still wonder if that was the right choice
• From central California, many conservatives, trying to think about how to have these conversations without scaring them off.
• In the summer when BLM was in the news cycle, my approach was to ask question when people posted racist things, and to do slow digging work and I could see them open up and then they shut down.
• Its so hard to say what kind of affect you are having on people.
• I have seen how my willingness to address these issues bring people
• 5 steps for the living revolution
• There is a vacuum left after they overthrow the government, so you need cultural preparation, education, building alternative population, non-violent direct action (11% of population). Need all those things. These are all non-violent movements.
• People need shit to do to stay engaged,
• Bay resistance had 15000 people sign up in the first few weeks, if only there was infrastructure to give them tasks, and then to follow up and organize them.
• Friend who's dedicated 8 years to fighting for unionization and they are going to finally win but it will only be marginal wins in the larger scope.
• I did labor organizing and was a Salt for years and just got burnt out and the way that I trust myself now is to balance some sustainability. Needing time and space to heal as a way to also do the work. So many voices that say I need to be out there.
• Women's march excited to see so many people out there but also seeing us being herded by the police.
• Want to invoke my great aunt- when I was a frantic activist as a teenager, I would come to her. She would say that the best thing that you can do is what you can do and thats the best thing to do. She was a Russian scholar of WWI and was around then and that its a long arc.
• SO many people who are socialized as white and female show patterns of martyrdom, burn out, lack of trust of oneself.
• I don't want to be 60 and look back and not have been part of something, but if that is the reason for showing up it's not strategic. Need to interrogate that.
• Risk- I have been feeling risk averse recently. I don't actually want to put my life on the line, actual death.
• such a strong value of putting my self at risk in solidarity for others, but so much easier in a nonviolent sense, harder when your life is on the line. And I'm not someone who thinks violence is not ok.
• What does it take to win? The calculus of what it takes it to win is clearer when you know what it takes. You get to chose what you do, so don't take a strategy that doesn't make sense.
• Risk doesn't feel strategic right now.
• When we do activism that is only in an office and non-profits, and not about helping our fellow people there is a serious danger in that disconnection.
• Isolation in the experience of having to decide what risk to take.
• I don't know what it means to win, while we know what losing looks like.
• Calls for impeachment but then what Pence takes over? WE overthrow the government but then what the democrats take over? Thinking about a lot in our difficult conversations workshop we are doing practice. It is not just one conversation within win or lose.
• There is concrete wins and losses, and then also all of it is building. Social relationships.
• What movement has there ever been that hasn't been exclusive in some way. There is endless practice.
• Our existence is resistance. Like accessing health care right now, especially trans health care, its like people fought for this.
• open up my mind to be more utopian, don't want to limit my imagination, hard to imagine the new world when it has never been.