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Male Violence against Women:
Links between Peace and War

I remember one day, when I was working in Belfast – it was back in the nineties. that battered city was very poor and very violent. But it had one thing going for it – quite a few women's community centres. I remember so clearly a woman in one of them who said to me "Don't talk to me about war. My life's a battlefield." The particular network of women's centres I was working alongside, and learning from, at that time were involved in a bold cross-community initiative for peace, to end the war between the Unionists, the British and the Republicans. But a lot of those drop-in centres found they needed to provide support to women experiencing violence in the home, from men who weren't called the enemy but the husband. There was a thread of violence in Belfast running from the bedroom, through the streets and bars, to the barracks. And the different kinds of violence weren't entirely separate or distinct. Looking at it from a gender perspective brings to view some of the links between them. Some people talk of a continuum of violence. This is the kind of thing I'd like to explore with you this evening. I'm going to talk for 40, 45 minutes and then I really hope to learn from you how you're thinking about and how you're doing 'No to war and no to violence'.

Today we're about half way through the period that's been designated the *Sixteen Days Of Activism Against Gender Violence.* 2010 is the 20th year that this Sixteen Days campaign has been running. It was the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in the USA that launched the Sixteen Days idea in 1991. This period was chosen because already for ten years November 25 had been named an International Day Against Violence Against Women, and December 10 was International Human Rights Day. The campaigners wanted to emphasize that link. They were saying, freedom from violence is women's legal right as a human being.

This year the theme of the Sixteen Days (and I think it's for the first time – am I right?) links violence in peace with violence in war. The title is *Structures of Violence: Defining the Intersections of Militarism and Violence Against Women.* It happens that this interests me a great deal, because the themes of women and men, war and peace-making, militarism and antimilitarist movements, have been the subject of my research for fifteen

years or so. And I guess it's been part of my sense of self and belonging for twice as long as that. A lot of my dearest friends today are women I first met in the 1980s when we got together in North London to support the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, protesting against nuclear missiles.

The organizers of this years Sixteen Days campaign introduce the theme, on their website, by saying quote "We, as defenders of women's human rights, have a responsibility to look more closely at the structures in place that permit gender-based violence to exist and persist. After much consultation with activists, organizations, and experts from around the world, *militarism* has emerged as one of the key structures that perpetuates violence." They go on to say, "While there are many different ways to define militarism, our working definition outlines militarism as an *ideology* that creates a culture of fear and supports the use of violence, aggression, or military interventions for settling disputes and enforcing economic and political interests."

So, yes, *militarism* is an *ideology*, and a very pervasive and persuasive one. For convenience, a different name is usually given to the social structures and practices that spring from the ideology, or that the ideology legitimates. It's called *militarization.* Militarization means the national and international military commands and their armed forces, the military-industrial complex that furnishes the materiel of war, and the arms trade that distributes it. It also includes the processes of war planning and preparation, war-fighting, armed peace. But in everyday speech people often use the two words, militarism and militarization, interchangeably and I'm afraid I'm likely to do that in this talk.

When we're looking for the links between war violence and violence against women in peace time, I think we need to look for causality, influence, flowing in both directions. Put briefly, violence in our everyday cultures, deeply gendered, predisposes societies to accept war as normal. And the violence of militarization and war, profoundly gendered, spills back into everyday life and increases the quotient of violence in it.

To think about the first flow first…My last research project took me to visit women antiwar activist organizations in 12 countries. One of the things I tried to learn is what they think are the roots or causes of war – so as to know what it is that they feel they need to tackle if they're to reduce militarization and end armed conflict. Of course they were all pretty clear that capitalism, the greedy, global ambitions of corporations, are one cause of war. And then

again, nationalism, state claims to territory, or the struggle for religious and ethnic supremacy, in some places women can't fail to see those things as causes of war.

But the reason these were women's, indeed feminist, antimilitarist organizations, is that the mainstream mixed peace movements of men and women that they're part of seem to them to be missing something. They point to patriarchy. They're not afraid of that old fashioned word. Patriarchy, gender relations that involve male supremacy, violent hierarchies of men and complicit, compliant or victimized femininities, that seems to them to be something to do with war. Not in the same immediate sense as those other causes of war, but present as a root cause, a predisposing factor.

That leads feminist antimilitarists to look at some of the same things that feminists addressing violence against women in peacetime are looking at. How ordinary boys and men learn to be combative, to use, to invest in, their bodies as forces of coercion, to use fist, head, boot and penis as weapons to exert dominance, to get the things to which they feel they're entitled: the respect of other males, the obedience and sexual submission of women. They find themselves looking at everyday cultures and the part they play in making war thinkable and do-able.

Conversely, what about feminists whose main focus is on violence against women in peacetime? I've done no research in that field. But I would hazard a guess. I suppose they (and perhaps its some of you in this room) find they need to be alert to the penetration of militarization, the feedback from war, into everyday life and culture. Some of you may know the work of Cynthia Enloe, who's written a string of really useful books in which she shows how militarization is much, much more than the obvious bristly things – helicopter gunships and kalashnikovs. It's threaded intimately through our lives – it's in the videos and films we watch, in the way products are styled and marketed, the language we use without thinking. Maybe research in this field in the UK is showing, as it is in some other countries, that war doesn't just bring inflict rape on enemy women - it also increases domestic violence at home. And I know some people are researching violence in military families.

I think I'd like to tell you about a couple of situations I've been studying where it's possible to see rather clearly the connection between the violence of armed forces and violence in civilian peacetime life, what part gender plays in it, and what some women are doing about it. The first is in Okinawa, the islands at the southern tip of Japan, where there's an impressive group of

women who call themselves Okinawan Women Active Against Military Violence. OWAM for short. (I think some of them may have visited Edinburgh once?) The second case involves Uganda, another continent, a different world, where I've been looking at the work of the International Action Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons (IANSA) – and particularly at their current campaign 'Disarm Domestic Violence'. And to wind up, maybe we can think about ways we might strengthen our movements, both against violence against women, and against militarism and war.

Okinawa

First, Okinawa. It's a cluster of islands way way to the south of the main territory of Japan. It's capital, Naha, is nearer to Taipeh than to Tokyo. It was once an independent kingdom, but was occupied by Japan and incorporated into the Imperial state. A lot of Okinawans still resent Japanese hegemony. But they also feel colonized by the USA. After the Second World War, the US continued to control Okinawa long after the Occupation of Japan itself was ended. Today 75% of the massive US military presence in Japan is actually on the islands of Okinawa, which are less than 1% of Japan's land area. The place is groaning under the weight of concrete and razor wire. Nowhere is free of the roar of helicopters and armoured vehicles. Or the demands of US soldiers for rest and recreation – in other words, access to women's bodies.

The organization Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence was set up in 1995. A group of feminists from the islands had been at the 4th UN Women's Conference in Beijing, and when they got back they learned that three US Marines had abducted and raped a 12-year old Okinawan girl near the base called Camp Hansen. They and other women mobilized an island-wide protest. They drew a crowd of 85,000 to Ginowan Park. Half a million people signed a petition for justice, and for closure of US bases.

A couple of months later some of the women set up OWAM. First and foremost they were 'anti-*Ampo*'. The '*Ampo*' is the Security Treaty that sets the terms by which the US keeps its huge military presence in Japan. OWAM called for the removal of the US bases. In the meantime they wanted the Status of Forces agreement revised, to end the protection of American servicemen from prosecution under Japanese law. They researched and published a case by case chronology of hundreds of incidents of violence by US soldiers against Okinawan women since 1945.

Last year I went to Japan and Okinawa for my research on the political and gender dynamics of peace movements. This project is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and four other charities. My partner in the Japanese case study was Naoko Ikeda, a doctoral student at York University in Toronto, who made a wonderful research companion and really helped me to make sense of what we found in Japan and Okinawa. Among other adventures, we spent time with OWAM, joining their activities and talking with the women. A specially important informant for us was Suzuyo Takazato, a founder and now coordinator of the organization.

OWAM are an integral part of the mainstream (male and female) antimilitarist and peace movement of Okinawa –a well-known and respected part of it. But they're different in a particular way. Yes, with the rest, they join protests against threats of massive violence. For instance the patrols high in the sky and deep under the oceans that the USA call their 'nuclear umbrella' over the North Pacific. What's different about OWAM, though, is that among the forces of coercion they perceive as threats, as wrong, along with nuclear submarines, they include the fist - or the erect penis – of the individual perpetrator of violence. These may be puny little weapons on the scale of physical force but they're devastating to the individual victim. OWAM allow for absolutely no separation between the issue of the Security Treaty and the issue of women's sexual abuse and their right to security.

What's more, if a rape occurs, before they ever organize a campaign about it, they'll seek out the woman, ensure she's getting medical care, ensure the police are treating her right. The individual survivor matters to them, more than anything else. That's where their politics start. They work at one extreme of the continuum of violence – where the woman is.

There's something else though. Foreign soldiers are not the only perpetrators of rape and domestic assault in Okinawa. Given that the population of Japanese and Okinawan males is much greater than the number of American males, it's likely they account for a pretty large proportion of the total of gender-based violence on the islands. Some of the women decided to act against sexual violence in the civilian population by establishing a sister organization to OWAM, the Rape Emergency Intervention and Counselling Centre – REICO. It's a support organization for women who are threatened by violence or suffer rape from whatever source. They work closely with OWAM and are vocal about the link between the presence of the bases and the violation of women's human rights. But importantly they assert the reality of sexual violence in Okinawan society. They say, 'Whether the

perpetrator is a US serviceman or a Japanese, our shared anger is against sexual violence itself'.

Each new military rape adds energy to the mainstream anti-base movement in Okinawa, the mixed movement of men and women. But the responses can be problematic. Often the mainstream movement use the rapes to fuel anger against the US military, the Japanese government and the Security Treaty. And that polemic against American men can be quite nationalist and patriarchal. "Look how they trample on 'our women' and 'our Okinawan land!" OWAM resist this exploitation of the woman victim.

Also, another thing - the media and public opinion often allow prostitution to cloud the issue of rape. Brothels cluster in camp towns around the US bases in Okinawa, as in other countries. Of course it's questionable to what extent the prostitutes involved are working under their own free will. A lot come from the Philippines and other Asian countries. All of them are poor, driven to work overseas to maintain themselves and dependents. Some are 'trafficked', virtually enslaved or tricked into prostitution. All the same, popular and media opinion often represents prostitutes as delinquent women, selling themselves for US dollars. OWAM and REICO refuse this representation of sex-workers.

They point to a double standard here. Prostitution in Japan used to be organized in legal brothels. When the government presented a Prostitution Prevention Law for the approval of the Okinawan legislature, it was rejected several times before it got through. Why? It wasn't said openly but everyone knew - the dollars earned through the sex trade were a valuable addition to the Okinawan economy. More publicly it was argued that if you didn't have organized and legal prostitution the supposed 'needs' of US soldiers would be unsatisfied, resulting in yet more rape. In fact, a certain category of Okinawan woman was pushed towards serving as prostitutes for the US military. Whatever one thinks of the argument from 'need', it's certain, as Suzuyo reminded us, that 'raped women and prostitutes are not separate phenomena. It's the structural violence of militarization, she says, that produces both effects.'

So for the women of OWAM the US bases issue isn't just to do with land, the space they take up, which is the key issue for the mainstream anti-*ampo* movement. They continually assert the connection between the use of force at different scales, by different perpetrators in different locations with different motivations. They believe militarized gender relations, or the other

side of the coin, gendered militarism *is* the connection. The military, OWAAMV claim, is a violence-generating system. Patriarchy is a violence-generating social order. Violence against women is a significant part of global violence.

IANSA and Uganda

To move on to my second story…this is about the category of military equipment called quote 'small arms and light weapons' - basically anything that can be carried and used by a single person without a vehicle. What it most often refers to is guns – everything from the pistol to the assault rifle, like the AK-47. You can see a gun, the classic hand gun particularly, as a weapon that has a very movable, flexible place in the continuum or spectrum of violence. It's in the state armouries, and it's under the pillow.

There's an international Ngo whose objective is to rid the world of small arms and light weapons. It's called IANSA, the International Action Network on Small Arms, and it's headquarters staff and small office are in London. It works through affiliated NGOs addressing the small arms problem in a lot of different countries.

In the way that the anti-nuclear lobby are currently campaigning for an internationally binding treaty to ban nuclear weapons, so the NGOs working on small arms at international level are calling for an internationally binding Arms Trade Treaty, including, at the bottom end of the scale of weaponry, small arms. There's still a way to go to get that – and the main opposition to it has been the US government! But the concerned NGOs have had one success already. Their research and documentation of the problem, and the pressure they've applied, has resulted in an initiative at the United Nations. In July 2001 the UN held an inter-governmental conference on 'The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects'. A practical measure came out of the conference, a Programme of Action. Member States signing up to it are committed to passing laws to end illicit production, sale and ownership of small arms; to introduce better programmes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants after conflicts; to identify and destroy stocks of surplus or illegal weapons and introduce tougher licensing laws.

Unfortunately, the Programme of Action contained only one reference to gender. In paragraph 6 of the Preamble there's one derisory observation

that the illicit trade in small arms has disastrous consequences for children quote “as well as a negative impact on women and the elderly.”

A few years on, IANSA established a Women’s Network, which supports feminist anti-gun groups that have sprung up in a lot of countries. Together they are telling the international institutions and governments just how serious that negative impact on women is. Also, they’re shifting the emphasis from women to gender. They’re saying the gun problem is intrinsically gendered. More precisely, masculinity and guns go hand in hand. Men are overwhelmingly the sex that manufactures, sells, buys, transports and uses small arms, whether legally or illegally. Violence against women is endemic in all societies and when firearms are present the risk to life increases dramatically. A study of femicide in 25 developed countries showed that rates of death are higher in contexts where guns are prevalent because guns increase the lethality or risk of death in violence. True, the great majority of victims of gun violence are males. But male-on-male violence too, women say, can be understood as a gender issue – one aspect of it is patriarchal rank ordering.

Of course we can’t ignore the fact that women are sometimes implicated in gun use and handling. Sometimes they participate in storing, smuggling and hiding weapons. Women and girls in some circumstances also benefit, or think they do, by being associated with men, uniformed and otherwise, who carry guns. Either they feel, rightly or wrongly, protected by their partner’s weapon, or they feel it gives them a reflected status. Women are increasingly being enlisted to the state armed forces and police forces that were once the exclusive preserve of men. (And I guess we need to think about how for girls today the only apparent alternative to stereotyped feminine roles is to emulate men and boys.) Women are also recruited to insurgent militias, very often as forced conscripts or by abduction, but sometimes as motivated volunteers. However, as it’s often pointed out, women bearing and using guns are often, even usually, also victims of the men who command them. They are simultaneously perpetrators and victims of violence.

A lot of research by now shows how gun ownership contributes to the sense of self of men and boys, how it’s part of a certain construction of masculine identity. It makes you a man among men. And one aspect of that is that a gun is felt to promise access to and control over women. The findings suggest that what has to change, if the world is to be rid of guns, is men – or more precisely the hegemonic masculinity that mandates, even requires, a man to be disposed to the use of force to assert his power over women and

other men. But the gender significance of control of the forces of coercion goes beyond individual behaviour. Other studies have shown how massive national arsenals are motivated in part by the state's need to demonstrate a virile posture in international relations. IANSA Women's Network have pulled this research together and now campaign energetically for a recognition of the link between masculinity and gun violence.

Sarah Masters, the coordinator of the Women's Network was my research partner in this case study. We had a wonderfully productive time travelling together to Uganda. We went to join in their activities for the Week of Action against Gun Violence that IANSA organizes worldwide and to interview men and women there.

Uganda is awash with small arms and light weapons, the by-product of many armed conflicts. There were wars of succession after independence in 1962 between the regimes of Milton Obote, Idi Amin and today's President Museveni. These fomented resentments of tribal and regional kinds, one result of which was the rise of the Joseph Kony's Lords Resistance Army in Northern Uganda and the terrible violence it still inflicts on its own forced recruits and those it deems its enemies. A second war zone is the pastoral Karamoja region in the east. Cattle raiding is traditional here and has always resulted in some death and wounding. But this has become incomparably worse since Karamojong men found a cache of several thousand assault rifles abandoned by Idi Amin's troops. The new gun economy is wrecking havoc in everyday life. Traditional gender relations are an important factor here. A Karamajong man is not considered a man till he marries. A wife will cost him about thirty head of cattle. If he doesn't have a gun he can't steal that many cattle. So he can't marry. As a result, the patriarchal hierarchy, the relation between older and younger men, and women, is in turmoil in Karamoja. The Ugandan state makes efforts at gun control, in Karamoja, in the North. But when its social and economic incentives fail, as they usually do, the security forces going in with their own guns blazing. Many of the guns in the hands of ordinary men and criminal gangs in Uganda have leaked into the community from the police and army.

An important fact I discovered about Uganda is the strength of its women's movement. I was just so struck by how, out of the poverty and underdevelopment of Uganda, with all the difficulties of rearing children, getting an education, earning a living, so many strong, competent, creative, feminist women have emerged. One of them is Marren Akatsa-Bukachi – a Kenyan woman working in Kampala, as coordinator of EASSI, the East

African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women, which is affiliated to IANSA and its Women's Network. She told us, 'The women's movement is very strong, here, very feminist. Feminists have a different way of looking at things.' She talked about their Charter of Principles of African Feminism. A lot of feminists are active in NGOs dealing with trying to bring peace, to demobilize and disarm, and reduce levels of violence in Uganda. EASSI is one of them. We had a chance to meet and interview members of others, all members of the IANSA Women's Network. We also met and interviewed men from the local Uganda and Horn of Africa branches of IANSA, and men on the government side, responsible for implementing the UN Programme of Action on small arms. We attended the ceremonial destruction of a stockpile of ammunition!

But the most informative moment for us was attending a day conference on IANSA's Disarm Domestic Violence campaign, which has been taken up in thirty countries including Uganda. The campaign basically says – wherever there's domestic violence, guns exacerbate it. Get rid of guns if you want to save women's lives.

Women in Uganda are acutely aware of the gun problem. Guns are commonly used to threaten and subjugate women. What's more, men's behaviour towards women has been changing in recent years. Rape has become more common, both in armed conflict and out of it. So has domestic battering. In parallel with the increase in domestic violence has gone an increase in the presence of guns in the home – and with it the severity of attacks on women. The wounds caused are more serious, assaults are more lethal. The presence of a firearm deters intervention and assistance by others. A retired Judge, Mary Maitum, told us that for a woman to successfully bring a case of rape in the courts she needs to show evidence that she 'resisted'. There's no possibility of physical resistance if she is threatened with a gun. So a rape survivor's chance of getting justice in the courts is greatly reduced.

Now, the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Uganda is drafting a new law in response to the UN Programme of Action. It will impose much more control over civilian access to guns. You'll have to have a licence before you can buy a firearm. Anyone currently in possession of a gun will have to bring it in to the authorities and apply for a licence.

The question is, what will the conditions of licensing be? A clean criminal record, yes, for sure. But which crimes will count? Women are saying, You talk about guns falling into the 'wrong hands'. You usually mean 'criminals' and 'terrorists'. You should consider any person convicted of

gender-based violence as ‘the wrong hands’ and ban him from owning a firearm.

The issue caused quite a lot of disagreement at the conference. Some women wanted a licence application to be rejected if there had even been a charge or complaint of domestic violence against an applicant – even if it didn’t result in conviction. Some went further. They’d like the law to require the applicant’s spouse or partner to affirm her agreement to her man getting a gun before a licence is issued. She should be given a simple power of veto, quote, ‘the woman knows best’. One man – he was actually one of those drafting the new law, said they were not going to include spousal consent ‘because in the context it would just not be acceptable.’ Others agreed, it would give much too much power to the spouse or partner. To overturn men’s historic authority in such a way would destabilize family, community and society. And so the debate went on. A wife or partner might oppose the man getting a licence out of pure malice, one man said. And of course there was a realization that it would be very difficult and costly for a woman to speak out against her husband getting a gun licence, so long as she remains in the marriage and household. The women’s and community groups present at the conference stressed that, whatever the details, there *must* be harmonization of gun law with domestic violence law.

Sarah and I came away from this case study feeling that the major international and state actors are bringing one approach to the gun problem - a technicist, ‘expert’ approach, founded primarily in the experience and know-how of the security sector. They address the weapon, rather than the violence, the hardware rather than the hand that holds it. By contrast women (and in general civil society actors, the NGOs, in which women are key activists) tend to emphasize the human, social, cultural causes of gun proliferation, looking for root causes in prevailing cultures. For instance some are working among the Karamajong for cultural change in that patriarchal family system I described. You can see perhaps how this echoes the difference we saw in Okinawa between the mainstream anti-base movements and the women’s movement against sexual violence.

Concluding…

I think what these two case studies tell us is that, yes, there’s a strong link between civilian violence and military violence. A light switches on for us and lights up the link when we focus on gender. And in particular on masculinity. The light switches on for the Okinawan women when they see

three soldiers come out of their base and rape a schoolgirl. The light switches on for the Ugandan women when they see a woman in her home shot in a fit of rage by a husband using a gun he's bought from a bent policeman with the money she earned brewing beer.

I'd like to turn briefly now to thinking a bit more what this insight, this perceived gendered link between militarism/militarization on the one hand and violence against women on the other, might suggest for our activism. And it's two fields of activism isn't it….feminist 'zero tolerance' kind of activism, which is maybe what a lot of you do; and antimilitarist, peace movement activism which is what I mainly do.

I think there are three things we probably should think about. One is, the lesson learned from the women in Okinawa and Uganda is that antiwar and antiviolence-against-women activism needs to involve huge campaigns but it also needs to involve day-to-day work for cultural change. Just what that hard, patient, time-consuming work is, we need to think about. I think some of you here, in your various projects, are doing that work. But I know in the mainstream peace movement there is not much recognition that work for gender transformation is work for peace. There are not many people doing it as conscious 'demilitarization' - yet. Work around children's toys and play would be a positive example perhaps.

Secondly, I believe we should be seeing men as a resource, and asking what are *they* doing to take responsibility for gender transformation. In the movement against male violence against women there is White Ribbon. Small - but a really important model. I don't believe (I could be wrong) that in the antiwar, antimilitarist and peace movements there is a comparable movement of men, men working together as men, and coming out and saying "don't exploit my masculinity for militarism". A few conscientious objectors, I'm thinking particularly of gay men, just a few, in the Turkish antimilitarist movement and elsewhere, have made the refusal of militarised masculinity part of their refusal of serving in state armies. I think until men do become gender activists, and in large numbers, we won't get very far.

Third, though, we can ask what we can do in our own feminist movements to bring together, better than we do, feminist perceptions of militarism as a gendered problem, and of male violence against women.

I'd like to tell you about two organizations I'm involved with in London and the difficulties we have in doing just that. I'm going to be critical of them.

But I love them to bits, both of them. So you have to see this as self-criticism. I do it only to see whether it rings any bells with you.

In London, we have a new, energetic and wonderful movement of (mainly) young women, called the London Feminist Network. This year, 1200 women turned out to their third annual Feminism in London conference. 1200 young woman calling themselves feminist – that's not been seen since the 1970s! Maybe in Scotland but not in London. Now, for this movement violence against women is a central concern. There's a strong angry focus on pornography, prostitution, rape and the objectification of women. That is essentially what LFN is about. So far, missing from the agenda have been the other many things that women suffer from: feminized poverty, death in childbirth, familial / religious despotism, theft of their resources, destruction of their environment and exploitation of their labour by multinationals, and the impact on them of armed conflict …none of that enters the chat on the LFN blog. Yet the Network has grown like topsy – and maybe I need to understand that the single-minded focus on body politics is because that's how this generation of women in London is most personally affected by male power, we begin with our own experience. But it is also my 'fault' because I could have been initiating conversations in that blog that introduce the issues I feel are lacking, such as women, war and militarism.

Be that as it may, this year, last month, some of us who have been feeling the lack of these other dimensions decided to organize a panel at the Feminism in London conference in which we tried to open up the agenda to what you might call 'full spectrum feminism'. We brought speakers from Iran, Iraq, Zimbabwe, Congo and Honduras to talk about their struggle with – all those kinds of things I just mentioned. We were the only workshop in the conference that began to address this massive array of themes. And we were aware of being out of step. We had carefully chosen to call our panel '*global* feminism' to give it a little bit of cred with a London Feminist Network audience. If we'd called it socialist feminism, or peace movement feminism we might have had no participants at all. Actually, I have to say, a huge number of women chose our workshop, turned up for it, and joined the discussion - so we came away thinking that a lot of women do feel the need for a holistic feminism.

Now let's look at an opposite example – a feminist antimilitarist organization that's having difficulty making the link in the other direction, with violence against women in the community, in the home, in peacetime.

I'm part of the international network Women in Black against War, and we have a group in London. Probably there are around 30 women on our London e-list. Our average age is probably twice that of members of the London Feminist Network. Our main activity, in fact really our only activity, is to mount a weekly vigil, on a Wednesday from 6 to 7 in the evening, around the statue of Edith Cavell near Trafalgar Square. We don't do much except this vigilling – but I think we do it pretty well. Clear bold placards that change according to our chosen themes. Well informed leaflets – we give out two or three hundred in an hour.

Now, we always, deliberately, introduce *women's experience* into our messages to the public. We don't just do antimilitarism we do feminist antimilitarism. Some examples: let's say we do a vigil on Palestine – we flag up the effects of the siege on Palestinian women. We ally ourselves with Israeli feminist activists against the Occupation. One of our vigils is on nuclear weapons, and we note that £95 billion saved on Trident could be spent on services women need. In our vigil about war in Africa one of our placards says "Congo is the most dangerous place in the world for women" and we enumerate the rapes.

BUT the Congo is one thing, England's another. And we have a deep resistance in my Women in Black group to mentioning on our placards and in our leaflets men, British men, the militarization of masculinity, and the issue of male violence against women - in this country. The M words are unsayable. It's felt that it would alienate the public, and deflect attention from the main issue: war. I am torn about it. I do feel the problem, the inhibition. But I want to name the problem: the affinity of (socially constructed) masculinity and violence.

Anyway - we have a little compromise. Some of us argue for a special treatment of March 8th. For a couple of years now, on that date, International Women's Day, we invite some other women's organizations to join with us, organizations we know work actively on male violence against women. And together then, our placards are able to go that little bit further. Then we say "No to violence against women *in the home, in the community*, in the state, in war." and "*No fists, no knives,* no guns, no bombs." Then we can say "No to *male* violence." Anyway… after this confession of our difficulties and our shortcomings, I'd very much like to hear from you whether and how you, in WILPF and Engender, and other organizations, have been able to bring into one focus *military violence* and *male violence against women*. What are you all thinking, what are you doing?