

## IS ANOTHER WORLD POSSIBLE WHEN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS IGNORED? SOME QUESTIONS FROM THE BOSTON SOCIAL FORUM

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Since its inauguration in January 2001, the World Social Forum has gained importance as a venue for strengthening alternatives to the neoliberal agenda for globalization. Many feminist organizations are struggling to find ways to plug into this arena. This article describes the efforts of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to participate in a regional social forum in Boston, Massachusetts, by collaborating with various women's organizations in mounting a tribunal on violence against women. This collaboration of feminist organizations encountered a number of barriers arising from contradictions within the social forum principles themselves as well as significant resistance from the core organizers of the event. The dynamics that played out around the Women's Tribunal at the Boston Social Forum distill some of the dilemmas faced by women's organizations seeking to impact the social forum arena and raise important questions about the usefulness of these forums as sites through which a transnational feminist movement can build momentum.

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On July 24, 2004, a Women's Tribunal on Violence Against Women was held as part of the Boston Social Forum (BSF), which met on July 23–25. The tribunal was one of three avenues of BSF participation initiated by the Boston branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The impetus for a social forum in Boston originated with the staff of the Campaign for Contingent Work,<sup>1</sup> who began discussing the idea internally in the fall of 2002. Although not the first event staged in the United States to be modeled on the World Social Forum (WSF) (Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2001, 2002, and 2003; Mumbai, India, 2004), the Boston forum was the first North American event to be recognized as a regional forum by the International Secretariat of the WSF. The BSF attracted somewhat more than five thousand attendees.

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In June 2003, Boston WILPF was one of the groups approached by the BSF organizers during their initial round of consultations with local organizations.<sup>2</sup> The nature of Boston WILPF's participation did not begin to take any clear shape until it held a branch retreat in February 2004. Following the retreat, WILPF immediately organized a public event to hear reports from four area women who had attended the January 2004 WSF in Mumbai, each of whom expressed excitement at the scope and liveliness of Mumbai while expressing reservations regarding the conviviality of the social forum as a space for transnational feminist organizing.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, they agreed that learning how to negotiate the social forum space and process was an urgent, movement-building task in which women needed to engage. The branch also moved quickly to establish a calendar of biweekly working sessions to plan for the BSF. Coming out of the February retreat, WILPF embraced the BSF as an opportunity for learning from and with other women-focused groups by means of building a short-term working group or coalition, which eventually came to be known as the Women's Web. Women's Web members included INCITE Women of Color Against Violence, Boston Chapter; Global Women's Strike; the National Organization for Women, Boston Chapter; and Massachusetts Welfare Rights Union.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to an initial commitment to assuring the placement of female speakers on all BSF platforms, in particular those occurring in the larger plenary venues, WILPF's retreat discussions identified the need to create two designated "women-friendly" spaces within the forum itself; these were provisionally named "the peace tent" and "the tribunal," loosely invoking two modes of interaction familiar to members from WILPF's work in international venues. In order to accomplish its goals, the branch leaders were assigned to liaise with the BSF planning, administrative, and programming committees. One member was tasked with creating a general list of female experts on the range of topics likely to be addressed in the program tracks. Other branch members were delegated responsibility for recruiting, convening, and fostering the development of the Women's Web. This article focuses on the execution and outcomes of the Women's Tribunal on Violence Against Women as it came to be situated within the context of the BSF, outcomes that were unexpected given our deep and extended engagement in the overall forum planning process.

The authors were both involved in the Women's Tribunal. This article began as a means of understanding what they had witnessed as participants. Through the rhythm of writing and reflection, and in the course of trying to find answers to the questions raised en route, the

authors began to notice ways in which their experience of the BSF both repeated things that had occurred in previous social forums and foreshadowed events that would transpire around the European Social Forum (ESF) and the Northwest Social Forum scheduled for fall 2004.<sup>5</sup> This article is intended to spark further analysis of the social forum process and phenomenon on the part of feminist groups that are considering engagement with social forums, and to quicken the development of the very pragmatic sort of know-how that might ease and guide such engagement.

#### FEMINIST ORGANIZING TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There are many organizations worldwide that take up issues of violence against women (VAW). Violence against women affects everyone in some way, whether it is personally, as in rape or partner abuse, or more indirectly, such as through public funds directed toward rape crisis intervention and domestic violence, corporate costs for absenteeism due to VAW, or taxpayer costs to create laws on violence against women. National organizations such as INCITE! a radical feminist organization of women of color, have been formed to raise awareness of and formulate strategies to eliminate violence against women, particularly women of color. The NOW has had many VAW campaigns throughout its history, including a recent initiative concerning the murders of over three hundred women in Juarez, Mexico, over the past ten years, as well as efforts devoted to strengthening the federal Violence Against Women Act. Many feminist organizations have worked to get marital rape laws passed and existing rape laws strengthened and enforced. International organizations such as the World March of Women (WMW) loudly condemn VAW and have created several documents, including its Global Charter for Humanity, in which VAW is seen as a fundamental patriarchal mechanism for men and masculinist entities to subjugate women. The Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, an internationally recognized period beginning November 25, the International Day Against Violence Against Women, and ending December 10, International Human Rights Day, was instituted by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991, and every year hundreds of events worldwide are held to draw attention to these issues, particularly from a human rights perspective. In the past decade or so, feminist organizations devoted to VAW issues have begun to use human rights models to frame the issues, thus,

providing a powerful tool that is designed to be responsive internationally as well as nationally.

Despite the fact that thousands of organizations worldwide dedicate their resources to eliminating VAW, monumental problems persist in the face of recalcitrant patriarchal practices of violence and subjugation. The patriarchal system is pernicious, and although feminists have been trying to dismantle it for centuries, its power remains quite intact within many progressive organizations and venues. In the absence of feminist advocacy and intervention, issues that many see as only pertaining to women, such as VAW, are consistently sidelined, minimized, or ignored.

The barrier that pervasive worldwide violence against women poses to the social transformation envisioned by the social forum process was articulated in a discussion paper circulated by the WMW prior to the second WSF. Following an analysis of the prevalence, extent, and effects of contemporary VAW, as well as its links to domination and more mundane forms of social control, the WMW offers a proposal for moving toward its elimination through the WSF process: "It is the responsibility of our male colleagues in social movements to show publicly their solidarity with feminists' struggle against violence against women, in the name of the very different kind of society we want to build together."<sup>6</sup>

### *The Social Forum Process*

The WSFs are a recent phenomenon. They are an arena where subjugated peoples from around the world and those who resist political, economic, and cultural domination come together to discuss and initiate programs against the economic, military, and cultural oppressions created by the world's power elite. The WSFs were developed as a response to the world economic forums where the World Trade Organization, the G8, and other representatives of the most powerful nations and corporations assemble in order to lay out their plans for the world's economies and the world's peoples. The world economic forums are opportunities for the "transnational capitalist class" to convene, strategize, organize, and socialize.<sup>7</sup>

Over the past several decades, but especially since the 1990s when the major international laws regulating trade (and consequently labor, goods, and services) were consolidated, the transnational capitalist class has created itself on the backs of those who "have some" but more so on the backs of those who "have not." The members of the transnational

capitalist class have moved their agendas forward without the consent of the world's people, making tremendous gains in political and economic power for themselves. These power elites have helped to create unbearable conditions leading to environmental disasters, starvation, disease, armed conflicts, and hyperconsumerism. As a countermeasure, the world's poor and marginalized have constructed the WSF as sites of potential power and protest against the ideology and actions of the transnational capitalist class.

Social forums, both the WSFs and the smaller regional ones, engage activists who think about and construct plans to create a more equitable world for human beings and all the earth's living creatures. They recognize the profoundly dangerous state that the world's most powerful people have created for the rest of the world. "Another World Is Possible" is both the mantra and the goal of these activists and the social forums. Huge gatherings of tens of thousands of people have congregated at the WSFs, masses of progressive activists and oppressed peoples trying to hear and to be heard in the world's many languages, moving from session to session of speakers and panels, with thousands coming together in the huge plenary sessions, all seeking space and time for their ideas and visions. The need to make the world not just livable and sustainable for all, but delightful as well, is the goal of everyone at these events.

The social forums themselves, however, have been sites of contention, often replicating some of the oppressive dynamics of the world's social orders. The familiar themes of sexism, racism, ageism, and classism have emerged as allegations against organizers, organizers who do themselves seek a better world but who, unintentionally or through ignorance, may reproduce these marginalizing and destructive practices.

In 2001, after the first WSF in Porto Alegre, operating precepts called the "Charter of Principles" were drawn up by the WSF International Council in order to create a model for the future social forums this body anticipated would occur after the huge groundswell of excitement and eagerness generated by the first social forum.<sup>8</sup> Generally, these guiding principles define what a social forum is, what the goals of the social forums are, and, very loosely, how the social forums are to operate. The principles are written with a positive approach, with very few "thou shall nots." Principle 6, however, does state that no entity, group, or individual person can make a claim to speak for all at the social forum or to take a position in the name of the social forum, although some social forums have done just that and this appears to be the precedent

set by and for the ESFs. Principle 6 is designed to guard against, among other things, unilateralism and universalism, tendencies that are considered antagonistic to the multiplicity of views and peoples the social forum processes wish to nourish. This practice is referred to as “no outcomes” by some, meaning that the social forums should not seek officially to come to conclusions or positions on any issues. Notwithstanding this, Principle 7 guarantees social forum participants the right to make declarations and to take actions on behalf of themselves, and the social forum makes it incumbent on itself “to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal without directing, hierarchizing, censoring, or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.” The intent here is to allow, even to promote, the right of social forum participants to take positions in their efforts to make a better world possible for those for whom they advocate.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of the interpretation by some that social forum events should not produce “outcomes” or issue doctrinal statements on areas of concern, some do through the Assembly of Social Movements.<sup>10</sup> Under the sponsorship of the Assembly of Social Movements, the ESF 2002 in Florence, Italy, produced a statement against U.S. plans to attack Iraq, an action that led to massive antiwar protests all over the world, but particularly in Rome where the largest number of protesters in all of Europe congregated.<sup>11</sup> The ESF 2003 in Paris issued statements against the U.S. war on Iraq and U.S. imperialism, which also resulted in a demonstration of tens of thousands in Paris. The operating rules for the ESF 2004 in London specifically encouraged a call for actions to emerge out of each plenary session, stating, “Every plenary will look at what action can be taken.”<sup>12</sup> The precedents set by these ESFs have helped to establish social forums themselves as key mobilizing factors in the mass movements against social injustices. The BSF principal organizers, however, did not implement this precedent in the BSF plenaries.

The confusion in the BSF processes around Principles 6 and 7 resulted in an all too familiar outcome for participants of the Women’s Tribunal on Violence Against Women. The immediate effect for the tribunal was that its judiciary body, the Council of Crones, was denied a place in the final plenary session on Sunday to deliver its findings and call for actions around the issues of patriarchal VAW.<sup>13</sup> The tribunal organizers and participants found themselves shut out, silenced by BSF organizers who claimed that these women and their male allies had no right to try to use the social forum as a platform from which to

condemn patriarchal practices and institutions that aid in the perpetration of VAW. In its interpretation of Principle 6, the BSF staff effectively denied the tribunal its right to utilize Principle 7, which not only enables groups to issue statements and calls for action on their own behalf but, further, directs the social forum to “circulate such decisions widely by means at its disposal.” The plenary process is one of these means at the social forum’s disposal. The question is, why were the women who organized and participated in the Women’s Tribunal refused at the last minute their right to utilize the plenary time that they had believed they had secured during the organizing process?

### *Violence on Trial*

Members of the WILPF left their February 2004 retreat with a provisional blueprint for participating in the BSF and committed to working with allied groups and individuals to collaboratively give greater definition to the “women-friendly” spaces they envisioned. The flyer they developed to recruit these allies refers to the “creation of several interactive, public spaces defined by women and informed by women’s priorities,” including “a peace tent for difficult conversations” and “a tribunal, adjudicated by a Council of Crones.” After two months of biweekly meetings, a subcommittee of the Women’s Web working group began meeting separately each week to work exclusively on plans for the tribunal, which had grown from an isolated event into a series of interconnected workshops, performances, and other activities.

Perhaps the most familiar example of a women’s tribunal is the 1993 Vienna Tribunal that resulted in the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate and report on incidences of such violence. The Vienna Tribunal was the result of years of consultation among different women’s interest groups, which included analytical/definitional work, careful culling of testifiers so as to provide a gripping demonstration of the ubiquity of violence in women’s lives universally, preliminary agreement on a legal remedy, and identification of a particular target institution.<sup>14</sup> Gerry Rogers’s documentary of this event shows that the effect was both transformative for the women who gathered as active participants and allies and persuasive to the mostly male policy-makers gathered for the UN Conference on Human Rights.<sup>15</sup> The Vienna Tribunal was a tactic strategically adopted by a broad-based “women’s human rights” movement to achieve a particular end.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, the Women's Tribunal at the BSF was designed as more improvisational and, as it turned out, its focus was more introspective and pedagogical, serving as an unscripted but sacred space in which the participants could learn from each other. In March, invitations for testimony began circulating through existing local networks, notably through the e-mail lists serving the coalition of groups that had cosponsored the Boston area's December 2003 Human Rights Day Forum on Violence Against Women. Drafted by Connie Chow, a member of Amnesty International's Steering Committee on Women's Rights, this call described the tribunal at the BSF as "modeled on the 1993 Vienna Tribunal," where "women and men can testify to the various forms of violence (physical, sexual, structural, etc., and their intersections) they have experienced." More specifically, the invitation explained, "We hope to hear testimony on violations, on experiences of survival especially as they illustrate community support, and in particular stories that illustrate how various forms of discrimination intersect to exacerbate the violation of women's rights. In addition, we welcome testimony from the children and other family members of survivors, as well as expert testimony that addresses these issues." An invitation was also extended, in the same document, to qualified counselors. "Since we anticipate that such a tribunal and associated activities may be traumatic for some visitors, we wish to have counselors available during the entire time who will 'tend' the tribunal space entryway and provide the necessary attention and solace, as people read and hear others' testimony." Laura Roskos was listed as the contact person on this invitation, and she was soon fielding an array of calls from potential participants.

The original timetable for the tribunal included plans for having the Council of Crones release its concluding statement at a press conference to be held on Sunday afternoon, the last day of the BSF. It was not until early June, just weeks before the BSF, that the subcommittee learned that the BSF staff had scheduled a plenary during this time period. Upon learning this, the subcommittee immediately contacted the WILPF representative on the BSF planning committee to discuss the apparent conflict. It was decided that rather than staging a press conference, which would likely draw attention away from the forum's plenary and, in any event, "compete" with it, it would be to everyone's advantage if the Crones were to present their findings as part of Sunday afternoon's closing plenary. The tribunal subcommittee felt that the move to forego a separate press conference demonstrated its commitment to "good citizenship," cooperation, and flexibility in the forum process. However,



when WILPF's representative on the planning committee attempted to make the tribunal's needs known, she found that speaking slots in the plenaries were highly coveted by competing groups and awarded by the staff in a nontransparent fashion.<sup>17</sup>

The imposition of the plenary schedule on the Women's Web was inconvenient, as the programming for both the tribunal and for the Women's Tent for Peace and Justice had already been set for some time. While the Women's Web program—with its dozens of partner organizations and over thirty-five separate events—was finalized, negotiations with the BSF staff over the two dedicated physical spaces that had been requested for staging the tribunal and the Peace Tent dragged on. The tribunal organizers were eventually forced to sidestep the BSF staff altogether and negotiate independently with sympathetic university administrators for an appropriate site in which to stage their Saturday programs. The uncertainty around room and timeslot assignments caused havoc for the Women's Web coordinators, who were responsible for preparing signage and securing the building materials needed to configure the sites. Additionally, several key organizers of the Women's Tribunal had committed to making presentations organized by other groups with which they were affiliated. Because the overall BSF program was not finalized until just hours before the event began, they did not know in advance if these commitments would conflict with their commitment to the tribunal. To compound the difficulties, the BSF organizers wrongly listed the tribunal as taking place on Friday rather than Saturday in the printed program.

#### THE "VERTICAL" WITHIN

The Council of Crones convened the tribunal on July 24 to hear and to speak to the injustices perpetrated on the testifiers and on the countless numbers of women who suffer from the brutal practices of the entitled male population, who further advantage themselves by terrifying women and children with physical, emotional, and cultural violence.

The testimonies were difficult to speak and to hear. The organizers made every effort to create safe spaces for testifiers, Council members, and other listeners. Profound sadness was a common reaction to the testimony, as were support, understanding, and sisterhood. The tribunal left some of the participants feeling vulnerable to male violence against women and others feeling ineffective because they felt that avenues had not been established to help the testifiers out of their situations once the tribunal was concluded.

In the aftermath of this emotionally charged day, tribunal participants learned that the Council of Crones was not included among the speakers scheduled for twenty minute timeslots at Sunday's closing plenary, as the tribunal organizers believed they had been. Late Saturday afternoon, as the testimony was coming to an end, the WILPF member participating in the BSF Planning Committee—the body where the plenary programs were supposed to be decided—announced to everyone's amazement that the BSF staff were determined that the Council was to have only three minutes at the end of the Sunday plenary. WILPF and the other feminist groups, as well as the Crones, were greatly disturbed that this major event at the BSF was going to be given minimal consideration by the two BSF lead staff, both of whom were men.

### *Pat Willis's Role*

Initially, Pat's role in organizing for the tribunal was to contact potential judges from a list she had been given by the tribunal organizers and invite these women to sit on the Council of Crones. She started calling and e-mailing women on the list just after the National Women's Studies Association Conference in June, where she had arranged to meet with Laura, who was the contact person from WILPF and in a leadership role with regard to organizing the tribunal. This task was time sensitive. Since the BSF was scheduled for July 23–25, she had approximately one month to assemble the Council. Included in her instructions were that these women had to be past menses because in some cultures women of that age are seen to have acquired wisdom, honor, and great standing in their community. It was also crucial that women of color be invited first so that they would understand their presence as central to the event rather than as peripheral or as an afterthought; therefore, they were given the highest priority. Although Pat received encouragement from nearly everyone she spoke to, several of the women approached were unable to participate because of prior commitments.

The seven women who agreed to serve on the Council were an impressive and varied group. All had rich histories of involvement with a range of national and international feminist projects and justice struggles as activists and intellectuals. They brought prestige, dignity, and gravity to the tribunal and to the Council as well as considerable experience and political wisdom. In addition to witnessing and validating the testimony given at the tribunal, they were asked to draft a collective

response, contextualizing the individual stories of violence presented with their assessment on the current historical moment, providing a structural analysis of the violence in women's lives. It was this statement that the tribunal organizers wanted and had expected would be part of the BSF's closing convocation.<sup>18</sup>

Of the seven Crones, three were African Americans, one was Chinese American, one was Puerto Rican American, one of East Asian descent, and one a German citizen of Germanic origin.<sup>19</sup> The demographic goal for the tribunal was to have a diversity of race, ethnicity, sexualities, class, and professional experience represented in order to bring various standpoints to the process. The council assembled did include individuals with a range of theoretical perspectives and expertise in various kinds of gender-based violence; however, it *was* heavily weighted with women of color. The tribunal organizing committee viewed this as a positive because they were well aware of some of the cutting-edge analysis coming out of women of color collectives and organizations grappling with this issue. Also, at this point in the organizing process, the committee was not certain about who would be giving testimony during the tribunal and did not want to have a Council of Crones comprised primarily of white women hearing the testimonies of primarily women of color.

One of the reasons that the tribunal organizers were certain that the Council would be included in the program for the Sunday convocation was the stature of the Crones as individuals. Clearly, each would have been highly desirable in the competitive economy of the social forums' plenary "star system."<sup>20</sup> The announcement that only three minutes would be allowed for the Council's findings produced a range of emotions and responses among those present, and as there was no one person "in charge," different individuals pursued different courses of action. The Council considered the possibility of disrupting the plenary by "taking the stage," then rejected it. Some of the Crones felt put on the spot by the suggestion of a protest action, and felt that the organizers would be asking them, as "women of color," to act out in unruly ways on their behalf. Grace Poore, one of the Crones, explained her decision this way, "While I have played the role of agitator and process-disrupter several times in the last 15 years, I never took on the role for its own sake but as part of a useful productive collective strategy, and not a knee-jerk reactionary response."<sup>21</sup>

While the deliberations were going on, one of the tribunal organizers began trying to telephone one of the scheduled plenary speakers, who she felt would be happy to ally herself with the council and its message

about “violence against women,” only to learn that this woman had already decided not to return to Boston for Sunday’s plenary session. Another member of the tribunal planning committee went home and began printing protest placards to bring to the plenary the next day. After the Council’s deliberations were finished, Laura and one of the Council members, Eva Quistorp, sought out the lead BSF staff organizer and tried to negotiate a better placement on the program. However, he remained adamant that no change would be accommodated, stressing Principle 6 in his insistence and expressing his concern that addressing VAW in this venue would be “too divisive,” hence, counterproductive, to the forum’s mobilizing function.<sup>22</sup>

With great dissatisfaction, tribunal participants proceeded to the Sunday plenary, which was late in starting. Furthermore, it was even uncertain to many that it had started once it did, and then ran over its two-hour time period by forty minutes with speakers who had not even been scheduled to present at the plenary. By the time the scheduled and unscheduled speakers were finished, almost everyone had already left to attend the final block of workshops that were scheduled to begin at the same time the plenary had been originally scheduled to end. This scheduling flaw compounded the situation further. Less than fifty people stayed for the end of the plenary when the Council of Crones delivered their three-minute address while several hundred had been assembled for most of the plenary session. It was a harsh outcome for the feminists at the BSF, all of whom understood that the ultimate denial of an honorable place on the plenary program as well as the stream of barriers thrown up throughout the forum planning process were yet further examples of men seeming not to want to understand how gender-based violence operates nor free themselves from complicity in this oppressive system.

#### AGE AND INVISIBILITY

After attending two concluding meetings, one following the final convocation during the BSF and one two months later, and after listening to Women’s Web organizers who were fully engaged in the BSF processes early on, we have begun to understand some of the psychological and transactional mechanisms at work.

Most of the BSF organizers were relatively young men, and even younger women, compared to most of the tribunal organizers, and of class and ethnic backgrounds fairly representative of lower New England demographics. Throughout the BSF process, power resided principally

within two men and this power crystallized even further within them as the date for the social forum drew near. The majority of the organizers and participants in the tribunal were, by contrast, older, seasoned feminists who have worked in various justice movements continuously for more than three decades. Feminists have tried to eradicate the patriarchal notion that old or older women are spent forces, past their usefulness because they are no longer useful to men or patriarchal society as childbearers or as sexual servants, patriarchy's most valued roles for women. Indeed, as we stated earlier, each member of the Council of Cronos was specifically chosen first for her characteristic of being past childbearing age because—in some cultures more woman friendly than ours—older women are seen as having acquired wisdom and standing in their society and we wanted to honor this tradition. But this ethic appears to not have been understood or even recognized by BSF organizers. Evidence of a restrictive youth culture ethic among the male organizers and the younger women organizers nullified the existence of some of the older Women's Web organizers.<sup>23</sup> Amazingly, even some of the younger women of color who were central to tribunal organizing efforts seem to have been shrouded in invisibility and relegated to nonexistence as well. We wondered if this effect on them was a result of their association with the older women.

Some of the processes at work seem to have been cultural processes that are prevalent in patriarchal culture, processes that help men to ignore women, particularly older women. Part of the explanation lies in the ways that some of the Women's Web organizers presented themselves during meetings and other organizing venues. Androcentric men, and women, can have difficulty acknowledging, even seeing women with soft voices, inclusive ways of speaking and behaving, and consensual ways of proceeding. The WILPF representatives participating in the BSF's central organizing committees were all white women over sixty years of age. They also shared a high commitment to the overall success of the BSF and to the alternative politics and critique of neoliberalism with which the social forum process is aligned. They are among the most politically radical and experienced in the Boston branch of WILPF, and should have been welcomed as proven and committed leftists, yet each reported feeling bruised and ill used by the BSF organizing committee in which she participated.

In their BSF roles, these women were invested with responsibility for representing the needs of a broad coalition of women's organizations (the Women's Web) and in the case of the tribunal subcommittee, for

representing the interests of a working group of women who were mostly younger and much more racially diverse, who wanted plenary space for the Council of Crones. In advocating for the space and placement needs of the tribunal, each used the language of “violence against women” and “Council of Crones,” which had been worked out by the tribunal subcommittee but which may have been undecipherable, or even objectionable, perhaps on a less than conscious level, to the main BSF organizers. Nor did they foreground the individual accomplishments or stature of any of the Council members, in part because during the bulk of the organizing process the individual identities of the women nominated and being recruited were unknown to them. In retrospect, it seems likely that some of the resistance to the Council, and to the tribunal itself, may have come about because the interests these women were representing came to be conflated with their own surface identities as older women.

When she stepped in to replace one of these women on the programming committee in the final weeks of preparation, Laura observed that the BSF staff kept referring to the coalition of groups in the Women’s Web as WILPF, thus erasing the participation of many other organizations in this endeavor. Subsuming the Women’s Web under the WILPF aegis may have contributed to the “disappearance” of the other groups and may also help to account for the seeming conflation of all these women under the identity of “older white women” by some BSF organizers. Women who do not typically present themselves in ways that androcentric men are accustomed to seeing may be invisible to them. But in this case, the speakers’ bodies may have been all too visible in ways that obscured and distorted the ability of some to hear their actual words. In addition, the dedication of these women to the success of the BSF may have caused them to self-censor behaviors and statements they anticipated might impede the smooth functioning of the organizing committees, or even to assume an underlying reciprocity of good will, which may have not existed, that would eventually provide for their expressed wishes.

On top of this, the tribunal organizers may have misapprehended the volatility of the issue of gender-based violence. Given the ubiquity of violence against women in our society, it can be assumed that it is a phenomenon that has personally affected the lives of most of those individuals associated with organizing the BSF. What is less predictable is the subject position or stance these various individuals have taken up in relation to this phenomenon. Whereas the male BSF staffers were

keen to give space to women who denounced militarism, ecological degradation, privatization of water, and empire building, they consistently failed to acknowledge that systemic and structurally entrenched VAW should be a concern for all BSF attendees.<sup>24</sup> In fact, when confronted with tribunal organizers who demanded that VAW be presented at the plenary as a substantive barrier to women's full engagement in participatory democracy and equal co-construction of "another world," one principal staffer made the stunningly counterfactual pronouncement that "domestic violence is a white women's issue."

Historically, during the rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, women's and feminist issues were marginalized by the male leaders and by androcentric women who saw their roles as support staff rather than as central to the movements. Even today, in some progressive communities it seems to be only the shallow feminism of political correctness that many men understand.

#### PATRIARCHAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The issue of violence against women is an issue that indicts masculinist behavior and ideals within patriarchal society and culture. It is a problem where the perpetrators construct women as essentially different from men, or as "other." Although some women do identify with the masculinist position and serve as or support perpetrators, feminist scholarship and activism, as well as FBI reports, UN reports, and many others, have shown that it is primarily men who aggress against women. In as much as most men enjoin in some way with a masculine subject position, some men may feel unfairly implicated in a feminist analysis that moves beyond indicting individual perpetrators for specific violent acts. Even those men who have made a personal commitment to non-violence may see the protection of women rather than women's empowerment as key to eradicating the problem. While feminist work has established patriarchy and its construction of masculinity as culpable, no one submits that all men individually are to blame. Yet the male organizers of the BSF could not see violence against women as the acute and pervasive structural obstacle to social transformation that it is.

Patriarchal violence against women takes many forms, and the authoritarianism that emerged as organizing for the BSF neared the end resulted in a consolidation of power into the hands of just two or three men. Committees were shut down and other organizers were shoved off onto the periphery while central males made unilateral decisions. Sadly,

the commitment to democratic process deteriorated to the level of mere image rather than reality and substance, where Women's Web/Tribunal organizers felt that they were only "window dressing."<sup>25</sup>

Historically, the euphemistic and narrow term "domestic violence" has been used to describe and define what violence against women is, but that is merely a polite cover for wife beating and child beating by husbands and fathers, and other males, such as boyfriends, who act as though they possess the archaic legal rights of husbands and fathers. Feminists working in this field have broadened the definition of violence to include pornographic exploitation; political persecution of women; socioeconomic violations perpetrated by economic institutions and the structural adjustment policies of the capitalist economies that abuse migrant women; war crimes such as rape, forced prostitution, and forced pregnancy, as well as the prostitution that is created by occupying or invading militaries that see these men as having rights in local and trafficked women's bodies.

In the 1990s, determined feminists worked to reframe structures and incidences of VAW as human rights abuses using the UN human rights treaty bodies as platforms for advocacy and redress. This was an attempt to ameliorate the fact that in almost every culture in the world, but, particularly, in those cultures most deeply impacted by colonization, men and their rights are considered normative. Sexual abuses against women during war and in the home are implicitly tolerated if not explicitly condoned because patriarchal cultures have not considered women full human beings.

#### INTERSECTIONALITY AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Women who organize for the realization of human rights often speak of intersectionality as a strategy for coalition building. Rather than attempting to facilely move "beyond" identity politics, intersectionality embraces the complexity of lived reality and the multiplicity of identities. Intersectionality asks us to engage through more than one of our social identities at a time, specifically to access simultaneously both our privilege and our oppression as a technique for breaking the downward spiraling of abusive behavior. But, as discussed earlier, the order and timing of event confirmations at the BSF disadvantaged precisely those more actively engaged with their multiple identities.

Much attention has been paid in debates within the social forum processes to the tension between hierarchy and horizontality, or



egalitarianism. In most of these debates, hierarchy is linked with institutionalization, elitism, and nondemocratic decision-making. However, the lead organizers from the BSF repeatedly stated their affinity for the horizontalist perspective, describing the “split” as between an “‘open space’ wing” and “other wings of the WSF [that] would prefer to move quickly towards the creation of some kind of global political party or shadow government and would organize the WSF in a more hierarchical fashion.”<sup>26</sup> As such, these organizers saw their role, in part, as teaching a factionalized and “foundering” progressive movement how to revitalize itself by engaging in a rigorously decentralized decision-making process, and have been cautiously critical of what they view as the ingrained territoriality of existing groups and organizations: “Although the staff of many organizations found the social forum process inspiring and motivational, many of the leaders did not know how to prioritize work that contributed to the movement’s common good with the ‘specific, achievable and measurable’ objectives of their immediate programs.”<sup>27</sup>

The Boston area feminist organizations’ efforts to create a safe space in the Women’s Tribunal for women who had been injured by gender-based violence was an effort to highlight and to give voice to women’s struggles to survive and create communities where such attitudes and actions are no longer normative. The women’s and feminist organizations participating in the Women’s Web brought together women who testified to their victimization in trafficking and the horrifying realities of the brutality of pimps and sex clients; of the working homeless who face the frightening knowledge every moment that they have no shelter, no place of refuge; of women who experience repeated violence from family members, family members whom they have obligated themselves to care for but who repay this with day after day of uncertainty about when the next blow might come or how damaging it might be. WILPF’s analysis would link these experiences together as manifestations of a culture structurally skewed by militarism and commercial interests that diminish us all and irreparably damage many of us, but a deeper feminist analysis indicts patriarchal culture in its entirety. The elimination of violence against women, then, can serve as an aspiration toward which alternative worlds can strive and against which the viability of their visions can be measured.

Although social forum advertisements typically address women as an identity group, at a deeper level of process the social forum also asks women to transcend their gendered identities upon entering the new

utopian space, of which Arundhati Roy is fond of saying “*she* is already here.” But is this realistic? Does it make sense? Can pain and suffering, loss and grief be so easily set aside? Can ongoing, indeed escalating, VAW be mainstreamed without being minimized in a social change movement being shaped through the WSF process?

*Marginalization of Women at the European Social Forum 2004*

Women organizing within the ESF process have reported facing dilemmas similar to those that plagued the Women’s Web organizers. In an effort against gender mainstreaming, the 2003 ESF held in Paris was preceded by a one-day forum organized by and featuring the work of a coalition similar to that of the Women’s Web. So when Pat made plans to attend the ESF 2004 in London, England, held on October 15–17, she was eager to find out about feminist events scheduled for that venue. A Women’s Day had been called for by several groups of women in Europe that self-identified as grassroots organizers after the ESF in Paris in 2003 had hosted its very successful Women’s Day with about three thousand women attending. Pat wanted to attend the ESF 2004 Women’s Day and e-mailed the ESF organizers in early October asking if one was going to be held, stating that she would like to attend. She received a rather cryptic response to check the ESF schedule. According to an October 12 article in a daily labor newspaper published in England (*Morning Star*, October 12, 2004),<sup>28</sup> the British organizers of the ESF 2004 refused to sponsor a Women’s Day on the grounds that the Paris one had been poorly attended. Anna T. of Global Women’s Strike, UK, and Sara Callaway of Women of Color in the Global Women’s Strike disputed the Paris figures as indicating poor attendance and stated in the article that “the staging of a women’s open day ensures that there will be an independent, non-party political space where the crucial issues that women are addressing can be brought to the fore, strengthening the vital connections among us despite divides of race, age, immigration status, or sexual choice.” The grassroots women are women who are not members of nongovernmental organizations, government employees, professors, or trade union representatives. They are mainly independent organizers who represent and are themselves “mothers, asylum-seekers, *sans papiers* (undocumented immigrants), lesbian women, sex workers, women with disabilities and women pensioners.”<sup>29</sup> Organizations from all over Europe had signed a petition to hold a Women’s Day at ESF 2004, in part because they felt that the Paris

Women's Day resulted in women of color, women *sans papiers*, and other particularly marginalized women having a positive impact on the final plenary at the ESF 2003. They did not have this presence at the ESF 2004.

Days before the ESF 2004 was scheduled to begin, these grassroots organizations decided that they would, nonetheless, hold a Women's Day of their own, independent of the ESF. This decision was made only after struggling for an entire year against the opposition of the ESF organizers. Interestingly, when this was announced to the organizers, the ESF hastily convened a feminist/women's plenary as part of the official social forum where one had not been scheduled before this. One grassroots organizer from Global Women's Strike UK interpreted this as an effort to pacify the grassroots organizers and also to thwart their plans for an independent Women's Day. The independent Women's Day was held but, due to a lack of publicity, was not the huge success that the Women's Day in Paris had been.

The practice of holding a Women's Day is an effort to make certain that feminist/women's issues are given equal time and relevance without being mainstreamed and potentially lost among androcentric women, men, and scenarios that do not give focus to issues with a gender analysis. The Women's Web and the tribunal at the BSF filled three days with two strands of consecutive feminist and women-centered programming that was incorporated into the official BSF schedule, thus providing feminist space and activism. The ESF 2004 wanted to mainstream women into its main forum, but there were many women's organizations that were not invited to speak and that were completely eliminated from the social forum.

It is curious that women organizing the Women's Web and Tribunal and the grassroots women in Britain experienced similar forms of resistance to feminist/women's issues. Perhaps social forums, this new phenomenon where unrepresented and underrepresented peoples are granted a platform, are not a place where feminists and women's issues from a feminist perspective are entirely welcomed. Most of the organizers of the social forums have been men, but even some of the women organizers are ready to exclude some feminists and the issues they raise. In fact, one of the women who sat on the hastily put-together women's plenary at the ESF 2004 was "named and shamed" by a representative of the Women of Color in the Global Women's Strike at this plenary as she took the stage and the microphone from the plenary speakers to announce her grievances with the process and to disclose that this woman was one of the organizers who voted to deny them a Women's Day. In storming the plenary stage, these grassroots women did what tribunal organizers and

participants at the BSF decided not to do. But after witnessing the effectiveness of this assertive demonstration, Pat wondered if the issue of violence against women would have been better served to do this at the BSF as some tribunal participants advised. While this was a highly effective action at the ESF London, the question remains whether it would have been in a U.S. venue where gender conservatism, which inheres in many leftist groups, has cast feminism and feminists as unhelpful troublemakers.

The ESF 2004 stated that one of its objectives for this social forum was to have fifty percent of the speakers on panels and plenaries be women, but this “add women and stir” method is no guarantee that the issues most pressing to women are addressed. It may also reinforce discredited notions of essentialism and reinvigorate identity politics in counterproductive ways, in that it assumes (a) that women are marked in ways that are obvious to the casual observer and (b) that women are basically interchangeable with each other and with men in as much as they are capable of “filling a slot on the program.” To the contrary, the coordinating meetings for the Women’s Web became sites for some heated discussions about what, in fact, constituted a “woman” for our purposes, about what cultural and intellectual traditions various groups and individuals were drawing on, about authenticity, sexuality, and a host of other contradictions. These candid, substantive, always unanticipated discussions marked a rare place where diverse theoretical commitments needed to be hammered into collectively endorsed practical applications to be executed within a short timeframe at the forum itself. The shape the tribunal finally realized with its adjacent grieving room, dance performance, reflective interludes, poetry jam, etc. was truly a model of a dialogical, albeit risky, educational space. Pulling it off was a matter of loving reciprocity among psychologists, social workers, prisoners, prostituted women, witches, mothers, political operatives; in other words, a matter of letting go of our personal identities long enough to change and be changed. This seems to be what the social forum would like to have happen on a larger scale—not just to generate consumers for a radically charged “marketplace of ideas,” but to spark the emergence of a new sort of participatory political subject.<sup>30</sup>

While we consider it important and necessary to place responsibility for the marginalization of women and of women’s issues where it belongs, we want to make it clear that it is patriarchal culture and socialization, of men in particular, that need to come under renewed scrutiny in progressive arenas if men are to become aware of their own internalized sexism. We do not shrink from this task, but it may be time to look

more critically at what these forums demand and at what they yield. The Women's Tribunal on Violence Against Women at the BSF was an important event that attempted to shine a spotlight on a major issue that egregiously impacts millions of women the world over every day. It may have been more effective, however, at revealing some of the ways in which patriarchy is, still or again or inevitably, embedded in left politics. Some journalistic reports from the 2004 WSF in Mumbai cheered the visibility and spaces provided for events organized by women's groups and movements as a sign that women's persistence was breaking down the "traditional" masculine dominance of the WSF, and indeed, the Mumbai feminist actions made patriarchy a major thematic agenda at WSF 2004.<sup>31</sup> After our experience at the BSF Women's Web/Tribunal on Violence Against Women, several of us questioned whether feminists should engage or abstain from social forums, but a more strategic question is, how do we gain effective feminist access to this arena that seems already to have been claimed as androcentric space?

#### APPENDIX A

*Statement from the Council of Wise Women Women's Tribunal on Violence Against Women Boston Social Forum, July 25, 2004*

Yesterday, the Women's Tribunal heard testimonies from a group of women who spoke about the unspeakable crimes and violence done to girls and women. We want to honor their pain and celebrate their triumph as survivors. They are battered women suffering from years of abuse from their husbands. They are victims of incest and child abuse. They are welfare mothers left through the cracks of our systems. They are homeless and depressed women struggling against the bureaucracy that is supposed to help them. They are children who suffer from environmental degradation we have created. They are women forced to be sex workers, providing service to the lobbyists. They live in our cities, in our suburbs. They are brown, white, black, and yellow. They are our sisters, our mothers, our friends, our children, and our neighbors.

Every year there are approximately 69 million newborn girls. Assuming one out of five will encounter domestic violence some time in their lives, 14 million newborn girls worldwide will suffer from domestic violence. There are about 2.1 million newborn girls in the United States per year, and among them 425,000 will suffer from domestic violence

during their best years. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women in the United States. Yet, it is our best-kept secret.

Violence against women cannot be eliminated without addressing the interlocking oppressions of racism, sexism, homophobia, and economic injustice. As we struggle against violence in the United States, we also remember our sisters suffering from war and atrocities in Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, and other places in the world.

The Council of Wise Women [Crones] indicts the federal government and the state for failing to put violence against women and girls as a top priority. The fight against terror must start at home, at our workplace, and in our communities. We condemn the perpetrators who maim women's bodies and break women's spirits. We call for a bipartisan effort to pass necessary legislations, devise appropriate policies, and provide adequate means to ensure the safety of women and girls so that they will live with dignity and hope. Our tax dollars must not go to war and to the perpetration of domestic violence and sexual violence in our houses, on the streets and in our institutions.

We call upon colleagues in the Boston Social Forum, the Democratic National Committee and people of goodwill to stand in solidarity with women and girls who suffer from all forms of violence to work for a future that women everywhere will live, and live abundantly.

## APPENDIX B

### *Participants in the Women's Web*

#### **Planning Committee**

*Women's Organizations and Projects:* Women's Lodge; Code Pink Women for Peace; NARAL Pro-choice MA; Women's Alternatives for New Directions (WAND); Center for New Words; National Organization for Women (Boston Chapter); INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Boston Chapter); Sisters Together Ending Poverty; Women in the Building Trades; Brazilian Women's Group; Massachusetts Welfare Rights Union, the Massachusetts CEDAW Project, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

*Mixed-Sex Organizations:* Tufts University Women's Center; United for Justice with Peace; the Walker Center; University of Massachusetts School of Public Service; Center for Women's Health and Human Rights (Suffolk University).

### Featured on Women's Web Program

*Women's Organizations and Projects:* Women's Lodge; Code Pink Women for Peace; Naral Pro-choice MA; Women's Alternatives for New Directions (WAND); Center for New Words; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Boston Chapter); Women's Empowerment and Development Organization (WEDO); Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious Leaders; Women's Global Strike; The Goddess Dancing; Tempest Productions; Women's Rights Network; World March of Women; U.S. Gender and Trade Network; the Clothesline Project; Chronicle Quilt of Outrage and Hope; Women's Nobel Prize; Aerobics; the Freedwoman Project; Cello Chix.

*Mixed-Sex Organizations:* Underground Railway Theater; Writing for Social Change; War Resisters League; riding East and West: A Peace Initiative; World Tribunal on Iraq; Center of Concern; Narvassa Dance Theater.

### NOTES

1. Campaign for Contingent Work is a Boston-based organizing and resource center for part-time and contingent workers.

2. The Boston Social Forum (BSF) did not have a payroll per se until November 2003 when a financial administrator and outreach coordinator were hired. However, from its inception until its realization, two individuals employed by the Campaign for Contingent Work played the leadership roles for the BSF. These four people are referred to individually and collectively as "BSF staff" in this article, while the larger group of individuals participating in the three BSF coordinating committees (planning, program, and administrative) are referred to collectively as BSF organizers.

3. Catherine Benedict, Barbara Salvaterre, Aparna Sindhoor, and Nancy Lee Wood spoke at "A Better World Is Possible: Implications of the World Social Forum for Women's Lives," International Women's Day Program at Simmons College, March 8, 2004. At the BSF, Catherine organized the film festival, Barbara coordinated the immigration and global justice programming tracks, and Aparna performed "Refugee Ragas" to open the Women's Tribunal.

4. For a complete list of the Women's Web organizations see Appendix B.

5. The Northwest Social Forum (NWSF) was to be held in October 2004, but was canceled when indigenous peoples, youth, and grassroots organizations pulled out due to their marginalization by NWSF staff. See [www.nwsocialforum.org](http://www.nwsocialforum.org) for statements by these groups outlining their concerns.

6. World March of Women, "Violence Against Women: the 'Other World' Must Act," in William F. Fischer and Thomas Ponniah, eds., *Another World Is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 218–235

7. According to Leslie Sklair, a sociologist at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the world's economic elite run the world. He explains that the transnational capitalist class consists of (a) corporate executives from the transnational corporations, (b) bureaucrats and politicians who facilitate "legally" the transnational corporate agendas, (c) professionals with technical expertise who advance the transnational corporate agendas materially, and (e) the merchants and the media who help to create desire and sell the corporations' products to the world's consumers. The web of the transnational capitalist class is vast; the agenda is set by the "have mores" (George Bush's affectionate term for the wealthiest of the wealthy) who actually work behind the scenes to establish their world view, while the mundane and quotidian application of these agendas are manufactured and operationalized by the middle-class and upper-middle-class workers (the bureaucrats, professionals, merchants, and media) in thrall to the corporate mission of free markets and exorbitant profits. See Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001).

8. The Charter of Principles can be found at [www.worldsocialforum.org](http://www.worldsocialforum.org) under Charter of Principles.

9. The World Social Forum (WSF) International Council (IC) is debating with itself and WSF participants the idea and belief by many that the WSF should take concrete actions to build the better world progressives envision, not just to serve as a meeting place for the exchange of ideas. This is in preparation for the 7th WSF in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2007, where the WSF IC wants to make some definitive statement regarding Principle 6 and whether this principle will remain as is or evolve. See *World Social Forum Bulletin* (June 27, 2006).

10. The Assembly of Social Movements is the official designation of social forum participant organizations and it is in this name that calls for action have been taken at social forums.

11. The coordinated worldwide antiwar demonstrations staged on February 15, 2003, were sparked by a proposal at the Florence European Social Forum (ESF) and coordinated through the 2003 WSF in Porto Alegre. *The New York Times* dubbed this show of unity, "The Other Superpower." Susan George, writing in *The Guardian*, connects the movement manifested that day to the movement that first became visible and salient in Seattle as protests during the World Trade Organization meeting held in November 1999. "Comment and Analysis: This Is the Way to Win," October 15, 2004.



12. See [www.fse-esf.org](http://www.fse-esf.org) under Programmes under European Assembly for rules guiding plenary sessions, particularly 1.7.

13. We decided to call the Tribunal judges “Crones” because feminist terminology seeks to recapture this appellation as the honorific it once was. Crone Mary Daly defines the word as a woman of “strength, courage, and wisdom.” It was in the crone’s aspect as Wise Woman that we particularly wanted to draw on this concept. See *Gyn/Ecology* and also Daly’s *Wickedary*.

14. Radhika Coomaraswamy, “Reinventing International Law: Women’s Rights as Human Rights in the International Community,” (Boston, MA: Harvard Law School, 1997), <http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/HRP/Publications:radhika.html>.

15. The *Vienna Tribunal* [video recording] (New York: Women Make Movies, 1994). Directed by Gerry Rogers, produced by Augusta Productions in coproduction with the National Film Board of Canada, Studio C and Atlantic Centre and in association with the Center for Women’s Global Leadership.

16. In their 2001–2002 discussion paper, World March of Women suggests that the WSF “organize an international tribunal on violence against women at its third meeting.” In 2004, the World Court of Women was convened at the Mumbai WSF to deliberate on the theme of “US War Crimes.” Convenings of the World Court of Women have since been held annually at the WSF.

17. Even though we questioned BSF staff about this, we were never able to determine how these slots were allocated. Women’s Web plenary committee members were baffled as to the criteria for plenary designations. There did not appear to be any articulated process in place for programming these events.

18. See Appendix A.

19. The Crones were Loretta Ross, Kwok Pui Lon, Grace Poore, Eva Quistorp, Christina Brinkley, Julia Perez Kennedy, and Vinie Burrows.

20. “The Porto Alegre World Social Forum in 2005 took the welcome step of eliminating the plenary star-system altogether in order to concentrate exclusively on seminars and workshops,” Susan George reports. “Comment and Analysis: This Is the Way to Win,” *The Guardian* (October 15, 2004).

21. Grace Poore, correspondence with the authors and Council of Crones, July 28, 2004.

22. This, apparently, is not unusual for women’s issues at social forums. In her dispatch from the 2002 WSF, Freda Werden reports “many mentions of women and women’s issues that were promised in the discussion [of the conference statement] don’t seem to have made it into the final draft, and it apparently was feared that they would be too divisive.” See “Feminist report from the WSF,” *Off Our Backs* (March 2002): 23.

23. BSF staffers Kim Foltz and Suren Moodliar reflect on the care with which they cultivated a youth presence for the forum: "The Boston Social Forum drew at least a fifth of its 5,000+ attendees from a predominantly young, people of color, hip hop community by deliberate outreach to the relevant networks." On the other hand, those not identifying with these categories were characterized by the organizers as the "white middle classes" who would be necessary to "build a majoritarian progressive movement": "[we] recognized the strategic necessity of involving the white middle classes without whom it will be impossible to build a majoritarian progressive movement ... reached them through the peace movement and communicating with the informal internet communities concerned about a variety of salient issues like the outsourcing of white-collar jobs." Within this formulation, radical women of color who do not enjoy hip hop effectively do not exist, regardless of their age, nor do white women who are other than middle class. Kim Foltz and Suren Moodliar, "The Future of the World Social Forum: Modest Reform Needed," *Z-Net* (February 9, 2005).

24. These areas of concern were traditional for social forums, and it is feminists who have tried to broaden the arena to include issues of particular concern to women. One of the major criticisms of social forums has come over patriarchal myopia.

25. This is the term that one of the tribunal organizers used to describe how she felt she was treated by the male organizers of the BSF in her discussion with Pat about the organizing process.

26. Suren Moodliar and Jason Pramas, "Boston Social Forum: Significance, Achievements and Some Lessons Learned," *Z-Net* (September 11, 2004).

27. Ibid.

28. "Women and the ESF," *Morning Sun* (October 12, 2004).

29. Ibid.

30. This is a phrase used by BSF organizers to describe the social forum venue.

31. See, for example, Santiago Mari, "Feminist Presence, Visions and Alternatives at the WSF 2004: Making Another World Possible," *We* (January 2004).