

Editors' Introduction

Suzy Kim, Gwyn Kirk, and M. Brinton Lykes*

WORLD MILITARY SPENDING ROSE TO \$1,822 BILLION IN 2018, WITH the United States accounting for 36 percent of that staggering total (Tian et al. 2019). The escalating nuclear arms race is also alarming. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has moved up the hands of the Doomsday Clock to two minutes before midnight—worse than at the height of the Cold War. An unprecedented 68.5 million people (53 percent of them children) are now displaced by war and violence (internally and externally) (UNHCR 2018). Moreover, the global system is enmeshed with militarized ideas of masculinity, even when women are heads of state, elected officials, military leaders, and CEOs of four out of the five biggest military contractors in the United States (Spade & Lazare 2019)—and sexual violence continues unabated in multiple forms.

The United States has roughly 1,000 overseas bases, and despite inter-Korean and US-North Korean summits in 2018, the military standoff between the United States and North Korea continues, as do trade wars between the United States and China, the fractured relationship between the United States and Russia, and increasing tensions between the United States and Iran. Trump's domestic policy failures seem to be pushing him to greater recklessness in foreign and military policy. Ironically, those who are most likely to join the so-called voluntary US military are low-income white people and people of color, as well as undocumented migrants and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, despite recent presidential efforts to deport them upon completion of their service.

Meanwhile, contemporary activism against such priorities and threats has emerged in many contexts and is often initiated by women. This special issue revisits the theme of women and peacemaking by re-engaging some

* SUZY KIM is Associate Professor of Korean history at Rutgers University and author of the awarding-winning book *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Cornell University Press, 2013). GWYN KIRK is an activist-scholar who teaches women's and gender studies courses; her writing focuses on ecofeminism, militarism, and women's peace organizing. M. BRINTON LYKES, PhD, is Professor of community-cultural psychology and Co-Director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College.

long-standing yet unsettled debates about what is meant by women as peacemakers. We situate this discussion at the intersections of feminisms, structural inequalities, environmental justice, and the need to generate sustainable communities—issues that have been seldom framed within a discourse of peace.

We bring together transnational feminist, critical race, and decolonial theories and praxes. Contributors draw on significant personal and professional experience and expertise in addressing these questions. We have worked in educational settings and in both grassroots and grassroots campaigns to influence national policy. Some of us have accompanied women engaged in armed struggle and transitional justice, working to change United Nations (UN) discourse, policy, and international human rights standards. This range of experience generates overlapping as well as divergent perspectives among contributors, rooted in different theoretical, disciplinary, and political positions. However, as we explore in the epilogue, there are also many synergies across the essays that lead to convergence around sustaining the commons that in turn sustains humankind. This concept and practice has a long history, which takes on renewed significance in this neoliberal era of heightened privatization, individualism, violence, and displacement.

Background

This special issue grows out of a roundtable entitled “Conversations about Women and Peace Making: Visions, Actions, Challenges” that brought together scholars, educators, and activists on the occasion of International Women’s Day on March 8, 2017, at Rutgers University. In turn, this gathering grew out of the editors’ involvement in Women Cross DMZ, when 30 women from 15 nations crossed the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) from North to South Korea on May 24, 2015, International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament (see www.womencrossdmz.org/). The goal of that initiative was to draw international attention to the need for a peace agreement to finally end the Korean War on the 70th anniversary of Korea’s division.

The Rutgers roundtable sought to engage in critical dialogue about women’s past contributions and future potential in making peace—including clarifying how women involved in such efforts understand themselves and peacemaking in the twenty-first century. Participants explored several previous efforts by women to reduce conflict and militarism while pressing for a just and transformative peace in various national settings. We engaged with feminist, intersectional, and decolonial scholarship, as well as theoretic-

cal frameworks focused on postconflict transitional justice, environmental justice, and social change. Speakers addressed strengths and limitations of the sometimes overly reductionist and essentializing discourse of women as peacemakers while also critically interrogating this conceptualization (hence the title of this special issue, *Women and Peace Making*, to underscore how both women and peace are always in the making).

Framing the Issue

Militarism

Militarism involves a broad system of economic, political, and cultural institutions, investments, and practices that take their meaning and value from war. The so-called realist paradigm in international relations that dominates political, military, and academic thinking about national security assumes a hostile international environment in which war is always a possibility. Militarism's central distortion is that organized violence is essential in providing security. On the contrary, feminist peace activists, as well as environmentalists and Indigenous people working for sovereignty and self-determination, have shown that militarism creates severe insecurities for subjugated peoples, for many within dominant nations, for all of humankind, and for the planet itself.

Meanwhile, military contractors reap unprecedented profits and the global arms trade is thriving, in both small arms and highly complex weapons systems. Notwithstanding the growing number of women—and men who support them—in leadership positions in militaries, national security agencies, and weapons-producing corporations, nation-states and armed militias remain locked into militarized notions of strength, brinkmanship, and masculinity. Militarism also renders those in dominant nations unwilling participants or complicit in other people's vulnerability and oppression. Because militarization is made to seem normal, it is necessary to peel back its many layers before one can think about reversing this process. A feminist understanding of militarism views it as an "extreme variant of patriarchy, a gendered regime characterized by discourses and practices that subordinate and oppress women, as well as non-dominant men, reinforcing hierarchies of class, gender, race and ethnicity, and in some contexts caste, religion and location" (Mama & Okazawa-Rey 2012, 100).

For this system to be sustained, it must be embedded and normalized. To understand systems of militarism and the process of militarization re-

quires examining how these are shaped by and influence gender and gender relations, ethnicity, religion, and class, as well as other social and political categories. It is important to note also that these long-term, structural factors, or *invisible power*, underlie the emergence of military regimes and conflicts and persist long after ceasefires and peace, that is, the absence of war, have been officially declared. Many examples of postconflict, post-military-rule nations suggest that they continue to exhibit the political, cultural, and economic features of militarism. Indeed, as Charlotte Bunch pointed out during the Rutgers roundtable, despite the remit of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security to bring women to the peace table, implementation has often targeted violence against women without a critique of militarism, based on the assumption that it is possible to eliminate violence against women in war but still have war. This is reflected in the recruitment of women for so-called peacekeeping operations as a way to mitigate violence against women, while still relying on military deployment and intervention.

Conflicts, war, and the aftermath of war tear apart connections among people, and between people and the land that sustains us. Hence, demilitarization includes nurturing and remaking these ties, rehumanizing those who have been defined as enemies, and healing the devastation caused by war and preparations for war. Opposition to militarism also turns on the argument that, by their very nature, militaries are profoundly antifeminist and racist and based on the objectification of others as enemies. Militarism's effectiveness depends on people's willingness to see reality in oppositional categories: us versus them, friends versus enemies, kill or be killed (Plumwood 1994). To this end, militaries are organized along rigidly hierarchical lines, demanding unquestioning obedience to superiors. Although militaries use women's labor in many ways, they do so on their own terms.

Women's Peace Movements

There is a long history of women working together for peace (see, for example, Alonso 1993, 1997; Cockburn 2007, 2012), with a range of strategies, organizational forms, discourses, and theorizing. Thus, women participate in peacemaking—defined according to local and national contexts—in a variety of ways. Some seek seats at the table when peace agreements are negotiated; others protest war and violence in the streets; still others care for people, including former combatants, women activists, LGBTQ people, and other minoritized groups who are targeted, uprooted, and harmed by

war, and create visionary projects to help stabilize and nurture their communities. These approaches overlap, of course.

One strand of this work focuses on women's roles as mothers, as with Women Strike for Peace in the United States (see Weiss in this issue, Swerdlow 1993). Other examples include the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Mutual Support Group (GAM) in Guatemala, which challenged state violence by demanding to know the fate of family members who had been disappeared by state agents (see Agosin 1989, Fisher 1989, Simon 1985), and women who opposed the civil war in Sri Lanka (de Alwis 2001). In all of these cases, as men were forcibly recruited into conflict or were the first to be tortured, disappeared, or murdered, women—as the main survivors—used their positions to protest publicly, demand information of governments and militias, and seek redress. Drawing on and transforming the respect accorded to them within patriarchal societies, women risked challenging militarism in ways that men in their communities could not. Women who stand up to military policies as mothers and grandmothers are behaving according to conventional gender roles, but they expose a key contradiction: that the state, through promoting militarism and violence, does not let them get on with their job of mothering.

Indeed, women have long made up a significant share if not the majority of peace activists worldwide, mostly working at the grassroots. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, founded in 1915, is the oldest peace organization in the world (see Kim in this issue, Foster 1989), currently with sections and branches in 47 countries, as well as international offices in New York and Geneva. The Women's International Democratic Federation was founded in 1945, shortly after the end of World War II, to promote peace through the advancement of women, linking racism and imperialism among the causes of war (de Haan 2010). A few more recent examples include the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace founded in the 1960s; Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence (1996); Women Making Peace in South Korea (1997); the Mano River Women's Peace Network, founded in 2000 to promote peace and development in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea; Women in Black (2001); Code Pink, started in the United States in response to 9/11; and the Women Peace and Security Network Africa (2006).

In 2005, PeaceWomen Across the Globe nominated an international group of 1,000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize (Association 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005, see Barlow in this issue). One thousand was a symbolic number chosen to represent the fact that many women are

involved in peace projects despite the small number of women nominated for recognition and awards compared to men. This initiative defined women's work for peace very broadly to include: alleviating poverty; enhancing health and education; changing priorities in government spending away from military budgets toward social needs; addressing structural violence and discrimination; ensuring universal and equitable access to resources; promoting gun control, conflict resolution, mediation, and reconciliation; and caring for survivors of armed conflicts and contributing to peaceful reconstruction and demilitarization of society. Although the group did not win the prize, this initiative recognized women's wide-ranging work for peace. Also important, the breadth of its definition showed that peace is much larger than the cessation of war, involving multiple factors that are required to transform economic and political systems rooted in patriarchal and racist violence toward ensuring everyday genuine security.

Why have women been so central to the history of peace movements? Context matters, of course. In Guatemala, for example, women have been central because many men are dead or disappeared (see Lykes in this issue). Typically, women's movements toward peace are outside the mainstream political process—the priorities of political parties and the articulation of political agendas—and a direct challenge to it. Women may be able to speak out in ways that men in their communities cannot, especially as mothers, as mentioned earlier. Eschewing claims that women are essentially peaceful by nature, we recognize that gender socialization from infancy onward contributes to significant gender gaps in attitudes, responsibilities, and behaviors in caring for others (see Kirk in this issue). Worldwide, women and girls spend much more time than men caring for family members as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and daughters, or in waged work as nurses, nurses' aides, primary school teachers, social workers, and eldercare and childcare providers. Such positionalities inform engagement in a broad swath of political and social activities contributing to peacemaking.

Despite long-established feminist movements in many nations, all societies have gendered norms and expectations that make it difficult for women to oppose their nation's foreign and military policy. Even so, women are disproportionately affected by war, conflict, and military budgets in ways that other women—sometimes including those defined as the enemy—can understand, whether as survivors of wartime rape and sexual violence or as women trying to care for their children and keep their families and communities together. These realities contribute to the UN's rather one-dimensional

focus on women as vulnerable victims. Although we do not underestimate the many ways that wars and violence harm people of all genders, we recognize and respect women's generative strategies for survival and healing (see Ahn-Kim in this issue). Women have set up organizations specifically to oppose militarized violence against women and to help people heal from wartime atrocities, or to urge a gender-sensitive approach to peacemaking in conflict zones. They have done this within and across lines of ethnicity, religion, and culture, as for example in Liberia (Gurira 2016, Reticker 2008), Bosnia (Giles et al. 2003), and Israel/Palestine (Rosenwasser 1992). Some of this work has enabled women to learn new skills and to move into new leadership positions, garnering respect and visibility in their communities and in national and transnational movements for peace, human rights, sustainable development, and so on.

Of course, not all women oppose militarism, just as not all men champion it. Women may support militarism from a sense of nationalism, ethnocentrism, religious fervor, desire for national liberation, or because the situation they find themselves in leaves them with no alternative. They may be required to perform military service, and they may enlist in state militaries for challenge and adventure, to escape poverty, or to gain recognition or first-class citizenship. Women may take up arms in national liberation struggles or support others who do. They may also join militias and armed groups as a way to survive violent upheavals and redress gross violations of human rights, including impoverishment (see Lykes in this issue). Some may feel that not taking up arms is a privilege available only to a few.

In light of these diversities, this special issue consciously foregrounds a transnational perspective, while not erasing our own positionality in relation to the nation-states in which we are embedded and the privilege that comes with certain citizenships (see Okazawa-Rey in this issue). We highlight various ways in which women seeking a just peace have organized within and across national borders and national identities, and have addressed issues of militarized patriarchy that cut across and crisscross nation-states, including the role of transnational and multinational weapons industries and corporations, whose actions impact all our communities and the global environment (see Johnson in this issue).

About the Essays

Although peace may resonate as a positive concept, it often seems emptied of meaning, used more as a rhetorical device than to refer to substantive

action. Each of the essays in this special issue engages with this term in different ways. Suzy Kim traces the historical progression of the term peace from the very early days of the Cold War with the association of peace with appeasement. Gwyn Kirk notes that “peace women” was used as a derogatory term against women at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, as well as being a strong mobilizing force, vividly described by Cora Weiss through her lifelong peace activism. Noting the effects of national privilege that are often unrecognized by activists from dominant nations, Margo Okazawa-Rey cautions any movement aspiring to be transnational to remain vigilant about privilege based on nationality. Moving beyond the English-speaking world to include conceptualizations and practices of peace in Latin America and East Asia, M. Brinton Lykes, Ahn-Kim JeongAe, and Tani Barlow all illuminate specific understandings of peace as the creation of genuine security, which includes farming, everyday sustenance, and urgent environmental and ecological concerns, also highlighted by Rebecca Johnson in this issue.

In shaping and fueling contemporary militarisms, Bush’s response to the attacks of 9/11 and his declaration of an open-ended War on Terror have had multiple nefarious effects within the United States and beyond, including manipulation of fear within large segments of the US public. As the larger global community sent messages of condolence and empathy, the US government sought a militarized response. At the time and since, so-called first responders have been hailed as security forces, deployed to reinforce the idea that future attacks can be avoided. Relatedly, the military’s new mission within US borders involves a combination of disaster preparedness and increasing militarization of the southern border to keep out what it thinks of as undesirables. The former is evidenced in the federal government’s gifting of surplus military hardware to augment cities’ resources for local security (as in Urban Shield), which is all too frequently turned against people of color who are residents of these very communities. The latter is written through migration, detention, and deportation policies, with particularly devastating consequences for would-be migrants as well as those who have sought refuge and asylum within US borders, often fleeing wars in which US military power was or still is deeply implicated.

A variety of women’s organizations and networks have sought to respond creatively to some of these iterations of war-making in the United States and beyond. Among them are the International Women’s Network Against Militarism, which decided to use “against militarism”—two negative words—in their name as a way to reference the network’s anticolonial,

antiracist, and anti-imperialist stance. Network women from South Korea and Okinawa, Japan, were adamant about using “against militarism” rather than “for peace,” as they felt this communicated a more powerful position, especially for women in Asia. Women for Genuine Security, the United States–based group involved in the International Women’s Network, wanted to be *for* something rather than *against*, but also wanted to avoid the term peace due to its ambiguity. They decided to use genuine security, which includes economic security and environmental security, and puts the group in dialogue with military security discourse.

By unsettling the conventional notions of peace and women as nonessentialist categories that must be continuously remade and redefined through practice, this special issue pushes us to envision peace more expansively in the structural challenges we seek to overcome but also more concretely in the way we practice peace in our daily lives. As Krishanti Dharmaraj asked during the Rutgers roundtable: Is there a way to quantify and make concrete our notions of peace? How do you measure clean air? How do you measure the time you spend with your child to read? She noted, “We have to shift the current macroeconomic system that was built on how to pay for war and transform that particular economic system to allow us to actually measure and engage positive peace.” The essays that follow show various ways in which women are approaching these questions in order to help create a more secure and sustainable future.

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