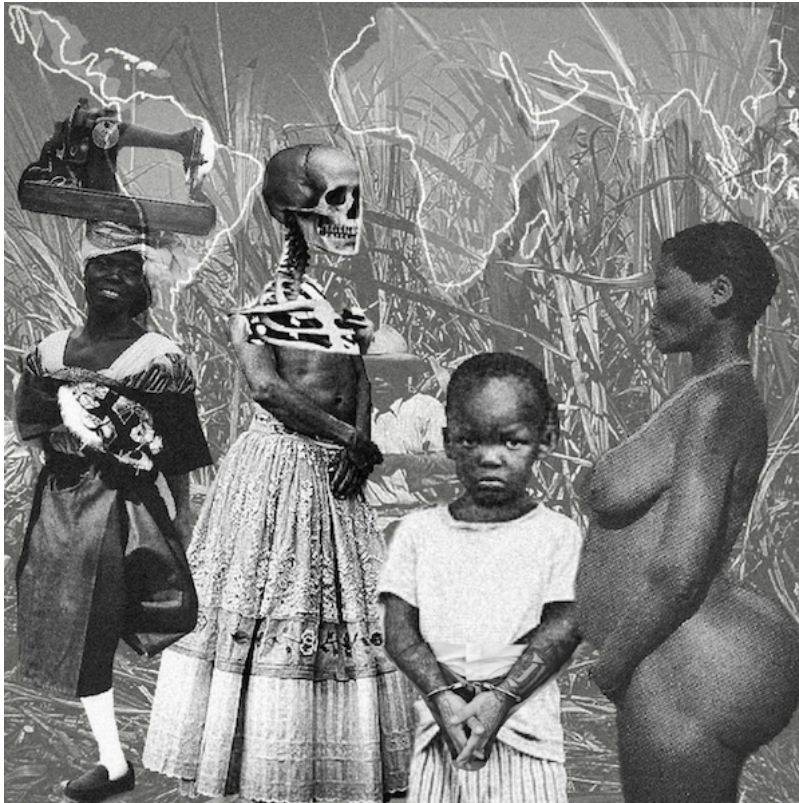


AFRONterera Manifesto

By way of rupture, AFRONterera—the borderland, afro, mestizo, and anti-colonial collective—proposes to vindicate identity as a strategy and political position and not as an end, against all essentialism and betting on revolutionary love and radical sincerity.



Marbella Figueroa, *Manifiesto (gráfico) AFRONterera*, 2021. Digital collage. Image courtesy of the collective

Mexico City, Mexico,

March 8, 2021^[1]

In response to the rise of Eurocentric and colonialist feminism, we at AFRONterera^[2] vociferously proclaim on this eighth of March 2021, that we are not feminists. We are not interested in defending ourselves from the space of feminism because we don't fit within it.

We aren't women, we are beasts. We are *Prietes* (dark-skinned), Black, *Sudakas* (South Americans),^[3] Chicanas, migrants, whores, *Indias*,^[4] trans, transvestites, poor, peripheral, *fronterizas* (borderlanders), the granddaughters and great-granddaughters of all of those who were exploited on plantations, in the sugar harvest, in the *maquila* factories, in the free-trade zones, on the farms, and in the family homes of white men and women. Only women are human and only humans can be feminists.

The idea of being a woman is a colonial invention that was assigned to European women and Criollo-Mestizas in Abya Yala. In turn, we racialized women were invented as non-humans, beasts, and savages. We are the result of the coloniality of gender and the construction of the world around the paradigm of race.

As borderland subjects, we experience myriad, interwoven kinds of violence and oppression, not only because of our sex and gender, but also because of capitalism, racism, colonialism, and ableism, as well as all the structural frameworks of oppression that the coloniality of power implicates in a world where the existence of the white dominant colonial class is predicated on that of the racialized subaltern classes.

We refuse to interpret the world from a single perspective because such an approach implies leaving too many things out. Forming an analysis solely based on the patriarchy is a mistake for various reasons: patriarchy is not universal, and to assume that it is, is an exercise in discursive colonialism. The world system we currently inhabit is a matrix of power that cannot be reduced to the patriarchal. Or, feminists, do you believe that men and women who are in jail are there only because of the patriarchy? Or that your domestic worker/servant/maid is one because the patriarchy is forcing them to be? Reading the world according to the logic of patriarchy is a privilege only certain bourgeois and gentrified subjects enjoy.

Feminism is a space only for women—diverse women, but women nonetheless. Articulating a movement around a subject constructed out of Western subjectivity is a grave error. For we have never been and are not women. Nor are we men. We reject the gender binary, heterosexuality as a political regime, and all the binary logic of sexuality that is upheld by capitalism and coloniality.



Marbella Figueroa, *Campo Florido*, 2021. Digital collage. Image courtesy of the collective

We reject them, we flee from them, we are not interested in occupying those spaces of “universal women.” Because we are not universal, we appeal to the singularity of the multiple subjectivities that exist on the planet. The category “woman” was and continues to be constructed out of the West by whiteness. We believe that abandoning that space that lately has become the inheritor of universal victimhood is a decolonial stance. We abandon it in order to embrace our bestiality. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, we are the beasts of the shadows, the weird ones, the half-and-half.

We aren't theory, we are Black, Indian, Mestiza, Sudaka, racialized flesh. We reject your PDFs and your disembodied lectures. We deny every trend of being and return to listening to each other, to looking each other in the eye, to telling each other stories, to building from lived experience. When we build from there, from the skin that feels, from history, from our Black peasant grandmothers, from all of our bad experiences of racism as migrants and displaced bodies, it is impossible to be a TERF.

We believe it is important to construct a collective out of that which is not virtual. We must return to that part of the body which is ineffable—the gesture, living words, the gaze. In this pandemic, looking each other in the face, embracing each other, and dancing together has become something potentially revolutionary. We refuse to use social media as a revolutionary end in itself. Our political goal is out there with and among people, in the possibilities of the street, not in an Instagram post with ostentatious claims and bright colors. We use social media strategically and with moderation as a channel of communication and dissemination and as a means of connecting with people in other countries who, like ourselves, are organizing themselves against the matrix of oppression.

**You can't be a womanist; you
can't interpret from only one
point of view because
experience doesn't come from
just one place, but rather from
many places, and it intersects
with many different
coordinates.**

We aren't separatists because the problem is bigger than that: What should I do about my incarcerated brother? What should I do about my father? What should I do about my uncles and cousins? We don't reject them because it is with them that we found love and not with the Western-centric and bourgeois feminists who say, “Reject your families because your families oppress you.” Maybe yours does, white girl.

It is in the communities and neighborhoods where racialized subalterns live that we find our potential and nurture it. Shut up, white girl. We are on the side of an interconnected analysis that isn't based on exclusivity, but rather on openness that invites us to weave together forms of life that, like our runaway ancestors, escape from the modern colonial system in which your feminisms reside.

Feminism is not a critical proposal because it tends to biologize and pathologize the behavior of men. We oppose the biologization of our comrades in the struggle. Despite the fact that white people and some men have harmed us, we do not agree with discourses that use pseudo-biology to justify the violence that some subjects are capable of committing. Nobody is violent by nature, nor does violence reside in genes. We oppose

simple analyses that state that men are oppressors because they have penises and that women are oppressed because they have vulvae.

We believe that the idea of *being a woman* is fundamentally essentialist and biological. The idea of woman exists in a relational logic to the idea of the heterosexual, which is foundational to capitalism and coloniality. To be a woman is an aspirational concept; it entails emulating the white and the Northern-centric. We, the nonhumans, always want to be feminists because we want to be more human, more female, more progressive, more civilized, more enlightened... This doesn't mean that from today onwards we will stop calling ourselves women, but rather that we understand that living in extra-European lands, we are in a constant struggle with the idea of being a good, empowered woman or a good victim.



Marbella Figueroa, *Todos los presos son políticos*, 2021. Digital collage. Image courtesy of the collective

We reject trans-exclusionary lesbianism as racist and essentialist. Being among women doesn't guarantee anything because being a lesbian doesn't exclude you from subjective production in the matrix of integrated global power. It is disingenuous to think that being lesbian makes you liberated; we believe that coitus isn't always rape, as many racist radical feminists affirm. For us, rape is what the masters did on the plantations with our Black ancestors or what happens today in family homes. Many of us, Black women or third world Mestiza marikitas,^[5] find liberation, love, and

revolution—things that were so long denied us—in our sexuality. We are capable of making free and consensual decisions. Shut up white girls and let us speak for ourselves!

Feminism is not an emancipatory theory because it seeks to insert itself into the intimacy of our beds and dictate how, when, and with whom we should sleep. WE WANT TO BE FREE.

At AFRONtera, we take the side of questions rather than of orders. We believe in the power of asking the right questions at the right time to generate movement and transformation.

In the same way, we reject mainstream LGBTI+ culture, which is falling apart and is no longer dissident, having become instead one more entity assimilated by the logic of representation and capital.

We demand a movement that is dissident and counter-sexual in response to the political regime of heterosexuality—one that doesn't depend upon the white gay-queer culture of the Global North. We embrace all the peripheral marikas that live with us in the plantation

quarters.

There exists a dishonest feminism that loves to talk about intersectionality and diversity. But they are lying through their teeth so as to appear progressive and not outmoded. The truth is that we are dissociating ourselves from feminism because we want to be, live in, and build a movement where it isn't necessary to "include" anyone, where it isn't necessary to remark upon the inclusion of Black women, African women, indios, and marikas; we want a decolonial political movement that even includes people with white skin.

We are against all essentialism, a strategy of the world's colonial structure. We throw out the essential because the essential always pulls us apart and naturalizes the processes of socialization. We don't just suffer patriarchal violence; we don't just suffer racism or classism. It is much more than that. Why don't you understand? We don't get to choose one portion. True solidarity is fighting against everything at the same time.

Being feminist implies a struggle by women for women, erasing our histories, whitening our corporealities, biologizing our bodies, sanitizing our practices, invalidating the struggle of racialized women as unfeminist.

They seek to render invisible our roots that lie with other women who have subverted the modern, white, and patriarchal system. We believe it is necessary to say that feminism in Mexico has served only to perpetuate all the discourses and practices that negate our existence.



Marbella Figueroa, *Mar(ika)*, 2021. Digital collage. Image courtesy of the collective

The denial of our bodies, our knowledge, our emotional ties; opposing them to hate speech. For us, white trans-hating feminism is the same as radical feminism that claims not to be trans-hating but that has failed to question its own class, racial, and gender privilege.

Enough of trying to proselytize with the theory of white women who respond only to their own privilege. We condemn the Christocentrism that abounds in social movements.

We believe that we do not need feminism in order to actively oppose sexism, racism, and colonialism. We are antiracist, anticolonial, and antipatriarchal. We are the children of ancestors who gave us liberty and we live to continue their legacy of struggle and resistance.

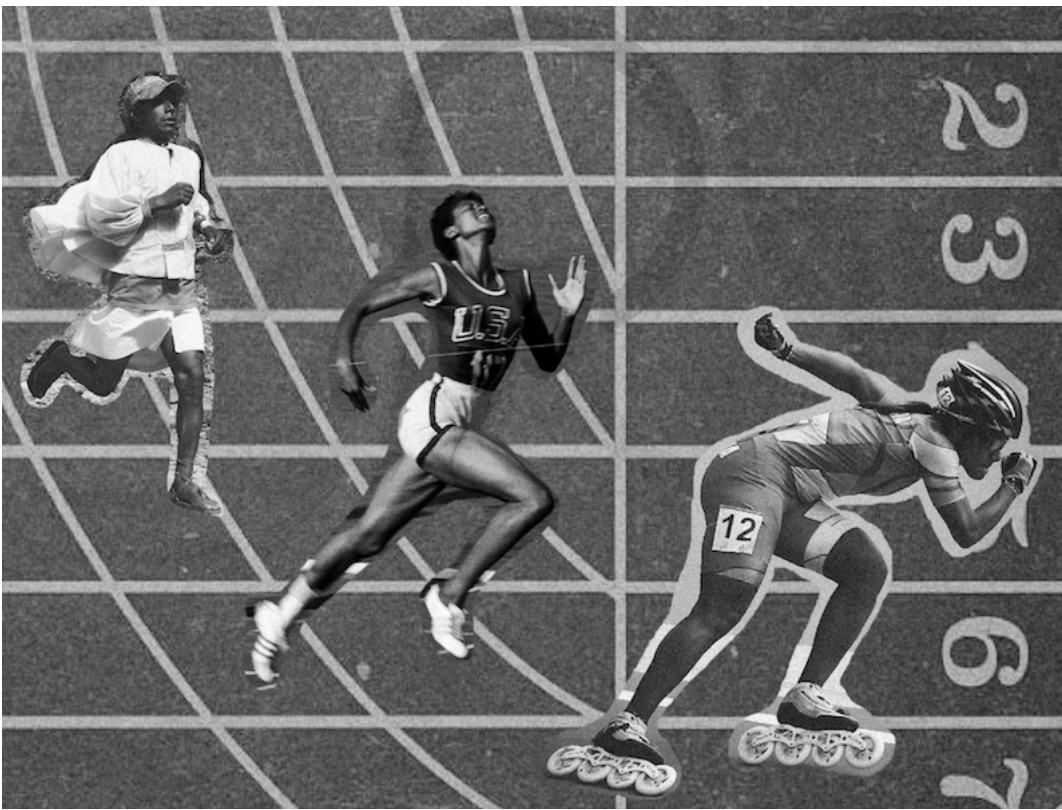
Anacaona was not feminist; neither were Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks. However, we recognize that their anticolonial, antipatriarchal, and antiracist political practices have contributed to Black feminist thinking and to genealogies of resistance among Indigenous women. For this reason, we are fed up with the fact that women who would never have aligned with the racist assertions of white feminist theory have been conscripted into the ranks of white Eurocentric feminists. We don't want our popola^[6] to be colonized as feminists. A popola is not the same as a woman and much less a feminist.

Feminism is white because the idea of woman is trans-exclusive and colorist. It is punitive by virtue of being in favor of that which they call "justice," but which in reality is prison and the control of racialized bodies. We are against all laws that call for criminal punitive justice. We don't want laws, we want them all to disappear, including the state. Don't you realize that your own laws are what perpetuate the repressive apparatus of the state? Let's kill the state. All feminism that appeals to the state is liberal and therefore racist. As Black people, we do not want anti-discrimination laws because we know that it is those very laws that are responsible for condemning our own comrades to jails.

Feminism is neoliberal. We do not share the belief that feminism should form part of the agenda of intergovernmental departments because the pattern of power they embody is not interested in fighting against itself. We denounce NGO feminism that seeks to civilize us with progressive and extractivist discourses financed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Feminism in Mexico is not only not antiracist, it is racist because it has excluded us. We are tired of people thinking that the only way of fighting and organizing today is through feminism. We are shocked by the shameless ignorance around the history of resistance undertaken by racialized peoples who have spent 500 years confronting the system.

Nor do we agree with the hierarchization of oppression that certain antiracist groups within the racialized community engage in. Enough with the sterile online discussions about whether Indigenous or Black people suffered more during the colonial period. What is understood as indio as well as Black, and even Mestizo and all the categories of caste invented under colonialism, experience oppression. We refuse to fight with our nonhuman siblings.



Marbella Figueroa, *Olimpiadas de la Opression*, 2021. Digital collage. Image courtesy of the collective

Black people and Indigenous people suffered dehumanization, slavery, death, extermination, looting, and kidnapping. We believe in solidarity among all the racialized groups of the world: Gypsies, Muslims, Arabs, Chicanos, Mestizos, Prietes.

Let our hatred for the system of whiteness unite us! But don't let us become divided over questions of who has curlier or straighter hair. We cannot delegitimize the work of others because of the way they look. We reject the colorism that exists within our own communities because it is a construct of whiteness that dismantles the struggles of those of us who have suffered many different processes of racialization. It trivializes collective work and forces us to play oppression Olympics.

We are calling for race as it exists to be understood as a historical, cultural, social, political, and economic system of domination and exploitation, and not as a set of biological characteristics that make us belong to a certain group.

We believe it is important to defend identity, but not as an end in itself. Let identities be strategic and political and not biological, as our sisters in the struggle Ochy Curiel and Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso have shown us.

Oppression Olympics do not build community. In exchange for them, we propose efficacious and revolutionary love as well as radical sincerity in a direct and frank dialogue. We love and respect each other so much that we believe it isn't necessary to always agree on everything in order to be and work together. We consider it fundamental to building community that people be able to speak without fear of being cancelled, judged, or iced out.

**The most radical thing today is
to stop *being* feminist and
make a political commitment
to dismantle the coloniality of**

sex and gender, racist violence, capitalist oppression, carceral domination, and the control of the state apparatus.

We support sex work. If you want to abolish something, let's start with the abolition of domestic work, jails, factories, and every job in the world that strengthens capital.

We do not participate in 8M^[7] because of its whiteness, because we have always had to justify our presence there. We will not use the tools of the master to fight against the network of power. We abandon the house of feminism and the entire plantation. Enough.

AFROntera Collective^[8]

Notes

- [1] This is a political declaration issued by the AFROntera Collective. It does not pretend to be an academic text—in fact, quite the opposite. It is fueled by our experiences in spaces that we believed were emancipatory, but which ended up hurting us. We are putting our motives and intentions on the table, calling out to the collective debate out of revolutionary love in order to build alliances outside of the West and invite our allies to escape with us.
- [2] Translator's note: A portmanteau of Afro (African) and frontera (border).
- [3] Translator's note: Sudaca is a pejorative term or slur that indicates a person from South America. It appears in the manifesto in the form *sudaka*, the "k" indicating that it has been reappropriated as a term of pride by people whom it was originally intended to oppress.
- [4] Translator's note: In the Spanish version of this manifesto, the authors use the term *Indias*. In both Spanish and English, this term is charged and can be considered disrespectful. However, like many of the racial terms mobilized in this article, its use can also indicate a reappropriation.
- [5] Translator's note: *Marica* is a slang derogatory term for a gay or queer person, which is also widely used as an affectionate term of friendship in certain parts of Latin America. Its spelling with a "k" indicates its reappropriation as a term of pride by those who it is intended to oppress.
- [6] Translator's note: *Popola* is a slang word for "vagina."
- [7] Translator's note: 8M refers to March 8, International Women's Day.
- [8] Members: Waquel Drullard, Astrid Cuero, Brenda Nava, and Valeria Angola.