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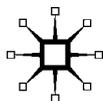
*Gendered Citizenships:
Transnational Perspectives on Knowledge Production,
Political Activism, and Culture*
edited by Kia Lilly Caldwell, Kathleen Coll, Tracy Fisher,
Renya K. Ramirez, and Lok Siu

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GENDERED CITIZENSHIPS

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To our families, with love and appreciation

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Series Editor's Foreword

The Comparative Feminist Studies (CFS) series foregrounds writing, organizing, and reflection on feminist trajectories across the historical and cultural borders of nation-states. It takes up fundamental analytic and political issues involved in the cross-cultural production of knowledge about women and feminism, examining the politics of scholarship and knowledge in relation to feminist organizing and social justice movements. Drawing on feminist thinking in a number of fields, the CFS series targets innovative, comparative feminist scholarship, pedagogical and curricular strategies, and community organizing and political education. It explores a comparative feminist praxis that addresses some of the most urgent questions facing progressive critical thinkers and activists today. *Gendered Citizenships: Transnational Perspectives on Knowledge Production, Political Activities, and Culture*, edited by the *Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group* (Caldwell, Coll, Fisher, Ramirez, and Siu) is an excellent example of such comparative feminist praxis. It is located at the intersection of feminist anthropology and ethnography, political theory, studies of citizenship, and discourses of subjectivity and agency anchored in the work of and about women of color in the Global South and North. As such, this collection is unique in terms of both the praxis of collective work that birthed it, and in its collective conceptualization of an “ethnography of intersectionality” anchored in geographically situated questions of experience, subjectivity, and citizenship of marginalized communities of women.

Over the past many decades, feminists across the globe have been variously successful in our search for gender justice—however, we inherit a number of the challenges our mothers and grandmothers faced. But there are also new challenges to face as we attempt to make sense of a world indelibly marked by the failure of postcolonial (and advanced) capitalist and communist nation-states to provide for the social, economic, spiritual, and psychic needs of the majority of the world's population. In the year 2009, globalization has come to represent the interests of corporations and the free market rather than self-determination and freedom from political, cultural, and economic domination for all the world's peoples. The project of U.S. Empire building, alongside the dominance of corporate capitalism, kills,

disenfranchises, and impoverishes women everywhere. Militarization, environmental degradation, heterosexist State practices, religious fundamentalisms, sustained migrations of peoples across the borders of nations and geopolitical regions, and the exploitation of women's labor by capital all pose profound challenges for feminists at this time. Recovering and remembering insurgent histories and seeking new understandings of political subjectivities and citizenship have never been so important at a time marked by social amnesia, global consumer culture, and the worldwide mobilization of fascist notions of "national security." The year 2009 also heralds changes in the political landscapes of many nations, with Barack Obama as the first African American president of the United States, and numerous women heads of State around the world, including Ellen Johnson of Liberia, Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile, Mary McAleese of Ireland, Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh, and Angela Merkel of Germany. However, whether these political shifts in governance at the top actually lead to deep and transformative changes in the economic, social, and cultural marginalization faced by communities around the globe and whether the contours of gendered and racialized citizenship change remain to be seen.

These are some of the very challenges the CFS series is designed to address. The series takes as its fundamental premise the need for feminist engagement with global as well as local ideological, historical, economic, and political processes, and the urgency of transnational dialogue in building an ethical culture capable of withstanding and transforming the commodified and exploitative practices of global governance structures, culture, and economics. Individual volumes in the CFS series provide systemic and challenging interventions into the (still) largely Euro-Western feminist studies knowledge base, while simultaneously highlighting the work that can and needs to be done to envision and enact cross-cultural, multiracial feminist solidarity.

Gendered Citizenships extends, complicates, and pushes the range of scholarship in the CFS series to new levels. The volume is the result of many years of collaboration among the members of the *Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group*. While collaborative scholarship is generally devalued in the academy (except in the sciences), it remains a desired hallmark of feminist praxis committed to the production of knowledge across racial and sexual divides. Collaborative work is difficult, time consuming, and requires emotional labor that often goes unrecognized. In drawing attention to the labor involved in collaboration, and the commitment to struggling across the

borders of identities and scholarship in the production of this book, the *Working Group* provides an important model of ethical, cross-cultural scholarship.

The intellectual project of the book is framed around the crucial question of the global stakes in defining gendered citizenship, both at the level of the experience of citizenship and at the level of discourses of political rights and entitlements. Framing their project in terms of building on feminist and ethnographic approaches to citizenship, the *Working Group* advocates an approach that “places the experiences and analyses of women of color and Third World women at the center of our understanding of citizenship” (Introduction, 3). Drawing on the work of Renato Rosaldo and others, the essays in this volume “conceptualize citizenship as a contingent set of cultural processes and multilayered experiences that are constituted by the intersecting forces of race, gender, class, and transnationalism” (Introduction, 4). Thus, one of the major contributions of the volume is an understanding of citizenship that is grounded in the theorization of intersectional identities and social movements. The chapters are organized around three distinct and expansive axes: activism and organizing; gender, diaspora, and transnationalism; and narratives of belonging.

Gendered Citizenships opens up a number of important theoretical and methodological questions regarding the transnational gendering of citizenship, ethnographies of intersectionality, and collaborative feminist praxis across borders. It is a profoundly respectful engagement with the theoretical contributions of women of color and Third World women. This is the kind of scholarship that can create the ground for cross-racial/cross-national dialogue among and between feminist scholars and activists in regional as well as global contexts. The book will be of interest to a wide range of scholars, ethnographers, cultural critics, and political theorists. It deeply embodies the comparative praxis and vision of transnational knowledge production that is a hallmark of the CFS series.

CHANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY

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*Preface*¹

Our collaboration as members of the Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group over the past nine years has involved multiple forms of dialogue and interaction, from e-mails to weekend retreats and conference calls. Through countless discussions of issues that were raised in our individual projects, we began to develop a collective conceptualization of gendered citizenships that is centered in the experiences and counter-hegemonic practices of marginalized women from diverse ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds. As cultural anthropologists concerned with a broad array of issues, including gender, race, trans/nationalism, social movements, and citizenship, we share a commitment to retheorizing citizenship from an explicitly feminist ethnographic perspective. We organized a panel at the American Anthropological Association's annual meeting in 2000, where the panel's discussant, Rina Benmayor, facilitated our transformation into a feminist working group. With support from The Rockefeller Foundation, we began to meet as a working group during 2001 and organized two symposia on gender and cultural citizenship the following year. This book is the product of our multiyear collaboration and collective thinking about gender and citizenship.

When we began to work together, we were all junior scholars at various stages in our academic careers; one of us was an advanced graduate student, another was a postdoctoral scholar, and the remaining three of us were assistant professors. Given the demands and professional expectations associated with being junior scholars, particularly the emphasis on producing a scholarly monograph, several senior scholars recommended that we focus on our individual books, rather than a collaborative publication. While we each took this advice to heart, we also had a strong commitment to the working group because of the nurturing space that it provided. Through our collaboration, we developed friendships and a feeling of sisterly camaraderie that has sustained us through the joys and challenges of having and raising children, maintaining family relationships, and negotiating the tenure and promotion process.

Although collaborative work is rarely given much value within the academic reward system, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, we have found it to be essential to the development of our

individual projects, as well as to our survival as nontraditional scholars. In many ways, working collectively and collaboratively has provided us with a way to become full citizens in the academy. As women scholars of nondominant racial/ethnic and class backgrounds, we have found our collaboration has provided a safe and nurturing space that has enabled each of us to move forward professionally and pursue projects that go against the grain. In many ways, the working group has served as an intellectual home and lifeline for each of us. Indeed, our involvement in our working group has enabled many of us to finish our own book projects. Two of us now have tenure, and a third is going up for tenure as we write this preface.

Our process has been collaborative at multiple levels. Each of our individual research projects was guided by principles of feminist ethics and involved collaboration with our research “subjects” while in the field. Some of us continued to engage dialogically with the women and organizations we wrote about in the process of elaborating our ethnographic analyses once fieldwork was complete. Though this type of collaboration is increasingly the standard of good practice in feminist and other contemporary ethnographic methods, a distinguishing feature of our working group has been the deep collaboration across projects and among the five of us as anthropologists and writers, which we have worked to develop and sustain.

As we worked together, we began to realize that our joint project had firm roots in feminist anthropology and would be conditioned by our particular subjectivities as well as research interests. We also found models for working together in the Interuniversity Project on Cultural Citizenship and the Latina Feminist Group, both of which Rina Benmayor, a contributor to this book, has been involved with.² However, as geographically dispersed, junior scholars, in some cases with young families and insecure academic positions, we also had to chart our own course.

During our retreats, we read and discussed classic and emerging works on citizenship, particularly work on cultural citizenship and feminist theories of citizenship. We also placed these in dialogue with our individual works in progress in order to elaborate our distinctive collective approach. The symposia we organized convened scholars with whom we shared days of intensive engagement and dialogue between their work and our own. We have also provided one another key support to finish our respective individual book projects, out of recognition of the realities of publication demands and institutional pressures framing our early careers. In these ways, both our collective work leading up to this volume and our diverse individual

scholarly projects have been intimately interrelated and mutually influential.

From the inception of our working group, we wanted to create a collegial space that would enable intellectual production and exchange in a respectful, nonhierarchical, and noncompetitive manner.³ Our interaction with established women of color scholars, such as Rina Benmayor, Patricia Zavella, and Sonia Alvarez, who had experience with collaborative feminist scholarly projects, provided a model for our working group. As we created a scholarly space in and through the working group, we attempted to work together in ways that would enrich our individual projects, while also leading to a collective conceptual intervention in citizenship studies. This has often required that we engage in self-reflection and collective dialogue about dominant ways of being and acting in academia that emphasize the individual over the collective and final products over process. It has also caused us to be aware of the ways in which the system of competition and rewards, which characterizes the U.S. academy, undermine the establishment of vital human connections that are essential to our well-being.

Through our discussions of citizenship, we came to realize that the practice of citizenship within our group would be vital to its success. In other words, we had to live out and practice the things that we were theorizing and writing about. During our meetings, one of our group members often referred to academics as “heads on sticks,” which was a powerful reminder of the mind/body split that is often encouraged in the U.S. academy. Through developing and practicing an ethic of care within our working group, we have sought to resist the tendency to reduce ourselves and one another to solely our intellectual capacities. Instead, we have attempted to create a more holistic approach to scholarly life, which has included setting aside time at the beginning of conference calls to enquire about the well-being of colleagues, giving gifts to celebrate special occasions, and early morning jogs together during trips to attend conferences. Our ethic of care for ourselves and for each other has supported our own feelings of self-worth, enabling us to be successful in academic environments, which are too often uncaring and stressful.

A shared interest in exploring the complex relationships among “gender,” “culture,” and “citizenship” initially brought members of our working group together. In our conversations over the past few years, we have found that traditional conceptions of citizenship take on new meaning and added significance when placed in dialogue with the terms “gender” and U.S. anthropological formulations of “cultural

citizenship.” By juxtaposing these terms, we draw on feminist theories of citizenship and ethnographic approaches to cultural citizenship to understand women’s (and men’s) subjective experiences of citizenship in diverse national and transnational contexts. Our conceptualization of gender and citizenship extends beyond static definitions of rights and entitlements associated with the nation-state that obscure structural inequalities and people’s differential access to resources. In contrast, our approach foregrounds how diverse women (and men) assert collective political and cultural rights in contexts where nation-states systematically erode the rights of their second-class citizens, particularly women, people of color, the poor, immigrants, and other disenfranchised groups.⁴ Moreover, we advocate a conceptual and methodological approach to gender and citizenship that highlights how people actively and creatively participate in processes of citizenship-making.

Our collective conceptual and theoretical intervention is rooted in ethnographic research with (relatively) disenfranchised communities: Latin American, Caribbean, and African-descended women in Europe and North America, Asian and African diasporic subjects in Central and South America, and Native Americans in the United States. Our methodological strategies involved interviews, collection of oral histories, archival and historical research, and participant observation in projects that concern cultural empowerment and social movements. We worked in urban settings, in some cases as anthropologists in our “home” communities or as members of diasporic communities. We used ethnographic fieldwork to identify and understand people’s own categories of analysis relating to activism and empowerment, as well as their critiques of power and social forces. This prompted us to pay closer attention to the vernacular terms, practices, and points of relations that might not have always been clearly related in our own minds as researchers. Hence, both our methodologies and our epistemological commitment to treating our research interlocutors as theorizing agents have led us to a focus on people’s subjective experiences and understandings of citizenship.

It is precisely a commitment to building a new episteme for studying and understanding power, gender, agency, and subjectivity that brought members of our working group together and that has undergirded our theoretical and methodological intervention in citizenship studies. While our shared commitment to producing this form of scholarship fundamentally binds us together, we also acknowledge that our varied approaches to gender and citizenship have contributed to the richness of this collective project. Coming from different racial

and ethnic backgrounds and examining diverse social groups and locales, we enter this discussion from a number of perspectives and positionalities. While, in many cases, we have conducted research with communities that are in some way linked to our own “home” communities, including other diasporic and tribal communities, we have practiced the process of cultural translation by exploring similarities and differences in the experiences of our home communities and those that are represented by other group members. Our sustained effort to speak across our differences and to find links and intersections in our work has truly enriched this collective project, as well as our individual ones.

As the coeditors of this volume, we have sought to maintain a spirit of collaboration and collegiality, an effort that has often forced us to challenge dominant practices of academic recognition that promote an individualist ethos that works against and undervalues collaborative endeavors. This book represents a collective effort and, as such, we have attempted to find creative ways to share both the labor and the recognition. Each member of our working group has contributed to the process of conceptualizing this project and carrying out the intellectual and practical labor associated with editing this book. As coeditors, rather than list our names in a hierarchical manner, we decided to list our names in alphabetical order, a decision that we felt would be the most appropriate reflection of our egalitarian and collaborative efforts.

This volume includes essays written by members of our working group and scholars with whom we have been in dialogue in recent years. During 2002, we organized two symposia on gender and cultural citizenship as a way to enlarge the conversation that we were having within the working group and glean new insights from the work of other scholars. The contributors to this volume participated in these symposia, which were held at the University of California, Santa Cruz and New York University. Without such collegial dialogue and support, this anthology would never have come to fruition. We offer this book to the public in the hope that it will enhance how scholars and activists think about gendered citizenship experiences in diverse sites, including geographical sites as well as sites of political, cultural, and intellectual praxis.

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Acknowledgments

We, the Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group, want to sincerely thank the individuals and institutions that have supported the development of this book project and the progress of our working group.⁵ We want to express our deep gratitude to Rina Benmayor. Indeed, she was the one who encouraged us to become a Working Group, and discussed the tremendous importance of us, as junior scholars, supporting each other academically, emotionally, and socially, so that we could navigate and become successful in the terrain of academia. Her support has been constant, always underscoring the scholarly importance of our work, providing us with feedback on our projects, and periodically e-mailing us to prod us along. Without her nurturing guidance, this book would never have been published. It was also Rina Benmayor who advised us to apply for funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. At her suggestion, we contacted Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, former associate director of the Arts and Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation. Through his support, we were able to acquire funding for our Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group. We want to thank Tomás Ybarra-Frausto for his willingness to meet with us and for believing in this project. We also thank the Rockefeller Foundation for providing us with the funding support to organize two symposia during 2002, and three writing/discussion retreats for working group members. Without this funding, our goal to be a truly feminist collaborative, sharing the work at each and every stage, could never have been realized.

Renato Rosaldo's scholarship on Latino cultural citizenship provided important inspiration for our project, and we want to thank him for his support and encouragement of our individual projects and of the working group as a collective endeavor. We also want to acknowledge Dhooleka Raj who participated in several working group activities. We appreciate her important scholarly insights.

We held symposia at the University of California-Santa Cruz and New York University (NYU) during 2002. These symposia could not have occurred without the support that we received from faculty and staff at both campuses. We want to thank Patricia Zavella, former

director of the Chicano/Latino Research Center at UC Santa Cruz, and Evelyn Parada, assistant to the director. Along with Sonia Alvarez, both Patricia and Evelyn were instrumental in helping with planning and logistics for the symposium at UC Santa Cruz. Their willingness to help us organize this event will never be forgotten. Indeed, Patricia Zavella has been an amazing mentor, teaching through her example, about how to work collaboratively. At NYU, we must acknowledge the support we received from the Anthropology Department and Asian/Pacific/American studies program. In particular, Jack Tchen, Fred Myers, and Faye Ginsburg deserve special thanks. The staff at A/P/A were amazing; they are the ones who made the symposium run smoothly.

We want to give special thanks to all of the participants of both symposia. In addition to working group members, the UC Santa Cruz symposium participants included Sonia Alvarez, Rina Benmayor, Maylei Blackwell, Dhooleka Raj, Renato Rosaldo, Audra Simpson, Anna Tsing, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Patricia Zavella. The NYU symposium participants included, Asale Ajani, Federico Besserer, Arlene Davila, Carolyn Dinshaw, Paulla Ebron, Faye Ginsburg, Alejandro Lugo, Purnima Mankekar, Toby Miller, Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, Mary Louise Pratt, and Renato Rosaldo.

We want to extend our special thanks to the contributors to this anthology, Rina Benmayor, Federico Besserer, Maylei Blackwell, and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. We deeply appreciate their patience, diligence, and good humor. Their work has enriched and enlarged our own understandings of citizenship. For this, we are extremely grateful.

We sincerely appreciate Piya Chatterjee, who personally spoke to Chandra Mohanty, the special series editor for Palgrave, about the importance of our project. Both of them encouraged us to submit our book manuscript to become part of Palgrave's Comparative Feminist Studies series. We also want to thank our editor, Brigitte Shull, and her assistant, Lee Norton, who patiently and tirelessly worked with us to bring our book to completion. We appreciate Brigitte's willingness to support our commitment to have all members of our working group be recognized as coeditors. We also want to thank Kathy Chetkovich, who read our book introduction and gave us extensive feedback. Also, Carolina Quiroz, an undergraduate research assistant at UC Riverside, compiled our bibliography; we thank her for all her hard work.

Finally, we wish to thank our families who supported us throughout the process of completing this book. Since we formed our

Working Group almost nine years ago, our families have been by our sides providing us with strength, laughter, and inspiration. They have played a crucial role in helping us make this book become a reality.

Notes

1. By The Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group. Members listed in alphabetical order: Kia Lilly Caldwell, Kathleen Coll, Tracy Fisher, Renya Ramirez, and Lok Siu.
2. Both of these groups produced groundbreaking publications. Collaboration by members of the Interuniversity Project resulted in the publication of *Latino Cultural Citizenship* in 1997. The Latina Feminist Group published *Telling to Live* in 2001.
3. We have looked to examples of feminist collaboration, such as The Latina Feminist Group (2001) and team-authors such as Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994).
4. See Iris Marion Young (1990).
5. This book has been edited by the members of the Gender and Cultural Citizenship Working Group.