



# Feminism and the Global Justice Movement

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## ABSTRACT

The global justice movement emerged in the 1990s in connection with protests over the legitimacy of a global governance by supranational institutions. It bore a strong heritage stemming from the social movements of the 1970s, with regard to both its theoretical point of view and its militant forces, and counted feminist activists among its ranks. Although the woman question is present in the working groups, founding principles, and activist agenda of the global justice movement, feminists have nevertheless denounced the lack of a cross-cutting feminist approach in global justice programs, as well as the incomplete implementation of gender equality in its decision-making bodies.

Stretching over both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the “anti-globalization” movement, later known as the global justice movement, made itself known by challenging the legitimacy of a global governance by inter- and supranational institutions (notably the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, European Union, World Bank, G8). This wave of mobilization initially concerned essentially North America and Europe, with the counter-summits of Seattle in 1999 and Prague in 2000, as well as Göteborg and Genoa in 2001. Beyond its dimension of protest, the global justice movement also organized local, national, and international meetings of militants in the form of “Social Forums.” A movement of movements, the global justice movement brings together a large number of organizations (non-profit, political, religious...) with diverse allegiances, along with isolated individuals.

The multiplicity of global justice demands is a reflection of this highly diverse movement. Beyond contesting the legitimacy of supranational bodies, the global justice movement has other demands: the taxation of speculative financial flows, environmental protection, defence of vulnerable populations (the homeless, jobless, landless, undocumented, etc.), the establishment of more equitable North/South relations, along with more revolutionary and anticapitalist demands. One can discern in this list of demands a line of descent stretching back to the mobilizations of the 1970s (Third World, environmental, pacifist, revolutionary, and feminist movements, among others). This heritage is accompanied by the active presence of militants over the age of 60 in the ranks of the global justice movement, joined by a young generation of militants (18-35 years old), who were often previously engaged in diverse movements (of the Left or the extreme Left, environmentalist, anarchist, defending the vulnerable, etc.). The great diversity and international nature of the movement raises the issue, on the one hand, of whether questions of gender are handled uniformly and in a cross-cutting manner, especially on the European level, and on the other whether the influence of the two most represented generations (the young and the over

sixty) in the movement impacts the approach to gender social relations in the movement.

Feminism's role in the global justice movement can be seen on different levels. It can firstly be seen in the demands and actions of activist groups: for instance, the leading organization—ATTAC—dedicated one of its working groups to the question of women in Germany (which it renamed *Feminist-Attac* during the 2000s) and of “gender” in France. ATTAC also takes up other demands (which are not unique to the global justice movement) such as recognizing domestic work, improving the conditions of women's retirement, or the status of women in countries of the Global South. National and worldwide global justice forums have also dedicated seminars, round tables, and plenary sessions to the woman question.

The movement's attachment to feminism can also be measured by the number of women present in influential positions, as well as by its practices and cooperation with pre- or coexisting feminist movements (notably the *Mouvement français pour le planning familial* [French network for family planning] and the *Association des femmes solidaires* [Women's Solidarity Association]). The global justice movement on the whole reserves a certain role for women among its “major figures,” including Aminata Traoré, Vandana Shiva, and Starhawk, among others. The role of spokespersons and influential women varies according to the country, as the global justice movement—which exhibits transnationality and unity—in reality consists more of a coalition of nationally rooted global justice movements. National activist traditions thus have an influence on the level of gender equality in the practices of the global justice movement. This can notably be seen in comparing French structures (inherited from the institutionalized Left) and German ones (inspired by “new social movements”): ATTAC-Germany is more active on the question, both with regard to the role given to women in positions of visibility or “power,” as well as the importance given to questions of gender. ATTAC-France, on the other hand, has often been criticized for the patriarchal spirit of some of its founders, and for the difficulty for women to impose their views within it.

The role of women in the life of the global justice movement had concrete effects beginning in 2003. The organization of an important international global justice counter-summit at Évian and Geneva in opposition to the G8 gave rise to attitudes that were deemed sexist by a certain number of French women (invective during meetings, distribution of assignments to the disfavour of women, etc.). Female global justice militants subsequently decided to organize a women-only camp within the counter-summit itself in Annemasse. This alternative camp mobilized only about thirty women (as opposed to approximately 10,000 in other camps), essentially Francophones and representatives of third-wave feminism, but attracted a more substantial female audience during its debates. Holding this woman-only camp (called G-Point) triggered strong hostility in neighbouring militant circles: men openly urinated around the camp, there was constant scorn for three days and, on one occasion, even physical violence. This tense situation prompted female militants to go beyond the standard feminist demands of the global justice movement (denunciation of the oppression of women) in order to point the finger at ambient sexism: this was done, for instance, by disturbing expressions of masculinity in mixed camps (notably during a “pogo” dance that was part of a concert by a group considered to be sexist), or by waving a banner during a joint demonstration bearing the slogan “Who washes José Bové's socks?” in reference to one of the central figures of the global justice movement.

Finally, the World March of Women—a women's movement that appeared in 2000—has been present during all World Social Forums, and also some counter-summits. The global justice movement and the World March of Women, which developed simultaneously, agree upon a number of demands. This connection does not prevent the feminists in the movement from regularly denouncing the domination of older white men speaking at many European global justice meetings, whether it be during the militant counter-summits or during more formal meetings (forums, conferences). Meetings specially dedicated to the question of women, gender, and sexuality were organized beginning in 2003 on the margins of Social Forums, in response to the deficient consideration given to the oppression of women, gays, and transgender people in the global justice movement, and in an effort to make the struggle against this oppression a more central issue of dissent.

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