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Women

# A Women's Strike Organizer on Feminism for the 99 Percent

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## **Description:**

"Women are the owners of the factories of humanity: We just need to raise awareness to take over our own power," says feminist labor organizer, activist, and professor Cecilia Palmeiro.

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**"Women are the owners of the factories of humanity: We just need to raise awareness to take over our own power," says feminist labor organizer, activist, and professor Cecilia Palmeiro.**

Cecilia Palmeiro is a professor of Latin American literature and queer theory at New York University Buenos Aires. She is also a longterm member of Ni una menos, the transnational Latin American feminist movement that started in Argentina.

This past March, Palmeiro helped organize the [International Women's Strike](#). The strike, dubbed "feminism for the 99 percent," was intended to represent the women ignored by "lean-in feminism" such as women working in informal labor markets.

The international strike happened on March 8, not long after the Polish Women's Strike and the South Korean Women's strike. Since then, "[we've] started to weave a new internationalism based on sorority and solidarity," Palmeiro said, "which open a new political perspective and the possibility of unexpected alliances.

"As the world made by men for men is collapsing because of its own contradictions, a new world is being dreamed of and created," she added.

Broadly asked Palmeiro about her year of organizing, how global networks of feminist resistance are strengthening and evolving, and what she plans for next year's international strike.

### **Looking back as we enter the end of the year, what did 2017 mean to you?**

This year, 2017, is a remarkable key date in the history of feminism and the politics of desire. For the first time, women and feminized bodies of 55 countries organized together to strike against patriarchal and colonial forms of exploitation. This was the biggest and most radical process we have ever experienced collectively.

The year opened with another historic event: the Women's March in the US, which happened in more than 600 cities. But these events are processes, they don't start and end on a determined date.

After the strike, we have organized a network of feminist politics. We have situated assemblies in places of conflict such as occupied factories, indigenous territories in dispute; in places where there are political prisoners, in high schools resisting the education reform. Not only have we been able to identify the plot of machista violence, but also to link struggles over land, labor, human rights, from a feminist perspective.

This is the year of the feminist tide, as we call the new collective subject that women of the world are creating in these oceanic protests that traverse borders, languages, and identities. The tide is intersectional, horizontal, transversal, global: We have constituted ourselves as a revolutionary subject, yet our revolution cannot be captured in the traditional frames of representative democracy, although it appears and floods everywhere. The tide permeates artistic languages, intervenes in political parties, imposes agenda within trade unions, changes the relations of production in factories and in the informal economy, fuels disputes over power in all spheres of life. It blooms in the street protests and exploits in the households and in beds. This is an existential revolution, and we are organizing ourselves to change it all.

**You helped organize the Women's Strike in your community. After the strike ended, how did you feel?**

By creating empathy between all the feminized bodies as we all suffer machista violence, from micromachismo to femicide, we have strengthened international and intersectional sorority as a source of power and social transformation. Instead of perceiving other women as competitors (as patriarchy wants), we identify with their struggles. We share the causes, because violence affects us all in different ways, but the root is the same. This is an effect of the organization of the international strike, that is not just an event but a creative process in which we map the global disobediences and resistances, we articulate concepts and struggles, we visibilize forms of exploitation and extractivism, and we construct a radical feminist perspective that is able to address this critical moment of humanity that threatens the very continuity of life on this planet. We have developed a feminist ethics of life and not of sacrifice, and found new conceptual tools to confront the gendered, sexuated, and racialized international division of labor.

Everybody can make a difference. Nothing is too small for the feminist revolution. We are creating a new power and we need to feed the tide in every possible way.

**Organizing for next year's Women's Strike is already underway for Ni una menos. What do you hope this next strike will bring?**

Next year, 2018, will find us with our networks already developed and tested. We were successful in organizing the first International Women's Strike as a rehearsal of the world to come, of the world we want to live in. Striking allowed us to denaturalize labor exploitation and extractivism of our bodies and territories. This year, the strike will be organized around the question: "How do women strike?"

Because for us, labor is not only the work we do in the formal market. Most women in the world don't have the privilege of a waged job. Housewives, unemployed women, students, retired women, workers of the informal economy are the majority of the female population. So our strike is a creative tool. We have first to make visible how we work. We need to perceive the tasks that are imposed over us and we "naturally" do as labor. Caregiving, reproductive and domestic labor need to be identified as such, with or without love. And then the question of how to strike gives us tools to take over the control of our lives, to disobey and create new forms of living. Because, with our devalued labor in the market and our not-recognized labor at home, women of the world support capitalism. Once we realize our position in the productive process, we have the power of changing the world.

**You've said that the Ni una menos movement has developed a lot since this March. In what ways has Ni una menos developed and how do you hope that expands?**

Since the strike, we have been networking and connecting different fronts of struggle, specifically in Latin America in the context of a conservative restoration. We have focused on issues of labor, exploitation, and extractivism. Our bodies and our territories are in danger because of this new wave of intense neoliberalism. The conflicts over the common property are at stake: The lands that are being appropriated by transnational companies displacing peasants and indigenous [people] (such is the case of Benetton in Patagonia); the state that is being dismantled, leaving women with no access to education, healthcare, or protection; and our bodies are taken as plunder of conquest, as we are exploited and disciplined. By connecting perspectives such as indigenous feminism with black feminism, migrant feminism, queer feminism, and popular feminism, we made alliances and enlightened the intersection of violences as well as featured possible strategies of resistance. That is why our movement has been described as a fourth wave of feminism or feminism of the 99 percent.

We were able to connect and deepen the mutual understanding of issues such as the life-endangering

agro-business, the defense of Mother Earth as a source of life, the defense of our rights and autonomy (considering reproductive rights as a main issue of public health) in the frame of anti-colonial and anti-neoliberal struggles. Since the strike, all sorts of feminist assemblies have proliferated. Women are organizing themselves at all levels from the academia to the slums, from political parties to high schools in an exercise of direct democracy and collective reconstruction of the social tissue. We have creatively questioned the pharmaceutical and financial control over our existences through direct action. We criticized the neoliberal appropriation of our demands. Our hope is that feminism can be the way out of this catastrophe.

### **Has the past year given you frustration? Hope?**

This year has been as exciting as frustrating. At the level of the social landscape, it has been devastating. Poverty and violence have spread over the world. Conflicts have arisen at all scales, from the threat of a global war to the increase on femicide rates. Neoliberal policies and the infinite greed of the one percent ruling elites, with the complicity of the governments, are responsible for this crisis of humanity. Our hope is that more than half of the world population can agree to end this madness. Women are the owners of the factories of humanity: We just need to raise awareness to take over our own power.

### **Do you have any advice for anyone who finds themselves tired or beaten down from fighting? How do we keep pushing forward?**

Everyday, we all feel frustration and despair as we see our rights and liberties limited more and more. But we always need to bear in mind that we construct the world we live in, so we can make it different, starting at the micro-political level, or the politics of everyday life. Everybody can make a difference. Nothing is too small for the feminist revolution. We are creating a new power and we need to feed the tide in every possible way. To know that one is being part of something bigger than oneself is already comforting and stimulating. We should not underestimate the role of affects and creativity in the revolutionary process.

### **Moving forward into 2018, what initiatives do you hold most important? What do you hope to accomplish?**

Besides the collective Ni una menos, some of us, together with other compañeras, have just founded the Permanent Assembly of Women Art Workers and have issued a [Declaration of Commitment of Feminist Artistic Practices](#). Our first goal is to provide creative perspectives on how to strike and to denaturalize and deconstruct patriarchy within the art world. It is of vital importance that female sensitivities and world views are promoted and not censored and that we work against inequity in every sphere.

With Ni una menos, our main plan for 2018 is the organization of the second International Women's Strike, which is already a huge campaign. After that, we aim to consolidate more alliances and imagine new languages for the social protest and the construction of new forms of community. We hope to experiment with new forms of organization and continue to expand our horizons.

As the world made by men for men is collapsing because of its own contradictions, a new world is being dreamed of and created. We are up and coming.

[Broadly](#)

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