

SPAIN: FEMINIST INTELLIGENCE VS THE LORDS OF DARKNESS!

by michelle renyé for mujerpalabra.net (March 2014)

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Women decide, the State guarantees, society respects& the Catholic Church does not intervene!

The situation of women's reproductive and sexual rights in a certain society is one of the clearest indicators of how well a certain society has understood the idea of human rights. Since the end of the dictatorship (roughly 1976), the feminist movement has been struggling for the decriminalization of the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (VIP) and closely related issues, like sexual education in public secondary education and in Family Planning Centers, free contraceptives, and VIP in our outstanding (and highly threatened today) public healthcare system, to put an end to ignoring women's fundamental right to their own bodies and lifestyles.

When the Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE, was in office and had the majority, two laws for the VIP were passed, the 1985 law, restrictive but which decriminalized VIP in three cases: when the pregnancy was threatening for the mother's life, physical or mental health; malformation, and rape; and the 2010 law, or Law on Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy, more progressist (25 years later!) but much criticized because it failed to decriminalize VIP. In 1985, the Right-wing Popular Party (PP) had filed an appeal of unconstitutionality against this law based on Article 15, "Everyone has the right to life and to physical and moral integrity, and may under no circumstances be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment" (apparently, except women) of the 1978 Spanish Constitution. The Constitutional Court sentenced that the unborn could not be considered more important than an actual human being's life. In 2010, however, the PP filed the same appeal again (still unresolved), while its bases started a campaign for the restoration of the traditional social and family order -- an ultra Catholic stance for most believers today, who understand sex is not only for reproduction and that forcing women to carry out a pregnancy is torture.

Under PSOE Zapatero's administration (2004-2011), the most women- and LGBTI-friendly legal measures were passed: for the protection of women from "gender violence" (2004, rather ineffective but it included the enlightening term "gender violence"), to legalize same-sex marriage and adoption (2005), for democratizing gender identity and allow transgender persons to register under their preferred sex in public documents (2007), to achieve true equality including women's right to being named (2007)... At the same time, the European Council was demanding the Catholic church was made to pay VAT tax, like everybody else. (The Catholic church in Spain has privileges which shock a democratic mind.) The political ultra-Catholic extreme-right were scandalized. And because the Spanish Transition allowed them to keep posts of power --mistaking injustice with reconciliation -- their religious dogmas can interfere in a democratic secular State, where the population knows that human rights are better for the organization of society than dogmas of faith.

Last December 2013, PP voted solo in Congress to pass the Draft Bill for the Protection of the Life of the Unborn [literally, the One Being Conceived] and of the Rights of the Pregnant Woman, and this has taken Spanish society back to threatening women's lives and attacking

their freedom to choose whether they want to be mothers or not. Even Saint Thomas of Aquino stated the unborn could not have a soul till born!

Voluntary Interruptions of Pregnancies (and prospective law)

Women mostly take care of not getting pregnant. However, something goes wrong, or they are forced in many different ways, from prosecutable open rape cases to marital abuse or drunk or angry sexist boyfriends... After the terrifying attacks to women and clinics and demonstrations by "pro-life" supporters in 2008 and 2009, we have a cartoon depicting a man buttoning his pants and telling a woman who is crying, "Go ahead, report to the police. I'll do so too and your prison sentence will be longer than mine, bitch."

If at the end of the 1970s, in the first years of democracy, 300,000 women had to interrupt their pregnancies, 3,000 died as a result of clandestine abortions and 18,000 managed to have a safe non-clandestine operation in London, today 100,000 women have to interrupt their pregnancies --one of the lowest rates in Europe. According to the Association of Credited Abortion Clinics (2012), a 95,7% states the pregnancy was unintended and they do not want to become mothers then. This includes a 30,2% that says they can't have a child for economic reasons (unemployment mostly).

Women interrupt their pregnancies as soon as they can. The 97,7% of the VIPs are carried out in the first 14 weeks (fertilization of the egg and embryonic development stages). A 53,98% interrupts fertilization in the first seven weeks with a pill. The future law demands various reports and permissions, and this paperwork will take time and will threaten the woman's health. A 4,3% initially wants to get pregnant, but something goes wrong. The upcoming PP law will force them to continue with their pregnancy, even if the fetus has severe malformation! The 60% of women requesting VIP are 18-30 years old. 15-year-olds represent the 1% and 16-17-year-olds the 4%. The 87% of the under-aged inform their parents because they need their support, but the remaining 13% cannot do that for sad or terrifying reasons, like having no parents, parents who abandoned them, are in prison or abroad, who mistreat them and would kill them if they knew... These are the girls that were literally saved by the 2010 law. However, PP party members called this measure "the atrocity of depriving" girls under 18 from the company of their parents/tutors at a time when they have to make a dramatic decision (!). To make matters worse, every single woman will need to be authorized by two psychiatrists apart from her own doctor, and doctors are encouraged to deny their services! (conscientious objection to VIP).

Feminist social commitment and creativity

After the defense of women's right to abortion in 1936 led by anarchist spokespeople at the Parliament of the Segunda República, when abortion was finally legalized for the first (and only) time, we had to wait until 1976 to re-start non-clandestine feminist struggle. One of the most impressive actions then were Self-accusations -- women made a public statement of having had an abortion, an action considered a crime in the Penal Code. They did this to fight for their rights and also to get people out of prison because women, midwives and doctors were imprisoned.

Today feminists continue combining creative actions in everyday life with the legal challenging to unfair legislation, Direct Nonviolent Action (DNVA) with initiatives to put pressure on politicians. **Since 2010 some examples are the following...**

The Train of Freedom. Les Comadres, a local group of women in Asturias, who -- since the 1980s -- had set their minds to promote feminism in society, decided to start this campaign

when the draft bill was passed in December 2013. Trains from all over the country headed for Madrid to present their statement "Because It Is My Decision" in Congress. This resulted in the largest feminist demonstration ever, with about 30,000 people coming from all the different feminisms: double militancy feminists or feminists connected to political parties, independent feminists, and the universe of groups and initiatives that exploded from these two large trends in the last decades, including cyberfeminism.

For more info, Tren de la Libertad, at <http://www.eltrendelalibertad.com/> (Dec 2013- Feb 2014)

The Register Action. Designed by visual artist Yolanda Domínguez and enthusiastically welcomed by women all over the country, since February 5th, women are going to the Chamber of Commerce of Personal Property to register the "ownership" of their bodies. "The forms presented and stamped are part of a symbolic action which aims to make this conflict visible," explains Yolanda. "The body is a territory which needs to be reconquered by women: a body which has been moulded by and for others, converted into an object, used as merchandise, assaulted, manipulated and subjected to impossible stereotypes."

For more info, check out <http://www.yolandadominguez.com/en/> (2014)

Feminist Escraches. On May 16, 2013, the Campanya pel Dret al'Avortament Lliure i Gratuït [in Catalan, Free Abortion For Free] called for a feminist "escrache" [a type of action intended to expose people who have committed crimes against humanity and are free used widely in Latin American grassroots and today very popular in Spain, especially in the Anti-evictions Movement] at the doors of the PP's headquarters in the different cities and towns, and thousands of people crowded the streets in 28 different places in defense of women's rights to a chosen motherhood and the population's sexual and reproductive rights. "El setze, setge!" [in Catalan, ¡The 16th, ambush! – both words are homophones]. "Ambushing the cuts, sexual repression, enforced maternity, the no-prevention of STD, the lack of sexual and affective education, the control of women's bodies. It is you and me and we, ALL OF US, who decide, not political or religious leaders."

For more info, Pikara Magazine, <http://www.pikaramagazine.com> (May 2013)

Women to Congress. The Platform of Women to Congress was established in 2009 and is still very active. They issue statements, manifestos, give talks, and publish information and analyses on laws and political maneuvers. They collect signatures and call for street protest support, too.

For more info, Mujeres ante el Congreso, at <http://mujeresantecongreso.org/> (2009-2014)

Staged DNVA. The Catholic Church is allowing ultra Catholics to try and re-establish an anti-women's-human-rights order. Younger women are wanting to mirror this aggression: Femen was attempting to get the message "Abortion Is Sacred" to the president of the Episcopal Conference (Feb 2014). Since 2010 women in cities have performed in or occupied church buildings with very straightforward messages, "If you invade our vaginas, we'll make love in your churches" (Dec 2013, Feb 2014).

Other creative events. In a more festive line, women are organizing street feminist cabaret, feminist weeks of action, feminist tapas, feminists celebrations of all kinds, where spreading information and ideas and DNVA are combined, the development being that we can fight for rights while developing our sense of humor because that encourages healthy chemistry in our bodies, which is also away of fighting the depression we could be developing and its harmful chemistry! (esp. since Dec 2013 on)

The 15M Violet Wave. People in 15M have been forming Las Mareas, human waves or tides lapping cities and towns, where people wear a certain color identifying one of the various kinds of demands people are making. The Violet Wave relates to feminist and LGBTI demands. People have been expressing their radical dissent with the announced new law in tens of cities, carrying for instance abortive herbs to indicate that women will have to go back to the very unsafe or ineffective methods used in the past.

For more info, 15M: Toma la plaza at <http://tomalaplaza.net> (2011-14)

International sisterhood. In the social networks people were able to learn about fifty events happening in Europe and other continents in solidarity with the defense of women's rights in Spain. Zene u Crom's action in Belgrade, Serbia, was especially close to pacifist feminists in Spain for the strong connection there has existed since the outbreak of the Balkan War in the 1990s.

For more info, check out "Convocatorias anuales" at Mujeres de Negro contra la Guerra (Madrid, Spain) <http://www.mujePalabra.net/activismo/mdnmadrid/> (February 2014)

A civilized society cannot say women need to be controlled by male leaders because they are dangerous and evil and incapable of reasoning, like tradition has taught and made women teach for centuries. Laws restricting women's right to decide on their own bodies and lives(!), far from protecting human beings, contribute to women's deaths or to forced motherhood, which goes against women's human rights. And this is the true fact: a woman who does not want to have a child will risk her life to avoid it out of a sense of responsibility both towards her own life and the child's. We need to overcome what the 18th century French revolutionaries did not understand when they wrote the Declaration of Men's Rights and guillotined the "female comrades" who demanded women also have rights! We are in the 21st century now and our focus should be respecting human beings, and making sure that leaders stop all the actual torturing and killing, all the misery and suffering that their wars in name of fatherlands, religions, power and money create on this planet.

We human beings are deeply concerned with life on this planet.