



CALL FOR PAPERS

Demeter Press

Seeking submission for an edited collection entitled:

Maternal Activisms (Working Title)

Editor: Reena Shadaan

Within social movement literature, it has been observed in both historic accounts and present-day manifestations that a variety of movements and sub-sections of movements are sustained by the labour of persons who identify as mothers. Examples of maternal activism are diverse – from the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, who have sought justice in response to the disappearances of their children in Argentina’s “Dirty War,” to the Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA), who mobilized in response to environmental racism. These activists utilize maternal frames to link their activism to the health and well-being of their children, families, and wider communities. Some scholars critique the use of maternal frames, arguing that it is essentialist, conservative, and thereby fundamentally opposed to the long-term interests of mother-activists. Others see the feminist potential of maternal activism. As Andrea O’Reilly has noted in *21st Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency*, “... maternal activism, in rendering the personal political, blurring the boundaries between the private and the public, and in inverting traditional gender roles, both disrupts and dislodges the gender essentialism... that grounds and structures modern patriarchy.” (p. 24).

While both perspectives offer vital arguments, the framing of maternal activism often rests upon a definition of motherhood that reflects the *patriarchal institution of motherhood* (Rich) or *normative motherhood* (O’Reilly). Approaching maternal activism from this lens erases the diversity of meanings and practices that underlie mothering in different contexts. In fact, many scholars have pointed to the distinct conceptualizations of mothering in Black communities, Indigenous nations, and non-Black communities of colour. These scholars point to settler-colonialism, imperialism, racial oppression, and capitalist exploitation – not just heteropatriarchy – as fundamental to understanding motherhood, and affirm that mothering is political labour. In fact, scholars, activists, and advocates of reproductive justice have long pointed to the oppression faced by racialized and Indigenous mothers, as well as mothers with disabilities – from sterilization abuse, to systematic child removal, both of which are rooted in the vilification of these mothers in the white supremacist, ableist, settler-colonial gaze.

This volume aims to explore these themes and more to expand the discussions on maternal activism within social movement scholarship. Questions for consideration include, but are not limited to: What are the diverse meanings of “mother” and “mothering” that underlie expressions of activism? Who can engage in maternal activism? Who or what can be mothered? Literature on maternal activism often rests upon an assumption that mothering is gendered labour, carried out by women. This is rooted in the feminization of care labour. However, can mothering and maternal activism transcend gendered connotations – or do we require different terminology? Moreover, how do we conceptualize maternal activism in a context of reproductive injustice? Contrary to the relegation of maternal activism as essentialist and conservative, in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality and Activism*, Rachel Stein notes that for communities that have been prevented from parenting, “... a “politics of care”—in which mothers and others strive for cultural survival by working to assure the viability of future generations—strikes me as a radical politics, rather than a reactionary one.” (p. 16). This is a fundamental theme throughout the ground-breaking, *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (Gumbs, Williams, and Martens), where the editors and contributors centre the radical potential of mothering amidst oppression – to facilitate transformation and justice. How do we navigate the integral role of mothers in ensuring the survival of their children amidst oppression (through everyday acts, and formal activism), and the feminization of this labour – a central concern for those critical of maternal activism? To contribute to the discussion on these and other pertinent themes and questions, this collection invites academic, activist-oriented, personal, and creative submissions.

Submission Guidelines:

For articles: Send an abstract of 250-500 words, and a biography of up to 100 words by December 5, 2017.

For visual art: Send a description of the intended work, and a biography of up to 100 words by December 5, 2017

To propose other mediums, please do not hesitate to contact the editor.

Deadline for full articles: August 1st, 2018

Articles submissions must be 15 - 18 pages long (including references and endnotes), and adhere to MLA guidelines.

Visual art submissions must be in jpeg or png format

Please send all inquiries, abstracts, and submissions to the editor, Reena Shadaan at reenas@yorku.ca

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