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The global struggle against the war on women

- Features - Feminism -

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The following speeches were presented at a panel discussion, “The Global Struggle against the War on Women,” at the 2018 Socialism Conference in Chicago. The audio of the panel is available to download at WeAreMany.org.

Deepa Kumar is an associate professor of Media Studies and Middle East Studies at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Haymarket Books, 2012).

This is a terrific time to be having this panel because the #MeToo movement, like the “SlutWalk” movement before it, has sparked an international conversation around sexual violence.

I was in India in May, visiting family, and I was struck by how many people want to talk about sexual violence. This is a new development. It wasn't always something to be openly talked about. If you've seen the movie *Monsoon Wedding*, it's something to be hidden, repressed, denied even, but not something to be discussed, analyzed, and fought against. Of course this isn't new, this is something that has been going on since 2012 when a young woman by the name of Jyoti Singh was gang-raped and died of the horrible torture inflicted upon her. What you saw after this was a massive rise in protest around rape and sexual violence in India.

Most recently, what brought this issue back again into the news was the murder of an eight-year-old Kashmir girl, Asifa Bano, who was brutally gang-raped and murdered. The #MeToo campaign along with the murder of Bano is what prompted the magazine *India Today* (roughly equivalent to *Time* magazine) to run a cover story on sexual violence against children and the men who are behind it. Of course the article doesn't go into the political nature of this hideous crime: the fact that the rapists were Hindu government and police officials who targeted Asifa as a way to get the Muslim community she was a part of to move away from the area where the horrific incident happened, or the fact that Kashmir is under Indian occupation, or that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi stayed silent at first because, after all, it was a Muslim girl who was the victim. So there is no discussion of occupation, racism, and right-wing nationalism and misogyny. Despite these absences, it was nevertheless significant that the premier magazine in India saw fit to highlight the scope and scale of violence against girls.

As I was reading this article on the plane back to the States, an announcement was made accompanied by a video explaining that British Airways was collecting money to save children around the world. We were asked to donate our spare change to help the poor children in the Global South live better lives; many passengers did actually fill the packet provided. This example typifies the ruse, the trick that sustains an unpalatable system like neoliberalism. That is, if you look at the level of devastation and poverty created during this era of neoliberal capitalism over the last forty years or so, which is responsible for the kind of problems articulated in the British Airways video and the problems of violence against women and girls as *India Today* outlines, then the solutions presented are really shallow and self-serving. At the end of the day, it makes British Airways look good and it presents the market as the solution to precisely the problems created by the market. So in my talk today, I want to focus on how not to fight the global war on women and to make a case for why we should reject the dominant logic of neoliberal imperial feminism.

First, what is imperial feminism? Imperial feminism is a false feminism. It is the use of women's rights and women's liberation to advance empire. It has its origins in the period of the European colonization of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and was a means of justifying colonialism. Today's imperial feminism has a lot in common with its nineteenth-century predecessor, but it is also something new. And that's what I want to spend the bulk of my time on.

What it shares with its predecessor is an obsession with “rescuing” women in the Global South through wars and

occupations. This was one of the justifications for the US/NATO war and occupation of Afghanistan. As people might remember, the not-exactly-feminist president George W. Bush suddenly began to give a damn about women's suffering in Afghanistan. I think it became clear to most of us on the left that this was a sham that gave ideological cover to war in that country. But what I want to argue is that we shouldn't limit our understanding of imperial feminism simply to the use of war to supposedly liberate women in the Global South, but to actually expand that to look at how neoliberalism reproduces itself, both ideologically and materially, through a set of practices and an ideology which I'm calling neoliberal imperial feminism.

There are certain characteristics of neoliberal imperial feminism that are important to flesh out. First and foremost, it's about the market. The market has become the key means to supposedly liberate women. Let me give you an example: in order to "liberate" Afghan women, a campaign called "Beauty without Borders" sponsored by Revlon, L'Oreal, and other cosmetic companies set out to train women to become beauticians and open beauty salons. I'm not even going to go into the idiocy or sexism of such a campaign, but will just say that the logic here is that by becoming entrepreneurs women can liberate themselves. It is the capitalist, neoliberal market and an entrepreneurial approach that will set women free. These sorts of "empowerment" campaigns are targeted at women around the world and what we are asked to do here in the West is contribute funds. Not build grassroots movements in solidarity, but go shopping. The narrative is that women in the West aren't oppressed, never mind the #MeToo movement. And it has now become the new "white women's burden" to give money to save women in the Global South. In her book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Lila Abu-Lughod notes:

The One in Three Women Global Campaign to raise awareness around violence against women asks that you buy their cards, charms, and dog tags. Peacekeeper Cause-Metics asks you to support women's causes by purchasing their lipstick and nail polish. Peacekeeper Cause-Metics gives a fraction of its proceeds to fight honor crimes and other forms of cultural violence against women associated with the Muslim world. Ayaan Hirsi Ali's foundation is only the most recent to pick up this commercialization of women's rights, inviting us to get our own high-quality "Honour" tote bag, for a donation.

Today, the way to build solidarity with women around the world has become marketized and directed towards shopping and charity if you live in the West, and "upliftment" through entrepreneurialism if you live in the Global South.

This brings me to the second aspect of neoliberal imperial feminism: the ways in which governments have appropriated feminism into a system where the crisis of care (care for children, care for the elderly, care for the sick) caused by neoliberal attacks on welfare and social services are met primarily by migrant non-Western women. Women from North Africa, the Middle East and so on, who are moving into various European countries who meet this need. Sara Farris refers to this phenomenon as "femonationalism." In her book *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* she argues that migrant women in Europe, particularly non-Western migrant women, have been channeled into care work and domestic work as a means of "liberating" them. As Western Europe has privatized welfare services in the neoliberal era and is facing a growing elderly population with no one to care for them, migrant women have been pushed into tasks like housekeeping, childcare, and caregiving for the sick and elderly. Insidiously this happens through what are called "civic integration programs" where migrant women are taught that one of the pillars of the Western European nations is respect for women's rights and the ability for women to work outside the home. But what kind of work are these women given? Typically low paying domestic and precarious work that serves to meet the social reproductive needs of Western European nations rather than liberate these women in any way.

The final aspect of neoliberal imperial feminism that I will talk about is the role played by NGOs in defusing women's movements. We have seen a massive growth in NGOs from the 1980s to the present that have stepped in to offer critical social services axed in the neoliberal era. Today, it would not be an exaggeration to say that NGOs have become crucial players in national and global politics, especially on questions related to women's welfare and rights.

By 2000 they were disbursing between twelve and fifteen billion dollars. By 2012, in some parts of the world, the NGO sector had become more powerful than the state. Sabine Lang writes about the “NGO-ization of feminism,” and what she means by this is not only the massive growth of feminist NGOs over the 1990s and 2000s, but also a process whereby NGOs have co-opted feminist activism and shifted from participation in political/social movements to advocacy and action in and through feminist NGOs. Now, I don’t mean to have a blanket statement against all NGOs, this is not all bad. Feminist scholars have pointed out that in regions where there is little or no social support, NGOs provide badly needed services and have been advocates for women’s rights. NGOs aren’t a monolith; there certainly are some NGOs doing good work in many parts of the world. But it is also important to note that the best-funded NGOs, and therefore the most powerful NGOs, are tied to all sorts of corporations and international agencies for their funding, and therefore benefit the people who actually sponsor them. This is why it’s become a liberal, rights-based approach to entrepreneurship and development, which does nothing to address the structural issues or imperialism.

To give an example, in Gaza and the West Bank there has been a massive increase in the number of NGOs since the 1990s, but the result of this has been to demobilize the Palestinian women’s movement, which used to be political, activist, and grassroots. Additionally, various human-rights activists and researchers have complained that in the work they have done documenting the impact on women of the Israeli occupation and its siege of Gaza, the context of occupation miraculously disappears from the final reports produced by groups like Human Rights Watch. The result is that the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which is an important and foundational context for the oppressive conditions that Palestinian women live under, is erased from the picture. In this way, the structuring reality of occupation and empire is removed, which then makes it possible to offer limited individualistic solutions that don’t challenge the underlying causes. To make matters worse, social movements are demobilized and the best activists are sucked into NGOs.

I’ve laid out ways in which neoliberal imperial feminism manifests itself in the twenty-first century, but it is by no means an exhaustive list. The argument that I have tried to lay out is that neoliberal feminism is not simply as an ideology to justify war and occupation but is a set of practices that help to sustain and reproduce neoliberalism and to demobilize feminist social movements.

In opposition to this we need to build transnational feminist movements from below that bypass the market and begin to not only fight back against the depredations of neoliberalism, but also start to imagine a socialist society where the needs of the majority take the place of the profit-oriented society we live in today and where we don’t have to keep fighting these struggles again and again.

Glória Trogo is a Brazilian activist based in Belo Horizonte, a member of Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL), part of Resistencia, feminist and socialist.

The subject of this session uses the expression “the war on women.” So I want to start by talking about the execution that became a symbol of this struggle, the murder of Marielle Franco. She was a councilor in Rio de Janeiro. She was a member of our party, the PSOL. She was a Black woman. Bisexual. A socialist. Marielle was from the favela Maré Complex, a big slum in Rio de Janeiro. She was brutally executed. Her death is an expression of our struggle in many ways. She became a councilor only two years ago in an electoral phenomenon that reflected the struggles of oppressed people like her. The PSOL candidates received the most votes in every important city in 2017. All Black women.

The feminist movement in Brazil does not have an organic national organization. It is composed of regional and local movements. A map of different organizations shows that there are more than 200 different [women’s] groups in the country. Women and other oppressed people are at the frontlines of struggle in Brazil, and, I think, in the rest of the world, too. With the ruling-class offensive against the working class, we are seeing the emergence of mass

democratic struggles that gain support from many thousands of people.

The historic crisis that has been taking place in capitalism since 2008 highlights deep contradictions that the ruling class can no longer resolve without imposing extreme levels of exploitation. The growth of the extreme right-wing movements, the growth of racist agendas, against immigrants, against reproductive rights, against LGBT people, misogyny—these kinds of politics and politicians have increased in this period. The main players of the parliamentary coup are those parties of the traditional right with a historical position against women. They think the state should not interfere in the economy, so they advocate, for example, for the privatization of the economy, but they want to intervene in women's bodies. So they say the Brazilian gas company Petrobras should be privatized, that the government should have nothing to do with it. But our bodies should be regulated by the state. Contrary to the recent victory of women in Argentina, in Brazil today there are more than six bills being put forward that attack women's reproductive rights. [1] There is no legalization of abortion in Brazil, it is a crime. But that isn't enough for the right. Now they want to outlaw abortion also in the case of rape, too. This is the demand of the extreme right today.

But there is also struggle and resistance on our side. Two months ago there was an important wave of demonstrations of the women's movement against Eduardo Cunha, a traditional right-wing politician in Brazil. The catalyst for these demonstrations was a case that took place in Rio one year ago, after a woman was raped by five men. Everybody went to the streets to protest Cunha because he was the main author of the bill being put forward to criminalize abortion even in the case of rape. He's the same one who put forward the impeachment of [former president] Dilma Rousseff in Congress. He was the president of Congress and the author of this bill. Just to understand who the people pushing this are.

Another important moment [for the feminist resistance] was the 8M marches [March 8, International Women's Day] in 2017. These demonstrations were very big and were preparation for a very important moment of workers' struggle and resistance. 8M was an expression of the movement in the working class. Everyone saw it and knew that something was different, and it ended up developing into a general strike at the end of April.

There is a new reality in social movements in Brazil, a profound change. All women consider themselves feminists today. There is an awakening of this consciousness in a mass number of women, including women who aren't socialists or activists or union activists. Marxists have a view of the relationship between oppression and exploitation. We know that both are related to the capitalist system and are not an individual problem. But oppression is also expressed in many ways inside the working class. It is different than exploitation, which is always between opposite classes. Oppression can happen within the working class. Because of this, movements against oppression are open to various class influences. This is true inside the feminist movement. Bourgeois politics of oppression try to convince people that the problem is individuals. And if that's how you see the problem, then your tactic will be to fight between individuals instead of fighting between classes. It's a tactic that divides the working class and ignores the role of the state and the ruling class. This is a very powerful view in the movement right now.

The Marxist view is the minority right now in the movement. And unfortunately, the identity politics and postmodern influences are stronger inside the left than the socialist left is. Those ideas are influencing the feminist movement more today than socialist politics are. We believe there is a crisis of strategy in the movement today. Because if you're fighting against someone on your side and you don't know the enemy, it makes it impossible to win. We think this is the time to study, to learn and unite against sexism, chauvinism—in society at large, but also inside the working class. If we don't fight, we leave it to the dominant ideas to explain the dynamics between individuals. We need to give practical examples to show our Marxist view of how to organize in a way that sees the problem of oppression and exploitation as being linked and that the problem is the capitalist system, not other individuals.

Natalia Tylim is a socialist and activist based in New York City, and a member of the International Socialist

Organization.

I don't live in Argentina. I have family there and was lucky enough to visit recently. But the beauty of being an internationalist is that a victory for abortion rights in Argentina is a victory for us here in the United States.

Legally speaking, there is much more access to abortion in the United States than in Latin America, where 97 percent of women live under prohibitively restrictive abortion laws. But something is starting to change qualitatively in Argentina. On June 14, the lower house of Argentina's congress passed a bill legalizing abortion before fourteen weeks in a close vote after deliberating for twenty-two hours. The existing regulation allows abortion only in extreme circumstances, but even when those circumstances arise, too much discretion is left up to individual doctors and a bureaucratic system that often makes it impossible to obtain. The senate will vote on whether to approve this bill on August 8. [2]. But I think we should say, definitively, that whether or not it passes the senate, something has changed that can't be unchanged. The legislative sessions themselves are hard-won advances for women's rights activists.

This is the seventh such bill that has been introduced to the congress in the last thirteen years. What makes this one different? There has been a growing movement around women's rights that has become significantly more radical in the most recent period. Since 1986, there has been an annual feminist event, the National Women's Gathering, that has grown every year, numbering 60,000–80,000 in recent years. In 2001, the piquetero movement brought with it a flowering of new organizing, and out of the conference that year, the National Campaign for Abortion Rights was launched. Two years later, this culminated in a coalition of 300 organizations centered on the demands: sexual education to decide, contraceptives to avoid pregnancy, legal abortion not to die.

Years ago, activists launched a massive propaganda campaign highlighting the fact that abortions occur whether or not they are legal and reshaping the stakes to be about women's lives and health. In Argentina, statistics show that about 40 percent of pregnancies in the country are terminated (about 500,000 annually). The fact that these abortions are happening extra-legally makes them the top cause of maternal mortality (which is true in every country where abortion is restricted). This campaign aimed to frame the question as one about a public health crisis, and reframe the debate away from being about entrenched Catholic notions of when life begins. The Catholic right has long argued that abortion is even worse than pedophilia or dictatorship, something that Argentines know the horrors of very well.

In the last few years, abortion has been posed even more radically as a fundamental question of a woman controlling her own body and life. Along with the growth of existing feminist organizations, there has been another important dynamic playing out that has changed the terms of the discussion. Combine all those unnecessary deaths due to lack of access to abortion with the staggering statistic that a woman is killed every thirty-six hours by her partner or husband in Argentina. This has produced an incredible movement against femicide, with the slogan "Ni Una Menos" (Not One Woman Less), where mass protests erupt at the announcement of new murders. The insistence that a woman is a full human being who doesn't belong to her partner, who has a right to her life and her health, is fully encapsulated in the Ni Una Menos slogan. The Ni Una Menos phenomenon has not only rapidly changed the terrain and confidence around women's rights but has also begun to raise systemic questions about the economic and social system that has forced women to be second-class citizens for so long.

I'd like to conclude with three main lessons that can be generalized from the Argentine experience:

1. It does not matter whether the people in government agree with you. They can be impacted by what happens outside of the congress if there are mass mobilizations. What is more, not one of the major parties supports abortion and still this bill was brought to the table. This is a lesson that Argentines know very well. Demonstrations broke a brutal dictatorship and restored democratic rule almost forty years ago. If people can break that, we can do anything.

2. Although this movement has been going on for decades, it is interesting that the watershed movement came not during the Pink Tide, when progressive candidates swept Latin America in opposition to the neoliberal order. No, it's under Macri, a right wing, pro-corporate, anti-social-welfare presidency that one can't help but compare to Trump in certain ways. It's under Macri and it's under an Argentinian Pope that every party is being forced to decide: Do you side with a woman's right to not be murdered or die from lack of access to abortion? Or do you side with the Vatican? There are openings today that didn't exist yesterday for both left-wing and for right-wing demands. If the left is organized and mobilized it can take advantage of this. Every party, including that of Macri and that of Kirchner (a left-Peronist who was full-stop against abortion all eight years in office) has switched sides or have been split on these votes.

3. Sexism adds to the horrors of a period of social crisis in exponential ways. In many countries, the response to the outcomes of this sexism is at the leading edge of rebuilding a resistance. I think this is true in the United States with #MeToo, and I think it's true in Argentina with the Ni Una Menos and abortion campaigns. Socialists should never see these struggles as counterposed to rebuilding a class movement for liberation. They are a central part of that process of organizing towards an alternative to capitalism and in this moment are helping lead the way for all on how to wage a fight that can win things that once seemed impossible.

Josie Chávez is the director of the magazine Cuadernos Feministas (Feminist Notebooks); founder of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT member of the Fourth International); and a participant in the feminist movement since 1975.

There is a complex phenomenon taking place around the women's movement today. What we have seen in the Mexican case was an opening in the 1990s when the left reconfigured itself around the Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) and most of the left united around this reformist movement. Many feminists took part in this reformist process and they began to focus on legal reform because the political framework that we had in Mexico didn't have any laws for women or human rights. What came out of this was a lot of very good laws that the feminist movement put forward, but the movement also began to lose its presence more broadly. It lost its political practice through the adoption of reformist politics.

Within this context, "the war on women" is something we have been organizing around for quite some time in Mexico. We have been organizing against femicide since the early 1990s. This is a very difficult context to organize in and what we saw was a rise of women's organizing centered on searching for their disappeared daughters and family members. New organizations have also emerged, such as "The Searchers," who go out to search for mass graves and bodies, trying to follow leads to look for missing women.

At the same time, the violence of capitalism against women's bodies has also led to a resurgence of the right wing in response to the legalization of abortion in Mexico City in 2007. So the right won a state-by-state fight in which they criminalized abortion in seventeen of thirty-two states winning the argument that life begins at conception. We take great inspiration from the Ni Una Menos movement that has emerged in Argentina. In Mexico we had had the demand of "Ni Una Mas" (Not One Woman More), a slogan pushed by Susana Chavez in 2010, a woman who was murdered for her activism. In Latin America, the protests that have taken place since 2010 have been important markers for the feminist movement. More people have heard about the feminist movement than ever before.

In Mexico, 2016 was another key year where we began to see the rise of marches of young women protesting sexual harassment and sexism. The mobilizations in Poland [against the ban on abortion] and the Latin American marches for Lucia Perez, [an Argentine woman who was raped and killed in 2016] were significant because for the first time in Mexican history it drew in much wider layers of women into the protests against femicide. For us, I believe April 24 [2016, when women on campuses across Mexico held militant protests against femicide, gender violence, and sexism] [3] was like our #MeToo moment in Mexico, of a smaller scale, but still important. The women in the

university were isolated and were not receiving support from the movement and were being resisted by the university administration. The impact of the 2016 International Women's Strike was also important to the movement in Mexico. Even though we didn't have mass demonstrations in Mexico like took place in Argentina or Uruguay, it opened up a conversation about women reclaiming the strike as a weapon against machista capitalism. This year the International Women's Strike call did not have as big of a resonance because here in Mexico we've been engulfed in an election year and we weren't able to mobilize as many people. However, something else occurred.

In December 2017, the Zapatistas called for a women's meeting that took place this spring. This summit called on women to resist and rebel against machista and capitalist violence. It also speaks to the transformation taking place within the Zapatistas themselves, brought about by the independent campaign of MarÃ-a de JesÃ's "Marichuy" Patricia MartÃ-nez, the first Indigenous woman to be proposed as a candidate. The summit was called The International Summit for Women in the Struggle. It brought out between 7,000 and 9,000 women for the first time in Chiapas. It was a women-only summit and took a very different approach to gender politics than the Zapatistas had taken before. The Zapatistas have highlighted that the Marichuy campaign organized women in a different way. As the summit was being organized, women decided that they wanted it to be for women only and the Zapatistas had to respect this decision. As a result, they were able to mobilize 2,000 Indigenous women to participate. There are a lot of changes taking place. This summit reconfigures the way that women are organized and it opens a new window for a new feminist movement to also merge with an anticapitalist movement.

Sarah Jaffe is a reporting fellow at The Nation Institute and the author of *Necessary Trouble: Americans in Revolt*.

I'm not from Ireland, but I'm talking about Ireland because our Irish comrade couldn't be here today. On May 25, 67 percent of people who voted in Ireland voted to legalize abortion by repealing the Eighth Amendment to the Irish constitution, which had been ratified in 1983 at the same time as most Western European countries and the United States were liberalizing abortion law. The Eighth Amendment reads:

[The State] acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

In the US we call these fetal personhood laws and the right has been trying to pass these in places like Mississippi for quite a long time. It literally gives a fetus the equal right to life as the person it is inside of. What this meant in practice is that abortion was illegal in Ireland in all cases except when the life of the mother was "at immediate risk." The "immediate risk" issue was best illustrated by the case of Savita Halappanavar who died in 2012 after going to the hospital with a wanted pregnancy that she was miscarrying. She begged for a termination, but there was still a heartbeat, so the doctors decided that she could sit there for days, septic, begging for them to terminate her pregnancy. They misjudged whether or not her life was actually at risk. Her face was on a lot of posters in Ireland over the course of this referendum. Another example is a case that my friend who is an attorney there told me. She represented a woman who was in the hospital getting a checkup and the doctors decided she should have a Cesarean section. They took her to court, where they assigned a court-appointed lawyer for her fetus. They requested to force her to have a C-section and to call the police to bring her back to the hospital should she abscond from the hospital. This was only a couple of years ago.

The other thing about illegal abortion in Ireland is that, in practice, about nine women a day travel to the UK to get legal abortions. This has been something of a safety valve in Ireland's case because there are stories like Savita but not as many horror stories of illegal abortions because people are often able to access them, although at great expense and risk to their job and all sorts of things because they are technically doing something illegal.

The campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment has been going on for many years. It involved campaigns not just from the feminist movement, but also a vibrant trade-union campaign, which surprised me because I can't imagine

too many American trade unions putting their neck out on this issue. Like in Argentina, the movement forced the parties to change their positions. Most of the major parties in Ireland were anti-choice essentially up until about a year ago. Of the four major parties in the Republic of Ireland, three of them campaigned against repeal as their particular position, and one, Fianna Fáil (one of the center-right parties in Ireland) saying that members could vote their conscience but that its leadership did endorse the repeal referendum. [4]

The campaign was won on the ground, by people going door-to-door, having very tough and messy conversations about abortion in a very Catholic country. I spent a week in Ireland going around to some of the most conservative parts of the country, including the one region that voted “No” in the end, and watching these conversations happen was interesting. We’re always told that these issues are divisive and hard to talk about and there were certainly people who screamed at you that you should be ashamed of yourself and chased you off their lawn. But there were also people who talked about it and shared personal stories. One story was of a mother and daughter who had not talked to each other about this, but through the course of the campaign found out that they had both had abortions and only told each other for the first time because they started to talk about it. This, along with the role of smaller left parties that were unabashedly pro-choice like People Before Profit; the role of the trade-union campaign; the role of independent left members of parliament (of which there are quite a lot, women in particular). This is what contributed to this win and it was way more than we thought. Leading up to the vote, everyone thought we would win but that it would be a very close vote and then it would be hell because the right is going to try to stop it in parliament and drag it out—and they still haven’t passed the law that will legalize abortion yet, but 67 percent of voters voted for repeal. The conservative party that is in charge in Ireland right now has been moving towards more socially liberal policies for a while. This is an incredibly right-wing, Thatcherite neoliberal party that now realizes that Ireland’s status as an international tax haven can be much more appealing if gay marriage is legal, if abortion is legal, and the prime minister is the smiling son of immigrants who is gay and wears fancy socks. Leo Varadkar is not your friend, but he is going to use this to campaign in the next election and this presents a challenge. These campaigns are incredibly important. They are not divisive to the class struggle, but you do have to figure on that end who our friends are and how to actually separate yourself on the end from saying this guy passed this referendum and he’s going to call himself the hero of Irish women, and he’s not, in many ways.

The final thing is that abortion will still be illegal in Northern Ireland and they are going to use this momentum from this to push forward immediately. There have already been three large demonstrations in Belfast. Because Northern Ireland is in the unique position of being technically a part of the UK, where abortion is legal and paid for by the NHS, and dominated by a right-wing nationalist party that Theresa May needs to prop up her government.

[ISR](#)

[1] In June 2018, a bill that would have legalized abortion and made it free in government clinics passed the lower house of Argentina’s congress. However, following this talk, in August, the senate voted down the bill.

[2] See [Amy Arreaga, “The People versus the Parliament in Argentina.” Socialist Worker.](#)

[3] [“Mexico Women Fed Up with Femicide March against Gender Violence.” Telesur.](#)

[4] Ireland’s two main political parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, did not take official positions, while Sinn Féin and Labour back “Yes.” [See Jon Henly, “What You Need to Know: the Irish Abortion Referendum Explained.” Guardian May 25, 2018.](#) (Editor’s note.)