

Focus on Gender-Based Violence April 2024

A Note from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Have you noticed that when people talk about gender-based violence—violence against women and gender-expansive people—we rarely name the perpetrators? “Domestic violence,” “street harassment,” “rape as a weapon of war,” “revenge porn,”—you could be forgiven for not knowing who the offenders are. So I’m going to state the obvious: cis men inflict the overwhelming majority of violence across the board, including gender-based violence.



The devastating reality is that cis male violence has pervaded almost every society in every generation so far. **Gender-based violence is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world.** From military and other forms of state violence to intimate partner violence, from obstetric violence to sexual harassment, from teen dating violence to **cyberviolence**, the list seems endless and relentless. Yet **movements to end gender-based violence are brilliant, multifaceted, tenacious, global, and often successful.** Our Bodies Ourselves Today is proud to be part of the movement for a world where we all can thrive, living securely and sustainably, free of the specter of violence in any of its forms.

But to get to that world—and to cope with the violence and menace in this one—women and gender-expansive people need information, skills, resources, and a lot of solidarity. This newsletter includes such resources, with much more on the website. We also invite you to join us for community and inspiration at two upcoming events. (Details below.)

When I was in junior high school in the 1970s, I had the good fortune to join a women’s self-defense collective. Everyone in the group—moms, college students, a karate expert, and 13-year-olds—took turns leading the Saturday class in a public park. I still treasure friendships and lessons from those early years, when everything felt not just possible, but right around the corner. One of the hardest lessons was the prevalence of cis male violence and the experience of being a target; one of the most profound was that *we are worth defending*: our bodies, our rights, our friends and communities, and our planet.

Onward!
Amy

Explore Our Resources

Climate Change Worsens Violence Against Women

The United Nations explains the deep-rooted links between the climate crisis and gender-based violence. Around eighty percent of people displaced by climate change are women. Displaced women are violently assaulted more often, including sexually. Violent men often attack when women are seeking emergency shelter, in tents and in camps. Women are subject to violence even at the hands of those authorities who are supposed to protect them.



The climate crisis also affects rural women and farm workers. Climate change makes access to water more difficult, requiring women to travel further and thus increasing their vulnerability to violent assaults.

Women activists who fight for human rights and environmental justice are often in even greater danger of sexual violence, especially when (male) attackers seek to assert power and control over women who refuse to stay in their place.

This article also offers policy proposals, such as providing women with alternative means of livelihood and holding perpetrators accountable.

[Read More about Climate Change and Gender-Based Violence](#)

Meet Our Content Experts



Nadeeka Karunaratne, Gender-Based Violence chair

This month, we spoke with Nadeeka Karunaratne, Ph.D., researcher, professor, and trauma-informed yoga instructor, who chairs the Our Bodies Ourselves Today expert panel on Gender-Based Violence.

What brought you to Our Bodies Ourselves Today?

Through my personal and professional experiences, I've come to believe in the power of knowledge to support healing, especially for minoritized individuals. Learning about issues that influence our lives can support us in understanding our experiences and ourselves. I was excited to contribute to an organization like OBOST that centered on these beliefs as well.

What's a crucial issue in Gender-Based Violence that we need to understand better?

Survivors continue to tell us that our criminal punishment system and other punishment-based structures like college and university Title IX processes are harmful. Thus, we need to better understand survivors' true needs for justice and healing. How do survivors conceptualize justice? What do survivors, especially minoritized survivors, need to feel safe and have access to radical healing?

What gives you hope?

When I think of hope, I always come back to [abolitionist Mariame Kaba's words](#): "hope is a discipline." She describes hope as a practice that she engages in daily. I too believe hope must be a continual practice and a commitment to show up day after day. I find hope from being in community--cultivating joy with others and seeing how people show up for each other in beautiful, affirming ways.

[Learn More about Nadeeka](#)

Our Bodies Ourselves Today Interns

Our Bodies Ourselves Today interns Ashvi Shah and Dulce Cisneros are undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. They have focused on research, content review, and resource curation on Gender-based Violence. We asked each of them to share something they've learned about gender-based violence in their work with us this semester. Thank you, Ashvi and Dulce, for all that you've contributed to Our Bodies Ourselves Today!

Ashvi Shah

During my time with Our Bodies Ourselves Today, I've learned that gender-based violence is a complex issue rooted in power imbalances and societal norms around gender and sexuality. It has profound impacts on individuals and communities, necessitating comprehensive strategies that include prevention, legal and policy frameworks, and supportive services for survivors. This experience has highlighted the importance of a multifaceted approach to address - and ultimately to eradicate - gender-based violence.



Dulce Cisneros

What I have learned about gender-based Violence as a result of my internship with Our Bodies Ourselves Today is that violence and abuse can actually be more inconspicuous than



we tend to realize. There are numerous different forms of gender-based violence. Being able to recognize the warning signs and behaviors of such mistreatment can significantly assist and benefit survivors and activists.

A Conversation about Healing

Healing from Abuse

This conversation on relationships, identity, and sexuality--which Our Bodies Ourselves hosted while compiling the last print edition--centers healing from sexual abuse and sexual violence. The women describe the relief that comes from sharing our experience with someone else, whether that person is a therapist, close friend, romantic partner, or even an anonymous individual in an online feminist community forum. They also explore the healing that can come through creative expression in the form of writing, music, and art.



[Read Excerpts from the Conversation](#)

[Support Our Work--Donate Now!](#)

News and Events

Plan C - Movie Screening & Panel

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
7:00-9:30pm EDT
Coolidge Corner Theatre
290 Harvard Street
Brookline, MA 02446

"Plan C," [the film](#), documents the grassroots fight to

expand access to abortion pills across the United States, keeping hope alive during a global pandemic and the fall of Roe v. Wade.

The film follows Francine Coeytaux, a public health expert and the co-founder of the organization [Plan C](#), as she and her team fight to expand knowledge of – and access to – abortion pills across the United States. The film reveals the grassroots network and pipelines Plan C built, the criticism they faced, and their work for future change.

Please join a panel discussion after the film. Hear from Coeytaux, the filmmakers, and other leading activists and experts in the fight to expand and secure access to medication abortion across the U.S. Learn how you can take action during the rest of 2024.



[Register to Attend the Plan C Screening](#)



Film and Panel Discussion: The Activist Life of Mother Jones

Friday, May 10, 2024
6:00–7:45pm EST (streaming and in person)
Suffolk University's Modern Theater
525 Washington Street, Boston, MA

"I'm not a humanitarian, I'm a hellraiser."

Spend some time with Mother Jones over Mother's Day weekend!

This public program will share and discuss the award-winning documentary film, [Fight Like Hell: The Testimony of Mother Jones](#) (Bullfrog Films, 2022), a portrait of the fiery labor activist Mary Harris "Mother" Jones – called in her lifetime "the most dangerous woman in America" and the "grandmother of all agitators."

Jones and the film about her are especially resonant as we witness an ever growing gap between rich and poor, challenges to democracy, and a surge of labor activism – including many victories for the half million American workers in healthcare, manufacturing, and creative industries who went on strike in 2023.

A panel after the screening will include the film's writer and star Kaiulani Lee, along with academic and local activist perspectives. Refreshments provided.

Free and open to the public; donations welcome.

[Register for FIGHT LIKE HELL](#) (streaming or in person)

Organizing for Change: Combating Violence



The Network/La Red

The Network/La Red is a survivor-led, [social justice](#) organization that works to end [partner abuse](#) in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, kink, polyamorous, and queer communities. You can get involved as an intern or a volunteer. There are many ways to contribute: connecting survivors with community, providing peer support, assisting with safety planning, sharing information about partner abuse, staffing the crisis hotline, co-facilitating telephone-based support groups, giving informational workshops, planning events, and more.

[Learn More about The Network/La Red](#)

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Our Bodies Ourselves Today | 73 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108

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Sent by contact@ourbodiesourselfestoday.ccsend.com