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Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

Moderator: It's Monday, 26th October 2020, and I'm with Carolina Gottardo via Zoom. Carolina is a feminist migrant human rights activist and was director of the Latin American Women's Rights Service for more than five years between 2012 and 2017. LAWRS is a user-led, feminist and human rights organisation addressing the practical and strategic needs of Latin American migrant women displaced by poverty and violence. Carolina is also a member of the UN Women's Global Expert Working Group on Gender and Migration. Carolina is sharing her experience of working in the women's voluntary and community sector and campaigning for women's rights for the Sisters Doing It For Themselves archive. Carolina, if we can begin with what influenced your decision to work in the sector and for women's rights?

Carolina Gottardo: Hi, Helen, and thanks for the question. I migrated to London in 1998 to do my Masters and, I mean, for personal situations, I stayed in London and I actually started working on human rights issues from before when I was in Colombia. I'm a migrant from Colombia and most of my work, at the beginning, in the UK, was in general human rights but around 2008/9, I actually started working mainly on women's rights issues. What influenced me is that I did a lot of work on women's rights and gender equality in Asia, Africa and Latin America, working with a UK organisation during those years, but an organisation working overseas, and I felt very strongly about intersectional issues. So, intersectionality was, kind of, the thing that attracted me. So, it was mainly about intersectionality between gender and other strands, other diversity strands. So, I was, for instance, working with disabled women in Central America or Dalit women in India and indigenous women in Bolivia, and it was just looking at that intersectionality between gender and race or disability, etc., that I became very, very interested about this and, since then, I just continued working on gender equality and women's rights issues. The thing or the issue that has attracted me the most is intersectionality between gender and asylum and migration, which is really what I have been dedicated to ever since. Oh, I can't hear you, Helen.

Moderator: So, were you influenced at all by the establishment of the first women's refuge? I imagine, coming from Colombia, you were probably not aware of the refuge being set up in the 1970s.

Carolina Gottardo: No, I wasn't in the UK at that time. I was actually quite young at that time and I was in Colombia. So, no, that wasn't so much of an influence for me but the feminist movement in the UK

certainly influenced me more in later years in my life because my first interest in the sector really came from working on women's rights issues overseas and then I started to work on women's rights issues in the UK.

Moderator: What attracted you to women's rights?

Carolina Gottardo: Basically, as a migrant woman myself, I just felt very strongly about the fact that it's not the same, for instance, to be a migrant woman or a migrant man, and the same with all the different, kind of, equality strands. I mean, by working so closely on these issues, I just could see the multiple layers of discrimination that were, kind of, accumulating on women and I just felt that something needed to be done on that specific issue. I had been working with migrants and refugees and asylum seekers initially and then, basically, it was almost a click for me to decide to join different struggles and women's rights became almost the entire focus of my, kind of, career or my struggle. I wouldn't call it career. It's a struggle or it's a life. It's a life of struggle, and it has been ever since, but it was just because of the situations that I was witnessing on the ground. So, it didn't come as a theoretical thing. It came, really, about meeting women that were experiencing multiple layers of discrimination and having the honour of working with them, getting inspired by the resilience and then deciding to do something about it rather than any theory. It was really much more based in practice and in pure willingness to try to do something about it.

Moderator: Which brings us nicely to our next section, which is who has inspired you in the past and who inspires you now?

Carolina Gottardo: Yes, so, actually, it's very similar to what I was saying before. I don't get inspired by important, prominent figures or something like that. I get inspired by real women on the ground. So, the people that I found most, most inspiring have been some people that you will think have been completely excluded by society because they have and it has been, I mean, I have two in my mind very clearly but there are many, many that I have had the honour to meet but one of them I met in the UK and another I met in Australia but they are both refugee women. Both of them are refugee women but, actually, some of the most admirable and resilient people I have ever met. So, for me, if any other woman had faced what they have faced, I don't even know how they would have managed but, not only did they go through all those struggles but they became leaders, and leaders not only in their own community but also in their countries of destination. So, in the UK or in Australia. So, I'm talking about women that had to face sexual and gender-based violence, and I'm talking about torture and, like, major issues and went through all the struggles. Had to leave their countries, fearing persecution, etc., and came to countries where they were discriminated, fully discriminated in both cases and, despite all the different factors, they just stood strongly and became leaders and, kind of, fought until the end. So, these are the sort of women that I admire. It's not necessarily, yes, people that you will think, 'Oh, wow, this person.'

It's more the women that I have been so lucky to meet and that I have seen standing against the odds and

showing that women's power and that agency that characterises women and that I find absolutely mind-blowing and inspiring. One of them is from Afghanistan and another of them is from Pakistan, actually, and I find them absolutely inspiring in their life journey and motivational for whatever I do. Again, they cut across of this intersectionality between being women and, kind of, survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence in one case, and also being refugees.

Moderator: Could you share one of their journeys with us, for the archive?

Carolina Gottardo: Yes. I could share the journey of one of them. So, I mean, both in reality, but one of them is-

Moderator: Oh, then do both. Do both.

Carolina Gottardo: One of them is a refugee woman from Afghanistan. She has spent quite a long time living in Iran, in a refugee camp. She actually had to leave her children there. At some point, when the situation got a bit better, she was working as the head of women's services in one of the provinces in Afghanistan, in a country like that. When she was there, she was tortured, like, in the worst way and she almost died and, finally, I mean, after many, many different journeys and difficulties, and travelling to other countries, etc., she was able to access the Women At Risk programme and she ended up being resettled in Australia. She came with no English, like, zero, absolutely zero English, and she is now studying to become a lawyer. She was a lawyer in Afghanistan and she became a community leader and now her English is still developing but she's an amazing-, like, she has brought so many women from the Hazara community with her and has, kind of, gone through all the trauma and, really, has inspired so many other women. That's one person, and the other person is in the UK. I had, also, the honour to meet this woman from Pakistan. So, by way (ph 09.45) of domestic violence, she, disabled, came to the UK, applied for asylum, asylum application rejected. This is around the time of 9/11, so a lot of those applications were being rejected. (TC 00:10:00) She had no legal advice. Took her case all the way through the European Court of Human Rights by herself and survived so much discrimination on the way, and got her case finally approved and recognised as a refugee during the time that she couldn't-, because, as you know, women in the UK cannot work when they are applying for asylum, she actually volunteered in so many places and she even became an advisor for the London Group on refugees, at that level.

I mean, the most amazing woman, and just being able to take her own case to the European Court of Human Rights and, doing that, I just found it absolutely incredible. So, these two women, and there are many but, I mean, these are two I can mention and that I always find very, very inspiring. So, these are the people that give me the drive because I always think, 'Oh, my god, what they have done.' I mean, we should all be, kind of, fighting for women's rights in any sort of way we can if people that have gone through so much can do it.

Moderator: How do you think women's leadership is different to men's leadership, or do you think there is a difference?

Carolina Gottardo: Oh, I definitely do. I think that women's leadership is feminist and, for me, feminist is a very important word, you know. Women's leadership is about sisterhood. It's about togetherness. It's not necessarily about competition but it's more about community, and it's also about solidarity and it's also about inclusion, and that's very different because I think male leadership, sometimes, can be a bit competitive, and I'm not saying that every woman is not competitive. I'm not saying that, but I do think there is a massive difference and I will think about sisterhood and feminism and, kind of, exercising it together. So, I certainly see a difference. That's not to say that every woman will lead in that way, and we have been seeing many examples. I mean, you wouldn't say that, say, I don't know, Margaret Thatcher or something like that is a feminist leader, etc. Obviously not. I'm talking about what I think is true women's leadership, and it doesn't mean that women's leadership is what all women do. I think some women, actually, exercise leadership like men because they try to fit in or to just play those dynamics of power. I'm talking about women's leadership in the sense of sisterhood and not necessarily for self-interest but for something bigger than that. So, I certainly see a difference and that's the one that I think we should aspire to as women leaders to be, kind of, genuine feminist leaders. I cannot hear you.

Moderator: Give me an example of women's leadership in action.

Carolina Gottardo: I think an example of that is very much, like, a lot of the women's leaders that I met in the UK in the feminist movement will be an example of that. I mean, for me, I work very, very closely with the BAME women's movement in the UK. So, there are leaders working for feminist organisations that were from specific ethnic minorities, and the sense of sisterhood that there was between us and the way that I saw so many of them and the way we, kind of, work together and support each other, and we're all going there for the cause. I mean, and our cause was multiple causes. It was the cause of women's rights but it was also an issue of race and it was also an issue where all these struggles came together and we supported each other. I met so many amazing women and I'm sure you have interviewed many of them but it was such a pleasure and an honour to work with an amazing bunch of women and it was all about women's power and how to exercise it in that way, which is inclusive and which is full of solidarity rather than competition.

Moderator: You've already touched on this but what makes a women's approach to leadership successful?

Carolina Gottardo: I think it's distinct in that it goes beyond the individual, into collective, into thinking about all women, into thinking about inclusion, into thinking about, yes, beyond one's self-interest, you know. I mean, men, in a way, in the society and the way they are socialised, is very much focused towards competition. So, who is the toughest, the fittest, blah, blah, all of that, yes, and that's the way patriarchy works, unfortunately. I mean, this is exactly the sort of system we need to bring down. It's not about competition. It's not about patriarchy. It's about collaboration. It's about togetherness. It's about

sisterhood. It's about inclusion. So, women's leadership needs to be inclusive, and it needs to be inclusive in many, many different ways. It also needs to be collaborative, non-hierarchical. It's not about imposition. It's not about competition. It's about dialogue. It's about a common approach and it's about the common good, and I always think it's also about women's power, of course, but that's part of my own beliefs as a feminist woman who has been in this struggle for a while.

Moderator: What motivates you as a leader?

Carolina Gottardo: I mean, for me, a lot of the things that motivate me are the ones that I was saying before and it's the fact that I think, as a leader, I mean, I think women together can achieve so much more than as separate entities or doing things by themselves. That feeling of sisterhood and togetherness motivates me quite a lot and I have seen it operating in such positive ways in the past. Not to say it's perfect, as I say. I'm not suggesting that everything is like, 'Oh, it's all smooth and clear,' I'm not saying that, but I'm saying, when it works, it works very well. In terms of my main motivators, it's really to try to achieve change and impact on women's lives and, really, for me, it's always mostly about the ones that have been marginalised or disadvantaged because, for me, what comes always to the fore is this intersectionality I have been talking to you about. So, women's change motivates me. Also, women's resilience motivates me, clearly. I mean, the examples I use can explain why and how. Definitely, it motivates me and, also, the exercise of women's power for the common good motivates me. All of those things, but trying to achieve something that goes beyond and that actually has a result. So, it's an impact and it produces change. It's very motivating for me, trying to see how we evolve, how we together can achieve better things and how we put our grain of sand, all of us, to try to make that change happen.

Moderator: Thank you, and, again, you've touched on elements of this but what are the issues that are dear to your heart and how do you think you can influence change?

Carolina Gottardo: So, probably, the issue that is dearest to my heart when thinking about women's rights and gender equality's intersection between gender equality and migration and asylum for someone like me, clearly, because these are probably the two struggles that I feel closest to. So, it's the struggle of women's rights and the struggle of migrants' rights. So, the two of them coming together is probably the issue that is closest to my heart. I think there is a lot of work to be done there because I personally believe that the women's sector is not often as aware about migrants' issues and the other way around. The migration sector is not necessarily aware about gender issues and this happens across different countries, actually. It's not an issue that is only for one country but, precisely, this is why it's dear to my heart because they need to raise awareness about that around the particular struggles of migrant and refugee women that face very specific issues on top of the issues that many other women face. So, violence even has a different expression when it comes in the multiple layers of discrimination that migrant and refugee women face, because we're talking about always, really, discrimination based on gender, race and migration status at the minimum. That will be, like, just to begin with. So, raising awareness on this issue and pushing for actual change on that intersection motivates me a lot and this is some work that I have been doing in the UK and in different countries and I'm doing also, kind of, more at the global level working on this specific issue as well.

Moderator: So, how do you think you as part of LAWRS, as part of the other organisations you have worked for, and as part of the UN's Expert Working Group has influenced change?

Carolina Gottardo: (TC 00:20:00) Yes, I was thinking about this and, actually, it's very nice to have time to reflect on this. I think, really, for me, probably in terms of how-, and I wouldn't say it's me, I would say it's a team of us. Like, I never like to attribute things to myself because I, kind of, see it as a part of the team, meaning the LAWRS team or, whatever I am team. So, I just might be in the position for director there, but it's not only me. So, that's a very important disclaimer to begin with, but in terms of LAWRS, for me, probably the two, kind of, clear achievements are LAWRS, for me, it was very important for LAWRS to become a policy organisation. When I started, it was only a service provision. So, it was looking at many services, like case work on violence against women and girls, welfare, etc. It was saving a lot of women but it was, for me, very important to go beyond services because, for me, services are only a band-aid, and to go into systemic change. So, to give that kind of approach to LAWRS that went beyond services, much more into something more strategic and trying to influence policy was very, very important and then I think the launch of the Step Up campaign. That, actually, was me who came up with that idea and, when I see how much the campaign has done, like, recently-, not that recently, in December 2018, when I heard how the campaign was succeeding to achieve, like reporting firewalls in London for migrant women, and I thought, 'Oh, my god. I had this idea,' I just almost couldn't believe it, how much it had gone further. So, the campaign advocates, really, for safety in reporting for women survivors of violence from migrant backgrounds because a lot of the women who are migrants do not report violence.

So, they are survivors of violence but they don't report it and that we saw all the time at LAWRS, and the reason why they don't report it is because they are scared of deportation and detention. So, because of their visas, they might not have immigration status or their immigration status might be insecure, they actually preferred sometimes to stay with the perpetrator or to live with violence rather than to report violence, and we kept seeing that again and again and again, and these under-reporting rates, women being scared of the police, women being scared of taking any sort of action to report violence. We started this campaign that LAWRS started and it came up as an idea that I had to build up a campaign on this issue and LAWRS built the campaign and then many organisations in the UK joined. I had it because I was doing a lot of European work and I was getting familiar with this concept of firewalls between immigration control and access to services. Meaning access to justice, meaning that, if you report, the police or anyone you're reporting to shouldn't be disclosing your details to immigration control and the same with access to health services. So, with any service that a migrant woman wants to access, and I became very familiar with that and I just thought, 'Oh, this will be a very, very good thing to do for the women that we're working with.' So, came up with the idea of the campaigns. We set up a campaign team, ended up getting funding for doing this and launched the Step Up campaign and LAWRS brought together all this group of organisations that joined that are very, very strong organisations in the UK and there have been so many achievements ever since in terms of Step Up.

So, I mean, I couldn't actually see everything that happened because then I needed to move to Australia

for family reasons, but just the feeling of thinking that I had been, like, the person that generated that, I just couldn't believe how much-, because that actually has the potential of changing women's lives because, if you're thinking about proper firewalls and then the police in London saying they are not going to report, and then a close parliamentary group pushing on that issue that is all parliamentary from the two parties is just very good. One of the best things of that campaign is that the women, including undocumented migrant women, were self-advocating and, for me, that's so powerful. So, it's not me saying, 'Oh, we can't report.' It's women saying, 'Actually, I'm a survivor of violence. I'm undocumented and I'm coming here and saying it, and I know I'm in danger of deportation but I'm saying it.' So, women speaking up for themselves that would never, ever do this before. So, I'm very happy with that. Obviously, there is a way to go but I'm proud of that change, and then, in Australia, I moved from the feminist movement in the UK and being very active, into working with a religious organisation in Australia. It was a big move and a very difficult one. Challenging, as you might think, but then what we have done, the organisation, was completely gender blind and now we have started a programme that is a women only safe space for women survivors or at risk of violence who are asylum seekers or migrants, and it's now their main programme looking at the intersection of asylum and gender in Australia.

It has now a different number of staff and it's just won the prize for the best programme in the humanitarian awards last year. So, it's amazing and this is coming out of a religious organisation in the Catholic church and, also, well, I have been able to train some religious people like priests and sisters on gender equality. So, that's good, but it was challenging.

Moderator: What do you think are the specific characteristics of being a leader in the women's sector?

Carolina Gottardo: I think the main word that I mentioned to you before is feminist. I think a leader in the women's sector needs to be feminist and feminism, as we know, is a word that is not very well understood. Some of us wear it with pride and some people see it as a label that is negative, but feminism is no more than about equality, inclusion, respect, solidarity and all these good things that we should aspire to. So, women's leadership should be feminist. There should be also a feeling of I think a women's leader should be living the sisterhood and in the solidarity that we have talked about before, and should look at doing things in consultation with, rather than impose or (mw 27.45), do you know? It's this sense of a women's leader should question power and should know how to manage it. So, we should always understand the sort of power we hold and to be able to question ourselves and question all our biases in whatever way we have them in meaning to be good feminist leaders and, if we can do that, I think there is going to be a problem, you know. So, it's also about questioning power structures in every way. Like, with gender, with race, etc. Like, all of that.

Moderator: What is your leadership style and how have you developed it?

Carolina Gottardo: My leadership style, I would say, is feminist, definitely. It's participative and

consultative. It's non-hierarchical. I don't believe in hierarchical leadership styles. Personally, they might work but it's not the one I want to pursue. You don't want people to be worried about you. You want people to work in the same that you're working and to be all inspiring each other, rather than worrying about something. I like it to be focused towards the common good and to be inclusive. So, I would say that's my leadership style. I cannot even think about authoritarian models. I hate them and I just don't-, they don't come to me. Like, they don't come naturally to me. Yes, they don't suit me. Obviously, I have developed my leadership style through the years, you know. Like, it has been an evolution process like it is for every woman leader. I mean, we learn from others, and we learn from others in every way. We learn from people that we report to. We learn from people that report to us. We learn from our peers and part of this leadership style is also about questioning ourselves and being evolving. So, I don't think it could be static. I think it needs to be dynamic. So, we need to be always challenging ourselves, (TC 00:30:00) and it's again about challenging that power. I think the more power you get, the more power you need to challenge, the more you need to challenge power, if that makes sense.

Moderator: Yes.

Carolina Gottardo: It's evolving, I would say, and I think, if it stays stale, it somehow becomes outdated. So, that's the way I will think about it.

Moderator: How has your involvement in the sector impacted on you personally?

Carolina Gottardo: A lot. A lot. I mean, I always felt that I belonged to something bigger and, as I said to you before, my journey was probably a bit different because of being a migrant woman coming from a quite conservative society like the society I come from, patriarchal, extremely patriarchal and conservative, for me, it allowed me to discover who I really was and that was so lovely. Coming from the society where I came from, I wouldn't have used the label feminist to describe myself, like, say, 20-plus years ago because of what I was coming from. Like, you know, I was born in a conservative country to a conservative family. You know, all these things that are (mw 31.16) a microcosm of a society and being in London and being part of the feminist sector, I mean, again, it was part of my own history but the thing is that I discovered that I had always been a feminist person but I couldn't label that because I didn't know how to. Then it was almost like because, when I was young, I used to disagree with half of what I say. I couldn't even understand. Issues like, say, house labour and the distribution in household chores, and I'm like, 'Oh, well, why does it have to be done by girls?' Like, do you know, or the division of political power or anything that was happening and that I was witnessing and that was so normal where I grew up, or even the objectification of women in Latin American is very strong. Like, you know, women need to be pretty, they need to be dressed this way, that way. Blah, blah, blah. All these things. Do you know? I never liked that. Never, and just being in this environment and, yes, kind of, evolving in my own style made me realise that I could finally know who I was, who I had always been and I could label myself with pride.

So, I feel I belong to something bigger and I felt that I was part of this common struggle with my sisters for women's power. So, it was about growing together and facilitating the empowerment of all women, and I actually do not believe that you empower anyone. People empower themselves rather than you empowering them. That doesn't really happen like that. That's such a misused word, but it was about facilitating that, for women to, kind of, discover who they are and to discover the power that they really, really have. It was also, as part of the part of the sector, it was inspiring to see change and to know that there was a group of sisters working together and, as I said to you before, I was particularly close to the BAME sisters. So, the women that were leaders from all the migrant communities or BAME communities in the UK because our struggle was a joined struggle. It was not only a gender struggle. It was also struggle on race and on migration. So, doing it together, I felt we had a lot in common.

Moderator: How has LAWRS and the women's sector as a whole influenced and changed the structural position of women in the UK?

Carolina Gottardo: So, LAWRS, I think the best example is the Step Up migrant women campaign that I mentioned to you, started by a BAME women organisation, which is not-, I mean, as you know, there is also some sort of hierarchy in the UK sector between mainstream organisations and BAME women organisations, and it's massive, and there was also a struggle. It's even a struggle within our feminist struggle, if that makes sense. So, LAWRS was the organisation that started this and, kind of, took this forward and just to see how much it has achieved for a specific group of women that are probably the most invisible and marginalised is very good. And to see that it was done by LAWRS, by an organisation that wasn't even a campaigning organisation before and, suddenly, it just started to evolve in this way. So, bringing an invisible issue to the fore and trying to make it relevant and to achieve change for this group. That's definitely a way where LAWRS has achieved change. LAWRS has achieved change for so many women. I mean, part of the thing that motivated me the most at LAWRS was to witness the journey of women. So, women will come as survivors of violence with very low confidence and, I mean, all the issues that happen when you are dealing with certain struggle. Then it was very nice to see how women were doing this process of empowering themselves bit by bit and doing their own journey. Also, discovering who they were and then finally becoming self-advocates and being able to stand in front of parliament and things like that. So, you know, starting from someone that wouldn't want to even speak to you, or that the case worker would take a long time in, kind of, building that trust into someone that can stand up for themselves after, kind of, going through so much.

That's a way that LAWRS achieves change, definitely. It's about these individual women's journey and especially in terms of women self-advocating. For me, probably, the biggest group on this is undocumented migrant women because you cannot think of a more excluded group. I mean, this is a group that no one wants to know about. I mean, it's women that don't even have the right to be there but, of course, they do because, I mean, everyone has a right but I mean, in terms of legally, there is an issue there. So, these are invisible women but everyone who is a survivor of violence, to have rights. I mean, they are still survivors. They're big things and they should be treated in the same way that any other woman that is from the UK or from anywhere is. So, this issue around undocumented migrant women, for me, is something, really, that has achieved change and especially around being able to attract mainstream

attention from organisations that were bigger and so much support for the campaign and being highlighted, like, in mainstream arenas, is all achieving change. So, all of that, definitely, for me, is-, even raising awareness about this in the feminist sector itself is achieving change.

Moderator: How do you think the sector as a whole has impacted women's structural position?

Carolina Gottardo: I think it has impacted a lot. I mean, just imagine if there was not such a strong feminist sector in the UK and if there was no collective action. I mean, that doesn't mean that there is not still a lot to do but making this agenda shine and women's power grow and not giving up to patriarchy is, by itself, such an achievement because women's rights are under threat and they still are and they are very much, like, today. Like, we are facing such a backlash and have faced it for quite a long time and then seeing this feminist sector, kind of, working together and not giving up is definitely part of that collective action, and it's also about main-streaming violence against women and girls. You know this has been changing. Like, it's not the same as it was before. It's just much better known than what it was, and it's fair less accepted than what it was. It really has gone out to the public agenda much more. It's also bringing different struggles together, which I mentioned before. So, understanding that the women's rights struggle is one of different ones and that, actually, by bringing them together, we are stronger. So, I think that's also part of what BAME women organisations do, which is, like, bringing together this struggle, and it goes beyond the fact of main-streaming this and making an agenda and advancing women's power. It also goes into achieving a sense of sisterhood. You know this thing that I was-, so, it's this thing that I told you about knowing that there is this group of amazing women that are there together and that are believing in your same struggle, that you can count on them and that you're trying to advance something together. That is part of what has also been achieved.

So, it goes beyond the actual change into this sense of belonging, the sense of feeling togetherness. This togetherness, a sense of sisterhood, and I think it also goes into increasing the confidence (TC 00:40:00) of the women that belong to those movements, you know. I mean, women become more confident and they become more committed to a cause and, as that happens, they also are better able to inspire others and to, kind of, grow together. So, it's like a snowball in that way and I think it's amazing.

Moderator: I know you've touched on this throughout our conversation. What do you think are the greatest achievements of women's collective action?

Carolina Gottardo: Yes. So, it's that. It's just, kind of, giving up. Advancing this issue, making it far more relevant. So, saying violence against women and girls is not okay, is not acceptable, is not a private matter, it shouldn't be justified. There should be no killings. This is endemic. You know, it's that kind of increasing that collective awareness that this is wrong and that, actually, there needs to be accountability. There needs to be accountability from whatever is happening and patriarchy is something that is simply not acceptable and there is a group of women that are simply not going to tolerate it and that will go to any kind of end to try to stop patriarchy in the way it has been working as a, kind of, structural systemic

issue that has been affecting us for years and years and years and, again, it's the same as I was saying before. It's that sense of solidarity and togetherness and sisterhood that you cannot contain because there is a point when you can't contain women's power. You can try but it's hard. It's not going to be possible.

Moderator: What do you think still needs to be done?

Carolina Gottardo: Well, I've been saying a lot of positive things but then, on the negative side, there is such a long way to go. Like, if you look at indicators in terms of gender equality, I think we have years to go in every single indicator, whatever way you look at it, political, economic, in terms of violence against women, in terms of participation, etc. So, violence against women continues being endemic. The statistics are not on our side for so many issues. The gender pay gap is huge, still. Political participation is still low. I mean, it's probably bigger than what it was before but it's still low, do you know? So, there is so much work ahead and, at the same time, it's all of that plus the threats of fundamentalist movements as well that are trying to get us back, like, in what we have achieved and you just need to see political situations across the globe that are very contemporary too, sadly, to realise that the threat is definitely always there. So, I think, like, in the Spanish, we say, 'La lucha continúa.' So, the struggle needs to continue and our fight needs to continue, but I think-, I mean, for instance, just seeing the Me Too movement and how widespread this has been is, kind of, encouraging in terms of mainstream issues that have gone to other parts of the media and certain industries that were not touched by this. So, I think we also need to find allies in different struggles and in different sectors and continuing relying on each other and continue trying to bring more women into the movement. Do you know? It cannot be this, kind of, elite feminist sector that only believes that they have the truth and that doesn't move. It's stale, and has this, kind of, backdated idea about how things will be.

It needs to renew itself. It needs to use different-, like, for instance, we need to use virtual technology and different ways of approaching and growing the movement more. We need to be working with younger women. We need to understand what feminist means to them. You know, it cannot be stale. It needs to be moving and it needs to be moving forward and counteracting all these negative trends and women's rights being under attack. It's an agenda we cannot give up on but that we need to renew constantly to try to continue the interest, kind of, growing and to try to join with other movements. We need to be vigilant and we need to continue advancing the feminist movement and reinventing our strategies as we go along and as the time changes because, if you look back, there have been advances. It's just that they are not enough and it's just that there is still a lot to do. So, we cannot be complacent but we cannot be overcritical either. So, we cannot say, 'Oh, everything is just a disaster. Now we've ended up tired and nothing has been achieved.' Well, yes, a lot has been achieved. I mean, you know, women only got the vote in the UK in 1927. Like, a lot has been achieved but it's just a constant struggle and it's incremental and we need to just try to make it go faster but that we cannot achieve by ourselves and that's how we need to bring younger feminist women, new technologies to try and then things join with all the struggles, etc., so that we keep alert to the way things are changing, and there are even different types of violence now that we were not dealing with before.

Like, for instance, cyber violence, right? Like, that's relatively new, compared with other times, you know? So, we have to also understand how things evolve and how to try to counteract all these new trends.

Moderator: Thank you, and what are your thoughts on the future for women's rights?

Carolina Gottardo: Yes, it's a little bit of what I was saying. I think there is a lot of future for women's rights but I think we cannot be complacent on the future of women's rights. I think this is a constant. It's the struggle that we need to be investing on and that we need to be motivating more women to join in this struggle and I think we need to understand what has been achieved but we need to continue to try to strive to achieve better things and to achieve them faster because, I mean, the sort of numbers that we still see in terms of violence and all of that are just simply not acceptable in a world like the one we're living in. So, the future means more struggle but the future also means different ways of thinking and the future means working with younger women and the future means continuing working together and trying to think how do we deal with these challenges, and how we not only stop the erosion, but actually continue progressing women's rights. I mean, sometimes if you think about, say, the Beijing Platform for Action, that was a pretty progressive document, right? So, you would think, okay, how are we in terms of the Beijing Platform for Action and now and, you know, you will have, like, a mixed view on what has been or has not been achieved. I think it's important to continue aiming high and not to give up and to really, really think about women's struggle as our struggle, as a collective struggle and as one that we are willing to continue dedicating our lives to pursue whatever we're doing. Like, it doesn't matter where we are staying. So, I'm in another country, right? It doesn't matter. I'm still pursuing the women's struggle, you know?

Like, and that's the way we all need to be trying to think about this. It's a common struggle for the future of women's rights to ensure that these threats that we're perceiving, actually, are counteracted and actually advance for gender equality and for women's rights in the way we want to see it and in a way which is meaningful and not tokenistic.

Moderator: Thank you. We've, kind of, covered everything that we set out to. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Carolina Gottardo: Just to say that I'm very pleased that this sort of project is being done because there have been so many amazing women working in the UK sector and sometimes what we don't have is the documentation of what has been going on or these struggles or the way women think, or the way they work together or the way the sisterhood works. This sisterhood that I'm referring to. I'm very, very pleased that this could be documented because, in reality, it will help other women in the future to understand what was happening during these times and to continue with that struggle because whatever happens is just time bound right now but this is a long-term battle and it's important to understand how it has been fought, and to continue fighting it. So, I'm very pleased and I'm so glad the WRC is doing this

and that so many women are participating and I'm really very much looking forward to hearing what my sisters have been saying. I think it's a wonderful project.

Moderator: Thank you, Carolina. It's (TC 00:50:00) been a pleasure, well, sharing your story.