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The Scholar & Feminist XXX:

Past Controversies, Present Challenges, Future Feminisms

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Comments on The Scholar & Feminist

By:

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I don't have notes from the conference that took place at Barnard College where we explored the complex alliances between motherhood and sisterhood and the gender implications inspired by these alliances. But, I do have the memories and thoughts of what inspired me to concentrate my passion on one of the themes of discussion, a theme that has been a fundamental part of my career as a scholar, activist, poet and human being.

In this conference, made up of many women from diverse disciplines and places in the world, we began to discuss through dialogue what being a woman and generating many of the antagonizing questions over the centuries implies. The kinds of antagonizing questions addressed how mothers participate and create changes in social justice, not only motivated by their biological makeup, but also by using the concept that motherhood is beyond biology and is a vital form of work linked with the transformation of social justice.

This is where I began to rethink the social movements in Latin America and their relation to gender and for the first time I was able to present my work about the Chilean arpilleristas; mothers and sisters of the disappeared who used fabrics to create scenes in the artistic form of collage that represented the brutal reality of societies besieged by repressive governments.

This conference made me feel I had a profound liberty to think in my utmost capacity. It was a public collectivity that incited dialogue among us and allowed us to share, reflect, and meditate in a heightened capacity. It was here where I realized that the work associated with mothers' tasks was also connected to sisters' tasks. I also realized solidarity between women could break down barriers between different classes, languages and identities in order to open up a dialogue more profound than I could ever have imagined.

Remembering this encounter, in which I spoke somewhat timidly about the work of the arpilleras, I recognized that I was at the forefront of a grand space full of beginnings and openings. These beginnings brought me to explore complex relationships, such as the relationships

between human rights and women's rights, and one particular relationship between memory, women and history, which always poses the same question: Do mothers, women and sisters mask and unmask the enigma of the human condition throughout history?

I don't have notes from these years, but my memory of this dialogue has served me well over the years. It is what I cherish more than anything and I feel it is my responsibility in my work that unites the creative dimension with social activism.

I am thankful for all of the exacting and arduous work that this center promotes. If not for these types of encounters, the sisterhood of women would be broken and disappear leaving us with an enormous sense of loss and absence. Instead, we are left a living presence in a world where History has not stopped meditating and dialogue continues to flow. Thank you.