

https://dspace.org/

Gendered citizenship among grass-roots women activists

Kaplan, Temma

1994-07-13T13:29:37Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7829

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

KAPLAN

DEMOCRACY



POPULAR
PRECEDENTS
PRACTICE
CULTURE

13 - 15 JULY 1994

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

HISTORY WORKSHOP

GENDERED CITIZENSHIP AMONG GRASS-ROOTS WOMEN ACTIVISTS

Temma Kaplan
State University of New York
at Stoneybrook

AFRICANA

Draft May 25, 1994

History Workshop Conference: **Democracy: Popular Precedents, Popular Practice and Popular Culture**

GENDERED CITIZENSHIP AMONG GRASS-ROOTS WOMEN ACTIVISTS

Temma Kaplan, State University of New York at Stony Brook

At a time when the nation state reverberates between Balkanization and globalization, questions about civil society and citizenship have come into question especially in countries undergoing democratic transformation. Despite growing interest in defining citizenship, few theorists or historians have noted how women who enter the public realm as mothers and housewives are making new claims about how the state should be implicated in civil society. Some women are especially vociferous in defending family members taken as political prisoners, preserving housing, and struggling against militarization, and have conjured up new notions of citizenship rooted in human rights.

All around the world, these women are taking action because they think the political situation has degenerated beyond repair any but new social associations can make. Such women include the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the women who emerged in the struggle over Crossroads in

Cape Town, two groups I am studying in my book, Making Spectacles of Themselves: Women's Grass-roots Movements. By focussing on these three movements, this paper will explore some of the advantages and disabilities such women bring to the political process when they attempt to define citizenship along gendered lines.

"Cultural citizenship," a term that has been emerging in the work of certain anthropologists and social critics, refers to groups-- such as women or people of color-- which sometimes proclaim their differences from the dominant society, but also demand justice. By justice, they don't simply mean equal access to the goods and services a state can provide; but frequently they mean a reordering or restructuring of politics itself, one in line with their own life experiences. "Affirm[ing] group differences," according to Iris Marion Young, can help "challenge [] institutionalized domination and oppression...."[1] Cultural citizenship need not necessarily be based on an implicit theory of human rights, yet frequently it is.

Sometimes when ordinary women, galvanized by what I have called "female consciousness," are involved in social movements, they have recourse to some theory of privilege that grows out of the obligations they accept to feed, clothe, house, and protect their families and communities. Believing in the division of labor by sex in their culture and historical period, the specific groups of women defining

themselves as mothers and potential mothers often demand the rights they think their obligations entail. These social concerns can be progressive or reactionary, although the two movements with which this paper is concerned have tended toward the progressive.

Looking at the constitution of the groups distinguishing themselves from the dominant society shows that solidarity occurs when people recognize that they share goals, problems, or beliefs they might have at first thought to be merely individual. Participating in collective pursuits with members of one's own group, whatever other differences divide the separate individuals, increases the group's sense of their practical rights and their importance to formulating future policy for the larger society. "Cultural citizenship" then frequently forms the basis for formulating strategies the subordinate group may outline but the law does not guarantee. Or as Rina Benmayor, Rosa M. Torruellas, and Ana L. Juarbe of the women's project of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College claim: "Bringing together culture and citizenship into a single analytical framework underscores the dynamic process whereby cultural identity comes to bear on claims for social rights in oppressed communities; and at the same time, identity is produced and modified in the process of affirming rights."[2]

To some extent, in the general debate about how we come to belong to social groups and how they come into being,

"cultural citizenship" provides another part of the equation. Showing how oppressed people have contributed to the notion of collective existence, how they have established their own place in new configurations, and how they have appealed to notions of justice outside of positive law, the concept of "cultural citizenship" helps explain the processes by which ordinary people act on their environment, reflect on what they have done, and assess how collective power should be allocated.

Elizabeth Jelin, the Argentine sociologist, has argued that certain social movements "should not be interpreted in political terms (if by this we mean the struggle for power), but rather as practices concentrated on the construction of collective identities and on recognition of spaces for social relations." I would add social relations based not only on similarities but on differences. These social relations provide, according to Jelin, "a new means by which to relate the political and the social, the public and private world, in which the every day social practices are included alongside and in direct connection with ideological and institutional politics."[3] Two movements of this kind should illustrate the way cultural citizenship may help explain social movements that appeal to justice.

The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo, Argentina

Mothers in Argentina succeeded in undermining the free exercise of an authoritarian regime. In March 1976, the

armed forces of Argentina carried out a coup overthrowing civilian rule and replacing it with three military Juntas which ruled in succession until the end of 1983. General Jorge Rafael Videla, Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera, and Brigadier Ramón Agosti of the airforce constituted the first Junta.[4] The new military government, carrying out what they called a "Process of National Reorganization," declared war on those they considered subversives, including opposition leaders, labor lawyers, socially conscious doctors, union activists, journalists, students and Jews, challenging the maternal identity of those who defended the disappeared.[5] The secret kidnapping, detention without trial, torture, and murders of thousands, of whom approximately one-third were women of whom about three percent were pregnant when they were arrested, continued from 1976 until the regime was replaced by a democratic government at the end of 1983.

Since many of those abducted, held without charges, tortured, and frequently assassinated were under thirty, and because their mothers set out to find them in increasingly public ways, the Argentine case has become emblematic of the actions of "mothers of the disappeared."

At the end of April 1977, whether by decision or by accident, fourteen mothers gathered at Buenos Aires' central square. Lying in the financial district of Buenos Aires, at the center of the downtown shopping district, the Plaza de Mayo is the symbolic capital of Argentina, its sacred

secular space. It is a square around which are the Ministries of the Army and Navy, the Presidential Palace, and the Ministry of the Interior, which controls the police and the courts. The cathedral and the cabildo or colonial city hall are also on the plaza. The square is filled with palm trees, benches, and walkways, encompassing a space so large that 100,000 demonstrators used to fit during the days of the Peronist rallies. A bit off center in the plaza is the pyramidal shaped monument commemorating the 1810 May revolution against Spanish domination.[6] Sitting around the square, recounting their troubles to one another, the fourteen mothers decided to meet on Thursdays at 3:30 PM. Since the police would not let them sit together, regarding any gathering as a prohibited political meeting, the women strolled around the pyramid in the Plaza.

At first, the women were quite naive about whether government officials would help them find their children, but experience taught them to take matters into their own hands. In June 1977, two months after the women had begun their marches, three of the mothers visited the Minister of Interior while sixty other mothers waited outside. Insulting the mothers inside, he asked whether their sons had not simply run off on some sexual escapade while their daughters had become prostitutes.[7] The women's sense of citizenship was not immediately outraged by allegations that they were bad mothers, but their sense of identity was. With their

qualifications as good mothers questioned, the women further turned against the regime and challenged its authority long before most other citizens did.

With state terror desecrating life in the mid-seventies, the women whom officials called "Las Locas" (the crazy women), did the only thing possible to give their children material reality: The mothers carried on symbolic funeral processions, replacing the bodies of those who had disappeared after detention with their own marching bodies seen every Thursday at 3:30 in the Plaza de Mayo. Despite the danger to themselves, the women marched to break the silence and to re-establish some sense of citizenship, a new community united in the pursuit of justice. Though the detained-and-disappeared were invisible until their dead bodies began washing up on the shores of the Plata River or in unmarked graves, people in Argentina and abroad could speak to the Madres or follow their demonstrations, which the European media began to cover in the late seventies.

Just when the Madres consciously realized their need for a collective maternal identity remains a mystery, but within seven months of the first demonstrations, they took out an ad in La Prensa, the leading newspaper in Buenos Aires, listing the names and identification numbers of 237 mothers of the detained-and-disappeared. The audacity of the Madres in printing their names when other citizens, including members of civil rights organizations, remained

circumspect is one measure of their desperation to make the plight of their children public. But it also resulted from a strategy that pitted their maternal rights against the military's authority. Although the Madres were not the only ones to fight against the Junta, or the first, they were, according to one of their leaders, Renée Epfelbaum, "the first to have done it publicly...."[8] They became publicity hounds, staging performances highlighting their situation as mothers before the cameras. Instead of working in secret, the Madres were the most public citizens in Argentina. And being so visible may have saved their lives.

International attention certainly aided the Madres and their cause, pitting outraged motherhood against masculine authority. Apart from the international feminist community, t.v. and photo journalists became the Madres' greatest supporters. The matter of visual symbols was of great strategic importance to the Madres, and their use of photographs of their children served as icons in their spectacles. With state terror desecrating life, the "crazy women," did the only thing possible to give their children material reality: They carried on symbolic funeral processions, substituting photographs on signs or hung around their necks for the bodies of those who had disappeared after detention. Despite the danger to the Madres, they marched to re-establish some sense of

citizenship, forming a community that included their missing children and challenged the hegemony of the Junta.

The symbols and rituals the Madres used were intimately connected to their own changing sense of identity and their need to highlight their role as good mothers simply carrying out the roles they were trained to assume. One of the first symbols to work were white kerchiefs. According to one account, on the march to Lujan, organized by a variety of human rights organizations in 1977, María del Rosario, one of the Madres, suggested that they buy white fabric to make head scarves so that they could recognize one another. Since the human rights march was moved up and there was no time for the purchases, they wound up wearing white diapers on their heads, marking themselves as mothers. By Aída Suárez' account, Azucena Villaflor, one of the leaders of the Madres, suggested the scarves to make the Madres noticeable; "Azucena's idea was to wear as a kerchief one of our children's nappies, because every mother keeps something like this, which belonged to [her] child as a baby."[9]

Repression grew apace as the Mothers' activities were closely monitored. The worst time for them was late 1977 and early 1978. Eleven family and friends of the disappeared, including two of the Madres and a French nun, were kidnapped from the church of Santa Cruz in December 8, 1977, and disappeared. On December 10, another French nun was captured, and Azucena Villaflor, one of the first Madres,

was abducted in the street by one of the ubiquitous grey Falcons. She was never seen again.[10] Yet the Madres continued to march as other mothers, frantic that they were unable to discover their children, joined the original group.

During the period from 1977, when three of the mothers disappeared, to the World Cup games, when foreign journalists flooded the city and helped the Madres gain international publicity, the Madres had to turn to other methods to create an alternative civil society of which they could be citizens. They began to write their stories on paper currency, on the one-hundred and later the five-hundred peso bill. On bills slightly larger than the dollar, across the face of one of the heroes of the independence movement, they wrote their children's names, when they were abducted, who they thought was holding them. They circulated the money at fairs and large markets where it would be hard to remember just who had passed the bill. Since no one wanted to be in possession of the money once they noticed its message, the currency circulated rather quickly. From the Madres' perspective, this was ideal, since many people got to see their message. One Madre recalls that in the absence of access to radio or television or daily newspapers, they had to be ingenious about keeping their children's plight in the public eye.[11]

International press attention certainly aided the Madres. After nearly forty years of attempting to bring the World Cup soccer games to Argentina, the games were scheduled to take place in Buenos Aires in June 1978. While the games opened at the Monumental Stadium of the River Plate on 1 June 1978 with more than eighty thousand spectators in attendance, at the Plaza de Mayo "one hundred women who had been dispersed around on the benches, gathered quickly around the pyramid having covered their heads with the white kerchiefs and begun their slow procession." Before television cameras in the Plaza, Madres began telling their stories. An official, followed by about forty men in uniform, approached the Madres and told them they had to leave since the state of siege precluded demonstrations. But with the cameras and microphones of the international press running, the police dared not attack, and the Madres continued their march.[12] Away from the centers of power, the mothers, qua mothers, nevertheless presented a challenge to the Argentine state by maintaining a separate identity as citizens of a community that excluded the generals but included their children.

The generals denounced the women and claimed that the world press was in the hands of subversives. Denying that there were kidnapping, concentration camps, and disappearances, the generals once again claimed that the women were merely crazy. And what was worse, the Madres were

Kaplan

accused of being traitors, anti-citizens, who gave the country a bad name by drawing the press.[13]

At the end of 1978, the military Junta, hoping to isolate the women and keep them from advertising their opposition to the violence, separated the women from their polis, the center of their life as citizens.[14] Authorities closed off the Plaza de Mayo with metal fences and mounted police, and then they planted ornate flower beds, breaking up the plaza into discrete gardens. Although the doors of the cathedral on the Plaza were barred to them, the women found refuge every Thursday at different churches. Soon, as they got more publicity as good mothers who, despite official silence about kidnapping and murder, broke the silence by asserting their maternal identity, they returned to the Plaza. The danger continued for the women who continued to march on Thursdays, while using their other days to go from jail to jail and ministry to ministry in search of their children. They were accused as subversives, traitors to the state. They saw their husbands and other children loose their jobs, and they faced opprobrium from their neighbors who believed that they and their children were threats to the Western, Christian values the Junta claimed to be upholding against the Communist threat.

It would be nice to say that the Madres had won the conscience of their country people and forced the overthrow the military government, but, in fact, the 1982 Malvinas or

Falkland War did that by demonstrating the weakness of the armed forces and belying the Junta's claims to have brought Argentina to the pinnacle of greatness as a world power. Seemingly successful in using nationalism to unite the country, the Junta embarked on war with great public support. Only the Madres refused to march to the drum of nationalism. The Falklands war, which lasted from April to June 1982, effectively discredited the military Junta and revealed the Madres maternal identity as an alternative source of citizenship, one opposed to the national identity the Junta proclaimed.

Over the course of their development, the Madres' identity had radically changed. As Madre Elida Busi de Galletti explained: "With the passage of time, the group had been growing, not only in number but in maturity. Their work, confrontation, and their school, the street. The dialogue, the interchange of ideas, the avid reading of every possible source of information or commentary, aided their analytical abilities. And many issues they had known intuitively began to become clarified and made conscious. There was no room for sectarian positions or differences in fundamental beliefs. Having a child disappear is what made us sisters: the same pain, the same struggle."[15]

Simply by becoming Madres, women became conscious of how they had ignored their place as citizens in favor of their roles as mothers. As Hebe de Bonafine explained: "My

Kaplan

life had been the life of a housewife--washing, ironing, cooking and bringing up my children, just like you're always taught to do, believing that everything else was nothing.... Then I realized that that wasn't everything, that I had another world too. You realize you're in a world where you have to do a lot of things."[16]

Shrewd and politically sophisticated, the Madres transformed their initial sense of victimhood into a strategy. They played on the contradiction that lies between sentimentalized views of mothers and the state. For example, they felt and projected the idea that they would have been bad mothers if they failed to seek their children. Only by hunting for their lost children would they be defending family values. Portraying themselves as eternally suffering victims, they stood up against fear.[17]

"Most people who protested against human-rights violations during the dictatorship did so only after their own kin disappeared, not those of their neighbors. They protested as victims, not as citizens," according to one observer.[18] The Madres certainly fit his description. María del Rosario recalled her own initial behavior: "When you go out to the street like that you don't have a clear motive, you have the anxiety of the loss of a child, the desperation, and when you begin to fight you realize the struggle isn't about a child, it's about a system which destroys everyone who thinks, everyone who disagrees."[19]

Alejandro Diago, one of the people in Argentina who has studied the Madres most closely, claims that "they negate the idea of maternity that had come down through the generations, the notion that it is exclusively an individual act."[20] And Hebé de Bonafini argues that the Madres have raised some new possibilities for women, the most important of which is the possibility of the "socialization of motherhood."[21]

Though the Madres were neither the first human rights group nor the most effective during the Dirty War, they were the most identifiable and the group whose identity could form a bulwark against the authority of the military Junta. In the Madres' public displays, they conjured up those who had disappeared into what the Nazis had called "Night and Fog;" and, by emphasizing their children's identity, they counteracted the anonymity of the disappeared, if only in photographs and silhouettes drawn on streets and walls. During the seven years when state terrorism had crushed most other forms of resistance and the other human rights groups worked more circumspectly, the Madres created a new sense of citizenship, albeit one rooted in a maternal identity that enabled them to pose an alternative to the authoritarian regime that ruled Argentina.

Increasingly, as an organization, the Madres proceeded to carry their difference with the government to a demand for justice rooted in human rights. An article published by

the Madres in El Porteño in June of 1984 stated their views about citizenship quite clearly. They believe that participation is necessary to promote democracy. "All Argentines must work to prevent future coups. But this active participation also means that we must voice publicly if necessary, our disagreement with policies or decisions that we judge to be of dubious effectiveness or to be mistaken. It is our obligation to do so, since this is the duty of all good citizens within the framework of a pluralistic and free democracy in which dissent should be expressed in a civilized manner."[22]

Continuing to address questions of citizenship and democracy, the Madres published an editorial in their newspaper

> To this president, who claims to be democratic, it is necessary to explain, once again, in case he's forgotten, what the meaning of 'national' is to us. What is authentically national is a population who develop the wealth of this country for their own benefit; it is to receive an adequate wage, to have enough food, to have a home; it is to be able to educate our children, to have health protection, to improve our intellectual and technical capacity, to have our own culture and to have freedom of expression; it is to have armed forces to drive [trucks], planes and boats which transport troops and materials to

> places of natural disaster, who work with the people in an efficient and rapid way; it is to have a police force which protects freedom and respects all citizens; it is to have impartial judges who guarantee justice; it is to have duties and rights which can be exercised freely; it is simply, to have the right to life, but with dignity. [23]

Crossroads, South Africa

Few realize the role women's identity as mothers played in helping to undermine apartheid, which not only separated the races but denied Black women the privileges that accompanied their obligations as mothers. Nothing shaped apartheid more than the Black Urban Areas Act of 1945. By prohibiting the mobility of Black people, including mothers, and by defining citizenship in such a way that it was nearly impossible for Black women to be citizens, the law effectively linked motherhood and citizenship. In order to qualify for residence rights in the cities, Black people had "to produce proof that they were born [in the city] and [had] lived [in the city] all their lives; or were contract workers who [had] worked continuously for one employer in the area for at least 10 years or for more than one employer for at least 15 years"; or were wives and unmarried sons and daughters, under the age of 18, of those men who qualif[ied]; or had special permission from the "manager of a labour bureau to reside in an area for a set period."[24]

"Influx control" regulations, replaced by so-called "orderly urbanization" rules in July 1986, permitted the South African government to monitor the movement of Black labor through the passbook, an internal passport listing employment and residential history. Representing the fifteen percent of the population that was white, authorities imposed pass laws not only to regulate labor but to assure that there was no urban unemployment and no public services expended on anyone, least of all mothers, who were not employed for wages at that moment. Willing to do almost anything to remain, approximately ninety percent of women who lived in the townships did some form of domestic labor.[25] Despite periodic work, Black women were effectively undocumented workers, aliens in their own country. Pass laws meant that people of color, especially women, negotiated almost every move they made with some official of the state: As if they were out on parole, they had to check in every few months and plead with some unsympathetic bureaucrat that special conditions, such as a child's illness or their own pregnancy, required them to remain in the city. Women's constant negotiations to preserve their families turned maternal identity into a public rather than a private issue for African women.

The law restricted older Africans, those without steady employment, and many Black women with children to "Homelands" or "Bantustans, "which lacked schools,

hospitals, and job categories in industry or agriculture. Effectively robbing Black African women, the aged, and youth of their citizenship, these laws marked gradations of difference among people by color. Able-bodied African men gained passes for jobs in the mines or cities only when work was plentiful. Even when mothers received passes to the city to earn money, it was generally to serve as live-in housekeepers and nannies for other women's children. Staying with the white family, working six and one half days a week, not only precluded raising one's own children, but it exposed women to sexual attacks from the master of the house and his sons.

By withholding from African mothers the right to settle in the cities with their children, the South African government effectively prohibited Black women from forming a maternal urban identity as well as robbing them of other rights as citizens. As the government attempted to consolidate its power in the seventies, it imposed yet another layer of restrictions. According to the Admission of Persons to the Republic Regulation Act of 1972, which granted citizenship to Black South Africans in the Bantustans, "foreigners," a category which now included all Blacks, could be deported even if they had a legal job under the old [illegible].[26]

Despite being a native, Mrs. Regina Ntongana, having married a worker who came from the rural areas, was not

entitled to live in Cape Town. Once the "homelands" were created, women, children, and the aged were assigned to these deserts and wastelands where it was impossible to eke out a living. As Mrs. Ntongana explained to Josette Cole, a field worker for the Western Province Council of Churches, "We as women, we had a feeling because we were the people who really felt the pain. We were the ones who were staying in the Transkei and Ciskei. We were the ones with nowhere to go." Ma, as Mrs. Ntongana is called, did not want to leave her children and work full-time for a white family, as her own mother had done. She complained that "as women we were worried about a better future for our children. Never mind you are married or not, we wanted to stay together as family life...Our aim was to see our children growing up in front of us. We wanted to blow the government down to allow us to stay with our children. That's what made us come together as women."[27] Women like Regina Ntongana, by their struggle to establish homes in the cities, undermined apartheid.

Among the townships of South Africa, Sharpville and Soweto have become the best known abroad because of the massacres that took place in them. Yet Crossroads, outside Cape Town on the treeless, wind-swept sand dunes south of the airport, served as home to one-quarter of all the Black people in Cape Town. Envisioned by South African authorities as a transit camp whose inhabitants were en route to the rural Homelands, Crossroads and its collateral settlements

Kaplan

at KCT, Nyanga Bush, and Nyanga Extension became permanent home to about one-hundred-thousand people before most of them were driven out in May and June 1986.[28] But the violence of the outcry about Crossroads helped break the back of the government's policy of influx controls and led to the abandonment of passes.[29]

Crossroads appeared as a settlement in 1975. Because of the economic expansion of Cape Town between 1968 and 1974, migrants increased by over 56 percent, leading African contract laborers and their wives to establish informal, illegal housing. But as the recession began in 1973 and intensified over the following years, the government increased its efforts to restrict migration. The population of Crossroads was principally made up of people who came that year or the next from other squatter settlements and from elsewhere in Cape Town. Mrs. Ntongana, who was one of the founders of Crossroads, recalls about her neighbors that, "some people came from the townships, some were women who were staying with their men in the 'single' quarters. They come with their husbands here and built their homes. There were some people whose homes were demolished by the Board of Inspectors...."[30]

Because Cape Town was a Colored Preference Area, Blacks suffered special repression. They were harassed for pass violations and forced to pay more exorbitant fines there than in any other place in South Africa. And the majority of

those without passes were women.[31] Because authorities, hoping to consolidate Blacks in one place the more easily to ship them out, told them to go to Crossroads in 1975 and 1976, women assumed that they had a legitimate right to settle there. Listen to Mrs. Ntongana, speaking at the time: "We are resisting because the Inspectors said 'This is your area....'The Council took the people who were staying among Coloured People and brought them here. It is because we have no place. We want to stay with our husbands. Women have lost their husbands before--we don't want to lose our men. There was even a White inspector who told us to go to Crossroads. We were not aware that they were going to kill us here. We were in other areas and they said 'come to Crossroads.'"[32]

Beginning with no more than twenty shacks in February 1975, about four thousand people, living in approximately one-thousand shanties, filled Crossroads by April. In 1978, about twenty-thousand inhabitants in three-thousand hand-made dwellings, some painted in bright colors, filled an area of approximately two square miles in which only one street, the Street of Mice (Mpuku), had a name.[33] Literally creating homes from scraps of wood and metal found in dumps, tens of thousands of Black people had begun to put down roots in Cape Town by the seventies when the government intensified its enforcement of influx control legislation, driving out people they claimed were illegally in the Cape.

Kaplan

A month after the founding of the settlement of Crossroads in February 1975, the first eviction notices came, and the men and women formed separate committees to deal with the threat. Jane Yanta and Elizabeth Lutango led the ad hoc Women's Committee, which acted as a mutual aid society. They contacted the Black Sash.[34] By May, Crossroads was raided and the first attack ended with thirty-four arrests. One in habitant of Crossroads, Mrs. B, explained how surprised she and the other women were "because [they] had been told that this area was for Africans." She went on to say that "we could not take these notices seriously, because we had been told by some other inspectors to come here. When these notices expired the inspectors arrived and ...[said] they would proceed with demolition. This happened to three women. And after that we came together and decided to take up the issue with bantu affairs [the Bantu Administration Board] in the Observatory. We were a group of 58 women and made our plea to Mr. [Fanie] Botha [the local Bantu Affairs Commissioner]...." Having formed a collective identity as African mothers in the city, they refused to leave. Then they approached the Black Sash. "We had already made previous contact with the Black Sash. From then on we were arrested, would appear in court, be arrested again, several times, until 1976 ...."[35]

A representative of the Black Sash Advice Office remarked on the new found militancy of the women from

Crossroads: "[T]he one thing we noticed was that these women were very independent....When we told them that they were illegally in the area, they told us that in spite of that they were determined to stay. There was no question that they would obey the law. Now that was the first time that we had heard of that. Until 1975 when you did everything you could to get permission for a woman to stay, and you failed, she went. But the women of Crossroads were the first women to sit in our office and say...'We are not going'".[36]

Responding to their persecution and growing in political sophistication and sense of citizenship, many of the women at Crossroads became political activists merely to keep their households together. Regina Ntongana succeeded Jane Yanta as head of the Women's Committee in 1976. Ntongana explained how the Women's Committee gained its power: "Between 1975 and 1977 we came to be strong as women. We used to have meetings every day, sharing our views and thoughts on each and everything.... We decided we must have a few in front to lead so that we must be definitely sure who is going to work. So we elected thirteen women, I was one of them. At first the men didn't like it. They said we did things too fast...it wasn't easy for the men because they were working during the day...the women was going all over the place to find out what was going on....So we knew more than the men....Some of them were really jealous...they sometimes stopped us to have meetings."[37]

Kaplan

Survival also entailed working to win legal rights. In a victory against the Divisional Council and the Bantu Administration Board, people from Crossroads succeeded in having the site declared an Emergency Camp in June 1976. This designation entitled the community to have human waste and garbage removed and community water faucets provided for a fee of 10 Rand a month.[38]

Despite hardships, women in the squatter communities had frequently been able to create what one person called "strong spirit" and a "good feeling"-- a sense of citizenship.[39] The women, many of whom had travelled with their children from shanty town to shanty town until they reached Crossroads, sometimes overcame their individual pain to resist apartheid through a notion of citizenship rooted in their identity as mothers. Since many of the women were single heads of households, they had to be extraordinarily self-reliant. Collectively, they began to constitute a sub-culture devoted to survival and the sense that they even more than the men could assure it.

Marching on the Bantu Affairs Administration Board in Goodwood on June 7, 1978 in order to attract the media, over two hundred women from Crossroads confronted authorities. Too numerous to fit inside the Board's offices, the women invited the officials to meet them outside. When the men refused to come out to speak to the assembled crowd of women, they reluctantly agreed to allow seven delegates to

represent them. Speaking only in Xhosa and therefore forcing the authorities to summon a translator, the women demanded explanations about the destruction of the school and about the harassment they had been suffering: being arrested as they went for water, being prevented from working, and having husbands arrested on the way to work. The officials, ignoring the women's protestations that many of them had been born and lived their whole lives in Cape Town, demanded that they "return" to the "homelands." [40]

Recently recalling the old battles, Ma chuckled about how the women taunted the authorities. They knew the translator summoned from Langa, one of the oldest hostel's in the area. And, of course, he knew that the women spoke English and could understand everything the officials said. The bureaucrats claimed that they had repeatedly sent notice that most of the women were illegally in the Cape and therefore that they had no rights to housing or schools. The women told the translator that they received papers, but not understanding them, they used them for toilet paper. Anyway, Ma recalls their saying, they were there to discuss the officials' illegal action, not where the women lived.

The South African government found that when they sent their own armed forces against the women, the women humiliated them. When one group of police backed by attack dogs tried to drive women away from their homes, the women formed a circle and sang, as reporters snapped pictures.

Portraying themselves as defenseless victims, the women marched on public offices with the press in attendance when possible. Exploiting the women's independence from the men of their groups, South African authorities promoted the men's committee at Crossroads, making deals, enhancing the authority of some local men, and ultimately supporting them as they burnt down the homes of their fellow squatters in 1985. Nevertheless, many, Mrs. Ntongana among them, moved down the road, kept the memory of Crossroads alive, and led activists of all colors in forming permanent organizations such as the Surplus People's Project to work on housing and land use in the new South Africa.

Conclusion

The juxtaposition of women's identity as citizens with their roles as mothers is common among members of women's grass-roots movements today. Generalizations about the nature of women as contrasted with men is very common among non-feminist women, who frequently conflate their antagonism against male governmental authorities with their resentment toward men in their own parties, families, or communities. Going it alone, mothers pit their power against the authority of governments, making moral claims that lie in their right to exercise gendered citizenship

Since there is nothing biological about the identity of motherhood, the contents of which are so historically and culturally variable as to discount any unified self-

representation, it remains to explain why mothers acting as citizens have wielded so much power in Argentina against the Junta and in South Africa against apartheid.

In Argentina, despite the Junta's claims that the Madres were crazy, seditious, bad mothers who had raised terrorist children, the military could not simply assassinate all the Madres so long as they retained a public identity as mothers--one increasingly visible on television news screens throughout the world. The South African government could pass law upon law restricting citizenship for Blacks, and the world stood by. But mothers protecting their children's homes projected a different face of apartheid to the outside world, one the government was loath to broadcast.

Whatever the ideological underpinnings of a government, it cannot appear to oppose maternal obligations and the privileges that go with them. Social order has heretofore rested on various circumscribed notions of citizenship that underestimated gender by forging justifications in terms of universal rights. But in modern states, at least, where social order rests as much on consumption as production, on appearances of brutality as much as on the acts themselves, the place of maternal identity in claiming citizenship has actually increased. Women in grass-roots movements throughout the world have increasingly used identities as mothers and housewives to legitimate their struggles to

control more of society's resources. Whether using maternal identity as a strategy or as a justification for acting in public--as the Madres and the women at Crossroads seem to have done, many women have been finding that they have greater rights as mothers than as citizens.

In grass-roots, popular movements, especially those of poorer women who, like the Madres and the women at Crossroads, the role played by the solidarity developed from joint activity and sense of cultural citizenship overcomes diffidence about abilities to make political decisions, intervene in the governing process, and even assume leadership positions in movements for political change.

Perhaps the political power of the term "cultural citizenship" becomes clearer in the formulation of Rina Benmayor, Rosa M. Torruellas, and Ana L. Juarbe when they argue that cultural citizenship "[affirms and asserts]... perceived collective rights which have been ignored or denied by the dominant society and its legal cánon. Defined in this way, cultural citizenship is clearly oppositional, articulating the needs of peoples who do not hold state power. [Their] usage of the term 'citizenship' is not synonymous with legal membership in the nation state. But rather, it is based on a notion of human rights."[41] I would amend this statement to say that cultural citizenship in the cases we have just examined entails a sense of community, state, or nation based on a practical notion of

Kaplan

human rights. It remains for these movements and the people who support them to articulate a more fully developed theory of justice based on difference. The practice has already begun.

Kaplan

1. Iris Marion Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 10.

2. Rina Benmayor, Rosa M. Torruellas, Ana L. Juarbe, "Responses to Poverty among Puerto Rican Women: Identity, Community, and Cultural Citizenship," New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, 1992, p. 4.

3. My translation of Elizabeth Jelin, "Los Movimientos Sociales en la Argentina contemporánea: una introducción a su estudio", en Los Nuevos Movimientos Sociales/1 (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1985, pp. 14; 18, as cited in Piera Paola Oria, de la casa a la plaza (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva América, nd), p. 65.

4. Jo Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared (London and Boston: ZED and South End Press, 1989), p. 11.

5. "Argentina Nunca Más," Index on Censorship, March 1986, pp. 9-13; p. 12 gives the following breakdown by percentage:

Blue-collar workers	30.2
Students	21.0
White-collar workers	17.9
Professionals	10.7
Teachers	5.7
Self-employed and others	5.0
Housewives	3.8
Military conscripts and members of the security services	2.5
Journalists	1.8

Kaplan

Actors, performers, etc.	1.3
Nuns, priests, etc.	0.3

6. Matilde Mellibovsky, Circulo de la Amor Sobre la Muerte (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Pensamiento Nacional, 1990), p. 40.

7. Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 29.

8. Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 66; Marjorie Agosín, The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (Linea Fundadora). The Story of Renée Epelbaum, 1976-1985. Translated by Janice Molloy (Trenton, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, Inc. 1990), p. 85.

9. Piera Paola Oria, de la casa a la plaza (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva América,nd), p. 113; see another account in Historia de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Buenos Aires: Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 1989), p. 5; translated quotation found in Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 54.

10. For a detailed, near contemporary account of the disappearances from the Santa Cruz church on December 8, followed by the abductions of Azucena Villaflor and the second nun on December 10, see Jean-Pierre Bousquet, Las Locas de la laza de Mayo (Buenos Aires: El Cid Editor, 1983), pp. 73-80; see also Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, pp. 68-69.

11. Bonafini in Diago, Conversando con las Madres, pp. 122-123; Oria, de la casa, p. 115.

Kaplan

12. Bousquet, Las Locas de la Plaza de Mayo, pp. 102-104.

13. Bousquet, Las Locas, pp. 97-106. For the Madre kidnapped, see pp. 105-106; 183-190; Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 73.

14. Fisher, The Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 90.

15. My translation of Elida Busi de Galletti as quoted in Oria, de la casa, p. 143.

16. Quoted in Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 91.

17. Amos Elon's paraphrase of Borges appears as a quotation taken from Elon, "Letter from Argentina," The New Yorker, July(?) 1982, p.79.

18. Quoted in Elon, "Letter from Argentina," p. 79.

19. Quoted in Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 149.

20. My translation from Diago, Conversando con las Madres, p. 34.

21. Translated and quoted in Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 158.

22. Quoted in Ag[illegible] The Mothers, p.72.

23. Cited in Fisher, Mothers of the Disappeared, p. 143 from From the editorial of Madres de Plaza de Mayo, No. 2, January 1985 cited in footnote 16, p. 148.

24. For a comprehensive survey of influx control legislation and its effect on housing for Blacks, see Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walk[illegible] the Surplus People Project, The Surplus People: [illegible]als in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985), especially pp. 2[illegible]

See also, "Pass Law Misery," Cape Herald, February 9, 1984, p. 4.

25. Jane Barnstable, "Helping them to help each other," The Cape Times, July 10, 1979, p. 6.

26. "Pass Law Misery," Cape Herald, February 9, 1984, p. 4. For a review of the legislation see Platzky and Walker, Surplus People, pp. 141-142.

27. Because of the need at the time to keep her identity secret, Mrs. Regina Ntongana, the chair of the Women's Committee in Crossroads, asked Josette Cole simply to use her initial when writing about her. For the quotation, see Cole, "' When Your Life is Bitter You Do Something' Women and Squatting in the Western Cape: Tracing the origins of Crossroads and the role of women in its struggle," in Dave Kaplan (ed.) South African Research Papers. Department of Economic History (University of Cape Town P. B. Rondebosch 7700 South Africa, June 1986), p. 16.

28. Since many of the people at Crossroads were there without passes, it is impossible to get an accurate count of the population at any time. For the figure of 105,000 see Marianne Thamm and Glynnis Underhill, "Focus: Crossroads 'war zone,'" Cape Times, May 21, 1986 available in the Surplus People Project Resource Collection: Press Clips, Crossroads, Box 1 (Pre-1992), File Crossroads, 1985/86/87.

29. The significance of Crossroads to the struggle for democracy and justice in South Africa became apparent to me

Kaplan

when I read Josette Cole, Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression 1976-1986 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987) and her earlier monograph, "'When Your Life is Bitter, You Do Something'". Cole, a volunteer for the Western Province Council of Churches, supported the people at Crossroads who were resisting expulsions.

30. Mrs. N (really Mrs. Regina Ntongana) quoted in "We Will Not Move" (Cape Town, Publication of the National Union of South African Students, 1978), p. 21.

31. Pamela Reynolds, Childhood in Crossroads: Cognition and Society in South Africa (Cape Town, Johannesburg, Grand Rapids, Michigan: David Philip Publisher and William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), pp. 208-209.

32. "Women's Movement Statement Following the Raid," We Will Not Move, p. 69.

33. Reynolds, Childhood in Crossroads, pp. 16; 97; Andrew Silk, A Shanty Town in South Africa: The Story of Modderdam (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), p. 83; Cole, "When Your Life is Bitter You Do Something," p. 19.

34. Cole, Crossroads, p. 13.

35. Mrs. B. in "We will not move", pp. 24-25.

36. N. Robb of the Advice office, in an interview with Josette Cole (Cape Town, 1984) quoted in Cole, Crossroads, pp. 13-14. She continued by saying "We had to have a special meeting because up to then we'd only defended those who were legally here and help them to get their rights. Now we were

being asked to defend people with no rights and this was quite a policy decision (for us). Cited in Cole, "When Your Life is Bitter You Do Something," p. 42.

37. Quoted in Cole, Crossroads, p. 20.

38. Cole, Crossroads, pp.16-17.

39. Quoted in Silk, A Shanty Town, p. 31.

40. Mrs. Ntongana is the best source for the meeting and how the women viewed it. It is almost certain that it is her reflection that appears in "'WE ARE NOT MOVING' An account of the Women of Crossroads delegation to BAAB-following police pass raids on the camp," We Will Not Move, p. 68.

41. Rina Benmayor, Rosa M. Torruellas, Ana L. Juarbe, "Responses to Poverty among Puerto Rican Women: Identity, Community, and Cultural Citizenship," New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, 1992, p. 72.