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Toward a Vision of Sexual and Economic Justice  
Thought Paper

## **Sexual and Economic Justice Preparatory Questions**

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### **1. What are the possibilities for collaboration between and among social movements with respect to global economic and sexual justice?**

Over the past few years, the social movements have taken distinct positions over sexual diversity, especially regarding sexual orientation<sup>1</sup>. As a result of proposals by the South/South LGBT Dialogue, the World Assembly of Social Movements has included in recent years clear pronouncements in its Declaration and mobilisation plans. The 2006 call was worded as follows: "We affirm our respect for sexual diversity and the autonomy of individuals. We respect each person's right to freely make decisions about their body and sexuality. We reject any form of discrimination related to personal choice and we call for support of the mobilization on June 28 for the full recognition of sexual diversity."<sup>2</sup>

The World Social Forum<sup>3</sup> and the Americas Social Forum<sup>4</sup> also included these principles in its equality policies, thus incorporating diversities and gender as central hubs, as a means of broaching of a number of inherent problems in its main proposal: to think and build "another possible world", as well as for dealing with a group of related issues concerning resistances to globalisation. As the la widest worldwide initiative in history, plural interaction between different intellectual and activist movements concerned with sexual diversity issues with a great diversity of sectors, has led to an unprecedented opening-up and coming together of inter-sectional visions and initiatives.

On the other hand, the feminist as well and the LGBT movements, often focusing on the past regarding very specific issues, have been developing and/or making visible a great diversity of initiatives and demands with multiple proposals in this new century. The most notable example is the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, part of the World March of Women, which includes the most crucial issues for women and the world. These issues relating to sexual justice are present and are part of the broad vision of change regarding peace, economic justice, poverty, etc.

In the same way, as part of the wide ranging dynamics concerning LGBT participation and content, networks and movements have initiated and developed proposals that converge with those of the model of change<sup>5</sup>. For example, the LGBT South/South Dialogue is part

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Irene (Ed.), La Otra América en Debate, Aportes del Foro Social Américas, Foro Social Américas, Ecuador 2006, 494 p.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.movimientos.org/fsm2006/show\\_text.php3?key=6428](http://www.movimientos.org/fsm2006/show_text.php3?key=6428)

<sup>3</sup> [www.fsm.org.br](http://www.fsm.org.br)

<sup>4</sup> [www.forosocialamericas.org](http://www.forosocialamericas.org) [www.forosocialamericas.org/index.phtml.en](http://www.forosocialamericas.org/index.phtml.en)

<sup>5</sup> Leon Irene, Mtetwa Phumi, Globalization: LGBT Alternatives, LGBT South-South Dialogue, Ecuador 2003, 97 pgs

of collective processes such as the Web Community of Social Movements<sup>6</sup> (made up by the small peasant/small farmers', urban, women's, antiracist, etc., movements) is a member of the WSF International Council, and is an active member of the World Assembly of Social Movements. The political confluence leads to a joint, progressive appropriation of sexual rights proposals.

Dozens of regional and local initiatives are a reflection of this rich process of inter-action embarked on by the social movements on a world scale. But it should also be noted that the most important theoretical and political proposals emerging, such as de-globalisation, alter-globalisation, among others, are based on visions of inclusion, which pose daily reality as a stage for possible changes. Issues such as the marketing of women's bodies, the trafficking of people, the right to personal autonomy, etc., are now part of this analytical universe.

An important aspect of recent developments in the movement of alternatives to globalisation is pluralism, the inter-action between the political, academic, militant and 'popular' spheres, as a creative process in imagining another possible world. One of the outcomes of this imagining of a diverse universe, with multiple practices and ways of thinking, is managing to develop discursive convergences into concrete actions. In other words, the main door open for considering economic and sexual justice at the same time is related to proposals for changing the model through concrete measures for making equality visible and sustaining social, political, economic, body, identity, etc., self-determination.

## **2. What are the obstacles, both in political activism and conceptual representations, to responding effectively to sexual and economic injustice? What keeps activists and scholars from approaching sexual and economic justice as co-constitutive?**

Sexual justice is a recent concept and its intersection with the economy is new. It is a focus that is only just beginning to define itself and that, in order to establish itself, needs to be sustained from multiple points of analysis.

On the other hand, predominating views, both with academia and society; consider issues of economic justice as an added factor, set in the "social" sphere, not in the economic one. From this perspective, the solution to problems that are a result of economic injustice are dealt with from partial views and through localised and focused policies and palliative measures, generally "assistencialist", aimed at sectors considered to be living in extreme poverty, quantified by parameters unrelated to issues of sexual justice.

Issues regarding sexual justice are, generally, seen as issues of concern only to minorities, removed from economic considerations, especially macro-economics. This leads to it being included within sociology or anthropology, and its virtual inexistence in economics.

Economic dimensions of sexuality continue to require research and analysis; although many feminist studies have revealed the power in sexuality, this has not been widely

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<sup>6</sup> [www.movimientos.org](http://www.movimientos.org)

related to the economy. The focus on the commercialisation of the body is clearly an economic issue. However, this is not the case as regards to private relations and sexuality.

In the Latin American case, the economic model, due to its exclusionary effects, made the rights won by women in the past decades inapplicable. Both the carrying-out and the obstacles for them to exercise their rights, are intrinsically linked to the way the connection between gender relations with the structural, social, economic, cultural and political situations. This means that access to equality is produced proportionally, to their positioning within relations of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, place of origin, among others. This situation has generated a set of priorities among many sectors, for whom sexual justice does not figure as a priority.

In the same way, in this same region, the processes of change currently taking place in most Latin American countries start off from a political vision aware of intersectoralism. Many countries have promoted a process of public development policies (the citizens' revolution in Ecuador, for example, includes sexual diversity as a priority issue in its strategic development plan). However, conservative sectors in a number of countries maintain their influence in academia and society in general; furthermore, ultra-conservative groups have formed and strengthened in the sectors, promoting the fight against sexual diversity, abortion, contraception, sexual education, etc.

In this situation, the challenges are many. One is to ensure that the inter-relationship between economic and sexual justice are visibilised and treated as political issues, concerned with power relations between different sectors that fight over societies' orientation and definition.

But another great challenge is to reveal the inter-link between relations of economic and sexual power as being part of the dynamics of the existing model: globalisation. And, finally, to subvert the existing unjust and patriarchal vision of "integrating excluded groups into the economy", especially in stereotyped areas, in order to establish one in which these are considered to be economic subjects, with equal rights. This would contribute to see the intersections between different aspects of people's lives and pose them as questions of justice.