

REVIEW ESSAYS

Feminists Question Revolution

LORRAINE BAYARD DE VOLO
University of Kansas

What does revolution have to offer feminism? What have women done for revolution? With these books, we have two scholars examining the relationship between feminism and revolution through cases in Latin America. In *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution*, Karen Kampwirth compares Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Chiapas—and in the process makes important contributions to both theory and our understandings of the cases themselves. In this exceptionally well-written book, Kampwirth asks why, in all three cases, many women separated from their respective revolutionary movements in the postwar era to create autonomous feminist organizations.

Kampwirth's fieldwork and analysis is the most extensive in the Nicaraguan case, and the two chapters devoted to it respond to several key questions. For example, what accounts for women's organizations' success or failure in implementing feminist reforms? In comparing two Sandinista women's organizations' contributions to the contra war, she finds that the women's branch of the Rural Workers Association successfully argued that their contribution to the war effort (raising women's productivity) required feminist reforms (p. 33). In contrast, the Sandinista mass women's organization AMNLAE (Nicaraguan Women's Association, Luisa Amanda Espinosa) had little to offer beyond unquestioning loyalty to the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) leadership, and thus their feminist initiatives were put on the backburner (p. 34). The conclusion: feminist policies are more viable when a women's organization has material benefits to offer.

Given the Sandinista commitment to social equality, what explains the general reluctance to proceed with radical gender reforms? The answer is complicated, and Kampwirth points to a variety of reasons: 1) a leadership of men who had internalized sexist norms; 2) the Marxist notion that class transformation would radically transform

Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, by **Karen Kampwirth**. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004. 279 pp. \$28.00 paper. ISBN: 0-89680-239-6.

The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba, by **Julie D. Shayne**. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004. 210 pp. \$23.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8135-3484-4.

gender relations; 3) the influence of Catholicism; 4) a reaction against feminism associated with the previous regime; and 5) the FSLN's desire to not alienate potential supporters during the contra war (pp. 44–5). As Kampwirth points out, the FSLN did not risk much support by proceeding slowly with feminist reforms.

During the administration of Violeta Chamorro (1990–97), Kampwirth argues that it is the combined influence of the end of the war, the Sandinista loss of the presidency, and the rise of anti-feminism that explains the emergence of a vibrant, autonomous women's movement. Interestingly, as Kampwirth would have it, it was this unintended outcome—an autonomous women's movement—that is one of the most important legacies of the Sandinista revolution. The movement was led by highly skilled Sandinista women who had gained political organizing skills through the revolution.

Again in El Salvador, the postwar growth of the women's movement was an unintended outcome of revolution. Here, Kampwirth highlights the problems of vanguardism, in which leaders claimed privileged insights into women's "true" interests (p. 76). The major women's groups were subordinate within a hierarchical relationship with the various male-dominated revolutionary groups.

Kampwirth focuses primarily on the mid-prestige activists of the war years, who later, as leaders of women's organizations, pressed for autonomy from former guerrilla groups. Kampwirth adds new insights into the phenomenon of the feminist "transnationalization," examining the influence of foreign feminists, particularly Nicaraguan feminists, on the Salvadoran movement as well as the impact of participation in regional feminist gatherings (p. 100).

For Chiapas, Kampwirth asks why the Zapatistas differed from other guerrilla organizations in the region with regards to gender issues. Her answer focuses on two processes. First, changes to the indigenous community, the Church, and civil society produced a unique political context at the local level. Second, the Zapatistas emerged in an era of post-Cold War globalization, in which a more powerful international feminism could successfully pressure this guerrilla organization to incorporate certain feminist priorities. Kampwirth also points to the important distinctions between the FSLN military-society relations that focused on mass mobilization and the Zapatista promotion of civil society (p. 116). The former took on a corporatist model in which mass organizations functioned under the control of the Sandinista state while the latter incorporated a respect for the autonomy of activists.

Kampwirth writes that the inclusiveness of the Zapatista rhetoric and agenda attracted women from both urban mestiza groups and the predominantly rural indigenous groups (p. 119). This, in turn, set in motion a series of statewide women's conferences and linkages with women's organizations in Mexico City. She suggests that by 1997, indigenous women had gained enough organizational resources to gather independently and promote their own demands, including Zapatista women, without being directed by them (p. 142). The Zapatista and liberation theology discourse stressing egalitarianism also helps explain the empowerment of women in Chiapas, especially indigenous women, and in turn, the development of a broader women's movement (p. 163).

While the in-depth analyses of each case provides rich new insights, the analytical highlight of the book is found in the final chapter, which engages in comparison of additional cases—Iran and Poland—to build

theory, particularly in relation to the work of Valentine Moghadam (1997). Here, Kampwirth shows that there is no automatic association between revolution and feminism. Indeed, Iran and Poland demonstrate that revolution can result in greater gender inequality, even when women play a prominent role. In both cases, the pre-revolutionary regimes imposed top-down challenges to traditional gender relations in a heavy-handed manner or through counter-productive policies (p. 168–9). Women's emancipation was thus associated with dictatorship and was rejected by most revolutionaries. Adding to Moghadam's stress on the factors of the pre-revolutionary regime and society—the previous gender system, the nature and goals of the movement, and the role of women in the guerrilla—Kampwirth argues that religious tradition, feminist resources, and the impact of international feminism on the guerrilla are also critical factors in determining the atmosphere for feminists following successful insurrection (p. 179).

Shayne takes on related questions in her book *The Revolution Question*: "What was it about the roles of women that made them so important to revolutionary movements, and how exactly did these experiences lead to feminism?" (p. 3). These questions emerged out of her earlier work on El Salvador, which in this book she applies also to Chile and Cuba. The main contributions in this book involve applying Shayne's conceptual frameworks to processes and problems that have been identified by others (Chinchilla 1990; Lobao 1990; Stephen 1997; Luciak 2001). First, she elaborates on the concept of "revolutionary feminism": "a grassroots movement that is both pluralist and autonomous in structure. It seeks to challenge sexism as inseparable from larger political structures not explicitly perceived to be patriarchal in nature, but from the perspective of feminists, entirely bound to the oppression of women" (p. 9).

Second, she develops her notion of "gendered revolutionary bridges," which serves to highlight the crucial (though often less visible) roles women play in revolutionary movements. For example, in El Salvador, Shayne details how three predominately women's organizations, in working with the popular sector, utilizing nonviolent tactics, and challenging governmental injustice,

served as crucial bridges between unincorporated civilians and the guerrilla (pp. 33–4). Shayne emphasizes throughout the book how femininity served to camouflage women's support for and participation in rebellion; that is, women militants working clandestinely aroused less suspicion and thus had somewhat greater mobility in hostile territory (pp. 43–4). These findings reinforce those of others studying women's opposition to military regimes (Bouvard 1994; Fisher 1989, Schirmer 1993).

From her comparative project, Shayne concludes that revolutionary feminism is conditional upon five factors (p. 10). First, women revolutionaries challenge socially prescribed roles, which they do simply by their presence in the guerrilla and through the nature of their involvement. Second, women are educated as activists through their experiences in the revolutionary movement. Third, political opportunity provides the organizational and ideological space for mobilization. Fourth, women revolutionaries sense that their own liberation as women remains incomplete. Fifth, and an outcome of the previous factor, they develop a collective feminist consciousness.

Both books would be appropriate for undergraduate and graduate courses. A particular strength in both is the original interview material, which provides fresh insights into the relationship between revolutionary movements and feminism. Kampwirth collected interviews and did the fieldwork for this project for over a decade and has published numerous articles on her three cases, in addition to another book (Kampwirth 2002). Accordingly, the depth of knowledge coming from sustained fieldwork and analysis, as well as strong familiarity with the vast secondary literature, is evident in Kampwirth's work.

The depth of expertise and original documentation one finds in Shayne's chapters on El Salvador are not replicated in her other two cases, testifying to the difficulties of managing comparative qualitative research (particularly in relatively closed societies, such as Cuba). Although Shayne conducted some archival work and participant observation, she relies most heavily on her interviews. Richer and more productive case studies might have emerged through a more conscious attempt at "triangulation"—the use of

several data-gathering methods to produce a checks-and-balances system such that misperceptions, false statements by informants, and other potential problems are more readily revealed or rooted out. Furthermore, Shayne conducted most of the roughly 50 interviews listed in her bibliography in 1998–99, a relatively short time frame for fieldwork in three countries. Setting up interviews in several countries, arranging sufficient funds and travel time, and mastering the cases themselves, with the vast amount of secondary literature, is a time-consuming task, to say the least. It is not surprising, then, to discover that some cases are explored more richly and deeply than others. These issues aside, Shayne does indeed compile the necessary evidence across three cases to support her theory on gendered revolutionary bridges, which will surely prove to be a useful concept for future scholarship. Both authors should be applauded for the obvious passion and respect they bring to their work and the women with whom they spoke, which make for two texts contributing important insights into the "revolution question."

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Equal Housing Opportunities: Conflict in Detroit in the Jazz Age

REYNOLDS FARLEY
University of Michigan
 renf@isr.umich.edu

Hurricane Katrina's destruction vividly reminded us how thoroughly whites are segregated from blacks in the neighborhoods of the nation's older cities. These two excellent books remind us about the long struggle to integrate neighborhoods by focusing upon the leading civil rights trial of the 1920s—one involving murder, a tragic hero, racial passing, the nation's most prominent litigator, the KKK, a future justice of the Supreme Court and, most recently, the winner of the National Book Award.

The two books describe the same events. Ossian Sweet was born in rural Florida to poor but intellectually oriented black parents. Indeed, he carried the name of a third-century Gaelic poet. Fortunately, his parents encouraged him to leave the phosphorous pits of rural Florida to attend Wilberforce College where he was a diligent student who spent his summers employed as a waiter in Detroit. He completed medical school at Howard University in 1921 and then returned to booming Detroit to initiate his career. He married and, two years later recognizing his need to learn more about innovations in radiology, spent a year in Europe studying both in Berlin and at Madam Curie's institute in Paris. He returned to Detroit in 1924.

Jim Crow neighborhoods were a creation of the World War I era. Prior to that war, a small black elite lived where they could afford in Detroit and other northern cities. Dr. Sweet's wife's family and their black peers lived in largely white Detroit neighborhoods. When southern blacks came for industrial jobs, racial residential segregation was rigorously enforced. In 1925, after living with his wife's family, Dr. Sweet purchased an attractive home on Detroit's East Side. He had not been involved in the city's active civil rights movement nor is there any evidence that he wanted to bear a torch for integration. Apparently, he just wanted an appropriate home for a young physician's family. After

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age, by **Kevin Boyle**. New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2004. 432 pp. \$26.00 cloth. ISBN: 0805071458.

One Man's Castle: Clarence Darrow in Defense of the American Dream, by **Phyllis Vine**. New York, NY: Amistad, 2004. 337 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 0066214157.

making arrangements to purchase the residence on Garland, he got many messages from his potential neighbors suggesting that he would not be welcomed. Indeed, in the summer of 1925, half-dozen middle-class black families were forcefully chased from Detroit neighborhoods they sought to enter despite verbal promises by the city police to protect them.

Just before his family occupied the house in September, 1925, Dr. Sweet asked the Detroit police for assistance and they agreed to guard his home. But he had little faith in the police and, now fully realizing the dangers to his family and home, he decided to assert his rights and protect his family. He had his brother and eight friends, one a federal officer, stay with him bringing along a large supply of arms and ammunition. During the first night, rude crowds merely taunted the Sweets but on the second night, violence broke out. There are two versions of what happened. Police officers contended that although whites walked along and verbally assaulted the Sweets, there was no violence. The Sweets reported that their house was pelted with rocks for several hours with increasing intensity while police merely watched. After a particularly violent pelting of the home, shots rang out from the second story window. One member of the crowd was injured and Leon Breiner was killed