**Vision Statement**

**16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Blogathon**

A collaborative project co-hosted by genderED at University of Edinburgh, the Gendered Violence Research Network at the University of New South Wales, and the Centre for Publishing Dr B R Ambedkar University Delhi

**16 Days Blogathon 2021: Gender-Based Violence: histories, legacies, myths and memories**

This year’s 16-day Blogathon (25 November to 10 December) will explore the powerful undercurrents that connect past and present, highlighting the historical and longitudinal dimensions that have shaped narratives, experiences and activisms surrounding gender-based violence today. We hope to draw attention to voices and perspectives from multiple geographies and time periods (from antiquity to the very recent past) accessed through the formal archive and oral history as well as through literature and the creative arts, including traditional music, poetry and storytelling.

Through legend, myth and collective memory, the past shapes contemporary understandings, cultures and narratives of gender, violence and resistance – leaving significant residues and traces. How do we perform, interpret or listen to these stories now? How do we channel the emotions they preserve or evoke? What insights do they bring that help us to respond to and combat gender-based violence—or violence against women and girls—in the present?

Colonialism, imperialism and other systems of political and economic domination have served to compound injustices based on gender with those of race, ethnicity, indigeneity and class. Across time and space, slavery, caste and other modes of domination have worked through and actively legitimised gender-based violence committed by those in positions of power and privilege by denying rights and the status of personhood to enslaved or otherwise subordinate people. Recognising, naming, and exposing the ways in which violence against women and girls has been used as a weapon of rule are important mechanisms for understanding the past’s continuing resonance in the present, correcting the public record, and working towards restorative justice. How do we take these processes forward? Can we identify and hear the voices of those who experienced gender-based violence in the past, drawing on them as a rich resource to inspire and motivate activists today?

Changing the law – to criminalise rather than entrench gender-based violence – has been a protracted, contradictory, and uneven historical process. In many societies, marginalised men have been disproportionately and sometimes unjustly prosecuted for gender-based violent crimes, while male perpetrators from powerful social groups have often remained beyond the reach of the law. What can activists learn from previous campaigners, movements, and moments of resistance about what worked and what prevented progress? And from the women and girls who spoke out or used legal and other mechanisms to pursue justice?

A historical approach also helps us to denaturalise the landscape in which we currently confront gender-based violence. What is at stake in how we name and categorise that violence? What are the historical connections and differences between the myriad forms of violence grouped under the heading ‘gender-based violence’? What have been—and what are—the effects of this violence and opposition to it in cementing and challenging patriarchal and other
relations of power? Are bodily and psychological violations experienced by different individuals and groups, from indigenous people in rural areas to marginalized communities in urban centres, best approached as shared or separate experiences?

Listening as past voices surface -- from the archive or through myth, story-telling, truth telling and criminal and media investigation -- provokes reflection on striking continuities of lived experience and feeling. These are powerful narratives that connect us through shared humanity, and through women’s shared though not identical experiences of living in patriarchal societies. But some of our blogathon contributions may also wish to reflect on what has been excluded from formal archives or on how easy or difficult it is to listen, and on the ethical issues associated with this. Ultimately, a focus on histories, legacies, myths and memories gives us a very important tool. It helps us to identify more lucidly what is unique and distinct about the moment and location we inhabit. It helps us to understand where we have come from and realise the vision of where we want to be.

The 2021 curators:

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