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THE BARNARD CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN
TOWARDS A VISION OF SEXUAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE
PUBLIC LECTURES BY JOSEPHINE HO AND NAOMI KLEIN
NOVEMBER 29, 2007

Elizabeth Boylan: Welcome to Barnard. I am Elizabeth Boylan, the provost and dean of the faculty at Barnard, and we're thrilled to have such a wonderful, full audience, especially as the semester winds down. That's a special tribute to the topic tonight.

We are delighted to host this evening's lecture: "Towards A Vision of Sexual and Economic Justice." I wish to thank the Barnard Center for Research on Women for organizing this event. The Center is a vital part of Barnard's long commitment to feminism and leadership for social change, and this event is a fine example of the type of progressive conversation they work hard to promote.

I want to also thank the Overbrook Foundation for their generous funding of this lecture, as well as the Ford Foundation, which is supporting a follow-up colloquium tomorrow. This colloquium is an opportunity to bring together a group of scholars and activists from various part of the world who are working on the mutual configuration of sexual and economic justice.

Tonight's event will touch on a set of very urgent questions. What is sexual justice in a world where efforts to prevent the transmission of HIV face not just medical hurdles but social ones, too, because of sexual regulation and gender inequality?

What is economic justice in a world where the gap between the rich and poor widens steadily, and where 1.3 billion people—where 20 percent of the world's population—lives on less than one dollar a day?

Finally, what do sexual and economic justice have to do with each other? Tonight's speakers will also discuss ways of building more connections between the justice movements that tend to treat sexual and economic justice discreetly, instead of as inextricably linked.

Barnard Center for Research on Women is committed to continuing these conversations over the next year, providing the promise to forge new links and offer new frameworks. They will be publishing a report summarizing the outcome of the colloquium discussions as part of the New Feminist Solution Series. So please contact the Center if you are interested in receiving a copy.

Hopefully, we can all take part in working toward a new and more inclusive vision of justice. You can also pick up a copy of the Center's most recent report, *Women and the New Feminist Solution Series*, in the back of the room. And please do sign up for the mailing list.

And now, to introduce tonight's speakers—Janet Jakobsen, the director of the Barnard Center for Research on Women. I want to thank Janet publicly for the quality and the imagination that characterized the programming work that she and her Center colleagues do. Coming up with a schedule this semester, in particular, as we have dealt with the campus construction, has been a challenge that she has met creatively. So, here is Janet.

Janet Jakobsen: Good evening and welcome to Barnard. I, too, have a few thank yous to start out with. And this is usually the moment when I invite you to the next event of the semester at the Barnard Center for Research on Women. But this is our finale for this semester.

However, starting in January we will begin again, and if you want to get information about next semester's programs, all you have to do is sign up on the list at the back. So please do so.

I also want to thank Provost Elizabeth Boylan and, in particular, the Virginia C. Gildersleeve Lectureship at Barnard College, which provided the initial funding for this event, as well as the Overbrook Foundation, which Liz mentioned, for their support this evening; and the Ford Foundation for their support for tomorrow's colloquium.

In addition, I have to thank—especially because it's the end of the semester—the staff of the Barnard Center for Research on Women, particularly Lucy Trainor, who is our administrative assistant, and who did all of the logistical work to make sure that our speakers, the colloquium participants, and all of you got here tonight.

Hope Dector, who is our web designer and who handled a lot of the publicity, as well as the always-appreciated David Hopson, from the Communications Department. And then, Gisela Fosado, who is the associate director of the Center and who was a crucial member of the Planning Committee.

Finally, I need to say a word about Kate Bedford. Kate was a Mellon post-doctoral fellow in women's studies here at Barnard College, and she is now a research fellow at the law school at the University of Kent. And Kate was really the driving force behind the entire project, for which we are eternally grateful.

As Liz Boylan mentioned, this project is part of BCRW's New Feminist Solutions Series, and for that series we always partner either with another organization—the one that you can pick up in the back is done with an organization here in New York called A Better Balance Work and Family Legal Center—or with a member of the Barnard faculty.

In the past, however, all members of the Barnard faculty have been senior scholars. They have been very advanced in the profession and in their own work. But Kate is simply such an extraordinary young person, that when she had this idea, we knew that we should build on it. And without her, we would not be here, none of this, this evening. So thank you, to Kate Bedford.

For tonight, our topic is Sexual Justice, Economic Justice. On the one hand, the two are inseparable. If, for example, women are economically dependent on their sexual partners, can they ensure or even negotiate for safe sexual practices?

Clearly, without economic justice, sexual justice would not be possible. Moreover, if conservative movements the world over focus on a regulatory sexual agenda as a means of promoting their conservative economic agenda, is economic justice possible without sexual justice? Are they even two different things?

As we pursue this project—and it's been over two years in terms of research in producing it—it's been harder to discern any separation between the two. We actually began calling this event the Eco-Sexual Justice Event. Although then it sounded like we were producing an environmental movement.

While I'm sure that environmental issues and sexuality are related, we have to do that next year. On the other hand, some academic analysts and some activists see a profound separation between these two issues and the movements with which they are associated.

This division has been named in a number of ways—as a division between social politics and cultural politics; between the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution; or perhaps less generously, as a division between real politics—war and the economy, for example—and the frivolous, hence unreal concerns of a few, gender and sexuality.

This division is getting harder to sustain both through the efforts of scholars and writers, as well as activists, several of whom are in the

audience tonight and are going to participate in the colloquium—and I want to thank them for coming.

We are beginning to see the relation. For example, anti-poverty activists have come to focus on the spread of HIV AIDS as a major stumbling block to ending extreme poverty, while HIV AIDS activists have increasingly focused on the need for global economic health care reform.

But even if we take the mutual constitution of sexual and economic justice to be proven, we still need to develop new visions of how the terms relate to each other—and of what sexual justice and economic justice, or sexual-nomic justice ... eco-sexualness (we'll get a word yet) ... might be.

And most importantly, how they, or perhaps more accurately, *it* can be secured in all of our lives? We could not have better assistance in this task than our two speakers tonight. And I then will introduce both of them. They will speak each for about half an hour, and then they will come to the table, and we will have a chance for about, hopefully, a half-hour of conversation.

We will speak in alphabetical order, so Josephine Ho will go first. We struggled really hard, because these are global movements, to have an international panel. Josephine Ho is a native of Taiwan. And she's been intensively involved in the burgeoning counterculture movements there, since her return to Taiwan in 1988, after receiving two—not one, but two—doctorates at U.S. universities.

She went on to found the Center for the Study of Sexualities at the National Central University, in 1995, which is widely recognized as a Center, for both its activism and its intellectual stamina—something which we could all use more of. Josephine Ho herself has been writing extensively on many cutting-edge issues in the Taiwanese context, spearheading sex-positive views on female sexuality, gender and sexuality education, queer studies, sex work studies and activism, transgenderism, and, most recently, body modification.

All of this work has also made her a target for conservative backlash. In 2003, a dozen conservative Christian NGOs banded together to bring a lawsuit against Josephine Ho and the Center, and specifically her massive sexuality studies Internet databank.

With the support of students, scholars, and activist groups, along with a widespread international petition drive, plus her own articulate self-defense in court, Josephine Ho won the court case—first in the district court and then in the high court, in 2004, thus successfully defending the freedom of speech and information on sexual matters.

Josephine Ho has also participated in mobilizations for the anti-war movement, anti-globalization movement, anti-nuclear movement—and most recently, anti-social exclusion movement. For her tireless efforts in all of these areas, she was one among the thousand women from all over the world who were collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

Our second speaker—again, part of our international panel—Naomi Klein, who is Canadian, is an award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist, and author of *The New York Times* and international best-seller, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Capitalism*. There is a six-minute companion film by Alfonso Caron, who is the director of *Children of Men*, which was an official selection of the Venice and Toronto International Film Festivals, and has been downloaded over a million times.

And if you want to see the film, you can either go to Naomi's website—naomiklein.org—or you can just Google "Shock Doctrine," and it will come up.

Her previous book, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, was also an international best seller. Naomi Klein writes a regular column for *The Nation* and *The Guardian*. In 2004, reporting from Iraq for *Harper's Magazine*, won the James Aaronson Award for Social Justice journalism.

She is a former Miliband Fellow at the London School of Economics and holds an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Laws from the University of King's College in Nova Scotia. Josephine Ho.

Josephine Ho: Good evening. It is a great honor and pleasure to be here at Barnard College. Many of us in other parts of the world have been touched by the Scholar and Feminist Conference that sparked the sex debates 25 years ago. And it's truly still inspirational to finally visit the historical site.

This evening I would like to focus on describing two significant developments that I believe have created brand-new sets of conditions, as well as power deployments for both economic and sexual struggles in East Asia and maybe in other parts of the world, too.

The first has to do with the crisis of reproduction that now faces late capitalism. The second has to do with the emergence of governance that constitutes so-called "democratization" in many national contexts. I shall try to demonstrate that these two related changes have so profoundly altered the nature and the field for struggles in the economic realm, as well as in the sexual realm—that any discussion we hold at this time cannot afford to overlook the ramification. Change of glasses—age does creep up on you.

The crisis of capitalist reproduction that I am interested in has to do with the reproduction of adequate subjects as competent bearers of the system—more specifically, the reproduction of class positions through education or other mechanisms, so that, for example, children of the middle class would be competent and diligent enough to inherit their parents' class standing.

And children of the labor class would remain content with their future status of labor, and readily accept whatever discipline and domestication come their way.

Yet, as we observe most visibly in the last wave of economically better-achieved Asian states—including Japan, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan—

such class reproduction is now facing an increasingly-acute crisis brought on by the capricious movement of globalization.

Japanese author Kenichi Omae's ominous theory has won tremendous following in Asia, when he described the economic aspect of this crisis as ... the rapid descent of the middle class into frustrated lower middle class, through a long trail of sagging salaries and precarious employments in so-called (inaudible) societies. With growing uncertainty and a volatile future, no enduring order seems to remain for steady class reproduction.

Increasingly out of jobs and out of prospects, the sinking middle class displays what Habermas has termed "a motivational crisis" with a pervasive sense of anxiety and pessimism over the future.

If adults find themselves no longer able to count on future prospects, neither do they find any consolation in their children's performance. The proliferation of neologisms in Asia that describe the disappointing work performance of the post-baby boom generations partially crystallizes such adult reaction and frustration.

For instance, the term "freeder" zeros in on young people's preference for freedom and flexibility of part-time or temporary jobs over steady but enslaving full-time jobs. And the so-called "strawberry generation," which satirizes the young generation's obsession with personal appearances, as well as their lack of resilience/perseverance in face of difficulties and pressure.

In a way, such neologisms are economically-framed expressions of adult anguish as they gradually lose hold of the reproduction process. As such, anguish seeks an outlet and culprit; it locates it conveniently in the sprawling global fashions and lifestyles that are inserting many unexpected variables into local youth cultures.

If American pop culture has brought individualism and attitude to Asia, now Japanese or Korean pop cultures are captivating Asian populations through

culturally-much more accessible forms. Surprisingly, these cultural representations are also quite explicit and matter-of-fact about gender and sexual diversities, illustrated by the omni-presence of adulteries, homosexuality, SM sex, incest, gender crossing, and other marginal sexualities in Japanese (inaudible). If you haven't read any, start now.

During the same period of time, the advent of the Internet also made a wealth of sexual information and, more importantly, sexual contacts, readily accessible—helping youngsters range way beyond the circle of relations closely monitored by parents and teachers.

As the status competition among teenagers draws upon such cultural resources, and as the tabloid media thrive on sensationalized reports of such developing trends, parents and teachers are increasingly alarmed about the possibility of so-called gender/sexuality deviances and their class implications.

When such economically-induced frustration gets deflected onto disciplinary problems with the younger generation, another power shift takes place. Parental power, as the embodiment of pre-modern authority and domination, had been on the decline in early years of national building in Asia, when the state aimed at minimizing cultural differences through modern mass education and social integration.

But now, parental power is widely sought by conservative Christian groups that hope to mobilize parent collaboration and support in casting a legitimate surveillance net over all social space in the name of none other than child protection. Helping to foster the protectionist mentality, moral panics and demonization of sexual diversity flare up regularly with the help of the mass media, followed by urgent demands for better protection measures.

In quite a few East Asian states, a continuous stream of legislations has been put into place in recent years, spearheaded by conservative Christian NGOs to ensure that social space is purified, all bad influences

removed—much like what they did to New York City—for the sake of the precious children born to this age of critically-low birth weights.

When the parent imaginary looms large and obligates every adult to live by such protective duties, the companion imaginary of the child as innocent and vulnerable and non-sexual is applied to everyone under the age of 18, according to U.N. decree. As protective middle class parents are recruited to purity campaigns to vigilantly hound down all kinds of bad, in particular, sexual influences that threaten children's well being, such socially-constructed anxiety and hysteria pose insurmountable obstacles to sexual autonomy and sexual justice for the young.

Incidentally, one aspect that seems to be missing from almost all of the thought papers prepared for tomorrow's colloquium is exactly this aspect of child and teenage sexuality as part of our basic conceptions of sexual justice.

While children's liberation received much discussion in the 1960s and '70s, and an historical construction of childhood was critically examined to a certain extent, the progressive efforts seem to have been replaced now by a new social consensus on the asexuality and vulnerability of children in the face of rampant sexual predators.

Necessary measures for their close protection are thus proposed at the price of infringement on basic freedoms of information, speech, and communication. Of course, we can discuss whether sexual justice equals rights of the young to sexual information and sexual pleasure, but at least there should be room for other such ideas for debate.

Yet in many parts of Asia, such ideas are not only unthinkable but now even relegated to criminality, for they are considered to be damaging to the hearts and minds of the young. Obviously, the backlash against the realization of enlightened and diversified sex culture is well underway. Viewed in this light, how subjects are produced since the early years of

their lives to be equipped with the right emotions, personality, or sexual inhibitions to become good citizens, bearers of the capitalist system, or believers of the free market economy—this has become an urgent issue that warrants our attention as we ponder the intersection of sexual justice and economic justice.

Rising parental power and the concomitant infantilization of all social space, real or virtual, also demonstrates that in addition to disasters that create clean slates for the spread of capitalism in various areas, which Naomi Klein has eloquently described in her new book, the reproduction of capitalism in many national contexts still relies upon or makes use of certain traditional cultural values.

Familial structures, gender roles and relations, and various traditional forms of social control were never necessary so as to facilitate its operation. In other words, capitalism does not always stand in opposition to tradition. In fact, it has become somewhat good at adapting and appropriating traditions as it developed.

Traditional gender divisions of labor and traditional hierarchical structures of domination within a family or in between generations make up ready examples in Asia. If we hope to pose any real challenge to the prevailing economic order, then we cannot lose sight of the important question of reproduction in the realms generally relegated to the personal, the familial and sexual.

The fact of the matter is: it is often changes in the sexual realm and struggles for sexual freedom that cause profound disturbances in traditional social relations and cultural formations. Issues such as surrogate mothering, homosexual marriage, right to abortion, premarital sex, female sexuality, teenage sexuality, sexual permissiveness, and pornography have raised sharp controversies exactly because they pose serious challenges to traditional

practices of motherhood, family, chastity, and various forms of social control—all related to the biological or social reproduction of subjects.

Of course, sexual openness also benefits capitalist reproduction—in a way, it spurs desire and consumption. Or, as Herbert Marcuse says, provides temporary but limited ventilation for sexual repression.

Yet because of their potential and fundamental threat to traditional mores and values and forms of social control, as well as their interruption of the continued reproduction of repressed, docile subjects, liberalizing tendencies in sexuality have always been deemed dangerous by the state.

While actual measures taken to curb such developments vary from one national context to another, nation states do tend to side with sexual conservatism when sexual practices and values diversify at the pace they do these days.

... Which explains the increasingly acute contradiction between sexual openness and sexual regulation that we are witnessing now in many countries. In the U.S., consensual sex between adult strangers may not constitute a crime. But in Taiwan, strangers seeking one-night stands or SM-ers seeking kindred spirits through the Internet have become prosecutable for "dissemination of messages deemed pornographic."

I have already alluded to the important and aggressive role conservative Christian NGOs have played in Asia's new democracies in this whole process of reinstating parental power so as to ensure proper reproduction of subjects through intense regulation of all social space in the name of child protection.

The question remains—if Christianity is but a minor religion in most Asian states, how did these religious NGOs achieve such positions of influence with the state? Well, I propose it takes place within an historical context. A context of democratization—and this is where we need to turn to

the second issue—the emergence of governance, or more precisely, global governance in East Asia.

Democratization, understood as elections based on universal suffrage, competing political parties, accountability of governments to govern, the rule of law and basic civil liberties, has been more or less underway in Asian states since World War II.

Whether these political arrangements truly empower the people and promote equality and justice is, of course, a different matter, which I will not have time to go into this evening. Yet, in the age of globalization, when both political and economic pressures from powerful nations and powerful international organizations can no longer be overlooked by the sovereign state, when this (inaudible) and proliferation of information channels create such social heterogeneity that it upsets existing social order and social homogeneity, and when the formal channels of socialization, such as the family and the school, falter in their power of influence, the state likewise faces a legitimization crisis as it is exposed as cumbersome and incapable of responding efficiently to such dramatic changes.

In order to rein in teeming social energies, the state learns to franchise its rule to cooperating NGOs or collaborating corporations, which in turn not only help consolidate state rule but also improve its international standing. The formation of the complex network of formal and informal institutions, mechanisms, relations between and among states, citizens, and organizations has thus effected a reconfiguration of political institutions and processes into what is known as governance.

Scholars of international relations are elated about the seeming shrinking of the state power, as they celebrate the rise of governance and the expansion of global civil society. In China, governance is even heralded by liberals as the ideal that would reform the Communist regime.

Sadly, as NGOs take up franchises from the state and eagerly enter the scheme of governance as consultants or decision makers for government policies, many of them are also gradually absorbed into the bureaucratic structure. Rather than being organizations of social transformation or at least social critique, NGO activism and feminist careerism—very strange terms—have now become increasingly disciplinarian, leading to stagnation of movement energy in many Asian countries, ranging from India to Japan.

Conservative NGOs, in the meantime, have enjoyed great success in turning themselves into long arms of the state in the creation and execution of policies, legislations, and strategies that purify and rigidify social space—real and virtual.

The enumeration of terms such as, and they sound funny, GONGOS—government-organized NGOs. BONGOS—business-organized NGOs. GINGOS—government-interested NGOs. And BINGOS—big NGOs ... all of which epitomize the professionalization of NGOs.

Each of the above signals a growing sensitivity toward the developing diversity and complexity within civil society and the symbiotic relations developing between the states, the corporations, and certain parts of the civil society.

When governance blocks force [a lack of] diversification of the civil society, social activism for marginal issues suffers. What is being described as economic justice in the new liberal democracies in Asia is basically distributive justice, far from any socialist aims geared toward transformations in the production realm.

In actuality, such distributive justice is often expressed through the institution of welfare policies and does not necessarily form any coherent full-scale measure to deal with structurally-ingrained economic justice—and are only limited to remedial measures that mitigate some of the hardships faced by marginalized populations.

Furthermore, as such welfare policies are always mediated through active negotiation with the state by representative NGOs, there is not only the problem of adequate representation but also of bureaucratic and strategic needs of the NGO institutions themselves, overriding the true needs of the subjects for whose benefits the NGOs were created in the first place.

Furthermore, in order to fit in with government regulations of spending and accountability, as well as to command respectability and image and appeal, NGOs tend to incline toward mainstream values and issues, making even distributive justice hard to achieve.

The professionalization of NGOs may end up diffusing whatever limited radical impulse there had been. But the entry of conservative Christian NGOs into the government power circle of governance proves to be even more devastating for struggles for sexual justice.

Developing projects aimed at promoting population management, disease prevention, and maternal and child health end up intentionally or unwittingly shaping ideas about what constitutes normal, thus acceptable, sexual practices and identities.

Much like U.S. Christian NGOs that launched boycotts of liberal-minded or gay-friendly media programs or industrial corporations, Taiwan's conservative Christian NGOs call upon big corporations to pull their ads from popular TV programs and tabloid newspapers that are more liberal in exploring changes in sexual values and practices.

In 2006, Taipei city legislators associated with an NGO called Exodus International, an international Christian organization that advocates "freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ," threatened to pull government funding from the annual gay festival in Taipei City because city funds should not be used to "promote homosexuality."

Worst of all is, of course, the numerous international agreements on measures directed at sex trafficking, pornography, sex work, child

pornography, pedophiles, Internet content monitoring, and so forth that aggressive Christian NGOs and their collaborating allies are helping to put into place.

Such international protocols constitute the strongest justification for comparable, if not more rigid, local legislations that make struggles for sexual justice all the more difficult.

The interpenetration of the states and civil society under governance arrives with other new technologies of power which may be potentially quite detrimental to marginal issues and subjects. A process called "deliberative democracy" had been introduced in some Asian states in recent years as a participatory method of policy making that is arbitrated through political deliberation by a select but supposedly neutral citizenry.

Procedure-wise, deliberative democracy seems to embody the essence of the democratic spirit in which reason reigns. And the end result could include certain progressive ideas. The problem is—in the state's own precarious status of legitimacy, it shifts its duty to uphold the rights and benefits of the minority to this mechanism of collective deliberation.

Consequently, basic freedoms now need to be renegotiated, while the final result of the process can still be mitigated. In Taiwan, for example, laws governing artificial insemination and surrogate mothering were subjected to the procedure of deliberative democracy, and the initial conclusion was quite liberal.

Yet eventually the state legislation excluded lesbians and gays who wish to have children. In Hong Kong, faced with articulate progressive scholars and increasingly liberal censorship officers, an ultraconservative Christian group now demands that the definition of indecency be determined not by experts and professionals but by opinion polls conducted among the general public every two years, so as to reflect "true contemporary community standards."

Conceivably, deliberative democracy will be invoked most often when sex-related issues rise to the level of controversy and when only sexual stigma can effectively put an end to liberalizing impulses. In essence, deliberative democracy may, in spirit, be a new form of democracy that gravitates toward so-called people's reason.

But in its actual execution, it has the potential to become a new form of social exclusion that threatens social sexual freedom. Incidentally, nowadays it is the NGOs on the right that are quite adept at using the language of multiculturalism, tolerance, and mild liberalism when they advocate their conservative agenda—sometimes I sound conservative.

Protectionist language is employed to chastise parents who do not live up to ideals of middle-class child-rearing practices. Feminist discourse on objectification and exploitation is liberally applied by the Christian groups to criticize positive female sexual assertiveness and any open expression or representation of sexuality. Now they are sounding more feminist than us.

Actually, the right wing seems to have no more gripe with discourse on economic justice. But when it comes to advocacy of sexual justice, right wing groups flip over in anger and terror. How are we to understand this odd phenomenon? Well, perhaps the conservative Christian groups quite aptly grasped the deeply-ingrained cultivation of bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions that constitute the material base of agency and against-the-grain action.

Perhaps justice is not only the way our society is organized, but more importantly, the way our character and emotions are constituted. After all, the belief in and feelings about justice need a material base too—not necessarily an economic base, but a material base that happens to have a lot to do with our very material bodies and their very material experiences with sexuality that are severely circumscribed by the given social environment.

It is here that the impact of global governance demonstrates the extreme potency. It aims not only to formulate the most intricate forms of social control but also to constitute the very subjects for its rule. So far, I have tried to explain how economic globalization has brought on its own crisis of reproduction, and how such crises is being deflected onto social control in the sexual realm, in particular.

I have also tried to demonstrate how global governance has opened up the door to state NGO collaboration to the extent that transformative impulses are diffused and sexual repression is institutionalized in the legal realm. Both tendencies have created dire consequences for economic and sexual activism.

Yet in many parts of the Third World, or even in parts of the United States, there are other social forces so powerfully nested in profound social contradictions, sedimented through convoluted histories, that their activation instantly dominates any given political scene, and overwhelms causes in sexual justice and economic justice.

Furthermore, the democratic spirit of rule of law, now interpreted by conservative forces as rule by law, has greatly broadened the scope of criminality to include almost all social presences of sexuality. In the last part of my talk, I would like to bring in these two important and different side effects of Asian democratization for our consideration.

Modern democracies are chronically enmeshed in the regular spasms of democratic elections. I think you're under one now. In many Third World nations, and maybe still so in many parts of the United States, elections can churn up such strong emotions that the hostility fanned up by competing political parties may take years to appease.

As much as labor groups and sex rights groups hope to further their causes in such political mobilization, they hardly ever achieve comparable leverage. Instead, ethnicity readily enters the scene. Blatant discrimination

and abuse of alien labor is characterized in Taiwan as an ethnic issue, justified by all the ethnic prejudices and totally eclipsing the class dimension.

In the face of severe economic hardship, even when presented with allegations of the President's long history of corruption and conspiracy, numerous Taiwanese voters still proclaim, "We will vote for Abien," the President's nickname, "even in starvation."

Or "loving Taiwan despite an empty stomach is true love for Taiwan." Such statements and the emotional strength that utters them defy any analysis that considers the economic as the determining factor. In fact, supporters lend themselves easily to the belief that Taiwan's economic depression is a result of China's deliberate bullying or individual Taiwanese entrepreneurs' greed, rather than a result of globalization and its consequent marginalization of Taiwan.

The ruling party's manipulation of ethnic identity in relation to nation-state passion has thus weakened and marginalized class analysis and class thinking. And the emotionally-charged issue of ethnicity can be invoked at opportune moments to divide and polarize any social movement.

As ethnicity-based nation-state building still operates as the core issue in many new liberal democracies in Asia and in other parts of the world, the obstacle it poses for other social causes certainly calls for more attention as we ponder the connection between economic struggle and sexual struggle.

If ethnicity, as it is mobilized in nation-state politics, is a formidable force to be reckoned with in our pursuit for justice, then the newly-expanded scope of criminality constitutes a second formidable force that works to frustrate our actual struggles.

Global economic shifts have exacerbated the daily survival of the economic underclasses, leaving them fewer recourses than suicide, bankrupt

credit, or destitution. Inability to stay economically afloat easily slips into bad credits and a large increase in debt-related prosecutions and sex work, whether in one's own country or through illegal stays in other countries often becomes the only viable, but criminal, exit.

Moreover, for them and for everyone else, the overall social context is worsening. Global protocols of governance, propagated by international NGOs and their branches in various nations, are sweeping across the globe to encourage new legislations that will treat all sex work as human trafficking; all Internet sexual exchanges as sexual predation; and all adult publications or videos as pornography—and all of the above are now considered criminal acts.

When the Taipei City government revoked the licenses of prostitutes in 1997, it effectively created hundreds of criminals, making what had been honest, state-protected, and regulated sex work into prosecutable crimes.

Since the child protection laws in Taiwan were modified to cover Internet information in 1999, more than 20,000 criminals have been created because they posted messages deemed to hint at sexual transaction—this actually includes one-night stand invitations and straightforward sexual solicitations by sexual minorities.

Plastic-wrapped and marked-for-adult publications sold in Taiwan's only gay bookstore were seized in 2003, and the owner convicted of dissemination of obscenity in 2006, despite continued protestation by gay groups.

Sex-positive campus publications by students of Hong Kong Chinese University were subjected to prosecution in 2006 because complaints of indecency have been filed against them by conservative Christian citizen groups. The legal grip on sexual information and values has grown so tight that sexual dissidents posted on the Internet could be prosecuted, and academic research into marginal sexualities is subject to severe scrutiny. I know this from first-hand experience.

More than a dozen conservative Christian NGOs banded together and took me to court in 2003 for including difficult material and liberal views in my sexual studies online databank. The final verdict was not guilty. Yet the lawsuit itself is symptomatic of the trend that contestations in sexual values and mores no longer take the form of rational debates or discussion.

Instead, marginal minority issues are now to be censored by the iron fist of litigations. At this historical moment, it may be highly instructive to explore the intersection of economic justice and sexual justice by looking into the process of how the economic and the sexual underclasses are relegated to criminality, much like the political dissidents had been prosecuted under martial law in Taiwan before 1987.

Finally, a few days ago, at dinner with some activist friends, I told them about my trip to New York and our topic for discussion here. I asked one of them how she would view this issue, and her answer was quite sobering. Here is what she said: "I'm not so sure how to think about economic justice or sexual justice. But when I hang around the economically-disadvantaged transgender sex workers, who are both frank and at ease talking about the sexual services they provide, and the way they make it through their daily lives in the world of gender dimorphism, I wish the leftists and the feminists and the predominantly middleclass transgender groups would have the humility to sit down and listen and learn from them. Class positions and non-conforming gender sexuality identities are not abstract ideas. Real people facing real problems occupy such notable points of limitation and oppression. Where even their mere presence and identity as transgender sex workers is considered criminal and prosecutable on many counts, obviously there is a lot more to be done by both the economic and the sexual fronts."

And I leave you with that thought. Thank you.

Naomi Klein: Thank you, Josephine. It is an honor to follow that very stimulating talk. I'm thrilled to be here. When I got this invitation I was

neck-deep in the research for *The Shock Doctrine*, which was a very, very male world, I can tell you.

And in some way I'm happy about that. Writing this alternative history of the rise of neoliberalism and this idea of disaster capitalism, I didn't find that many examples of women who believed that you could create a utopia through destruction.

Condoleezza Rice is an exception.

In the final stages of writing, the Israeli bombing of Lebanon took place, which was described by Ms. Rice as "birth pains for a new Middle East." So women are equally capable of confusing destruction and creation. But it is a very male world. And that is why I have been so looking forward to this gathering and this discussion.

I am actually going to talk a little bit shorter, just because we are running a little tight on time, and I want to leave room for discussion. And so, I'm just going to quickly edit myself a little bit. So be patient with me, if you can, while I figure this out.

Although I was really struck, and I want to respond a little bit to Josephine's fantastic talk. And I'm really glad that [she] stressed the rise of the surveillance society and the criminalization of so many parts of our lives, which is, I think, part of ... it had people in this country quite confused about whether globalization is over. Right? Whether neoliberalism is over? Whether all the Bush administration really cares about is security. Part of the reason why we're confused about this is because we hear it all the time. One of the responses to September 11, one of the ways in which the administration responded to September 11 was to tell us that the debates we were having about economic justice were no longer relevant.

There is a rightwing newspaper in Canada called *The National Post* that was started by Conrad Black—some of you may know his work. And on September 12, 2001, they ran a headline that said "Globalization Is So Yesterday."

And so, there was this incredible enthusiasm actually to end the debate that was taking place, more than the debate and protests that were taking place in the streets, the day before. And to use that event to say—okay, we've got much more important things to discuss, and we don't care about economics.

And the American Ambassador to Canada at the time, a charming man, announced that, there was this phrase we heard over and over again—security trumps trade. And what it meant was—if you want to keep the trade of goods flowing, you have to abide by our new security measures.

I think people got a glimpse of some of our new security measures a little while ago when some of you may have seen the videotape of a Polish immigrant coming through the Vancouver International Airport and being tasered within thirty seconds of meeting our police force, and dying in the midst of this.

So one of the things that I am arguing, at this point, is that what we need to understand that security is the new trade. Security is the new big business. And all of this infrastructure of hyper-surveillance and control has been privatized.

And this is the cutting edge of the neoliberal project. I'm going to use the phrase neoliberalism, if that's okay. I know that it's not a phrase used that much in the United States because anything liberal is associated with the left.

But in most parts of the world it's called neoliberalism. I'm talking about the economic agenda of privatization, deregulation, cuts in government spending. I think you know what I mean—Reaganomics, Thatcherism, free markets, whatever. Globalization.

One of the hardest things about tracking the rise of this ideology is knowing what to call it, and the fact that people call it different things, and the fact that it is a shape shifter. And just when you kind of nail it

down and are really having a debate about it, it changes its name. It used to be called globalization, free trade. Now it's called the war on terror, I would argue.

So the privatization of the criminalization and surveillance of every aspect of our lives reconciles this seeming contradiction between the rise of this kind of control and the neoliberal agenda. And it is a real difference from the way we talked about globalization in the '90s, where the discourse of the corporate world was all about diversity, liberation, mobility.

I'm not saying it was a reality, but that was the public discourse. And particularly when it came to the information companies. This is what they were selling. They were selling freedom, and their technologies were going to bring freedom to enslaved societies around the world.

Rupert Murdoch was going to liberate China with satellite TV. That was the promise of globalization, and now we see the shutting down and the constant attacks on immigrants. The person who embodies this shift most graphically is Lou Dobbs. And Lou Dobbs, in the '90s, was a man of the new economy.

All day long, on CNN, he was telling people to buy dot-com stocks. And he was getting very personally wealthy off of the dot-com boom as well. He leaves CNN, comes back, and he is now the face of this crackdown on immigrants. And night after night after night, he is using extraordinarily racist language.

The fear of the immigrant influx. And so, it seems that Lou Dobbs has really changed. He used to be this staunch capitalist, and now he doesn't seem to care about capitalism anymore. In fact, he's taking on the big capitalists. But what I would argue is that he is, in fact, fueling a different kind of economic boom. He fueled the boom in information economies. And now, even though he won't admit it, he is actually fueling an economic

boom in homeland security technologies, which need to be in a state of constant threat, whether they're immigrants, terrorists, or child predators.

What really struck me about what Josephine was saying is that, in the realm of parenting, it is the super-predator—they are the on-line pornographer pedophile who plays the role that the terrorist plays for grownups. But both of them really sell the same technologies. And these are all privatized technologies.

And there is an economic boom going on. We don't talk about it because it doesn't brag. In the '90s we got used to new economies announcing themselves with great fanfare. And we got used to a class of wealthy people, a newly-wealthy people who were not at all ashamed of how rich they were; and liked to get their pictures taken in glossy magazines next to their remote-controlled yachts, and things like that.

So we came to expect that when there was an economic boom, it would brag to us. It would tell us that it had arrived. Because it was so relentless in its bragging in the '90s. So this economic boom, this homeland security surveillance boom, the privatization of the war on terror—it does not brag. It knows better than to brag about how much money is being made through this infrastructure of surveillance—the CCTV cameras, the Blackwaters.

It's all cloaked in the language of security. And Blackwater, I think, is a great example of this merging of this far right conservative agenda, and the neoliberal privatization agenda in its final phase.

What I am arguing here is that we should kind of think about this state like an octopus that has all of these arms, and it has this body at the center. And what the neoliberal economic project has been doing over the past couple of decades—three decades in some parts of the world—has been lopping off the arms of the state and feeding them to multinational corporations.

The phone system, the roads, the air waves, water, electricity. Now, in this country, all the arms have been pretty much lopped off. There is not much. All that's left is the core, what they call core government services. Now, what are those core services?

Well, it's the running of the government itself. The issuing of welfare checks and the overseeing of contracts, the issuing of contracts, the administering of the state. And it is security. It's the army. It's the police, it's fire fighting, it's disaster response.

So the people who make up the Bush administration, the key people who have been leading this country in the world now for almost eight years, really are people who saw this as the final neoliberal frontier. That is what Halliburton was doing in the '90s when it was headed by Dick Cheney—privatizing the military.

Building U.S. military bases in the Balkans that were like U.S. suburbs—entirely run by Halliburton—like heavily-armored, packaged vacations for soldiers. Where military bases are not the way we traditionally think of as military bases. They have fast food outlets, video stores, gyms—and everything is run by Halliburton.

And the troops are kind of content providers in this. So this was Dick Cheney's business before he went into government. And Erik Prince, the head of Blackwater, said that he wants Blackwater to do for the military what FedEx did for the post office. He sees this as part of a continuation of this neoliberal privatization agenda. He also happens to be, along with his entire family, very linked to the far right in this country.

And they donate exclusively to the Republican Party, except sometimes they donate to the Greens, if it looks like they can keep a Democrat from winning. And they are very linked to the anti-choice movement. They are very linked to this anti-immigrant surge in the South.

And they see a growth market in taking the role that they played in Iraq and bringing it home to policing the borders. So this whole surveillance economy—and these so-called traditional values—are very profitable. And this whole discourse, which we tend to think of as a backlash against neoliberalism, is also very profitable.

And this is one of the ways in which the backlash against neoliberalism is playing out around the world. Because, of course, now that there is a legacy of these policies, we can measure. ... We're not talking about the promise of globalization. We're talking about what actually happens. There's a track record, and the track record is lousy.

And that's why people are rejecting neoliberalism in Latin America and in many parts of Eastern Europe—because the promise of trickle-down economics has failed. Now, these right wing policies come in to fill the gap, and you get this scapegoating; and you have the rise of fascism in Eastern Europe.

You have, in Poland in particular—although thankfully they lost in the last elections—you have a new politics that is talking about economic shock therapy as having been a humiliation for the country; that they need to get their nationalist pride back, and part of that nationalist pride is attacking gays and lesbians, is attacking women, attacking immigrants.

But of course, this siege mentality is also part of this privatization, militarization security state. So I think we're in a new phase. We need to understand that it is more sophisticated. It's harder to identify. It challenges some of our traditional ways of understanding economics and the ways in which we talked about these issues before September 11.

Now, the defining characteristic of the neoliberal crusade around the world, I would argue, is the rise of precariousness. The exclusion of large sectors of people from the official economy—just shocked out of the roles. And what I do in this sort of alternative history of neoliberalism is look at

the key junctures where countries were prescribed what's called economic shock therapy.

And the whole set of these policies were imposed all at once. Russia in the mid-'90s is a classic example. Poland in 1989. What we know about these key junctures is that societies become much, much more unequal. This rapid-fire selling off of the state creates an oligarchic class.

And it also just throws millions of people out, not just out of work but out of the organized economy. And precariousness is the signature experience of the neoliberal project. Displacement—from mega-dams, from export processing zones. The rise of casual labor, as opposed to steady, protected work—protected by trade unions.

And that's why mobility—and when you add the mass displacement because of climate change, and a collision between weak public infrastructure, which is also a legacy of the neoliberal project, which sees investing in the public sphere and that kind of public infrastructure as antithetical to the goals—you have this collision between weak infrastructure and heavy weather like we saw in New Orleans.

And so you have millions of people displaced by extreme weather. And so the precariousness, the mobility—these are the signature policies of neoliberalism. Now, I talked a little bit about how this economic project is adaptable enough to be able to profit from cracking down on those mobile people.

That in a way, the market has very much been created by neoliberalism. The mass displacement, the need to look for better work—whether in cities, moving from countryside to cities or country to country, to look for more work.

Then you come up against the privatized infrastructure like Boeing's \$2.5 billion virtual fence that is being built on the border between the U.S. and Mexico—the largest homeland security contract issued to any company.

Whether it works or not, is beside the point. It is an economy, and this is such a resilient model that it can both displace the people—it can't find jobs for them, but it can profit from containing them.

And Halliburton, of course, one of their more recent contracts is a contract to build detention centers in the case of some of a vaguely-worded, unexpected immigration influx, which I think is probably a reference to mass displacement because of some sort of natural disaster, probably is what it references.

So precariousness is the signature effect of neoliberalism. And what we're starting to see are more and more very interesting social movements that are organizing around the idea of precariousness. And because the women's movement has such a long history of organizing in sectors that were ignored by a predominantly male labor movement, it makes sense that what we're seeing is that women are at the forefront of these new organizing models.

Because the organizing of home workers, for instance, or the organizing of sex workers, or the drive to get house work counted, in the work of Marilyn Waring, for instance. All of this groundwork that feminists have been laying is suddenly being noticed, finally—although not enough, by some leftwing male economic thinkers and writers who are recognizing now that this organizing of the precarious is our future.

When I was in Argentina, we were making this film called *The Take* about what happened in Argentina after the economic crisis in 2001. And I think of it now as post-disaster reconstruction—reconstructing from the disaster that is neoliberalism. It wasn't a natural disaster or a war, but Argentina looked like it had been hit by a war, at this point.

And what we were making a documentary film about was workers who had been laid off by their workplaces, mostly factories, though not exclusively

factories. And they had to face a choice. It was really a choice, many workers put it to us, between life and death.

There was no social safety net left, so being laid off was a death sentence for many people. So there was a drive to what was called the Occupied Factory Movement. And what it really was, people refusing to be fired. Being told they were fired and just un-firing themselves.

Saying to the owners—you can leave if you want, but we are staying. And staging the reverse of a strike. If you think about the traditional labor action of withholding labor—that's not a very effective tactic, if you have an economic system that doesn't want you to work or have any work for you.

And you're in a country where 60 percent of the people have been pushed under the poverty line, and in a country that used to have the largest middle class in Latin America. So people said—the machines are good, we still know how to work them, we're going to go back in and work.

And what was really interesting in Argentina is that this movement, it was not exclusively a women's movement, but it was definitely a women-led movement. And the first occupied factory was a garment factory called Brookman in downtown Buenos Aires; they made business suits.

And the women of Brookman, as they were called, were not self-described feminists. They were just looking at this future of being the only employed people in their families. Many of them had husbands who were less resilient in the face of the economic crisis.

One of the things that we see in these disaster zones is that the loss of pride associated with work hits men harder, and men are less resilient in the face of disasters. And what we heard a lot from the women in Brookman is that their husbands were just sitting at home drinking; many of them were becoming violent, leaving it entirely up to the women to earn money. And that's why they decided to occupy their factory and put the machines back to work.

When I was in New Orleans, a local community organizer there called Saket Soni, who works with migrant workers, said to me, "I'm tired of hearing about disaster capitalism; they have disaster capitalism, but we need disaster collectivism."

And I think it's such a fantastic phrase, and when he said it, I realized that in so many of these disaster zones I've seen this impulse, this disaster collectivism impulse. It's really the opposite of this dream of starting over, starting from scratch. It's much more practical, it's a radical practicality. I call it starting from scrap. Whatever is left around, and whoever is left around. And what I have seen from these tsunami-affected areas— from Sri Lanka to Iraq to New Orleans to Argentina—and from all of this research over the past four years, is that women really are at the forefront.

They are developing the intellectual framework, and they are developing it with their hands. This is another phrase, and I'll just leave it with you and come back again to something Josephine said about NGOs; it's something that I think we need to talk more and more about—the professionalization of activism, of civil society.

I always say—we need less civil society and more civil disobedience, especially in these extreme circumstances. In Sri Lanka, after the tsunami, you had one of the most blatant cases of disaster capitalism, I think, anywhere. Four days after the tsunami hit, the government pushed through a water privatization law—four days after.

They also were pushing an electricity privatization law. Flexibilization of labor. I mean, the whole package. This is a country that had just lost 40,000 people in the wave—40,000 people. And obviously their attention was focused elsewhere.

The NGOs, and that was only one side of the neoliberal experiment. The other part of it was that people were relocated from the coast into inland

camps. The people who lost the most in the tsunami, both their lives and their livelihoods, were fishing people. People who lived on the coast and lived off the ocean.

And they were brought to inland camps in the name of their safety, in the name of their security. And meanwhile, while this was happening, the coastlines were being handed over to huge resort developers, with the help of the U.S. government and the World Bank and the usual suspects.

And so, what the NGOs did in this period was really, really troubling. Because it was actually a kind of revolutionary moment, as people watched this happen. People wanted to resist. It was theft, and people were seeing it, especially because an unprecedented amount of charity had been raised in the name of the victims of the tsunami—and they knew it.

So these were the richest poor people in the world. Yet they are living in absolutely squalid camps, and the camps were entirely run by NGOs who were playing this state function; the state was nowhere to be found, all along the hardest-hit coasts of Sri Lanka.

And what the NGOs ended up doing was keeping people in this kind of a holding pattern, when there was this moment when they actually really needed to fight. But this aid model set in of—just wait here, we'll take care of you; there's more blankets coming, there's more food coming, you have to stay in the camp; if you're not in the camp, then you can't get food, and you won't get your vouchers and you won't get whatever the aid is.

So rather than going back and defending the land, which was literally being taken—people stayed in the camps. And there were some exceptions. And once again, these were exceptions that were predominantly led by women. The most dramatic cases were in Thailand, where people just refused to wait in the camps; where there was already such a healthy distrust of the state, of government, and of NGOs that communities, whole villages organized

themselves, went back, marched past the security guards and the soldiers and retook their land.

And then said—okay, are we allowed to come back now—they said, as they were rebuilding. And they called this negotiating with their hands, from a position of strength. And that's the sort of spirit that I've seen in all these places. And I'll end on that note. Thank you.

Janet Jakobsen: I want to thank both Josephine and Naomi for wonderful talks, and I just want to turn it over now to you all, for your questions and comments, any kind of responses. We do have microphones that will be available so that everybody in the audience will be able to hear your questions.

While you're gathering your thoughts, I did want to ask Josephine, since Naomi had a chance to respond to your paper and draw on some of the excellent connections between the papers—I thought they actually flowed together quite well—if you had anything that you wanted to say, as a follow-up, while all of you gather your questions, so that we don't have to wait for that fateful first question.

Josephine Ho: Yes. I was really struck by Naomi's starting point of security and trade. We see that happening now. That a lot of things have been produced under the name of home security or child security; a lot of monitoring and surveillance devices were being put into place.

And that siege mentality, that the family is under siege, that society is under siege, the nation is under siege—that siege mentality has created the reason for the state to institute a lot of policies that infringe upon basic freedoms. That is what we need to pay attention to, as we think about the connection between the two kinds of struggles.

Janet Jakobsen: Right, I thought that was, in fact, one of the most concise statements of the connection between sexual and economic justice. Which is that, if this is the new form of neoliberalism as a surveillance

security state, then surveillance and sexuality become absolutely central to the work of the states. So that was very helpful.

Okay, right here, if you could stand and then wait for the mike?

Audience Member: I wanted to ask Naomi—I had read your article on the Latin American resistance to shock, which I thought was just a terrific article, in *The Nation* in the beginning of November. And you described the Brookman women, and that seemed to link the resistance to shock with both the women's movement, freedom, choice—which I think we need to not discuss as the choice of abortion or not abortion but the choice of being in control of one's own privacy and body and decision-making. Have you noticed any ... then recently Calderon in Mexico talked about the culture of machismo that needs to change. He just talked about that, I think, this week, although I'm not sure where he comes on the resistance to shock, exactly.

But yet, what I found interesting was—he started talking about the need to have less oppression, both psychologically and economically, of women. And so, I was wondering what you thought about that as the morphing or a new, or the adopting of a resistance to change.

Naomi Klein: I didn't hear that statement from Calderon, but in general, I think it's positive whenever leaders talk about a culture of machismo. But I would approach it with skepticism. I don't think he is in any way part of this resistance to shock. I think, in fact, what we are seeing are quite a few examples of the deliberate use of shock in Mexico, particularly around a crisis in their national oil.

The big fight in Mexico is over the national oil company and that there is a real big push from this country to privatize Chemex, and we've seen some classic shock doctrine tactics being used by the Mexican government to prepare the ground for that.

So I have to say, I don't trust him. But I think it brings up another point, which Josephine also talked about, this is—how do we respond when we

see feminist arguments being used by governments that we consider regressive? And the classic example of that is the Bush Administration, which managed to embed feminism in two imperial invasions—Afghanistan and Iraq.

And it's setting women's rights back unendingly. One of the things I was going to talk about it, and I'll talk a little bit briefly about, is the real compatibility of religious fundamentalism and neoliberalism, which is another one of these false dichotomies where so much of the discourse of the war on terror is talking about standing up to Islamo-fascism and whatever the latest language is.

But what you actually see in so many places are these regressive religious forces, controlling religious forces working hand in hand. Because neoliberalism builds weak states, certainly not weak security states, but weak states when it comes to education, health care, social services.

So, parallel social services emerge, and those might be connected to the mosques of Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq. And it's also the mega-church in this country, where you have communities like the so-called exurbs, where there is no public space whatsoever, except the church.

And I think the rise of the Christian right in this country is really intimately connected to the loss of public space, as well. So the gathering place, there is no town hall. There is only the megachurch, and that is where you go for aerobics class, marital counselling, daycare. Everything.

And that, to me, is no different from what I saw in Iraq, where Muqtada al-Sadr responded to the neoliberal so-called reconstruction by filling the gaps. Rigging up generators and organizing traffic patrol, because there were no traffic lights, which ultimately morphed into the Mahdi army, which has been an incredibly repressive force for women in Iraq.

Janet Jakobsen: Good, okay. More questions? We have one right here and then right here. And I'm going to take them both at once so that we can save some time. Go ahead.

Audience Member: My question is for Ms. Klein, although Ms. Ho might be able to respond as well because she also mentioned the gutting of the state and putting many of its services in private hands or NGOs. You mentioned, Ms. Klein, that under the neoliberal agenda most of the arms of the state had been cut off and the services privatized.

And then you brought up the example in Argentina, of people who had been victims of this policy taking matters into their own hands and collectivizing the factories they worked in. And it seems to me that there seems to be somewhat of a tension in bringing up that example, in that I wonder if, as a solution, you're suggesting that, did we not have the interference from neoliberal agenda makers anymore, would the best-case-scenario be to re-establish the arms of the state with the potential, again, of having them cut off later?

Or is collectivization, in fact, a better example or a better solution to this problem?

I have read somewhat about what happened in Argentina, and as far as I know, while that collectivization had been extremely successful, as soon as the state had recovered itself, it immediately went after some of the collectives and tried to dismantle them.

Janet Jakobsen: Okay, so we're going to hold that and move the mike over here.

Audience Member: I'm glad that Naomi distinguished between different kinds of states, because the octopus, yes, the arms that had been cut off are the arms that people have struggled, for decades, to get the state to do in terms of putting a floor or a safety net under the precarious types of activities labor and living conditions and health.

And especially in other countries like Western Europe and the Scandinavian countries, where those things really, those kinds of reforms

really have worked. So I wonder if that collective question—and Kathy is pushing me with this one—is the question of, are more reforms what we want?

Or do we want some other kind of system altogether?

Janet Jakobsen: I'm actually going to ask both of you to respond to that because I think that both papers really touched on the question about the state and both what its role is in promoting sexual and economic injustice. And then the question of—what do we want from the state? And where does collectivity reside? Do we want collectivities that are outside the state, or do we want to demand that the state respond to collective bodies, as well as control individual bodies?

So, Naomi, do you want to start? And then we'll move on to Josephine.

Naomi Klein: It is true that the state did go after the occupied factories in Argentina after it reconstituted itself, the Kirchner government, but they weren't successful. The occupied factories in Argentina, they have defended themselves. It's a very broad-based social movement.

And all the factories that I know of have survived. There are still 200 occupied factories in Argentina. But the movement hasn't grown because what has reconstituted itself most dramatically in Argentina is the clientalism of the parent state. And that is something that the Kirchners do very well.

And certainly, a very different model of how you control the discarded people of neoliberalism. I think it's a really good question. I hope we don't have to choose. I think what neoliberalism does is very clearly ... it weakens or just completely destroys those aspects of the state that help, that are supposed to help.

And it super-empowers those aspects of the state that hurt—prisons, police, surveillance. And I'm arguing that the newer innovation is also the simultaneous outsourcing of privatization of those aspects of the state that hurt. And I think we're going to see more radical forms of this, unless we

confront it very, very strongly in response to more disasters, more crises connected to climate change.

We're really only at the early stages. But that's it. I think that the ability, the success of the neoliberal project is not just about the ability to take advantage of shocks and crises. It also has to do with the fact that there was enough truth in the anti-state rhetoric, that it sold.

Which is to say, that many of the public institutions that were privatized were public in name only; were seen as very remote bureaucratic, in some cases, oppressive, corrupt. They really weren't public and certainly not collective. I think the idea of collectivizing the public sphere is possible.

And that's really what we should be striving for. I really don't believe in giving up on the concept of the public and leaving it all to anarcho-syndicalist circles. I mean, it might sound good, but I do think we need to protect the idea of a state that can help, even if there is absolutely no evidence of that at the moment.

And I think if we look at some of the most exciting alternatives emerging in Latin America, to neoliberalism, they are not giving up on the idea that the state should help. They are radically changing the state through mechanisms like constituent assemblies.

It's not just a question of taking over the state and saying—okay, our guys are in power, and everything is fine. But really, changing the rules as a first stage, and we see this not just in Venezuela with a very controversial constitutional process at the moment but also in Bolivia, also in Ecuador.

So it's a phenomenon. I wanted to talk a little bit more about organizing of the precarious, and I think this discussion is more developed in Europe than it is in North America, around naming the precarity

as ... they use the word "precarity," which isn't actually a word, but I kind of like it better than precariousness.

In Italy, there is a wonderful social movement around the idea of precariousness that even has a patron saint—Saint Precarious.

And the activists carry this saint around, and all the old ladies come up to them, and they think that it's a real saint, and they have little prayer cards. And San Precario, who is a protector of all precarious workers—from fast food workers to migrant workers to people without papers—and it's a really wonderful organizing tool, in the way that it brings together young workers who see a very precarious future of never having any kind of job security, and don't see any in their future.

And (inaudible) is a legal movement and the precariousness of mobile labor—people without papers, that defining experience being one of total precariousness. You can be deported at any time. You can be disciplined if you step out of line at any time.

And what's interesting about the precariousness movement—I'm taking up a little too much time here because I'm going to have to leave, and you're going to hear a little more from Josephine after—so I know I'm being rude, but this is my excuse.

But the discourse of this movement, which is so interesting, I think, is, say—okay, in a previous organizing model, you had rights attached to citizenship, citizens' rights. And you had rights attached to the workplace; that you got maternity leave and health care attached to where you work, or attached to the fact that you are a citizen.

But if we accept the precarity as a defining characteristic, or the defining legacy of the neoliberal project, then you have all of these people who neither have workplaces nor papers, nor citizenship papers, nor access to any of those rights.

So what the precarity movement really is, is a new framing for a human rights movement, where the rights are attached to the person, to the individual, including the demand for basic income. That every person should have some basic income that is guaranteed, regardless of their citizenship status. That everybody should have some kind of maternity leave from whatever it is that they do, regardless of where they work or the fact that they don't have a contract or citizenship papers.

So there's a sort of manifesto emerging out of this, which I actually think is very exciting and points to what I see as one of the answers to the kind of world we would want—one where rights are attached to people, not to workplace or citizenship.

Janet Jakobsen: So let's hear from Josephine. We are running out of time, so we'll give her the last word.

Josephine Ho: Okay, the question of the state. In Asia, the question of the state is a little more complicated. To start with, the long arms of the state are not really cut off. It's just replaced by NGO arms. NGO arms are helping manage the life world, social world that people live in.

And because they were coming from these well-meaning, child protection, women's protection NGOs, they oftentimes push for policies that are very hard to resist. So in a way, when we fight the state, at the same time we have to fight these NGOs, too.

The state/NGO collaboration is a fact that we have to deal with. It's not just the state. And also, in Asia, many states have legitimation crisis. For example, in Taiwan, the nation-state status is not settled yet, so that issue can mobilize a lot of emotions, and the president will be justified in throwing in a lot of resources, a lot of ideological warfare, building up this issue as the determining issue.

This issue of Taiwan entering the United Nations is going to be attached as a referendum in the next presidential election, which we are

fighting, which we think—that's not the real issue right now. But I think the state does have the power to mobilize people's emotions in these status of precariousness, of the nation-state status.

And in the nation-state building project, a lot of real issues—economic issues, sex rights issues, minority issues—they are all overlooked. The only thing is—love Taiwan, or getting the nation into the United Nations and becoming a state.

I think that nationalism, on those terms, needs our resistance strongly. There was a question raised about feminist language being used by the state and conservative NGOs. To a certain extent, I don't blame the conservative NGOs for using feminist language.

I think the ways certain mainstream feminists explained feminist terms lends these terms very easily for conservative use. If you polarize your language and say—men are all bad, women are all saints—you lend yourself very easily as collaborators with the conservative right because they can say the same thing, too.

So there's a certain degree of sophistication that we need when we fight the state, when we fight the NGOs; the way we talk about these issues will have to incorporate a lot of different views from a lot of different minority groups.

I think that the destitute situation of the economy at the present has created a lot of discontent around people. But this discontent has not been organized. Ideologically, discursively—progressive movements need that kind of collaboration.

We are seeing that in Taiwan now. Alien laborers are organizing for a December 9 march on their rights to have a break. They don't have holidays. Every week, they cannot have any day off, so they are demanding for a day off. And the sexual minorities are included. All the minorities are going for that parade.

So I think the destitution of the situation has created opportunities for these marginal groups to band together and work for solidarity. We can see that we are in the same status of being ignored, being marginalized, and being persecuted through a lot of new legislations.

To be able to fight the state, it does not mean that you just say "no" to everything the state does. In Taiwan, the state is cumbersome to such a degree that sometimes you can manipulate language in such a way that you can present a certain issue and make it impossible for the state to reject it.

But of course, we failed on the homosexuality marriage issue and also the equal rights for employment issue. But still, there are opportunities. We just have to keep on siding with the most marginal because they are steadfast opposition to the state. Whenever an NGO gets funding from the state—and it gets lots of funding from the state—usually, you are gradually losing that.

Fortunately, when that happens, usually a small branch of that NGO will break off and then start another small movement and start a small resistance. And so that I am calling for a more sophisticated thinking in relation to the state. It's not a yes or no, reject and give up.

You just have to watch what's happening. The precariousness of the situation that we're living in offers up a lot of opportunities for us to interfere. But at the same time, it also creates a lot of frustration, so you have to work with that reality. That sophisticated thought, rather than a yes or no, clean-cut polarization of their status, is what I think is most important now.