

Decolonial Resistance Through A Critical Feminist Analysis of Gendered and Racialized Violence in Vancouver and Guadalajara

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BACKGROUND

- Colonial Legacies & Gendered Violence**
- Coloniality in all its manifestations imposed a worldview that **divides people** and **sustains distinctions** and hierarchies based on categories like race and gender that are evident today in the way practices or rules used to tackle gender-based violence are often ineffective and even harmful to victims (Tapia Tapia, 2025).
- Gendered and racialized violence refers to violence a person is subjected to because of gender norms, ethnic background and unequal power dynamics which has deep health, social and economic impacts on survivors, families and communities (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2025).
- Although not limited to physical violence (Women and Gender Equality Canada, n.d.), this study focuses on the **most violent manifestations** of gendered and racialized violence, which is the killing, abuse, and disappearance of women characteristic of the ongoing issues of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) and feminicide.
- Combating **gendered and racialized violence** requires dismantling **colonial frameworks** (Dorries & Harjo, 2020), **activism** is a significant **bottom-up** approach because of the way it highlights the needs and perspectives of those who are most affected.

- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), Canada**
- Violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in social, economic, cultural and historical factors shaped by colonialism and state neglect (Pabla, 2021).
- Residential schools and the Indian Act imposed patriarchal norms, tied Indigenous women's rights and status to their husbands, and contributed to **economic marginalization and vulnerability** to violence (Pabla, 2021; García-Del Moral, 2024).
- Legal and political institutions often frame this violence as cultural or individual, **obscuring its systemic nature** and making it difficult to address within a colonial socio-legal framework.
- State inaction, or counterproductive action, normalizes conditions in which Indigenous women and girls are harmed or murdered with little accountability for perpetrators (García-Del Moral, 2024).

- Feminicide, Mexico**
- Central American feminists conceptualize femicide as a **state crime**, showing how patriarchal institutions dehumanize women, **normalize** gender-based violence and **depoliticize** their suffering (García-Del Moral, 2024).
- Spanish **colonization** in Mexico imposed patriarchal racialized gender norms subjecting Indigenous women to forced labour and sexual violence simultaneously pressuring Indigenous men to adopt these norms (Juarez Armenta, 2023).
- As women enter the public and industrial workspaces in the 1970s, officials increasingly blamed victims for transgressing traditional gender roles, sexualising them and using these **narratives to justify inaction** on feminicide (Perello, 2014)
- Capitalism reinforced control over women's bodies and unpaid domestic labour, while Mexican masculinity rooted in colonial violence values dominance and emotional repression, sustaining unequal gender dynamics and women's disposability (Juarez Armenta, 2023; Perello, 2014).

- Colonial Legacies & Gendered Violence**
- Activism is broadly understood as collective, **contestational action** that challenges dominant systems of power and meaning through tactics like protest, boycotts, petitions, and everyday resistance (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012; Martin et al., 2007).
- For this research, activism encompasses both formal **large-scale political** actions and **smaller acts of social change** in daily life.
- Feminist movements against gender and racialized violence push for legislation and policy implementation while **reshaping community understandings of power**, conflict, and collective action (Müller & Shahrok, 2016; Scott, 1992).
- Activist outcomes can be partial or fragile: policy gains may be poorly implemented, and success depends on legitimacy, participation of those most affected, sustained collaboration and the capacity to confront resistant state institution (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Pianta et al., 2012).

Against this backdrop of colonial legacies, state inaction and shifting legal frameworks, it becomes essential to examine how feminist movements in specific local contexts articulate and contest the state's role in ongoing gendered and racialized violence.

Research Question

How have feminist movements in Vancouver and Guadalajara framed and contested state inaction in the face of gendered and racialized violence ingrained in colonial legacies?

METHODOLOGY

- Archival research** through analysis of primarily online activist materials and campaigns. By conducting a media analysis, this study aims to illustrate the diverse strategies and narratives feminist movements employ to frame and contest state inaction related to gendered and racialized violence.
- Media analysis through **framing analysis**: frames are structures of meaning (concepts and relations among concepts) found in culture, and framing is the construction and use of said frames in a society (Hertog & McLeod, 2001).
- For each chosen activist movement, this analysis examines how the movement's framing constructs the state, frames other citizens, defines its objectives, and employs symbols or visual elements to convey its purpose. **Three activist movements from each city** have been selected based on their significance, accessibility of documentation, and capacity for in-depth comparative analysis. Some of the media regarding Mexico and Guadalajara comes from sources in Spanish; any necessary translations will be done by the researcher.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is through **Critical Race Feminist theory (CRFT)**. CRFT is a legal theory that looks at the intersection of race, gender, and class when examining the experiences of women of color (Wing, 1999). CRFT is relevant in issues of gendered and racialized violence within the chosen contexts because it underscores how colonial legacies and patriarchal **structures shape the lived experiences of marginalized women**, leading to the specific forms of violence they face. This framework helps reveal how colonial legacies and current legal, social, and spatial inequalities are challenged by feminist movements that contest state inaction to work towards transformative justice.

Women's Memorial March

- The Women's Memorial March (WMM) originated in Vancouver in 1992 and is now held in various cities across Canada and the United States on February 14 (Conn, 2020).
- The March began as a small memorial for an Indigenous woman who was found murdered in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, but it has turned into a march with thousands each year (Conn, 2020).



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