

Interview

Argentina: On Ni Una Menos women's rights movement

Wednesday 15 March 2017, by [ABBATE Florencia](#), [MILLER Ben](#) (Date first published: 2 June 2016).

On 3rd June 2015, protestors gathered to stage the largest protest for women's rights in Argentina's history. Tomorrow marks the anniversary of the Ni Una Menos movement and their inaugural march. The Indy spoke to founding organiser Florencia Abbate about the movement's origins, progress, and goals in the days before the second march.

Ben Miller - What are the specific demands of this year's march, and how are they different from last year?

Florencia Abbate - Basically, the first demand is the same as last year: to put an end to femicide. Related to this, we are asking for more funding for the National Council of Women, which is the body charged with these issues. In July we are going to present a national plan for the prevention, sanction, and eradication of violence against women. It is a plan for the entire country that demands a federal budget, which would be very positive like Law 26.485 for the Protection of Women, which was approved in 2009. We hope that they assign the necessary funds for this new initiative.

Ni Una Menos stands against human trafficking, along with the issue of kidnappings in this country. We are also calling for an abortion law and better abortion rights, since there are many organisations that are in support of the national campaign for abortion rights. In particular, we are calling for the liberation of Belén, the woman who is currently imprisoned ... eight years for supposedly illegal abortion without proper DNA analysis. This clearly demonstrates the machismo that is enacted across Argentina constantly.

The case of Belén is a question of justice, which continues to be a problematic process. How can women who are unable to exit the cycle of violence find justice from the police or the courts when neither is working to combat the social problem of domestic violence? These failures express the same machismo that is so engrained in society. So we say it is all a part of the state's responsibility to educate as often as possible in schools and create assistance for women who need refuge as a result of their economic situation.

We know that this is also a cultural issue that we face as a Latin American country, but these protests serve to raise awareness in society and provide an opportunity to reflect on their own practices. For example, what about the roles within the home, or the way in which many young women last year claimed street harassment as a major issue? This is such a common issue, and it is so notable because every woman can share experiences with harassment.

There are specific demands like the fact that last year our act against gender violence was signed by a senator, who presented the project to the assembly, but nevertheless we still have not seen any implementation or budgeting for it. There is also a very good law for sex education in schools and we need to face conservative groups in order to implement that.

How has the voice of this movement grown to include other elements, such as education, beyond the annual street protests? What has happened in the year since your first march?

We are not an NGO, we are a group of artists, journalists, and researchers who think collectively about these calls for justice, but we don't dedicate all of our time to it because we have our own jobs. Even so, I see the positive effects of social media, which has attracted many organisations of university students, inspired the creation of workshops, and brought many of our organisers to schools to speak to the students who are very interested in Ni Una Menos. I also believe that another positive outcome has to do with the media outlets, many of which were quite misogynistic before last year's march, pointing out the specific clothes worn by victims of sexual assault by showing their Facebook photos. Now it seems like journalists are more careful, for example when they use the term "femicides" rather than "crimes of passion".

Do you believe that media is truly changing its practices?

The media has its own logic that has a lot to do with commercial interests, and that is never going to change. But yes, I believe that there is a common feeling among the population that after our first march the rhetoric changed a bit, because they needed to adapt to their listeners. The media discourse is getting slightly more sensitive with coverage of these cases because there is a receptive population that has criticised when they heard a woman who experienced violence described as a "fan of nightclubs".

Just after the march we saw political figures of all parties supporting the cause during their own candidacies, and one of these candidates was President Macri. Under his government, have we seen a change in policy accordingly? What about having a new cabinet with far fewer women in positions of power since December?

It is a neoliberal government, by which I mean that neoliberalism does not tend towards social aid or social problems. We can see this with the cutting of many health programmes, where the government is not allocating the necessary funds. They are making several cuts on that end, for example how they are trying to remove the retirement rights for housewives. They need to understand that mothers who take care of their spouses and children as their job do not receive payment, but it is a job. It is just a different role culturally. The only positive is the appointment of Fabiana Tuñez to the National Council of Women. She is a feminist who has been an activist working with NGOs, and she focuses on the statistics to really help women directly. As a result, we see her assignment as something positive in this government. Other parties have their own female fronts, and many women from different parties will attend this year's march.

Since the first march, this movement has received a lot of attention on social media networks like Twitter and Facebook, especially as a hashtag. Would you say the movement has stayed largely online between marches, or have there been some real world examples of continued support in the interim?

Before the first march, there was already a women's rights movement in Argentina. The calls we made last year were widely covered by the media and attracted many reporters. It raised these issues for a wider independent public audience. There were also many who came to protest who belonged to the preexisting women's movement. Thanks to their movement we have seen the

creation of some laws (like 26.485 in 2009) that exist thanks to their militant feminism and were developed with the collaboration of many people. The law of comprehensive sex education and the campaign for abortion rights are other causes that existed for many years before 3rd June last year. The first march was a catalyst for many people to become aware of these issues; we initially chose our name because of widespread machismo and violence against women. I think that militant feminism arrived long before.

How have these movements grown and attracted a larger population of supporters? Has this expansion crossed any unexpected cultural boundaries?

Last year was more of a spontaneous collaboration between several forces, whereas this year we have prepared more. This year is interesting because many different types of organisations got involved and will attend. For example, we are welcoming the constituency of Ni Una Menos against transphobia, which is very strong as a part of LGBT militancy in this country. They are also a part of this movement, as are the migrants who will be marching with us to protest their own issues. We also have AMAR, an organisation of sex workers, along with some anti-trafficking organisations who oppose prostitution. This is very interesting because we have such heterogeneous groups that seem opposed, but there is consensus on certain goals within the movement.

After attending the march tomorrow, how can our readers further involve themselves in this movement besides following on Twitter and Facebook?

Ni Una Menos belongs to everyone, and there are groups who want to identify as Ni Una Menos in the other provinces and parts of the country who unexpectedly use our logo to promote their local demands. I hope that the movement multiplies with all of these collectives working to improve, for example, abortion rights. There are tonnes of groups collaborating to fight against such “micromachismos” in Argentina.

The march will begin at 5pm this Friday in Plaza Congreso and will march to the Casa Rosada. For more information visit niunamenos.com.ar, or their Facebook and Twitter.

P.S.

* Argentina Independent. 2nd June 2016:

<http://www.argentinaindependent.com/socialissues/ni-una-menos-an-interview-with-florencia-abbeta/>