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AF³IRM'S 2014 INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY STATEMENT

On March 8th, more than any day, we, the women of AF³IRM, salute all women, their struggles, and their stories in honor of International Working Women's Day and Women's History Month. This day was born from the New York City women garment workers in 1857 and born again in 1908, and from their protests for workers' rights and better working conditions. This day was born from their purposeful resistance and calls for revolution-- so on March 8th, AF³IRM joins with women around the world calling on the same spirit of resistance, justice, and revolution- with Marissa Alexander and her fight within Florida's unjust system, with the UC Berkeley and other college students speaking out against sexual assault on college campuses, with the Saudi Arabian female activists demanding more rights from the Saudi Arabian Shura Council, with the women in Bolivia, Venezuela and other countries speaking out against violence and imperial interference in their homelands. We salute their strength!

As transnational feminists and women of color, we especially take this year to celebrate our own organizational history, as well as the personal and collective histories of the women workers and warriors that we know and are. For almost 25 years, the women of AF³IRM and previously of GabNet, have come together to stand up for liberation, justice, and freedom and so we celebrate 25 years of sisterhood, 25 years of knowing that feminism is an action, not a noun, and 25 years of collective resistance and survival. Because yes, for almost 25 years, we will have survived - against the continuing war on women, rape and rape culture, the attacks on women's rights, the systematic and state-sanctioned assaults on women's bodies, every label of "whore" and "slut," the harassment and discrimination on the streets, in schools, at our jobs, and across these borders.

Within these 25 years, we have struggled and survived together - to win victories, from the Stand With Grace campaign to gaining Justice for Laya, from #NotYourFetish to the passage of the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act (IMBRA) to protect mail order brides. We have advocated on behalf of women workers and immigrants. We have educated high school and college students around issues like trafficking and militarization and welcomed them into our membership ranks. We have mentored, trained, and empowered women and girls to be fierce leaders and political activists.

This year, we renewed the charge on the 15th anniversary of the Purple Rose Campaign against the trafficking of women and children to include the fight against sexual violence and the fetishization and the commodification of transnational women/women of color's bodies. AF³IRM chapters have also been preparing for and conducting social investigations from coast to coast to identify sex trafficking. We have hosted report-backs on findings from Phase 1 of our sexual violence relief centers project with NAPIESV that took place in the Philippines in areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan and by armed conflict. We recognize the need for justice, not charity in these areas of disaster and are working to put the control of resources back into the hands of women and their communities so that they can rebuild their lives their way.

Together, we have achieved numerous victories and as an organization, we are striving to reach even more goals and win more campaigns. But we have also struggled together to support the unheralded individual journeys and fights - the ones our members and allies have endured and triumphed over. AF³IRM women have personally dealt with domestic violence and sexual assault, state-sponsored violence and institutionalized harassment, abusive relationships, trafficking and the sex industry, discrimination and poverty. Many of our women have left abusive relationships or faced sexual violence. These struggles have left scars on our bodies and souls and we continue to bear the scars of physical and emotional abuse and trauma everyday.

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But we also carry these truths - that scars are signs of healing wounds, that we are survivors and warriors, and that we as women are not alone in our struggle - and it is these truths that have held us up and changed us. We see the scars on each other and recognize the scars on our own bodies and souls.

So we come together and bridge our stories of struggle across our backs - bridges built and welded over the scars that keep us whole. As Rumi said, "the wound is the place where light enters you" and we remember each scar, each wound, each triumph - collectively and individually - and use it as light towards liberation. Our women lead campaigns against trafficking and against sexual assault; we do work as community advocates, social workers, healers, creators. We have become stronger with each story and each woman we take along with us. As transnational feminists and women of color, we celebrate our personal and collective herstories of struggle, survivorship, and triumphs. We celebrate each other.

We know that without our celebration, without our voices rising together, without our collective light, we will be forgotten and even purposefully erased. We have been taught that scars are ugly, unsightly and unwanted - just like how the histories and experiences of our women and communities of color are considered unnecessary and irrelevant. We have been taught that we do not matter, that we deserve to be hurt, to be raped, to be killed, that we are the scars of human existence, and they have tried to marginalize, silence, and erase our histories and our lives. Media, politics, education, even our own movements have at times tried to cover us up or wash us away, but they underestimate us. They forget that we are fortified by those who came before us and those who struggle alongside us. They forget that we will not get pulled under, that we will survive, and that together we rise.

On October 4th through 5th, we will show them our strength and what it means to survive as a woman, at the AF³IRM Summit: Women on the Wave, which will take place at The Women's Building in San Francisco. As transnational feminists, we recognize how we act as bridges between each other and our stories, as well as the bridges from the lands of our roots to the lands where we reside, as we remember our diverse histories and cultures. We are Women on the Wave because we call upon the power of the waves to connect us, with our ancestors, with each other, with future generations. These waves also connect the history and legacies of feminism with our own - yet we are more than the declared waves of feminism, going beyond the fourth wave as we go break through intersections and separations of feminism. As women on the wave, we traverse the boundaries of feminist political theory and connect it to an active and engaged practice. We also resist and refuse to be pulled down and washed away by those who wish to extinguish our light. This isn't just our resistance - this is our renaissance. We call on all to join us as we come together as women, as feminists, as transnational peoples for Women on the Wave.

As we look forward to October and look back on our 25-year journey, we, the women of AF³IRM, want to remember and recognize all the women who are working towards liberation and freedom.

We salute our heroes and the women warriors who came before us!

We salute our mothers, grandmothers, and every mother - because every mother is a working mother!

We salute our sister organizations and allies in the struggle for liberation!

We salute all of the sisters who have joined us and all of the sisters who made the conscious decision to stay and continue the fight!

We salute every woman engaged in this every day struggle to survive!

We would not be here without these women and without each other. As women, especially as transnational working class women, we were never meant to survive. But, together, even with these scars, we will continue the fight. Together, we will survive, we will thrive, and we will dismantle these systems and agents of oppression!

Onward to women's liberation and to the liberation of all humanity!

AF³IRM is a anti-imperialist, transnational feminist organization, with chapters all over the United States. To learn more about AF³IRM, visit our website at www.af3irm.org. Follow us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/AF3IRM>) and Twitter (@AF3IRM).