



# ECHOES OF THE SOUNDS OF THE CONCH

CALLING OUT TO THE HEARTS OF WOMEN ACTIVISTS, DEFENDERS OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNIVERSAL GOODS IN LATIN AMERICA

## ECHOES OF THE SOUNDS OF THE CONCH

Calling out to the hearts of women activists, defenders of human rights and universal goods in Latin America



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## PRESENTATION

The Urgent Action Fund of Latin America and the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean, committed to the security and protection of women activists and defenders of the Human Rights of women in the Region, has defined Sustainable Activism as its ethical and political beacon. This implies a profound commitment to the individual and collective well-being of the defenders and their organizations, as well as the strengthening of their capacities to make this possible in their personal and collective daily activities.

This methodological document reflects three years of UAF-LA experience with women defenders and activists from Central America and Colombia in the development of the proposal, the central contribution by the program coordinator, Luz Stella Ospina in its creation and development, as well as the collective contribution of the Fund's team in its design. In addition, it grows out of spaces for dialogue and learning where "the personal is political" takes on new meaning, so that the transformation sought by feminists once again gains resonance in the private sphere and in relationship with the public. The goal of this document is to provide insights so that defenders and their organizations can reflect internally, analyze their practices and their models for defending rights and their activism, and so that they can draw on them according to their needs and contexts.



The document begins with an introduction that establishes how and where reflection on Sustainable Activism originates in the Region. The first chapter deals with the ethical considerations required for developing a process of formation and learning, and gathers together criteria iterated by feminists who have worked with women victims of violence. In the second chapter, the concepts on which this proposal is based and which constitute the framework for this effort, are defined. In the third chapter, the principles and methodological elements which make these processes possible, are outlined. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters, power- as the overarching concept- is related to Sustainable Activism at the levels of the personal, collective, and public, respectively. Finally, the last chapter outlines elements to be considered so the proposal can be multiplied with others.

We trust this document will be a contribution to our Region in strengthening the women's and feminist movement, in broadening the viewpoint of donors about the work of defenders, and in promoting South-South and South-North dialogue with our natural allies: women's funds and organizations.

Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean (UAF-LA)

## INTRODUCTION

The Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights contributes to the strengthening of the women's and feminist movement through the funding of rapid response grants, collaborative initiatives, knowledge production, and advocacy. As a result of the work of women activists from around the world, the Fund assumed the task of enquiring into the conditions in which these women undertook their activism and the consequences in their personal lives and inside their organizations of how they went about it. The result of this reflection is the book *"What's the Point of Revolution if We Can't Dance?"*<sup>1</sup>. Now, *"Sounds of the Conch"* continues this initial reflection, in Latin America.

The conclusions and questions raised in *"What is the Point of Revolution if We Can't Dance?"* allowed the Urgent Action Fund of Latin America- UAF-LA- to organize encounters with activists from the Region, especially from Central America and Colombia, so they could get together and talk. As a result of these collective reflections, the need to continue facilitating spaces for meeting and dialogue about the conditions and ways of assuming activism, as well as the effects generated in the emotional and physical health and integral well-being of women, was clear.

The analysis of rapid response actions, together with the conversations, made it clear that women's activism, undertaken

1. Barry J. & J. Dordevic. 2007. *What's the Point of Revolution if We Can't Dance?* Urgent Action Fund. Available at: <http://urgentactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/06/WTPR-Final-Book.pdf>

in contexts of high risk, in surroundings where violence and armed conflict predominate, are crisscrossed by high stress levels, anxiety, fear, enormous pressures, and traumas produced by the violences exercised against the women and their families. Besides these conditions, it was necessary to re-think activism that is directed towards others, while their own needs as women are postponed and subordinated. The issue of how power relations affect risk factors and vulnerability in the personal and collective lives of activists was also crucial.

Reflections by women activists from the Region pointed to the restrictive manner in which security and protection is understood in the institutional frameworks on which the design of programs and responses directed to women human rights defenders<sup>2</sup> is based.

For women, the question of holistic or comprehensive security and protection touches on the body, the personal, the spiritual, organizational practices, “well-being”, material guarantees for the development of their work, and the strengthening of collective endeavors. Such an approximation requires comprehensiveness in the response and transcends the classic protection schemes of institutional frameworks, revealing their limitations. Echoing the call from Latin-American activists, the UAF-LA creates “*Sounds of the Conch*”, an initiative that opens up spaces and pathways from and for activists, proposing to displace an outward-looking framework to one that is internal, exploring the interior world of women in secure spaces where they encounter confidence, non-judgement; and where they share reflections about women’s activism, the ways of assuming activism, the satisfactions this has brought, the weightiness generated, and what they like and don’t like about their way of being activists.

2. We understand women human rights defenders to be those women who individually or collectively contribute “to the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals”, in accordance with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (fourth paragraph of the preamble) of the United Nations Organization (1998). In addition, the term activists will be used as synonymous with defenders, in that both are related to the realization of activities directed to the defense and promotion of rights.



So, since 2013, we have been involved in constructing this Sustainable Activism proposal. It is an invitation to take on board personal and collective organizational activist practices, and at the same time reflect on power as possibility, and not only as criticism of patriarchal power. The idea is that, together in organizations and/or collective experiences, we can find ways of turning this activist practice into a way of life that takes into consideration the various relational levels of woman-political actor, the woman who is affected, mobilizes, loves, feels, and enjoys what she does.

The UAF-LA, as a feminist organization, that understands feminism as an ethical-political project, as a critique of power, and as capacity for creating new ways of thinking and being, imagines, along with women activists from the Region, other forms of activism, and considers, as some women have declared, that these new possibilities require the re-connection of women with themselves and their surroundings. The process of observing oneself requires bravery, willingness and time- time to pause and listen; to take distance from the work itself in order to observe it; and to look at oneself with distance, honesty, and self-criticism, as well as re-evaluating the ways of undertaking activism and the models embodied in these practices.

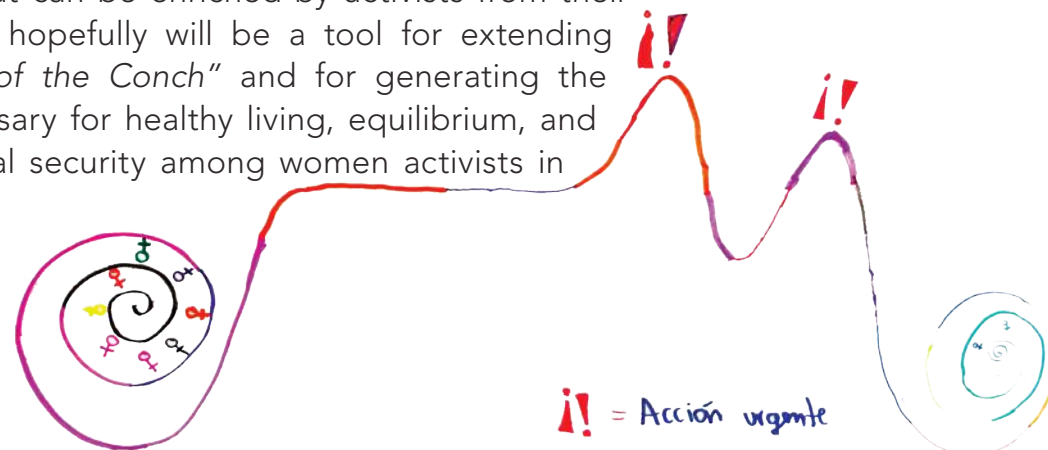
The process of creating this document can be summarized in three moments:

In the first instance, the material produced by “*Sounds of the Conch*” was revised, including its conceptual and methodological developments and the reports from the conversations-workshops with women from the region. At this time, a series of conversations with Luz Stella Ospina, coordinator of the Sustainable Activism Program, were initiated, and with her, the first attempts at detailing and enriching the reflection initiated by the UAF-LA were sketched out.

During a second moment, the UAF-LA team dialogues with *"Sounds of the Conch"*; questions are formulated; there is an attempt to pin down some of the contents that sustain the proposal; new visions about the experience are provided; and the team works collectively to mainstream Sustainable Activism throughout the Fund's different commitments in the Region.

Later on, with all the previously-mentioned elements assembled, dialogue between the findings of *"Sounds of the Conch"* and feminist theoretical developments is re-established and enriched, the goal being to strengthen the basis of UAF-LA's ethical-political proposal represented in the implementation of this initiative. During this dialogue, feminism, with its call to create epistemological ruptures in order to imagine other possible worlds, allowed, among others things, recognition of the centrality of emotion, experience, and the body as forms of knowledge privileged by *"Sounds of the Conch"* and the importance of the collective in the work of women activists in the Region.

The document presented here, captures the flows, movements, connections, and queries during the process of creating *"Sounds of the Conch"*, starting with the ethical considerations that sustain it, the conceptual framework constructed with activists from the Region, the principles, and the methodological design created to incorporate reflections on activism with women. The methodological framework is a work in progress that can be enriched by activists from their specific realities, and hopefully will be a tool for extending the call of *"Sounds of the Conch"* and for generating the transformations necessary for healthy living, equilibrium, and emotional and physical security among women activists in the Region.



## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### A SAFE PLACE<sup>3</sup>

Considering the constant risks faced by women activists for the work they do- insecurity, fear, and impotence-, *"Sounds of the Conch"*, based in feminist practices, suggests to women the collective creation of a secure place where each one constructs and also finds understanding, support, listening, validity, recognition of her life experience, care, and generosity of spirit. It is in such surroundings that women can re-imagine themselves and slowly make changes that result in greater personal and collective "wellbeing", for which certain useful tools for self-care, healing, and transformation of pain are shared.

From a feminist perspective, a secure place is understood as a space of confidence in which women can openly share their life experiences about issues that affect their personal lives, situating private life as a political concern. From this approximation, women in the 70's created self-awareness groups where they collectively, and from their life experience, analyzed such relevant themes as autonomy in decisions about their bodies and sexuality, patriarchal institutions such as the

3. The concept of a secure place as a space of protection and serenity in contrast to "insecurity" and generalized violence comes from work with victims of sexual violence; for example, see the manual for women victims of sexual abuse in childhood: Bass, Ellen and Laura Davis (1988), *"The Courage to Heal"*. New York: Harper and Row Publications.





family, matrimony, couples, heterosexuality as regimen and political institution (Curiel, 2009), and the effects of patriarchal culture on their lives.

In this case, the secure place is a space for dialogue, song, celebration, and ritual, all of which suggest to women a possible leap from victim to creative and protagonist actor, erstwhile generating conditions for recognizing women's history and transforming pain and anger into internal strength and calm. It is a space and time for accompaniment, so each woman feels and lives the possibility of relief, of confidence; it is a space where each receives serene and respectful listening, attentive care for her body and physical and spiritual nourishment.

It is a place for the construction of shared confidences, where the spoken word, gestures, the body, and silences have their place. It is about respectful space that avoids prejudgments. So that the place is secure, personal and collective attention is required, as is active listening.

## CARE OF SELF

The human condition has, since time immemorial, been constructed in reference to the existence of others who proceed us or surround us, meaning we are constructed as social beings in relationship, in interdependence, constantly exposed to, and transformed through, the presence of the other. Our daily behavior is marked by the relationship with others and by norms that act upon each individual, generating concrete effects. Sexual difference in a patriarchal culture is the basis upon which unequal power relationships are constructed and generated. The cultural construction of the genders in the case of defining the categories women and feminine, associates the feminine identity with the care of others, assigning the reproductive role to women and the productive role to men. Women owe to others their recognition and value vis-à-vis the other, and to a great extent depend on the fulfilling of this norm generated by the culture.

As a result, for activists, the search for recognition and dedication to the cause of defending women's human rights is frequently undertaken with displays of heroic activism, including a high sense of sacrifice and limitless dedication. In this dedication that knows no boundaries, self-care disappears; it is not a priority; and emotional and physical wear that turns into illness is the result.







For UAF-LA, promoting self-care among women activists constitutes a political objective designed to subvert the established order. It is sustained in the conviction that it is only possible to re-write the world if individuals take the first step of looking internally in order to transform themselves. For UAF-LA, self-care requires the creation of spaces in daily life that allow women to think about themselves, to acknowledge how they feel and to feel others,

to listen to one's body, to lovingly take another look, to see others through new eyes, and to fill up with fresh air to be able to continue the commitment with greater awareness of one's own limits, both in the work as well as other parts of life.

As a result of the experience that has evolved in the spaces of encounter facilitated by the UAF-AL, the idea is for women to become cognizant of what they do or might do to care for themselves; that they take on as a priority in their daily lives the need for time to rest, relax, eat well, listen to their bodies, and as such, recognize the state of their strength and prevent harm to their mental, emotional, and physical health.

Therefore, self-care is understood as a political act of resistance and it proposes recognition and transformation of certain social norms that have determined one way for women to exercise activism, resulting in high costs for their lives, and so they may recover a place, a moment for themselves.

## MUTUAL CARE

The cultural construction of gender and the resulting sexual division of labor, has placed the practices of care in the domestic realm and has delegated women as the only ones responsible. As a result, it has been understood that care of others is part of a cultural mandate associated with the feminine and which women undertake throughout their lives, in many instances giving priority to the needs of others, of sons, daughters, partners, women comrades, and women victims, over their own needs. Patriarchal culture establishes that women exist for others, for the pleasure of the other, and that they are in the world to look after others, this stereotype being associated with the notion of sacrifice and guilt installed through patriarchal and Judeo-Christian discourse.

"This function of care-giver becomes a value assigned to us by the patriarchal world. It also has its positive aspects since it is what ensures there are women caring for the water, or in the environmental movement, or that the Ruta Pacifica exists- a movement of women for peace and a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict in Colombia. But it has been "too much", as if caring were only women's responsibility. What is missing is to share the caring, a more equitable distribution of caring" (Participant workshop, Inputs, 2013:3).

In the case of women's organizations and of women activists, this dynamic is transferred from the domestic and private sphere to the organizational. That is to say, women activists give themselves over to the defense of victims of human rights violations and to their care and protection, forgetting about themselves, just as happens in the private world of women, especially of mothers, who devote themselves to the care of their sons and daughters, unable to share this responsibility with partners and relegating their own needs and interests to the back burner.

"We give hope to others and what do I do with mine?" What is going on with me?.....I always have the imperative: "I can't let them down".

"The way I had been realizing activism overwhelmed my health and this made me take charge of myself. I am doing what gives me pleasure. I make meals with the children, we go to the river, I manage to disconnect" (Participant workshop, Inputs, 2013: 4-5).

Reflection about care confronts us with fragility, with the weakness of the other; women can relate to fragility and receive fragility because this state of affairs is part of what has culturally been assigned to the feminine. However, fragility as a constituent part of humanity, is counterpoised to force and requires care and listening. Consciousness of fragility and the need for care of the human species are, as a result, elements of the feminine necessary for the conservation of life that ought to permeate dominant masculine logic in the exercise of the public, of power. By integrating masculine and



feminine elements, the scale is rebalanced and a change in social structures can be generated.

As such, an activist's call to ensure care becomes a political rallying point for the women's movement, is pertinent. It is a question of positioning care as a human ethic, a responsibility of all, as a criteria for decision-making in the personal and political spheres.

"[...] care is more than an individual act or a virtue along with others. It is a "way of being"; as such, it is the way in which a person constructs herself and behaves in the world with others. Or better still: it is a "way-of-being-in-the-world" that marks the relations one establishes with all things".

Thanks to care we stop seeing nature and all that exists therein as objects. The relation is not one of subject-object, but of subject-subject [...]

This "way-of-being-in-the-world", in the form of care, allows human beings to live the fundamental experience of value, of what is important and matters definitively. It is not utilitarian value, only for use, but the intrinsic value of all things. From this substantive value, the dimension of otherness, respect, sacredness, reciprocity, and complementarity evolves [...]" (Boff, 2001: 160).

In the case of shared or mutual caring, of care between and with women, in the collective, in the support networks, it is clear that women are not alone, that the work we undertake as activists, as human rights defenders, has a place for listening and support. That is to say, we are required to develop a new concept of power, one that assumes forms of democracy and shared power: the construction of new mechanisms of collective accountability, decision-making, and responsibilities.





Permanent and continuous work is required if our relationships are to become a possibility of *affidamento*, as the Italian feminists name this relationship amongst us, meaning recognition of the authority of the other (for the position she holds, her experience, her skills and capacities, which make all, and each one, of us special) and not because of fear. It is similar to *sisterhood* where the goal is to develop relationships of shared caring, of reception, warmth, and accompaniment among women in order to transit to a type of holistic protection and security that transcends manuals and is accompanied by speech, affection, and the necessary measures according to circumstances.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### PRACTICES

During the encounters, women identified certain installed imaginaries and practices related to the ways activism is taken on:

- Activism is related to the heroic, sacrifice, and total commitment.
- To be recognized as activists, it is necessary to undertake heroic acts, even to the point of sometimes putting one's very life at risk.
- On many occasions, working on behalf of others becomes a way of escaping from personal problems and of avoiding responsibility for oneself.
- Women's activism is crisscrossed by guilt related to: risks for family members which, on occasions, are generated by their work; conflicts in their emotional lives as a result of their work as activists; the lack of time for family concerns, among others.
- Older women's activism does not build sufficient bridges to meet up with that of young women.
- Difficulties persist within the women's movement to be able to reach out to new ways of defining feminism and activism, particularly to those originating from young women.
- Discourses reinforcing the condition of women as victims and disowning them as active agents of their own lives, generate

a dynamic that results in many women situation and perpetuating themselves in this very place, so this becomes a source of recognition, benefits, and advantages over others.

Given this panorama, we began asking ourselves: how to begin transforming activists' practices that move beyond the security and protection measures a State must guarantee?

We understand that by examining the very practices and the underlying "duty to be" is a way of beginning to transform the reproduction of models and imaginaries, and of recognizing individual and collective co-responsibility for continuing the work of defending human rights, but as activists with greater individual "well-being" and improved conditions of collective protection and security.

## EXPERIENCE

Feminism conceives experience as a series of lived events common to women and a valuable source of knowledge. To recognize women's experience is to give space to their voice and wisdom.

Experience constitutes the terrain where it is possible to track relations of domination and oppression, as well as resistances to power activated by citizens; and it is in the body where such movements record their memory. Experiences shared among women generate common knowledge and bring to light unconformities regarding oppression operating in their closest relationships. The narration and sharing of lived experiences with other women becomes a transgressing and transforming potential and one of resistance. In the narration and sharing of life experiences, the individual and the collective are present and possibilities to question and to reflect on the social and cultural norms that underlie women's very practices are opened up. This becomes an invitation to generate new movements related to the manner in which activism is exercised.

## BODY

We understand the body as materiality, concrete reality, as sexually differentiated territory that can be mapped out; text and material from which it is possible to read individual subjects, her desires, and the political and social milieu that regulates her. It is a unique surface, irreducible in its diversity. The body speaks, in its own way, of what the heart has not said; it is the nearest link to conscience, a radar that allows us to know what might be happening internally.

"A body tells of the singularity, the force, and the difference that each body represents". (Nancy, Memory: 2013).

"We suffer from a lot of pain in the chest, in the head. All our emotions are moored to the body and if we don't get rid of it, illness follows". (Workshop participant, Memory: 2013).

Foucault approaches the body as a place of resistance, of knowledge creation, and as part of the strategies of power (Rodríguez, Magda; 1999: 203). The body is also a place of interaction in which the physical, the imaginary, and social relations are articulated and layered. (Braidotti, 2000:30).

Following this framework, the suggested movement is to contemplate the body from new lenses, to reveal the body, to read the discourses that have disciplined it,





the power mechanisms that have negated, indoctrinated, and limited it, and to discover the corporal dimension of human existence, to embody life's experiences.

Beginning with this approximation, a pathway to a new understanding of, and relationship with, the corporal dimension of human existence is sought, one where the care of, and listening to, one's own body take precedence. The question for the body and with the body, among other things, comes from the evidence of the dangers to the health of the bodies of women activists which they themselves relate to exhaustion and accumulation of the pains of the women with whom they work and whose rights they defend, and the pains, anguish, weariness, and tensions related to the work they undertake.

"We must be conscious of the body and learn to read our own bodies. What is it telling us? What is it referring to? What is being silenced? What is it trying to hide, but which sneaks out and becomes visible? It is necessary to maximize a body that feels". (Restrepo, s.f.).

## PRIVATE-PUBLIC

In the 70's, feminism coined the motto "the personal is political" as a response to the construction of modern citizenship that separated the private and public spheres. The modern category of the individual, from the liberal perspective, establishes the category of the "public" as universal and homogeneous, placing particularity.



To inquire after "the personal is political" from the viewpoint of activists' work is a proposal which invites women, based on their own histories, to recognize the ways in which personal, family, and sentimental relationships are manifested and affect their work as activists, and how the relations between these different dimensions operate. From this standpoint, what is sought are changes in practices that negatively influence personal tranquility, and that strengthen those favoring the exercise of activism with greater enjoyment and self-awareness.

This implies re-thinking cultural imaginaries and imperatives that reaffirm sacrifice for others, leaving aside women's own needs and interests. It is to question imaginaries such as that of the generous care-giver who accompanies those who need her until she drops: the tireless woman, the one who risks everything for the cause she defends and who feels guilty if she takes time for herself.

This same approximation requires us to question the way in which organized women, starting from an exploration of their interior worlds and daily lives, can expand notions about the realm of the political and of traditional concepts governing political involvement; how they might bring to light the importance of subjectivity and the personal by placing new ways of exercising activism on the agenda, of reading corporal language, of exercising power in a way that strengthens women, and of providing a different focus to security and protection of those women who work to defend human rights. The notion of the political is expanded, as conceived of by the State, but which goes much further- emphasizing daily life events and society as spaces for transformation and emancipation (Vargas, 2007).



Following this logic, it makes sense to ask: What new forms of political involvement would arise when women human rights defenders, in possession of varied identities, come together around a common concern: to transform themselves in order to contribute to the transformation of society?

“I have really been turned inside-out thinking about how we implement our practices. I feel we are very confused. I realize that healing ourselves first is important” (Workshop participant, Memory, 2014:10).

Women activists have transgressed the cultural norms that prevented their entrance into the public sphere, they exercise public power, and they place needs and interests on public agendas. In the medium term, however, the demands of public political work, of its formal structures, and of forms of leadership corresponding to a patriarchal culture, produce a disconnect among women from their internal worlds. Participating in public politics rarely promotes spaces for interior reflection and also negates time to weave collectively; the hours of work, the demands, and the power games begin to affect women’s health and well-being.

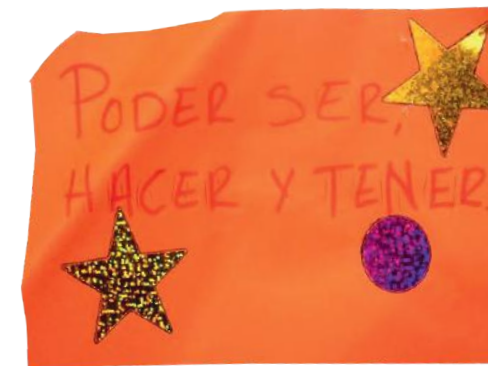
The personal is political is being given new meaning according to activists in the Region. What emerges now is that this space for women’s intimate and daily lives has a place in political action; that this connection is encouraged, and that it is not left aside as if it did not exist. It is recognition of the dynamic between the personal and the political, rather than fragmentation or denial.

## POWER<sup>4</sup>

To address the issue of power and power relations among women activists and within their organizations, we distance ourselves from the notion of power as an external repressor. That is to say we understand power as personal exercise, as collective-organizational and public, as well as acts of daily resistance. Power in this sense is not

understood exclusively as domination and oppression, but as relational networks (Foucault, 1987).

“[...] power extends to every capillary, it impregnates a broad spectrum of spaces and relations: family, sex, school, urban distribution... It is a reversible flow that moves, concentrates, and expands. No individual possess power if not for the place they occupy; “power is always a form of instantaneous and continually”.



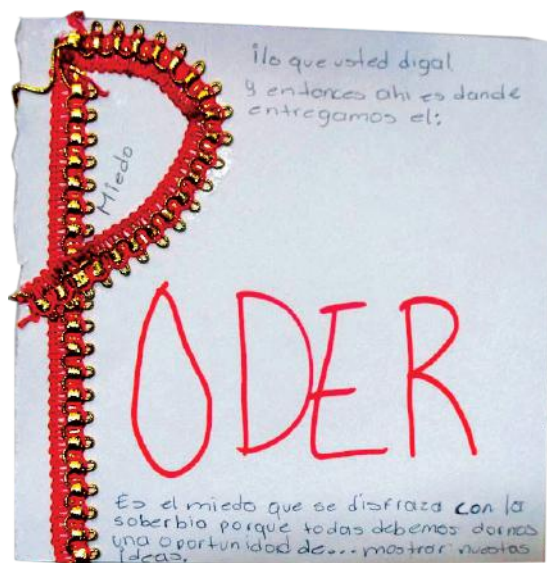
Accordingly, the approximation proposed here emphasizes the identification of the most subtle mechanisms of power, the power relations that operate at the personal level and in groups, organizations, families, and the manner in which the exercise of power operates in the life experiences of activists.

Daily life, and of women themselves, are the nearest domains where we, as individuals, make sense of the world that surrounds us and of our experiences over time. It is also in the terrain of daily life where power is learned and felt. We take actions against its effects, actions that are immediate and that are related to what is closest, the most common corridors of power in daily life.

The UAF-LA is proposing that women activists undertake a self-critical reflection about the exercise of power and models of leadership within their organizations, with the intention of coming to realize to what extent the ways of understanding and exercising power favor, or not, the protection and strengthening of activists, at both personal and collective levels. The idea is to facilitate recognition of personal power and the ways in

4. To go deeper into this reflection, see: Ospina Murillo, Luz Stella. (2013). *Power for the construction of the Sustainable Activism of women defenders of human rights and universal goods in Latin America*. Bogotá: UAF; and Ospina (2015); *From personal to collective power- a pathway to Sustainable Activism*. Bogotá: FAU. Available for down-loading at [www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co](http://www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co)





which this power strengthens women's defense of human rights and the rights of universal goods, confronted, as they are, by the powers they come up against on a daily basis. "To activate the consciousness of women themselves in order to identify "internal tyrants" and to create possibilities for emancipation and change, from one's soul" (Goldman, 1997:26) from that which threatens the well-being of women and their organizations.

In this sense, the idea, therefore, is to advance in the deconstruction of dualisms between reason and nature, masculine and feminine, public and private, that underlie hierarchical scales in power relations, and to imagine

new junctions and possibilities of encounter permitting the construction of other forms of relating.

The possibility of contemplating the changes required in the exercise of activism and power in personal and every-day life facilitates the identification of one's own prejudices, the weight of tradition, and the cultural constructions in every-day activities. This generates possibilities for transformation in public political life, enriching its contents, and transforming its advocacy strategies in favor of a more integrated understanding, and of profound structural transformations for greater personal and collective satisfaction.

For Rosa Braidotti, "feminist philosophy is the critique of power in the discourse and as discourse, and it embodies the active intent to create other ways of thinking; that is to say, behaviors in the process of learning to think in a different manner" (Braidotti, 2000:143). In this context, for *"Sounds of the Conch"*, another way of thinking is to vindicate not only reason but affectivity, the body, and emotions, as well as women's experience of power and the forms in which these experiences have molded their way of assuming and exercising activism.

This is to say, we wish to validate the experience of *power with, power for*, shared power, delegated power based in confidence; an opportunity to construct other ways of being activists and exercising activism.

## THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION<sup>5</sup>

The spiritual dimension has traditionally been associated with religion and, in our contexts, with the power of the churches. However, in practice, we are a multicultural region, enshrined in beliefs and rituals that have been enriched by the ancestral traditions of indigenous and Afro-American peoples. Spirituality and its expressions are part of our culture and daily lives. They have formed part of individual and collective protection strategies, and rituality has provided sense to life. Song, drumming, dance, crops, celebrations, and collective labor are some of these expressions.

These beliefs have been a conduit to the vital energy, to the force of life. They nourish and recognize the inter-relation and the inter-dependence between the human, living things, and all that surrounds us. In this sense, this dimension cannot be denied in the notion of care, but it does imply dialogue and inter-cultural openness.

Faced with risk management, generally, traditional classic measures are selected, although some organizations and/or activists make use of other forms that are also very important: protection ceremonies, the use of ancestral protection symbols, the use of plants and traditional medicine, individual therapy (continues to be the one of personal choice since there is no institutional policy in this regard). Some women share other practices such as recovering good news stories or celebrating even if there is no visible motive.

5. For a deeper understanding of this reflection, see document: Cardoza, Melissa (2014): *Spirituality of Garífona women and activism in transformation*, Honduras: UAF. Available to download at [www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co](http://www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co)

A woman in one of the groups, when asked how they celebrated, said: *with water because I was brought up in the countryside and my blood is like water, the rivers, the streams, I cry, run, I am in contact with nature, I read, sow corn, I don't let things pass me by.*

It is important to be festive, to celebrate our coming together, to lighten our load by dancing, to involve ourselves in other practices like bio-dance, therapies, massages, laughing.



## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Beginning with the findings presented in the document *“What is the Point of Revolution if We Can’t Dance?”* (Barry and Dordevic, 2007), UAF opened up spaces for conversation and reflection with some of the organizations that had received Rapid Response Grants (RRGs) in order to think about risk management, prevention, and protection of activists, from a holistic perspective. During these encounters, the first outlines of the concept of Integrated Protection and Security were drawn up, since staying safe and in dignified conditions were vital and basic to the work of enforceability of rights and social mobilization.

In 2012, three years after the UAF Regional Office for Latin America was established, a proposal to deepen reflections about security and protection, and involving women and their organizations, was made; therefore, women and organizations that had requested RRGs, as well as allied organizations in the Region, were invited to talk about what kind of activism they wanted? And how they wanted to exercise their activism? It is here that the first document *“Sounds of the Conch, a Call to the Hearts of Women Activists and Defenders of Human Rights and Universal Goods”* was presented. *“Sounds of the Conch”*, therefore, arises from the need to collectively assess the concepts, life-styles, imaginaries, and practices in which women’s activism was being sustained. The idea was, together, to construct proposals for a kind of activism that strengthens life and solidarity action, mutual support, confidence, shared care, and self-care that would accompany the strategy of Rapid Response Grant-making.



The image of the Conch emerged from intuition, recognizing that this call is not only about the present, that it is ancestral, and that it can only be heard by those who feel the connection with their hearts. This is a call to connection and resonance from where we originate, a call to the spiritual realm that is part of our multicultural world of indigenous and afro origins that crisscrosses our Region.



"When I was a little girl, on the Island, we women blew conches. It was a power we held. When a girl child was born, the mother gifted her with a conch and taught her how to blow. It was a power only we women had. I remember that we would stop at a high spot and play the conch to announce that someone had died, or when someone was lost at sea. Each event required a distinct sound. All the women in my house have their conch. I always carry mine with me. When I feel alone, I take out the conch and I make it sound, and this helps me". (Workshop participant, Memory, 2014:1).

## METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

### DIALOGIC

The methodological proposal is based on the importance of conversation as a form of sharing knowledge and experience. The exchange of experiences and ideas around such a fundamental question in women's lives is conceived of as an exercise in dialogue where thought, emotion, and affection come together, generating happenings of differing degrees of intensity. The conversation is understood as the flow of thought and affection, as the possibility of connecting with others and of re-connecting with self, in a dynamic interaction. The proposed methodology starts with daily life. The idea is to generate a space where the wisdom of each woman can be retrieved, where self-critical reflection about activist practices and their impacts on women's lives is promoted.

### CREATIVE

There are many ways for facilitating experiences of sensitivity, creativity being one of them. Creative explorations connect us with the subconscious and symbolic world; give reign to other forms for expressing oneself and constructing discourses; go beyond the spoken word; and favor an interior connection with desire, emotion, and their manifestations in the body. Creativity is a possibility for opening up one's own vision, and for this reason, generates familiarity with other languages while their exploration engenders increased tolerance to difference of all types.

From this point of view, the goal is to move us closer to reality from the realm of sensitivity; to create spaces for the re-signification of painful experiences, dialogue, and exploration between sensitive political beings. We prioritize experimentation, games, and uncertainty surrounding what appears certain and known, from the languages of sound, the audio-visual, creative writing, among others. What is at stake is an exploration of subjectivities and from there the problematizing of the relationship between the intimate, the private, and the public; between the intimate and the collective. During these travels, the idea is to contemplate how we work with subjectivity, and how it is possible, from this place, to detonate movement at the deepest levels, beginning

with the question concerning the practices of activists, their protection, and personal and collective security.

Starting with the activation of sensitive experience through the use of creative languages, writing, plastic arts, sound, among others, the UAF-LA is engaged in generating spaces of confidence for self-recognition and learning with others through experimentation and creation.



## CORPORAL

Linked to this approach and an analysis of activists' practices, based in daily life experience, the idea is to situate reflections in women's bodies; the body being understood as a territory crisscrossed by social, political, and economic dynamics, as well as by women's most intimate experiences.

From the recognition of the body as territory, conflicts related to activists' practice, security and protection are to be found there, as well as power relations, along with the emotions and sensations related to the experience of these conflicts and the specific impact they generate in women's lives.

"*Sounds of the Conch*" proposes an exploration of bodily movement, corporal expression, and rhythm in order to seek out silence, pause, slowing down, as well as of other movements; these are creative explorations with the body in order to get closer to understanding the physical body, and as a result, consciousness and reason, as well as our intelligences and modalities of thought. We get closer to a comprehension of the sensitive body and as a result of emotional and spiritual life and this helps us to become conscious of our own situations and to see ourselves without distortions and prejudices.

In consequence, we work with methodological possibilities such as: body mapping, conscious breathing, movement, creative writing, collective mapping, massage and self-massage, representation, among others, which are explored in the following sections.

## METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The methodological approach explores possibilities for observing the world from women's daily and personal lives, and allows for mapping the body in relation to the impacts and affectations emanating from their work as human rights activists

and in relation to their personal experiences in the exercise of power. In addition, it recognizes other forms of constructing narratives, closer to feminine subjectivity, drawing in daily happenings, intimacy, family, community, and organization as sources of knowledge. Value is assigned to affection and to the emotions associated with women's lived experiences, mapping them in their bodies.

The proposed methodology uses as a starting point the importance of the power of the collective in all its diversity, and as a result, it attempts to favor collective construction beginning with women's self-awareness and individual reflection.

The methodological roadway takes the form of a conversation-workshop, and gives reign to intuition, questioning, and uncertainty as fundamental elements of every creative and self-awareness experience. It is centered in: the development of creative expression, strengthening the connection with nature, provoking greater awareness of the body, enriching the world of self, and maximizing the ritual and sacred meaning of life.

## ENSURING A SAFE SPACE

"This space is one of permanent ritual. This makes me feel secure and at ease, even to the point of falling apart. At work we cannot fall apart, if we did so, it would seem like being incoherent. This is a space for continuous growth" (Chinauta workshop participant, Memory, 2014).

Recognizing that it is difficult to look inside oneself and that this may cause a sense of emotional vertigo, it is crucial that the facilitators of the conversation-workshop pay great attention to detail. For the energy to flow freely, they need to generate a secure space, for listening, of care, and of confidence among the women. It is important to motivate the participants to talk about themselves, from what they think and feel, and not from the judgements of others; and to remind them that what is shared in this space remains among the participants.



The arrangement of the space plays a determining role in the creation of a secure place, a place of confidence. As a result, it is suggested that the space be arranged in a circular format in order to facilitate a horizontal relationship among the participants, and that elements that generate sensations of tranquility and confidence be used. It is further suggested that elements considered useful in assisting, motivating, and inspiring (photographs, personal objects, elements from nature, books, writings, among others) be situated in the space in order to enrich the conversations.

To open up discussion about sustainable activism and power from the perspective of personal experience, women must be open to asking themselves: why did they take on activism? What is the daily routine in the work? What effects are generated by activism in their emotional, personal, and family lives? In what parts of the body are these effects felt? What do they do to care for themselves and to care for each other, in the organization? How do they celebrate and celebrate self? How are power relations played out in the organization? How do these forms of power affect them?

Asking these questions requires great honesty and readiness to revise customs, beliefs, stereotypes, insecurities and also strengths related to the work as activists. And this is precisely the idea- to delve into these personal and collective reflections.

As part of creating a secure space, it is important to invite the participants to feel their bodies, to be conscious of their corporality where daily emotions are manifested through the sensations. The awareness of sensations in the body helps to have calmer reactions when faced with stimuli from the outside world.

## LEVELS AND DIMENSIONS:

### WHAT IS THE STARTING POINT TO APPROACH SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND POWER?

The following proposal is designed to support the women who responded to the call of *"Sounds of the Conch"* and are interested in expanding reflections on sustainable activism and power, and moving from personal experience to collective work in their organizations and to advocacy in the public sphere.

We remind ourselves that there are **three levels of reflection on activism and power**, which are of interest for pursuing more deeply:

- Personal
- Organizational-Collective
- Institutional-Public

### The places where these reflections are situated include:

- Las emotions
- The body
- Life experieencie

### The languages from which they are explored:

- Creativo
- Corporal
- Oral and written
- Symbolic
- Ritual

### POSSIBILITIES, METHODOLOGICAL CLUES

In this section, we will present a series of methodological possibilities for approaching the question about activists' practices and the power relationships within their organizations. The ideas presented allow for an exploration of the ways in which women live their activism at the individual level and how they articulate this individual experience with the way activism is developed in the collective/ at the organizational level.

The questions are directed towards exploring certain aspects related to the two related concepts, Sustainable Activism and Power, such as:

- Elaboration of individual experiences of activism.
- Description of and learning from activist practices.
- Impact of such practices in daily and organizational life.
- Perspectives of change towards sustainable activism.

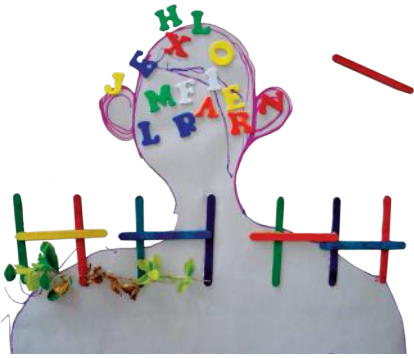


The possibilities described below are those that “*Sounds of the Conch*” used in the Conversations-Workshops during these two years of work, and during which, tools such as writing, visual arts, story-telling, representation, among others, were included.

Pathways for exploring the afore-mentioned themes are many. This is a proposal that UAF-AL is sharing with women in order to expand the echoes from the “*Sounds of the Conch*”; to extend the call to other women; and to initiate transformations from small beginning and the closest to the lives of women activists:- practice, territory, body, and the organization.

### BODIES THAT CONVERSE

#### Body Mapping:



This is an exercise that consists of drawing an outline of one's own body and mapping onto it emotions, experiences, wounds, and memories.

**Collective Mapping:** In order to generate an experience of collective creation, the starting-point being the body maps elaborated by the participants or other images produced during the encounter. To the body maps, as an individual exercise, a strategy to conjure other images, objects, and elements is added. For the construction of these collective creations, the space where they will be constructed must be taken into consideration and should facilitate ways in which the observers can interact with the creation. Later, impressions and reflections that the exercise generated are collected.

### BREATHING

**Conscious Breathing:** Through moments of breathing, relaxation, and stretching, the idea is for women to connect with their own bodies, their own rhythms, movements, and pause. Breathing constitutes a vital activity which most people realize in an automated and involuntary fashion. During the workshops, the goal is to become conscious of one's breathing as an activity that connects internally and that favors a more harmonious relationship with an external world in constant movement.

The here and now of the body can be recognized through consciousness of breathing. An attentive and alert attitude allows one to move through the body and to become conscious of sensations. In this connection, sensitivity, the symbolic world, and ritual are involved as forms of contacting one's interior world in order to awaken the spirit and to connect with that more profound place of one's very being (Hart: 1987).



Conscious breathing helps to increase physical and mental vitality and to eliminate the causes of many ailments and physical imbalances. It helps us to relieve tensions.

One of the ways to initiate this practice of breathing is the following:

Position: with feet apart in a direction parallel to the shoulders, knees slightly flexed, arms loose and uncrossed, look for a comfortable, easy position.

1. We take in air through the nose and try to direct it to the lower abdomen; expanding the lower abdomen, we count: 1, 2, 3, 4 while we are taking in air. In this respiration, all organs are involved; at this moment, inhaling mobilizes the kidney and the liver.
2. We retain the air for another four counts: 1,2,3,4. The pancreas spleen takes charge of distributing liquids. Let's remember that the lower abdomen is expanded, not sunken. We are unlearning the way we are used to breathing.
3. We exhale, emptying the lower abdomen, rising to the stomach, chest, throat, brow, and crown of the head and back down by way of the spine to the tailbone and count: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. During this moment of exhalation, the lungs and heart are involved.
4. We retain air again and count: 1,2,3,4.

Following this pattern, at the beginning we use short cycles of 5 respirations which can later be increased according to what feels comfortable. The exercise is to be done slowly, calmly, and if at some point there is a sensation of dizziness, remain quiet, feel your body, and resume normal breathing.

### BREATHING AND MOVEMENT

The breathing sequence described above is maintained and now we are going to accompany it with corporal movement, in the following way:

- You are going to walk, conscious of your breathing. Slowly, calmly, and maintaining the sequence: inhale 1,2,3,4; pause 1,2,3,4; exhale 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8; pause 1,2,3,4.
- Now, take in air, and during the pause, lower your heel to the floor and exhale while you are settling the foot.
- End with the exhaling pause.
- Alternate from one foot to the other.
- Be aware to walk without following anyone else; rather try to occupy the entire space so that no space is left untouched and walk in different directions, always with the rhythm of the respiration. As such, the movement should be slow, very slow.
- Try to do the exercise each time for a longer period of time.
- Now you are going to walk a little more quickly and you will remain still when there is clapping. The idea is to be conscious of how your body feels at the moment of stopping.
- There is more clapping and you will continue walking, now more slowly.
- When the sound of clapping is heard again, you will couple with another, and with your partner, remain still, like statues.
- This is an exercise that can be done in combinations of slow, rapid, and medium.

### MOVEMENT AND COMBINATIONS WITH PARTS OF THE BODY

- You begin by walking around in the space and when the facilitator calls out, you find a partner and join together the parts of the body she mentions. For example, nose with forehead, knee with back, hip with ankle, elbow with head, left eye with big toe of the right foot, forehead with left little finger, right shoulder with left ear. You stop for a moment and continue walking
- A variation is to walk around with music in the background, and when the music stops, you give indications about which parts of the body to bring together.

### FREE MOVEMENT

Music is played and participants are invited to move each one of the body's joints and then to enter into a free dance. Each person moves according to how she feels her body and to her possibilities for expression, being mindful of all the body's joints, and high, medium and low levels; that is to say, one can move upwards, downwards, or towards the middle

### CONFIDENCE

One woman moves with her eyes closed and another leads her very slowly through the space, approaching objects and textures that have been placed throughout the room.

One variation is, in a large space with greenery and trees, one woman closes her eyes and the other leads her without speaking; she leads the other to recognize the surroundings only through touch or signals in the body, avoiding bumping into anything, and ensuring she can move about tranquilly. In this case, how the woman leads the other is very important.

Afterwards, they change places, and the woman who had her eyes shut now leads the other<sup>6</sup>.

### MASSAGES AND SELF MESSAGES

Massages are a way of establishing a relationship of affection and of care for one's own body and for the body of others. Messaging in order to relax or to help another person implies the intention to put oneself in the disposition of alleviating a bodily pain which also has an emotional origin. It is an act of caring and love and attempts to reestablish the balance of energy in body and soul.

6. Other sources that can be consulted: Blog with breathing exercises "Formarse": [http://www.formarse.com.ar/ejercicios/ejercicios\\_respiracion.htm#aprendiendo](http://www.formarse.com.ar/ejercicios/ejercicios_respiracion.htm#aprendiendo) Web page dedicated to disseminating breathing exercises, "Respiration Techniques": <http://tecnicasderespiracion.com/>

Such contacts with the body allow us to distance ourselves from mental noise. We open ourselves up to other forms of knowledge.

When we move close to the body of another woman, we must remember to ask for permission because there are people who are not comfortable with being touched or with touching others. It is important to be aware of the social and cultural context in which the activity is being developed.

There are a series of massages that can be carried out with oneself, as well as with others.

### MOVEMENT OF THE JOINTS

The idea is to consciously move each of the body's joints, each one being related with an attitude to or an answer about life. You will do sequences for 5 counts for each movement in each joint, and if one feels comfortable, the number can gradually be increased. We are articulated beings that require communication and our body is an articulated expression of who we are.

- Ankles: the support of life. Flexion, extension, to one side and the other, rotation from one side to the other.
- Knees: represent humility. Flexion, extension.
- Hips: related to responsibility, vitality, fear. Move each forward, then backward, to one side, to the other, half a turn forward, half a turn backward, a complete turn from one side, from the other.
- Shoulders: Represent the capacity to assume life's experiences with joy. With our attitude, life can become a heavy load. Movements upwards, hold and let go; rotate raising the shoulder to the ear and then a complete rotation forward, then backward.
- Elbows: Facilitate embrace, acceptance. Flexion, extension.



- Wrists: Remind us that life is a childhood game. With the right hand put pressure on the front part of the left hand and count to 10 and then with the other; next, with the right hand pressure the lower part of the palm of the hand and again count to 10, and change to the other. Rotate both wrists.
- Neck: Has to do with the acceptance of authority, with communication, with anger. Place the right hand on the left ear and from the ear move the neck to the right and count to 10 and then do the same with the other hand and from the right ear, move the neck to the left and count to 10. Interlace the hands and raise them to the neck and softly push it forwards. Then take the head and turn it to the left and then to the right 5 times on each side, then forward and backward; rotate a half circle forward, and then half a circle backward and then a complete circle to one side and then to the other.
- Fingers and Toes: Details of life. Move each joint of the toes, and then of the fingers.

### SELF MASSAGE

With both hands on the ankles, rub the area until it becomes warm, and then do the same with the wrists, first with one hand on the left wrist and end with the left hand on the right wrist.



- Knees and elbows: rub with both hands in a circular motion, then the elbows.
- Scalp: rub with the fingers of both hands moving from the front towards the back.
- Ears: Place pressure with the thumb and index finger in the form of tweezers.

- Upper back towards the neck: with the hands explore painful points and put pressure on them.
- In the center of the chest, with the fingers together, give light blows in order to stimulate vitality, and in moments of anguish, with the thumb apply pressure 9 times.
- Lying on the floor on a blanket, massage the spine, draw up the legs and swing the spine forwards, backwards, from one side to the other. Another way is with the body stretched out, take in air, draw up the legs and lower them again, exhaling; inhale and again draw up the legs and lower them to the floor 5 times in succession or more often, according to how each person feels.
- To diminish a sense of obsession, give soft blows with the knuckle of the ring finger to the Crown.
- Breathe and let out sighs, relax and get rid of anxiety.

With another participant, you can pass the tips of your fingers over her back 5 times, subtly, without pressure, and then thank her for the moment.

### THE ELEMENTS

We move now to the symbolic which has been, and is, universally represented by the elements of nature (water, air, fire, and earth) and by objects of the participants' cultural imaginary and experience, as a possible path for developing the themes at hand.

During the workshops, one works with objects in two ways:

- The first is to give an object specific qualities, for example a wallet which symbolizes power, and

- The second way is to work with the memories, feelings, and cultural significance of objects that the participants bring and share, as part of the dialogue about a particular theme.

Some of the symbolic objects used in the workshops are:

### THE WALLET OF POWER

One methodological proposal for approaching the issue of power is to choose an object that symbolizes power, in this case: a wallet. With the wallet, the proposal is to activate three distinct ways of getting power: the first, through the handing over of power randomly, with the eyes closed; the second is by placing the wallet at the disposition of the group so one woman decides voluntarily to take it; and the last, is to identify certain candidates who could have the wallet, with the participants voting for the candidate; the votes are counted and the wallet is given to the woman who received the most votes. The woman elected, or the one to whom the wallet is granted, has power for a determined period of time. No instructions are provided for the exercise of power. Each woman does what she feels is pertinent with power.



The wallet contains different objects and messages related to power, which can be used or not. With this exercise, we have the possibility of bringing to light women's relations with concept of power.

### THE ELEMENTS (WATER, FIRE, AIR, EARTH):

These four vital elements from nature, and sacred to all traditions, are included as points of connectivity. The spiritual dimension is part of our culture, of our roots. Ritual is part of the connection to life and is a way of relating with the spiritual, with our surroundings, and with others.

Each element has specific properties, the content of which is provided by the cultural traditions and wisdom of those participating. They are used as symbolic elements to enrich the sharing between women, and as activators between one moment and another in the Conversation-Workshop.



WRITING

In “*Sounds of the Conch*”, writing is proposed as an exploration through the exercise of creating texts, actions, movements, images, places, and sounds, putting these materials in relationship with each other, in order to construct collective approximations to the themes being reflected on, starting from the individual.

Through writing, we try to connect women with personal experiences associated with power and activism. During the Conversations-Workshops, explorations, through the exercise of individual and collective writing, are used; in addition, by listening to the body, corporal writing is explored, that is, how to write and tell personal stories, or express emotions through gestures, and how to communicate a lived experience or an emotion through the composition of corporal gestures.

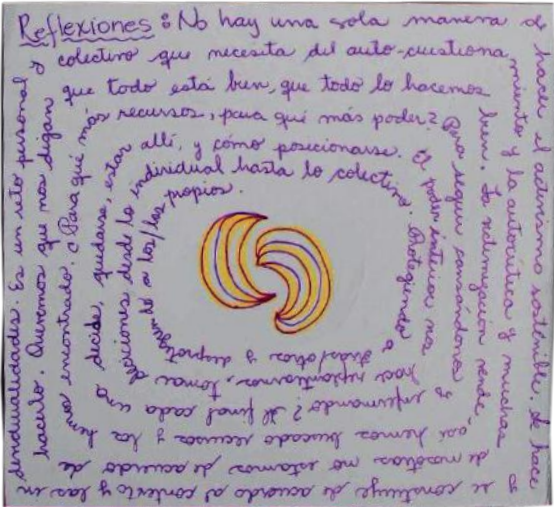
Individual Writing:

This is proposed as another possibility for introspection, and consists of taking a moment for each woman to dialogue with herself and reflect, through writing, about her experience during the days of the Conversation. In this section, the following exercises can be included:

**Automatic Writing:** This is a form of rapid writing (no more than 5 minutes) about a theme or experience. This form of writing activates the subconscious, intuition, and the emotional world. It is writing without thinking, without judging, to do what is possible in a determined length of time.

**Personal and/or Collective Logs:** This is a type of daily writing exercise which consists of personal, intimate, and written dialogue. It can also be undertaken collectively. Different materials are chosen that diversify the forms of communication. Therefore, the exercise is not reduced to writing, but also includes drawing, relating images, photos, objects, textures, questions, interpellations, group conversations.

**Writing with a Purpose in Mind:** The idea here is that the exercise be undertaken at the end of each morning and afternoon. In these daily writings, participants are invited to record what they have felt, thought, spoken about, heard, seen, acted, tasted, chewed, and smelled, in this case, in relation to power. As a result, the writing is evidence of what each woman thinks, feels, and acts, with regards and relation to power from her personal place and from her own experience during the Conversation/Workshop.



**Collective Writing:** Based on the written word, images, and the body, possibilities are used to allow different voices to join together in collective accounts, such as: automatic writing, exquisite corpses, and writing with images.

**Exquisite Corpse:** This is a play on words from which it is possible to obtain many different tales out of one tale. It is a creative technique used by surrealists during the 20's. The games consists of the participants taking turns writing on a piece of paper. They fold the paper to cover the part they have written and they leave one word visible. Starting from this word, the next person writes a phrase and the game continues in this manner. Then, the entire paper is unfolded and the connections that have appeared at random are read. The exquisite corpse is used during the Conversations as a tool for the collective construction of narratives related to experiences with the themes in question in the collective and organizational realm.

**Collective Writing with Images:** To call upon lived experiences from the collective realm, collective writing, using images created by the women based on their reflections regarding power and activism, are incorporated. Individual images constitute the original materials for the construction of new images within a space that gives form to an approximation from the collective, about the themes under consideration. One



example of this type of writing is the collective creation of new images emanating from the participants' body maps.

### REPRESENTATION

This exercise consists in collectively representing situations related to lived personal or collective experiences regarding power and activism. The idea is for the group to take on the representation or staging of a situation, the content of which will be analyzed by the entire group, serving as the audience.

Representation has been used based on the following possibilities.

**Mask-Making:** Heavy paper and a variety of decorative accessories such as scissors, wooden sticks, and glue are handed out. The idea is to create a paper mask to which each woman will give direct power to represent her, and to be used in the different activities in the Conversation/Workshop, as she considers appropriate.

**Silent Film:** The goal is to motivate collective reflection based on life histories. In addition, the exercise uses corporal expression and collective creation as other paths towards sensitization and reflection, which facilitate the appearance of multiple viewpoints related to a concrete happening. In this case, the life history points out, in a creative manner, how one acts and reacts in daily life, and what other possibilities might be proposed in addition to the ones already known.

One life history per group is distributed. A slow and careful reading is suggested, followed by sensitive reflection as free from prejudices as possible, and accompanied by broad and diverse observations of the history being considered. We propose first defining the three scenes to be communicated; the search for non-verbal languages for each scene comes next; and finally the definition of the texts to be written on big sheets of paper to accompany each scene.

Participants are reminded that they should answer these questions:

- What is the main theme of the life history?
- Which characters in the life history are related to Power?
- Which conflict/conflicts can be recognized and how are they related to Sustainable Activism and Power?
- What proposal/proposals are put forward to the protagonist of the life history with respect to the themes in question: Sustainable Activism and Power?

In these scenes of silent film, the actresses use the masks that were constructed. The costumes and makeup will be defined by each group, as well as the staging or the place where the three scenes will be shown.

Socialization of the scenes of silent film. Each group acts out the three scenes. The minimum duration of each scene is 1 minute and the maximum is 2 minutes. The maximum time for the silent film for each group is 6 minutes.

The representation is carried out in silence, and only signs for a change of scene or notice of the changes are allowed. The idea is to represent a situation faced by a woman, the effects on her life and her work, and at the end of the presentation, the outcome and/or alternatives to the situation.



**Sculptures:** These are collective representations involving imaginative scenography, depicting a situation/a lived experience, based on ideas embodied by characters from a group who pose motionless during a period of time.

Other possibilities for theatre work to reflect on power and activism are:

**Theatre of the Oppressed:** Starting from the representation the group constructed about a problem identified as oppressive in their lives,

this methodology introduces the role of a “wild card” who provokes the audience to get involved in the situation being staged so that the problem of oppression can be resolved in the best way possible. Every time, the situation is newly presented, so that the person who intervenes tries to provide solutions. The most important aspect is to provoke discussion and promote a climate of free opinion in which multiple visions are brought to light, without judgement, without conclusions. It is possible to use this exercise to facilitate the expression of imaginaries at play and of transformations that occurred during the processes of formation. Its comparative advantage lies in the fact that it can be easily adapted to cultures in which orality predominates and where participants do not read. Besides, it allows for other interpretations of body language and gestures, of the handling of space, and of the symbolic content of the representation.

## SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND PERSONAL POWER

Reflections on the concept of Sustainable Activism have been profiling a possibility for reflection, defining limits in activists' work, and gaining space for rest, for pause. For some women, it is a proposal of collective care and protection that involves looking after one's own strength at both the personal and organizational levels. It is also a question about the democratization of power within organizations as a strategy of protection.

Up to now, three levels of reflection have been identified in terms of the contents of Sustainable Activism.

At the first level, the issue of security and protection is mentioned from the viewpoint of the demand for economic recognition of activists' work. This material dimension of protection is connected with other dimensions: the political, the spiritual, and the social.

The second level is related to the connection with their inner selves and with the body as a form of prevention and protection, in that the deterioration of the emotional state and health of the activists is avoided; this likewise facilitates revision and self-criticism of practice in order to create new links with others that strengthen personal and political goals.

A third and last level corresponds to the exercise of power and forms of leadership. For women, Sustainable Activism proposes



leadership that is collective and supportive, that establishes more harmonious relationships between women, nature, and their bodies, and between themselves and other women; relationships based in confidence and care and the development of the power to heal the one affected by pain.

The question about power, as related to prevention and protection, and women's security, is closely linked to the conceptual framework of Sustainable Activism. For activists, one of the causes of infringement and risk for their protection and security at the personal and organizational levels, is related to the ways power is assumed and exercised, as well as to certain power relationships at the personal level and in the organization. All of these affect relationships of confidence, mutual support, support networks, and as a result, affect the process of holistic protection. For these reasons, approaching and deepening an understanding of the relation between power and sustainable activism in women's experience at the personal, organizational, and collective levels, as well as in the public sphere was considered essential for the discussion on women's security and protection and the activism that we desire and imagine. For Flory Yax Tiu, member of the UAF-LA Board of Directors, *"one way of avoiding risk is to democratize power"* (within organizations). It is one of the most powerful protection strategies, given the risks women face in their work. She affirms:

"[...] it seems to me that the issue of power, the most complex of all, is sweet, but at the same time, bitter; soft, but hard; but it is not seen...in the end..... all our senses are required to deal with it. I am concerned that women are no longer the same, but that's how it is, it has to do with the

Poder erótico  
Resistencia  
Fuerza creativa  
Placer  
Colectivo  
Rebeldía

concentration of power" (Yax Tiu, Memory, 2013).

Several questions have been raised by women concerning the exercise of power within their organizations:

- Is power an end or a tool?
- What is the power each one possesses?
- How is it exercised?
- How have we learned to relate to power?
- What do we want to change?
- What type of power do we exercise: patriarchal, vertical, overwhelming power?
- Or the shared power of solidarity?

Responding to this need and in congruence with the framework defined, after inputting contributions from women activists who responded to the call of *"Sounds of the Conch"*, the UAF-LA designed a conceptual and methodological proposal to promote feminist reflection on sustainable activism and power, their concepts and practices.

A Workshop Proposal: SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND PERSONAL POWER		
<b>Objective:</b> To share experiences and reflections on lived experiences of power in order to nourish the movement towards Sustainable Activism of women defenders of human rights and universal goods.		
<b>Dimensions:</b> - Individual and collective familiarity with the theme of Sustainable Activism through creative activity, conversation, listening, concentration, and group work.  - Collective reflection on Sustainable Activism and Personal Power.		
<b>General Requirement:</b> A team of 3 people is required: a facilitator, logistic supporter, and a recorder.		
<b>Preparation:</b> Prior to the initiation of the workshop, name-tags with the name of each of the women participants will be prepared. At the same time that the invitations are issued, participants are asked to bring an object that symbolizes power for them.		
First Day		
Time	Activities	Materials
30 min	Breathing, relaxation, contact with the body.	See references in Sustainable Activism and personal power, Possibilities section methodological clues, conscious breathing.
40 min	Presentation of the participants and conversation-workshop.	The name-tags, distribution of the plan for the workshop.
10 min	The power wallet, first moment: Giving power.	Object of power (wallet or other).
60 min	Constructing a collective body: approximations of collective power and sustainable activism.	Newsprint, scissors, colored paper, cardboard, markers, scalpel, threads, sequins, cloth, buttons, wooden sticks, needles, threaders.

A Workshop Proposal: SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND PERSONAL POWER		
First Day		
Time	Activities	Materials
120 min	Constructing a collective body: approximations of collective power and sustainable activism.	Text: Ospina Murillo, Luz Stella, “Power for the construction of sustainable activism of women defenders of human rights and universal goods in Latin America” (read prior to workshop).  Newsprint, scissors, colored papers, cardboard, scalpel, threads, sequins, cloth, buttons, wooden sticks, needles, threaders, masking tape, elastic bands, elastic cloth.
30 min	Personal Writing	Log-book, paper cuttings, colored paper, scalpel, imitation jewelry, glue, markers.
Second Day		
40 min	Breathing, relaxation, contact with the body.	See references in Sustainable Activism and personal power, Possibilities section methodological clues, conscious breathing, massage and self-massage.
30 min	Exposition of instalations	
10 min	The wallet of power, second moment: I request the power.	Wallet of power
60 min	Graphic representation of the experience of power.	Flip chart, colored pencils, markers.
30 min	Election by voting, third moment of the wallet of power.	
120 min	Conversation about power.	Flip chart, colored pencils, markers.
20 min	Closing and thank-yous.	

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKSHOP

### FIRST DAY

Each day the idea is to activate consciousness of the body and breathing among the participants, to relieve tensions, to know themselves, and to know and feel others. During the first day, the framework to approach the theme of power, as well as to explore their relationships with power from the personal and intimate, from the body, is presented.

### BREATHING, RELAXATION, CONTACT WITH THE BODY

Participants are asked to form a circle. The facilitator proposes a series of exercises that help to improve the manner of breathing. A short routine of stretches and movements that activate and circulate vital energy throughout the body takes place.

At the end of the exercises, the women are asked to share how they felt.

As a variation, one's own routine of stretches and exercises of conscious breathing or yoga can also be designed.

Doing this exercise to music is recommended in order to

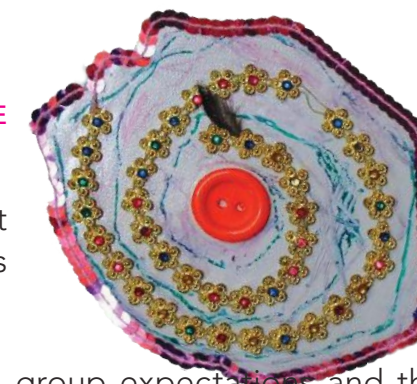
### PRESENTATION OF THE CONVERSATION-WORKSHOP TO THE PARTICIPANTS

We propose a creative and active way of handing out the name-tags and approaching each participant. It is recommended that the name-tag forms be prepared beforehand with a small detail, text, or drawing. Each one chooses how she wants to do it and this facilitates an exercise of the imagination, of inventiveness.

### WHAT DO I BRING AND WHAT DO I WANT TO TAKE AWAY?

It is important to know what emotions and what frame of mind each participant brings, as well as what each wishes to take away.

This, in order to make the necessary fit between group expectations and the limits of the Conversation-Workshop.



### THE WALLET OF POWER: FIRST MOMENT: GRANTING POWER

The participants are requested to make a circle, stretch their arms behind then and open their hands, in a position of receiving. The facilitator stands behind the women with her eyes closed, walks around the circle, feeling the energy of each participant, giving the wallet of power to one of them.

The facilitator explains to the woman who was given the wallet that during the entire day she will be in possession of the wallet of power and that she can use it in the way she sees fit.

The facilitator should be attentive to the dynamics that the wallet of power activates; she should have the following questions in mind in order to ask them in plenary. How do we feel when we have power? What is power for? What do we do with power? What type of power do we exercise? Where do we learn these ways of relating to power? What relation exists between the way of exercising power and our work as activists?



The wallet, as the object, can be changed. Think of objects relevant to women, and choose those which could be invested with power. Be aware of the symbolic connotations of each object when making the choice.

The wallet may, or may not, contain different objects and messages related to power, that can be used, or not. The methodology seeks to bring out the relationships of women with power.

The wallet of power exercise is useful in identifying women’s practices related to power. Indications provided by the facilitator are minimal. The wallet is handed over and the woman receiving it is told for how long. No other instructions are given so that the relationship with power be as spontaneous as possible. Once the time of possession of the wallet is up, the woman who had it is requested to leave it in a specific place in the room where everybody can see it. The purpose of the exercise is to facilitate personal reflections, which will become collective, about the relationship of women with power and the ways in which they come to “have power”.

**BODY MAPPING: MAPPING ACTIVISM IN THE BODY**

The participants are requested to form pairs. Each one draws the silhouette of the other on flip-chart paper the size of her real body. Then, each one takes the paper where her body is outlined and begins to construct a body map; that is, she fills up the silhouette with symbolic elements that respond to the following questions: in what parts of the body does activism resonate? What effects does activism have on the body? How to describe relationships with power and how are they manifested in the body? What new forms does the notion of Sustainable Activism introduce in the body?



Once the exercise is finished, those participants who wish to, talk about their body map, having the questions that guided the exercise, in mind.

The facilitator takes note of the most relevant elements mentioned by the participants, which are related to the manner in which activism and power is conceived and experienced from the body, as well as of the ideas around Sustainable Activism that appear and in what parts of the body they are located. This register is useful for providing feed-back to the participants. The body is the first territory we inhabit, and as such,

this exercise proposes to map out the ways of being activists and their manifestations in the body.

This exercise is a proposal to facilitate introspection through representation of the body, and as such, silence is recommended or the use of background music that invites relaxation and helps concentration.

The purpose of this exercise is to increase the capacity to become conscious of one’s own body. It is to understand the body as a territory where the most important happenings in life can be read, and in this case, the events, memories, images, and sensations associated with the practice of activism in each woman’s life.

Everything passes through the body, so it is necessary to make contact with its entirety in order to recognize practices and the effects of said practices on our lives, tracking them in the body. To travel over the body, narrate the body, and listen to the body, form part of the practices of care of oneself and changes of attitude and thinking with respect to how we undertake the activism we are trying to promote.

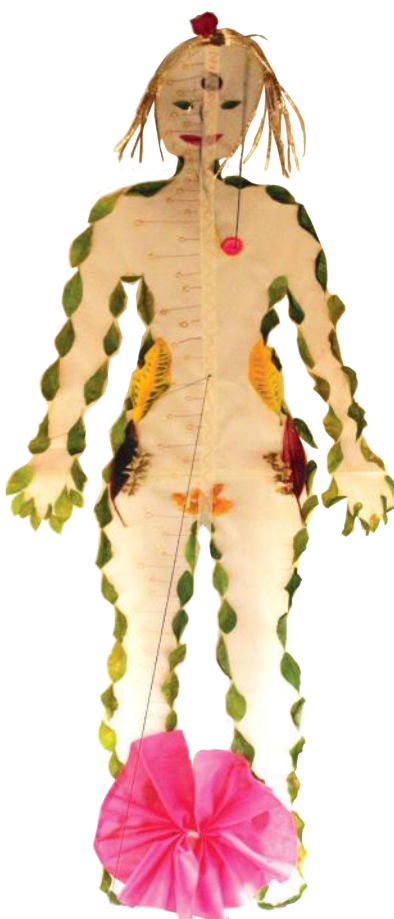
Linked to the approach and analysis of the practices of activism from daily life, women are asked to situate their reflections in the body, the body understood as territory crisscrossed by social, political, and economic dynamics, as well as by their most intimate experiences.

From the recognition of the body as territory, conflicts related to activists' practices, to security and protection, and to power relations are represented therein, along with emotions and sensations related to the experience of these conflicts and the specific impacts generated in their lives.

### CONSTRUCTING A COLLECTIVE BODY: APPROXIMATIONS TO COLLECTIVE POWER AND SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM

After presenting each silhouette, the women are asked to form groups of 5 and to construct, in groups, a performance with the groups' 5 silhouettes, in the available space. The facilitator requests that they develop the performance taking group ideas on Sustainable Activism and collective power into account.

From the individual body, we move to the construction of a collective body, a collective story about what we consider Sustainable Activism to be about. The purpose of this exercise is to create an image which each group feels represents Sustainable Activism. The creation of the image should



take into account the space and the audience members, with whom some type of interaction with the constructed image should be proposed. The participants are requested to play around with the silhouettes of the body mappings, connect them, interact with them, and create a new image, which incites sensations and emotions, among the audience, associated with what the group understands as Sustainable Activism among the audience.

### PERSONAL WRITING

The women are requested to register sensations, thoughts, and emotions in their personal log books.

To the writing exercise, you can add drawing, color to narrate states of emotion during the day, and the collage as a form of expression and visual writing.



### SECOND DAY

During the second day, the idea is to deepen reflection on power, exercise of the same, and the relation between women's ways of exercising power, their practices as activists, and Sustainable Activism.

### BREATHING, RELAXATION, CONTACT WITH THE BODY

Participants are requested to get into a circle. The facilitator proposes a series of exercises that help to improve the way we breathe.

### EXPOSITION OF THE INSTALLATIONS

Finish presenting the collective installations to the group.

### THE WALLET OF POWER; SECOND MOMENT: I REQUEST POWER

The facilitator asks the women who wants to have the wallet of power and it is handed over. If there are many candidates, who should have it is determined randomly.

This person will have power during the entire morning of Day 2 of the workshop. Once the time is up, the wallet must be handed over to the facilitator who will place it in a visible and easily accessible place.

### GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF POWER

In groups, the women are asked to work together to draw their experience with power relationship inside the group, during the exercise of the previous day. Each group makes a presentation of their drawing and comments on it. When the groups have finished, a brief discussions follows about the sensations and reflections the work of the previous day generated.

### ELECTION BY VOTES, THIRD MOMENT OF THE WALLET OF POWER

The group, in plenary, suggests the names of several women to represent them in the exercise of power. A secret vote is held to select the woman who, from this moment, will have the power. Whoever gets the most votes has the right to possess the wallet for the rest of the day.

### CONVERSATION ABOUT POWER

In plenary, a sheet of paper with the following questions is handed out and participants respond individually.

What are our powers? How do we relate to power? What kind of power do we exercise in our organizations? In whom do I delegate power and for what? How is the exercise of power related to what we understand as Sustainable Activism? What are the effects of power on our bodies? What is power for? How would I change my way of exercising power?

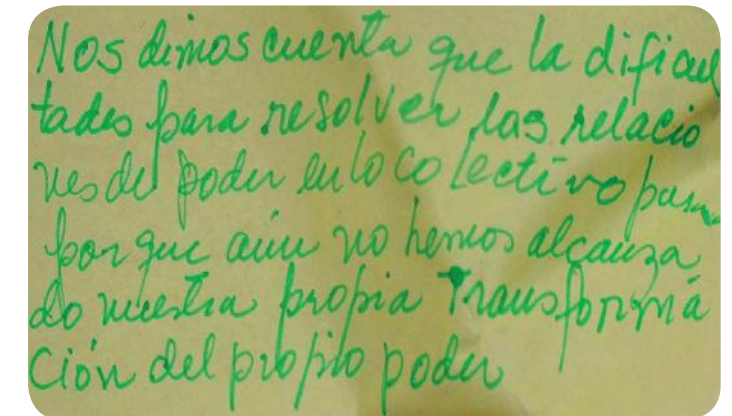
When the questions have been answered, the conversation begins by sharing the reflections that each question generated and the experience participants had with the wallet of power.

It is important that someone is taking notes on the flip-chart about the most important ideas generated by each question, in order to complete an exercise of synthesis at the end of the conversation.

The facilitator invites participants to adopt an attitude of deep listening, listening without judgement, ready to learn from the experience of others.

### CLOSING AND APPRECIATION

Propose a closing ritual and thank yous. The idea is to publicly value and recognize each participant's contributions and the importance of their life experiences.







# SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND COLLECTIVE POWER

Moving forward to Sustainable Activism is a fragile, suave, resistant, concentrated, and disperse path, full of confusions and clarities. Until now, the following territories referring to Sustainable Activism have been identified in a interdependent and relational unit:

## SUBJECTIVITY: ATTITUDES, EMOTIONS, TENSION WITH IDEAS AND CULTURE

We are talking about the essence of our being, its imaginaries, its ideals, paradigms, and how we act in specific contexts. Therefore, we observe, qualify, disqualify, care for, abandon, hope, listen, pause, interpret, and from this point, respond, act, or are paralyzed.

Current emotions in evidence are fear, loneliness, exhaustion after hearing about so much pain, many sorrows, tiredness, desperation, rushing, vertigo, physical symptoms of illness, efforts to maintain united what has been accomplished, leaving dreams behind.

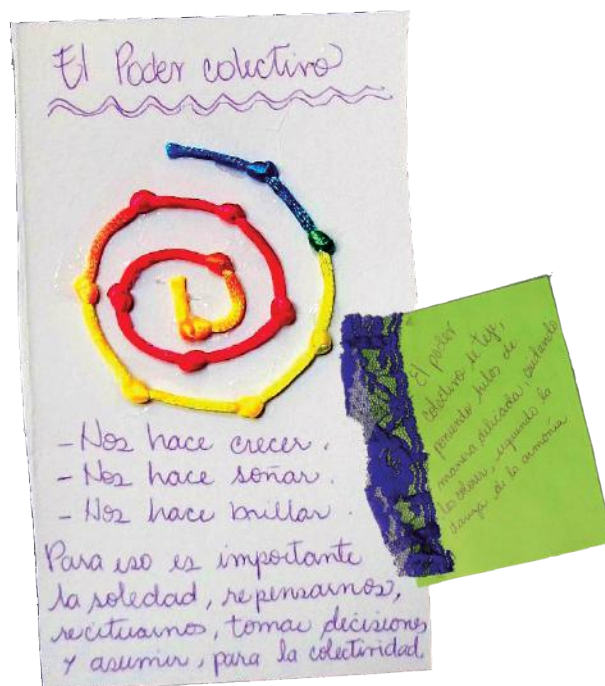
All of this is made into a mat onto which life is lodged- the wounds, the conquests, the doubts, the possibilities, and the obstacles for one to be and to do.



### THE RELATIONAL, THE DECISIONS, THE COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION

Imply: standing back, protecting myself, pausing, not exposing myself because I am protecting others, connecting and continuing, or leaving everything aside, wanting to be and how to be; and in this state of affairs, recognizing a process, without judging, recognizing how the energy called negative or obscure mobilizes and transforms; seeing the possibilities in chaos and in different pathways.

Sustainable Activism is possible inside a collective where each of the women participants has elected her representatives for their ability to convince, to convoke, for their calmness, and their management capacity. This is because these women leaders have learned to prioritize, to say no, and to delegate in a way that does not fracture their leadership.



Sustainable Activism requires articulation and communication, and both characteristics can be nourished by water as a horizontal-vertical reality that flows, and which is one single spiral in continuous movement.

Sustainable Activism, in its spiritual and vital dimension, can be nourished by ancestral wisdoms in that they call forth cosmic space, the space of the surface and the interior space of the earth.

Sustainable Activism asks us to try to reconcile discourse and practices in organizations, so that in both instances, the sentiments and emotions of women

members are recognized, as well strategies to liberate processes of pain and resentment.

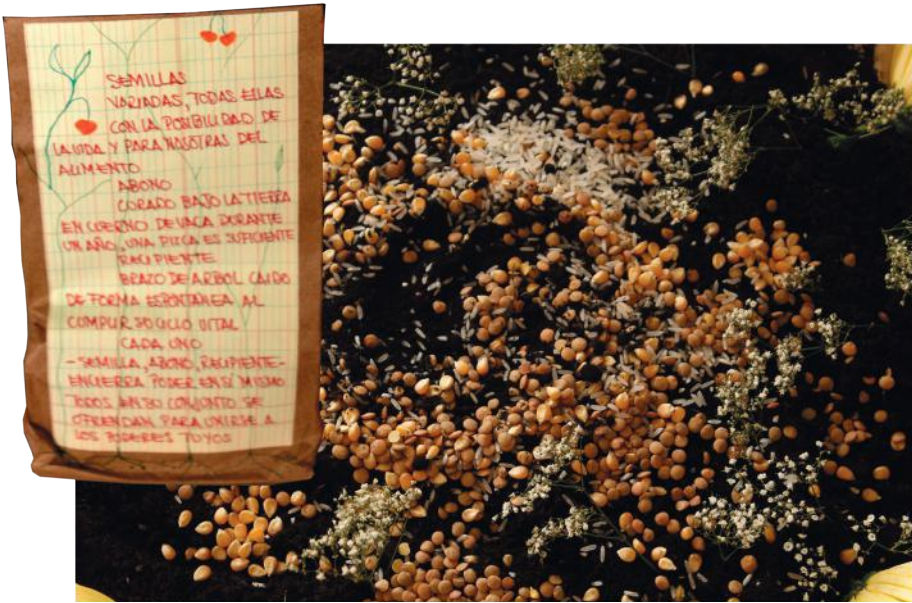
Sustainable Activism could be referred to as activism that mobilizes the powers in a collective manner, embracing a holistic vision towards life and nature.

Sustainable Activism is a collective force, united by a political will to recognize women's rights, where women find channels and processes of healing and/or new meanings for their anger, pain, and trauma.



A Workshop Proposal Of: SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND COLLECTIVE POWER		
Objectiv: To direct our vision towards the power of the collective as one of the constituent elements of feminist activism that permits reducing and confronting risks.		
Dimensions: - Individual and group approaches to the theme of collective power through creative activity, conversation, listening, reflection, concentration, and group work.  - To pause, to see ourselves and to find ways of acting according to the dreams of an activism that recovers power from within and for oneself , both individually and collectively.  - To live each moment from and within the body, to close in on the connection between what we think, feel, and do.		
General Requirement: A team of 3 people: facilitator, logistic support, and reporter.		
Preparation: Name-tags with the names of the participants are to be prepared prior to the workshop. Participants will be requested to bring seeds from their places of origin and one element related to collective power to be used in an exchange. The flame is lit and the offering of seeds that each one has brought, takes place, and this offering remains visible throughout the workshop.		
First Day		
Time	Activities	Materials
30 min	Breathing, movement	Music
120 min	Presentation and welcome	Name-tags, gifts for each, workshop guide.
120 min	Presentation on Sustainable Activism and Personal Power	Colored sheets of paper, markers.
180 min	First session of reading and conversation	Copies for each group of short texts and/or portions of: Ospina, Luz Stella: Power for the Construction of Sustainable Activism of Women Defenders of Human Rights and Universal Goods in Latin America Marcela Lagarde: Women's Autonomy and Gender Might (In: Claves Feministas) Rainer, Eisler: In Favor of Participative Politics: Our Options for the Future (In: Placer Sagado) (Hacia una Política Participativa: Nuestras Opciones para el Futuro Audre Lorde: The Sister. The Outsider (La Hermana. La Extranjera Kaqla: Pathways for the Fullness of Mayan Women and Our Peoples: The Network of Life ( <i>Caminos para la plenitud de las Mujeres Mayas y Nuestros Pueblos: La Red de la Vida</i> )

A Workshop Proposal Of: SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND COLLECTIVE POWER		
First Day		
Time	Activities	Materials
60 min	Conversation on collectively-created power and the relation with collective and personal power,	
30 min	Breathing, movement, and the day's closing	Colored cards, markers
Scnd Day		
30 min	Breathing, movement.	
150 min	Second session of reading and conversation.	
120 min	Movement and provocative breeze between Sustainable Activism, personal power, and collective power.	
120 min	Socialization	Thick markers, blackboard or paper holder, flip-chart.
60 min	Closing	





## DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKSHOP

### FIRST DAY

Each day, those participants, who so desire, are invited to become conscious of their bodies through breathing, movement, and of their relationship with well-being, calmness, internal fortitude, and introspection of self and its infinite possibilities. During this first day, each participant is asked to name the personal powers with which she is participating and can share with the whole group and to the specific group with which she will be working during the three days. A presentation is made on the findings on Sustainable Activism and Personal Power emanating from the previous workshop.

### BREATHING, MOVEMENT

Continue together in the first circle for the initial breathing exercise, and then each one finds a place in the room where she feels comfortable for doing the proposed movements.

They can design their own routine of stretches or exercises of consciousness breathing from yoga. Relaxing music to accompany this exercise is recommended.

### PRESENTATION AND WELCOME

The name-tags are given out in a creative and active way and the names of each participant are made visible.

All of the proposed exercises can have the variations that each considers convenient and according to specific conditions and goals. It is suggested that different and creative ways be used to get to know the women's names and who the women are that accompany the group.



## SHORT PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS ON SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND PERSONAL POWER

Explanation of the methodology and the handing out of log-books. Each woman notes the powers that up to this moment she recognizes in herself and uses in her activism. Those who have been participating in the process of *"Sounds of the Conch"* have the sheets of paper with the proposals that each left in the previous session to help her remember. The women participants form groups of 5 according to colors previously assigned. The logbooks are configured and personalized. Each woman is given a sheet of paper with her words about personal power from the previous workshop so she can retrieve her experience for her reflection on collective power during this conversation-workshop.

The findings mentioned at the beginning of the description of these workshops in Point 4, Activism and Personal Power, are presented. Each group selects 2 documents

for reading; they can be used more than once; each group approaches them in their own manner and with their particular stamp.

In this workshop, the log-book is used as a possibility for recording what takes place in each group. This is a proposal of collective construction and personal responsibility that influences the collective. The log-book is a folder that has sections, by thematic groupings, of sheets of paper of different colors, textures, and forms:



- Sheets to register the questions elaborated by the group or by the facilitators, the answers that were considered, and the thematic writing produced. 10 sheets as a minimum, and what each group considers relevant as the maximum.
- Sheets for drawings and collages that enhance and complement the ideas elaborated; in certain cases, ideas that were not mentioned or that are still confusing, come up. 3 sheets minimum, and as a maximum, the number the group considers necessary for what they want to express.
- Sheets for poems or songs. 6 sheets minimum and the maximum is what each group considers necessary to express sensitivity and understanding.
- Personal sheets in which each of the participants announces in writing the powers that until now she recognizes in herself and contributes to the collective.

It is very important to familiarize yourself with this way of working in order to communicate to the partners how to use it. The facilitator creates energy from the questions and observation, and she should also make her own log-book. All the log-books are open books that can be consulted at the end of each day. The idea is to develop a process of collective knowledge construction, starting with the reading of each document; the relations, questions, associations, and divergences that appear in each group; and then relating these to collective power, personal power and Sustainable Activism and their realities in organizations and in the country.

#### FIRST SESSION OF READING AND CONVERSATION

Construction of collective knowledge and references for relationships: personal power, collective power, and their organizational realities. Select the first reading to be worked with.

This exercise attempts to increase creative capacity and collective conversation, and to note down emerging ideas in the log-book. While the reading is going on, there is discussion and conversation, and participants can be drawing and recording whatever thoughts, writings, and sensations are produced. They go into the log-book.



#### CONVERSATION ABOUT THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE CREATION AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLECTIVE AND WITH PERSONAL POWER.

Socialize what takes place inside each group from the point of view of thought, sentiments, and working collectively.

It is very important to recognize the capacities of each participant in order to facilitate, write, and coordinate in each group; as well as to maximize their capacities and recognize them in the collective setting. Responsibilities are rotated so that all can contribute. Personal and collective responsibility concerning the regulation of speaking time and of everyone being alert to exercises of power amongst the groups, is necessary. One must be alert to conflicts and the way to confront them. It is also important to record that, in collective work, the idea is to surface tensions, conflicts, and differences and to confront them, since the tendency is to leave them alone and let them go by in order to avoid problems. But the only result is discomfort. We must also remember that the questions that are asked both to each group, both by the participants, as well as the facilitator, should be noted in each log-book, since this energizes conversation and collective construction. The writing is motivated by what the document and the conversation unleash.



### BREATHING, MOVEMENT, AND DAY'S CLOSING

Relaxation exercises and preparation for rest and leaving behind; on a card, each participant relates what she received from the day.

These moments are planned for the beginning and at the end, however, according to the rhythm and intensity of the work, there can be moments of pause between other moments of the workshop in order to enhance concentration and distension in the work, and to promote moments of coming together among the participants.



### SECOND DAY

During the second day, the idea is to continue deepening understanding, relationships, and conversations based on the reading of the documents, personal and organizational experiences around power and exercise of the same, as well as the relationship of the ways of exercising power among women, their practices as activists, and Sustainable Activism.

It is a time for bringing to light what happens when we come together, and when what happens is our own responsibility and how this develops. This is to be discussed later so that the dynamic between personal power and collective power as paths to Sustainable Activism can be made evident.

To become conscious of the body through breathing and movement, and the relationship with well-being, calm, internal strength, self-observation and its infinite possibilities.

### SECOND SESSION OF READING AND CONVERSATION

Construction of collective knowledge and references to the relationships among personal power, collective power and organizational realities.

### MOVEMENT AND PROVOCATIVE WIND AMONG SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM, PERSONAL POWER, AND COLLECTIVE POWER

The purpose is to talk about minimal agreements around Sustainable Activism, and its relationship with personal power and collective power in organizations; what is helpful and what obstructs; to identify possible indications that can be considered in their organizations, beginning with some of the aspects that have been identified in prior conversations.

To motivate this moment, a paper construction that represents a woven fabric leading to Sustainable Activism can be used. Each woman takes a thread in her hands, the care of the fabric depending on the care of each and of all. At the invitation of the facilitator, the women make different movements and corporal gestures; the group begins to move in different directions without letting go of the end of the fabric. From this point, one observes what is happening in the group, with each woman, how they resolve tangles, how they confront complications, what difficulties are identified. A plenary about the exercise follows; what did it produce in each participant? What conclusions can be drawn in relation to personal and collective power in the construction of Sustainable Activism?

Each group reaches an agreement about the group work undertaken, the readings, the reflections that took place, and the log-books, and they select what they are



going to share in the final socialization and how they are going to do the presentation. They select some of the proposed questions for the conversation.

### SOCIALIZATION

Each group presents and the facilitator gathers what the groups are reporting; in this way, a body of information about the relationships between personal power, collective power and Sustainable Activism is built up, as well as implications at the personal and collective levels. This can then be referred to at the different levels in the life of an activist and/or organization.

Be mindful of the debates in the group setting as far as the role of personal power and collective power for achieving Sustainable Activism is concerned: How do we follow up in the organizations? What have we accomplished? What is possible to do? And finally, how do we experience and undertake collective construction (emotions, affectations, conflicts, conflict resolution, among others).

### CLOSING

We are going to exchange the symbolic object related to collective power; each person decides to hand it over to another, and this continues successively without anyone repeating. For the closing, we return the seeds to the earth and each woman explains what she is taking away and how she feels about embarking on her return journey.

The closing is very important, as it synchronizes what we have constructed, and the questions, sensations, perspectives, and desires that remain.

## SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM AND POWER IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Public power is an interaction between the power of care of the self, the power of mutual care, and movement towards a society of care, in which holistic protection and security involve and value different levels of intervention.

These are some guiding questions for this level of reflection that are still to be explored:

- What types of powers do we confront in our public work as rights defenders and how are these related to the power we exercise in our personal and organizational lives? How do they affect us?
- What prejudices, traditions, and cultural constructions learned in daily life are we looking to transform with our participation as activists in the public sphere?
- What type of power do we exercise when we claim and demand rights?
- What would we change in our ways of exercising power in the public sphere?
- How can we promote self-care and mutual care in public agendas towards a society of care during processes of enforceability of rights?



## EXTENDING THE SOUNDS OF THE CONCH

The women, interested in undertaking this walk, have already experienced *"Sounds of the Conch"* and have voluntarily decided to work on the themes of Sustainable Activism and power inside their organizations, with their peers. Embarking on this path is demanding; as a result, it is suggested that women ask themselves several questions before beginning the process of constructing the experience they want to propose to other women. They can make use of the possibilities that *"Sounds of the Conch"* offers, and, in this way secure their desire and passion for the encounter with others. The questions are:

- Which, of all the experiences from the Conversations-Workshops of *"Sounds of the Conch"*, impacted me the most and why?
- Why do I want to work on these themes with the organization?
- What are the qualities I possess and can use to work on the themes of power and Sustainable Activism?
- With which of the methodological possibilities that the *"Sounds of the Conch"* experience has provided me, do I feel most comfortable in using with other women in the organization?
- In what, and with whom, can I find support to take on this work?

Responses to these questions will provide women with an orientation, from their own sensibility, for designing the type of experience they consider most appropriate in working with reflections on activism and power in their organization, making use of the methodological possibilities proposed by *"Sounds of the Conch"* and others that come from their own experience in working with women.

Finally, it is important to be aware that each encounter with women stirs up emotions and can painful situations be manifested; therefore, it is necessary for organizations, interested in extending the call of the *"Sounds of the Conch"*, to discuss and reach prior agreement on the mechanisms they will be placed at the disposition of women in order to contain situations that might occur as the result of internal movements generated during the encounters.

Some of the themes that have come up in conversations with women and which UAF-LA would be interested in exploring more deeply include:

- Spirituality and Resistance
- Structural Racism
- Personal Power
- Collective Power

The Urgente Calm: Strategies to Defend Defenders

These issues have been dealt with in conceptual documents that can be downloaded from the web page: [www.fondoacionurgente.org.co](http://www.fondoacionurgente.org.co) and we hope they will be shared and that they are useful as working papers and reflection within the framework of Sustainable Activism.

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