

Liz Mason-Deese

## Not One Woman Less. From Hashtag to Strike

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LIZ MASON-DEESE

## **NOT ONE WOMAN LESS – FROM HASHTAG TO STRIKE**

A renewed and reinvigorated feminist movement has swept Argentina in recent years under the hashtag, slogan, and collective shout *Ni Una Menos* (Not One Woman Less). Emerging in response to an increase in public, brutal femicides, as well as other forms of violence against women, Ni Una Menos has not only organized massive protests against gendered violence, but has also coordinated multiple feminist strikes, highlighting the connection between violence and the devaluation of women's reproductive labor. Feminist assemblies, working groups, and conversations proliferate in digital and physical spaces, producing new feminist encounters and creating a sense of solidarity among women and other 'dissident identities'. In this way, Ni Una Menos has managed to politicize the issue of social reproduction, breaking down distinctions between 'private' and 'public' spaces and issues, and opening up multiple spaces to feminist questioning and re-imagining. In doing so, the movement itself has developed an analysis of social reproduction that centers the reproduction of human life, life understood in a broad sense to include both individual bodies and social life. With an analysis that focuses on lived experiences, they emphasize the materiality of all elements of social reproduction from giving birth to educating and caring for people of all ages, focusing on the concrete practices that make life possible (or not). Ni Una Menos politicizes these elements by showing how they are a battleground for struggles over subjectivities and social relations, where capitalist social relations are reproduced or where alternatives take their place. The violence widespread throughout these activities serves to discipline women, making resistance and the construction of alternatives more difficult. Their recent analysis particularly focuses on how processes of financialization and popular debt have transformed and put pressure on these processes of reproduction as more and more families go into debt to meet their basic

needs.

Ni Una Menos formed in 2014 in response to the increasing rate of femicides in Argentina and has been responsible for organizing a number of social media campaigns to draw attention to gendered violence and to allow women to share their stories in their own words. The group has also organized a number of huge marches and protests, sometimes with millions of participants, along with three women's strikes, and is a leading member of the coalition working to legalize abortion in the country. Yet the power of the feminist movement as a whole is not only seen in these large public events, but also in how it has reframed the debate about gendered violence by directly linking it to a critique of capital and in how it has opened up gender relations at multiple sites and scales to contestation, from the household to the workplace, from the university to the nightclub, from the street to Congress, from WhatsApp and Facebook groups to public plazas. Thus, the movement has drawn attention to the multiple forms of violence against women in today's society and the fundamental role that violence plays in the reproduction of capitalist relations. Beyond making visible these different forms of violence and the connections between them, the feminist movement also proposes and enacts, in its very organizational practices, different forms of social relations. How did #NiUnaMenos go from a slogan to a movement drawing millions of women into the streets? And what is the relationship between the hashtag and the multitudinous mobilizations? To answer these questions, we must look at the intersection between the material practices of the feminist movement and its forms of knowledge production and digital presence.

This text will explore how the interplay between the digital and the physical has allowed for creating new connections between women and between struggles that were able to challenge violence in new ways, mapping the heterogeneity and multiplicity of women's labor, and developing and disseminating an analysis of the relationship between different forms of violence and between violence and social reproduction. First, I offer a brief history of the emergence of this new feminist wave in Argentina, then I describe the proliferation of spaces of encounter and assemblies, both online and in person. Next, I concentrate on the movement's theoretical production relating issues of violence, women's labor, and social reproduction, to a specific focus on how financialization at multiple scales, and with the help of new digital technologies, has affected social reproduction, making women increasingly vulnerable to different forms of violence. Ultimately, Ni Una Menos shows that the digital realm is an important space of sociality, allowing for possibilities for non-hierarchical and more autonomous

organization, but also that it cannot be disconnected from material bodies in physical spaces and the concrete and embodied practices that reproduce life itself.

### EMERGENCE OF A NEW FEMINIST WAVE

Ni Una Menos refers to both an organizing collective comprised of journalists, writers, artists, and academics, and a larger movement made up of women from diverse class backgrounds fighting against gendered violence, as well as the hashtag/slogan that gave the group their name. The slogan references a phrase coined by the Mexican poet and activist, Susana Chávez in 1995, “ni una menos, ni una muerta más”, in speaking out against feminicides in Ciudad Juárez. Chávez was later assassinated in 2011. The slogan’s use in Argentina can be traced to an action carried out in March 2015 in response to the brutal murder of Daiana García, which included a reading marathon, performance art, and film screenings, organized by women writers, artists, journalists, academics, and other cultural workers. María Moreno’s text for that event introduced the phrase Ni Una Menos into the Argentine context.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, it would be taken up at mass level after the murder of 14 year old Chiara Paéz, whose pregnant body was found buried in the yard of her sixteen year old boyfriend who had beaten her to death. In response, radio journalist Marcela Ojeda tweeted: “Actresses, women politicians, artists, businesswomen, social leaders... all women... aren’t we going to say anything? THEY ARE KILLING US.”<sup>2</sup> Her tweet drew the attention of a wide range of women, allowing #NiUnaMenos to become more public and begin reaching a mass audience. A subsequent march against feminicides in downtown Buenos Aires on June 3 exceeded the organizers expectations drawing over 200,000 people.

That would be the first of the many major mobilizations under that rallying cry. More than a single organization or even a single movement represented in visible public events, this reinvigorated feminist movement in Argentina has become a major political force because of its *transversality* and its proliferation and multiplication across spaces. Women I interviewed<sup>3</sup> talked about how all spaces – the household, the workplace, the café, or even the nightclub – had now become spaces that

<sup>1</sup> María Moreno, “Elogio de la furia”, *Página/12*, June 10, 2016. Available at: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/contratapa/13-301412-2016-06-10.html> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>2</sup> @MarcelitaOjeda, Twitter post, May 11, 2015. Available at: <https://twitter.com/marcelitaOjeda/status/597799471368564736?lang=en> [accessed 11/30/2018].

<sup>3</sup> These included mostly informal discussions with women living in the City of Buenos Aires and low-income areas of the city’s periphery; including both women involved in formal feminist organizations such as Ni Una Menos, and women not involved in any organization but considered themselves part of the broader movement.

were opened up for feminist critique and conversations. All of a sudden, the gendered division of household tasks was up for debate; catcalling on the streets could finally be discussed in terms of harassment; gendered hierarchies within unions and other grassroots political organizations were being questioned. It also allowed for the creation of the *among women*, what Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar defines as consisting of: “the everyday and intentional practice of generating bonds of trust between diverse women to generate force and clarity, with the goal of challenging the many forms of violence and negation through which everyday patriarchal domination is exercised in private and public spaces.”<sup>4</sup> In conversations around kitchen tables or in bars, I found myself talking with other women about questions such as: the first time we were groped or catcalled, our own experiences of assault or fearing assault, or everyday harassment and discrimination in school, work, or in political spaces. Sharing stories of what are usually taboo topics allows women to experience them as more than individual or personal and recognize their political and common element. And also to build trust and a collective subjectivity among one another by recognizing their shared experiences.

Digital spaces and social media played an important role here as well. Journalist Maria Florencia Alcaraz describes “a sort of feminist confessional that circulates on social media and on the internet in general these days. Feminist speech appears with irreverence on Twitter profiles, on Facebook posts, at an increasing rate and with unprecedented frequency.”<sup>5</sup> Women use social media to share stories of the violence, harassment, and discrimination they have experienced, giving them the option of anonymity, allowing women to feel safer and freer to share their stories. The use of hashtags, Facebook and WhatsApp groups, allows women to recognize that they are not alone, that other women have had similar experiences, and to connect in a horizontal and direct way with others. As Alcaraz argues, “social media enables the possibility of weaving alliances, networks, and influencing the media without intermediaries, without quotas or parity legislation. To weave a web: one of feminism’s greatest potentials.” In other words, what was important about the digital space was not only that it allowed women to express themselves individually, to name their own experiences, but even more importantly, that it allowed them to connect to one another and begin naming their experiences in a collective voice. Building on that analysis,

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<sup>4</sup> Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, “Because we want ourselves alive, together we are disrupting everything”, *Viewpoint Magazine*, March 7, 2018. Available at: <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2018/03/07/want-alive-together-disrupting-everything-notes-thinking-paths-social-transformation-today/> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>5</sup> Maria Florencia Alcaraz, “Ni Una Menos’: Politizar el uso de las tecnologías”, *Gender IT*, June 2, 2017. Available at: <https://www.genderit.org/es/feminist-talk/edici-n-especial-ni-una-menos-politizar-el-uso-de-las-tecnolog> [accessed November 30, 2018].

Ni Una Menos would call the first women's strike on October 19, 2016 in response to the rape and murder of Lucía Pérez and then the International Women's Strike the following March.<sup>6</sup> The strikes drew the participation of hundreds of thousands of women, demonstrating the multiple ways in which women work.

#### PROLIFERATION OF SPACES OF ENCOUNTER

One of the defining features of the current feminist wave in Argentina has been its ability to link multiple issues in order to construct a mass and popular feminist movement, and particularly to link issues of violence against women to questions of labor and social reproduction. What is important to highlight here is that the feminist movement has made these connections through concrete and territorially-rooted practices of investigation and consciously creating both an analysis and personal relations that link different issues, campaigns, and struggles. It is by starting from these specific conflicts and lived experiences, rather than abstract notions of what it means to be a woman that the movement is able to create spaces of encounter that allow for building a shared understanding of the situation and a common subjectivity. In this process, the need to expand the very subject of the feminist movement became clear: instead of only talking about 'women', the movement began using terms such as 'dissident bodies' and 'feminized subjects'. This was a direct outcome of trans women, genderqueer individuals, and others expressing that they did not feel included by the term 'women', and demanding more inclusive language. The movement as a whole has since taken up this language (for the most part), again the result of a concrete encounter between different subjects that was able to produce this collective subjectivity. Key to generating these encounters has been a focus on politicizing questions related to social reproduction, bringing them into the public sphere, making them collective public issues instead of private matters to be dealt with within the household.

The use of social media groups and hashtags allows for turning the digital sphere into a space of encounter between different subjects who share their stories and experiences and find a commonality in them. Social media allowed first for publicizing cases of femicides and transfemicides, and by connecting them through the hashtag, #NiUnaMenos, activists are able to draw attention to the severity of violence against women, and to link these different cases that are often

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<sup>6</sup> Ni Una Menos, "How was the March 8 International Women's Strike Woven Together?", *Viewpoint Magazine*, February 16, 2017. Available at: <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/02/16/how-was-the-march-8-international-womens-strike-woven-together/> [accessed November 30, 2018].

attributed to ‘personal’ or ‘domestic’ causes rather than public and structural issues. Thus, the use of the hashtag and naming these murders as femicides was an initial first step both to drawing attention to gendered violence against women and in building an analysis that seeks to understand the relationship between these different instances of violence. From there, other hashtags and social media campaigns focused not on the extreme cases of violence ending in murder but also on the everyday forms of harassment and violence that women face on a constant basis. Sharing these stories, from experiences of being catcalled on the street to harassment at work, from aggression at nightclubs to threats in the home, denaturalizes this violence and allows for constructing an analysis of the “continuum of violence”,<sup>7</sup> seeing different forms of violence as connected in a spectrum of male violence. The characteristics of the digital sphere, especially the possibility of anonymity and the ability to connect across different social and political groups, made it an especially productive space for women to share their experiences and to begin to create an analysis based on a diverse range of concrete experiences. Of course, however, that digital sphere is not neutral, not everyone has equal access to it and not everyone has equal power within it. Feminist activists often complain of ‘machitrolls’ on Twitter and Facebook, who make the space feel unsafe for women; instead, they often organize through chat groups that allow them more control over who participates but still enable them to make use of digital tools.

But just as important as those digital spaces of encounter is the physical space of encounter through assemblies, marches, and other actions. The assembly, the principle form of organization of *Ni Una Menos*, is in itself a practice of investigation and the production of collective subjectivities. General assemblies, to organize marches, events, or other campaigns, are called based on geographic location – either a city, municipality, or neighborhood – and often draw hundreds of women. These women are usually quite diverse, especially in a place as heterogeneous as the City of Buenos Aires. They arrive at the assemblies for different reasons, with different experiences of previous activism, and different political and ideological formations. This heterogeneous composition of the assembly means that they are often contentious, lasting hours, including arguments and disagreements, as much as agreement and consensus. Yet this conflict is a fundamental part of *Ni Una Menos*’ practice: rather than starting from a predetermined notion of what it means to be a woman or what women’s experiences might be and thus what their demands and desires should be. These assemblies

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<sup>7</sup> Gutiérrez Aguilar, “Because we want ourselves alive”.

have proliferated in different spaces and within different organizations: in workplaces, unions, neighborhoods, grassroots social movements, political parties, and schools, organizing around issues of sexism within those spaces but also connecting those spaces to the broader struggle. Another important part of this process are assemblies explicitly between different organizations or groups. For example, women from urban centers traveled to El Bolsón for an assembly with indigenous women in the midst of a growing wave of state violence against indigenous communities, allowing them to draw connections between the violence against indigenous communities and their territories and violence against women. In another assembly, Ni Una Menos brought together women laid off from the PepsiCo Corporation with women from other sectors, enabling a discussion about how women are particularly affected by neoliberal restructuring.<sup>8</sup>

Both the physical assemblies and the digital encounters are responsible for creating that *among women*, which could also be thought of in terms of queer kinship practices through which women support each other in multiple ways. Writer and abortion rights' activists Claudia Piñeiro describes the experience of using social media to collaborate with others on the campaign:

“Before that we knew each other, we had dealings especially through social media, but we weren't friends. The law made it so that we ended up becoming friends. We weren't the only ones, there were hundreds of chat and working groups doing everything possible so that the law for the voluntary interruption of pregnancy would be passed.”<sup>9</sup>

This *among women* contains the seeds for a new form of social reproduction, both through enabling material reproduction via the appropriation and sharing of resources, but also through producing new social relations that are not based on capitalist and patriarchal divisions and hierarchies.

## WOMEN'S WORK, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, AND VIOLENCE

From these encounters and situated investigations, Ni Una Menos specifically has been able to build an analysis of the relationship between different forms of violence, social reproduction, and women's labor. It

<sup>8</sup> For an account of the Ni Una Menos assembly in El Bolsón, see Marta Dillon, “Asamblea Ni Una Menos”, *Página/12*, September 25, 2017. Available at: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/64978-asamblea-ni-una-menos> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>9</sup> Claudia Piñeiro, “La Nelly Minyersky Club Band”, *Revista Anfibia*, August 10, 2018. Available at: <http://www.revistaanfibia.com/cronica/la-nelly-minyersky-club-band/> [accessed 1 November 30, 2018].



was a combination of a previous engagement with the work of feminist scholars such as Silvia Federici and Rita Segato and the knowledge coming from diverse women's everyday experiences, shared in assemblies, mobilizations, and digital encounters, that allowed for the development of this analysis. Silvia Federici's work on the foundational relation between violence against women and the origins of capitalism has been essential to the movement's understanding of the *ongoing* relationship between gendered violence and capital accumulation; while Rita Segato's work on how violence against women functions as a *pedagogy of cruelty* in contemporary capitalism (which she defines in terms of a new form of landlordship or ownership society), has been crucial for understanding the multiple ways in which this violence structures social relations.<sup>10</sup> Yet it is the concrete and diverse experiences of women from heterogeneous backgrounds that has allowed for building an analysis that speaks to different women, contributing to the massification and popularization of feminism in Argentina today.<sup>11</sup> What these inquiries have pointed to is the close relationship between violence, the devaluation of the reproductive labor mostly carried out by women, and a crisis of social reproduction.

As indicated above, the first element of Ni Una Menos's analysis has focused on the connection between different forms of violence. Collectively naming and sharing experiences, both online and in assemblies, formed a sort of *militant research* into the multiple forms of violence that women experience, allowing Ni Una Menos to build an analysis of the relationship between the most visible forms of gendered violence and other forms of economic and political violence.<sup>12</sup> The same mechanisms of masculine authority and patriarchal control were identified to be at work with different types of gendered violence in different spheres of life: the workplace, on the street, in the home, at school, on the internet. While this analysis in itself is not new, the mass-scale and popular character of this feminist movement meant that it focused on a particular angle in understanding this problematic. Women who came from the movements of the unemployed, which emerged in Argentina in the late 1990s around issues related to unemployment and a crisis of social reproduction, were fundamental in insisting on the

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<sup>10</sup> Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, New York, Autonomedia, 2004; Rita Segato, *La guerra contra las mujeres*, Madrid, Traficantes de Sueños, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Verónica Gago, "El movimiento feminista muestra que se puede ser muy masivo y muy radical a la vez", *Lobo Suelto*, July 17, 2018. Available at: <http://lobosuelto.com/?p=20416> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>12</sup> For more on the concept of militant research, see Colectivo Situaciones, "On the militant-researcher", translated by Sebastián Touza, *Transversal*, September 2003. Available at: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en> [accessed November 30, 2018].

importance of women's work carried out in neighborhood and household spaces.<sup>13</sup> They directly connected cuts to state benefits and programs and increases in work for women (work which was usually unrecognized and unpaid), and argued that this economic vulnerability made poor women especially susceptible to other forms of violence as well, from unsafe abortions to being trapped in abusive relationships. Women from these organizations had been participating in the National Women's Encounter<sup>14</sup> since the early 2000s, creating fertile crossover between the movements of the unemployed and different elements of the feminist movement that would become one of the defining features of Ni Una Menos.<sup>15</sup>

The feminist strike itself, more than only a mobilization, is a form of research<sup>16</sup> and intervention into the multiple forms of women's labor today, drawing a new map of contemporary forms of work, especially focusing on the labor of social reproduction. This map shows that women work in a multiplicity of sites and times, in myriad ways, and also points to the heterogeneity and divisions within this labor, how it has changed with migration and the introduction of new technologies. This rethinking of labor through the feminist strike is clearly expressed in a statement released by Ni Una Menos on International Workers' Day 2018:

“When called by the women's movement, the strike ceases to be an order to be turned into a question: what does it mean to strike in each concrete situation? How is the multitude constructed in a single powerful political act: the strike of housewives, street vendors, farmworkers, students, the unemployed, care workers, migrants? [...] We put the patriarchal concept of labor into crisis because: we question that the only dignified labor is that which has a wage; we question that the only recognized labor is that which is masculine; we question the idea that the only productive labor is that which takes place outside of the home or the

<sup>13</sup> See Liz Mason-Deese, “From the Picket to the Women's Strike: Expanding the Meaning of Labor Struggles in Argentina”, *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> An annual gathering of women held in different cities in Argentina since 1986. The Encuentro remains autonomous from political parties and is self-organized by the hundreds of participating organizations. It has played an essential role in articulating the feminist movement and in recent years has drawn tens of thousands of participants.

<sup>15</sup> Amador Fernández-Savater et al., “The Strike of those Who Cannot Stop”, *Viewpoint Magazine*, March 21, 2017. Available at: <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/03/21/the-strike-of-those-who-cant-stop-an-interview-with-veronica-gago-and-natalia-fontana/> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>16</sup> The strike can be considered a form of research to the extent that it makes visible all the different forms of work that women carry out precisely by their absence on the day of the strike. It thus serves as a starting point to identify the heterogeneity of women's experiences of work.

neighborhood.”<sup>17</sup>

The strike is then the manifestation of this redefinition and broadening of the concept of work, as explained above, which allows for making reproductive and care labor visible, as well as for emphasizing its importance to society.

Yet before and after the major march marking the May 1st day of action, this mapping of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of women’s labor takes place in digital realms as well: hashtags such as #YoParo (#IStrike) or #NosotrasParamos (#WeStrike) allow for women in diverse spaces to identify the work that they will stop doing as part of the strike. Yet the hashtags themselves are usually decided upon through in-person meetings or assemblies where different alternatives are discussed until reaching a consensus. The digital runs transversally through all these myriad other places where women work, meaning that women – whether working paid jobs in formal workplaces, doing informal work on the street or in markets, or unpaid care work –, could participate by tweeting about their work that they would be striking from. This was particularly important for women who worked outside of more ‘traditional’ workplaces, or individually or in unorganized contexts. It also, in practice, recognizes the blurred divisions between ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ labor, refusing to draw a hierarchy between the two.

What this mapping of production and reproduction points to is the variegated nature of labor in Argentina today in which digital labor coexists with ‘premodern’ forms of labor in what Verónica Gago has termed “baroque economies”.<sup>18</sup> Here, new technologies play an ambiguous role as they are appropriated in different work settings, both to increase the rate of exploitation and by workers to resist that exploitation. Two very different cases will allow me to illustrate this point and also demonstrate the heterogeneity of labor forms in Argentina today. The first refers to call center workers. Call centers have been at the forefront both of applying the use of new technologies in the work itself and to monitor and control workers, as well as directly exploiting affective labor, something that call center workers have been struggling around for decades.<sup>19</sup> More recently, women working on ‘Line 144’ – the gender violence hot line in the Province of Buenos Aires – have added a new twist to these struggles as they began organizing around their pay

<sup>17</sup> Ni Una Menos, “Daughters of the Strike”, *Verso Blog*, May 1, 2018. Available at: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3792-daughters-of-the-strike-a-may-day-statement> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>18</sup> Verónica Gago, *Neoliberalism from Below: Popular Economics and Baroque Economies*, translated by Liz Mason-Deese, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Quién Habla Collective, *¿Quién habla? Lucha contra la esclavitud del alma en los call centers*, Buenos Aires, Tinta Limón, 2006.

and precarious working conditions, while linking them to the broader movement against gender violence, as well as to issues related to affective labor. Veronica Gago describes their struggle: “To the psychic and affective intensity of the work is added the uncertainty of their job continuity, the management of their own precarity. Thus these women work with the anguish of others while they juggle their own. A sort of redoubled violence.”<sup>20</sup> In a very different context, migrant women, including those working in clandestine textile workshops and other forms of informal or popular economies, have also played an important role in the Ni Una Menos organizing. These forms of illegal, informal, and/or popular economies are often characterized as ‘premodern’ because they do not adhere to the supposed capitalist norm of formally contracted, wage labor, with some even classifying them as forms of ‘slavery’. Yet these forms of labor and production are fully incorporated into contemporary neoliberal capitalism, play a fundamental role in the continued reproduction of capitalist social relations, and also use a diverse set of technologies and forms of control, ranging from the mobilization of ‘indigenous customs’ to digital technologies, to manage and discipline the labor force.<sup>21</sup> Migrant women, as well as women from the Confederation of Popular Economy Workers (*Confederación de Trabajadores de Economía Popular*), have played an important role in Ni Una Menos, drawing attention to both the particular forms of violence they are subject to, and how their forms of work and labor conditions expand the notion of the strike.

What these heterogeneous forms of labor point to is both a continuation – reproductive labor continues to be carried out mostly by women and is largely unrecognized – and a complexification – productive labor and reproductive labor become mixed together, reproductive tasks are divided across time and space in new ways. Call center and hot line workers are paradigmatic examples of the exploitation of affective and care labor, often using the newest forms of technology to intensify work and control workers. Migrant and popular economy workers, on the other hand, point to a different geography of reproductive work: often hired to take care of others, yet unable to ensure their own reproduction, their very lives are in constant danger as they struggle to make ends meet and pay for basic necessities. Yet these different types of workers find similar conditions of precarious employment and sexual abuse and harassment at work. They connect these conditions to a general devaluing of reproductive and care labor

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<sup>20</sup> Verónica Gago, “Teléfono descompuesto”, *Página/12*, September 15, 2017. Available at: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/62849-telefono-descompuesto> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>21</sup> Gago, *Neoliberalism from Below*.

and discuss it as a type of economic violence, which in turn makes women more vulnerable to other types of violence.

### FINANCIALIZATION AND A CRISIS OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Lastly, Ni Una Menos has also focused attention on how financialization is transforming social reproduction and the relationship between financialization and violence. In 2017, the Alianza Cambiemos government announced that it had opened negotiations with the IMF to take out large sums in loans. As Argentines know from the experience of the 2001 economic crisis, attached to these loans are mandatory austerity measures and cuts to public spending, ultimately leading to increased poverty. Ni Una Menos was in the first organization to publicly protest this decision, in an action entitled ‘We Want Ourselves Debt Free’ that drew attention to the connections between sovereign debt and household debt and the particular effect that both have on women in terms of multiple forms of violence. In a statement that accompanied the action, they wrote:

“As women, we know, we have learned in our everyday lives, what it means to be in debt. We know that with debt we can’t say no when we want to say no. And that the state’s debt always spills over to subjugate us. And our children. And our grandchildren. It exposes us to higher levels of precarity and to new forms of violence.”<sup>22</sup>

This statement and the associated action draw attention to how debt operates at multiple levels, and particularly how sovereign debt disproportionately affects women through leading to austerity measures that reduce state spending on social reproduction, the cost of which then falls mainly to women. This is what has been referred to as a crisis of social reproduction, in which ultimately people’s material reproduction is put at risk.<sup>23</sup>

In that same action, Ni Una Menos drew attention to how the expansion of financialization includes a financialization of everyday life,

<sup>22</sup> Ni Una Menos, “Desendeudadas Nos Queremos”, *Página/12*, June 2, 2017. Available at: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/41550-desendeudadas-nos-queremos> [accessed November 30, 2018].

<sup>23</sup> For more on a crisis of social reproduction in general, see Nancy Fraser, “Contradictions of Capitalism and Care”, *New Left Review*, 100, July-August, 2016. Available at: <https://newleftreview.org/II/100/nancy-fraser-contradictions-of-capital-and-care> [accessed November 30, 2018]. For more on the relationship between a crisis of social reproduction and neoliberalism, see Part II of Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, Oakland, PM Press, 2012, pp. 65-111. For more on a crisis of social reproduction in Argentina specifically, see Liz Mason-Deese, “Unemployed Workers’ Movements and the Territory of Social Reproduction”, *Journal of Resistance Studies*, 2 (2), 2017, pp. 65-99.

which has also transformed women's lives, again putting more of the burden of social reproduction on them. As the Debt Free action statement reads:

“As female heads of household, we occupy a central role in the organization and self-management of networks of cooperation. Financial corporations exploit these community economies by charging commissions on benefits and wages and applying exorbitant interest rates on loans, credit cards, and microcredit.”<sup>24</sup>

As Verónica Gago explains in a recent paper, this compulsory banking occurs through the financialization of welfare benefits, including a cell phone app that serves as a ‘digital wallet’ through which beneficiaries receive their payments and can then use them to make purchases, allowing them to receive tax benefits when buying food items. As Gago argues, financialization is increasingly what makes social reproduction possible: “Financialization is deepened to the point that indebtedness is the private form of managing poverty and austerity, offering credit as an individual platform to solve issues of food consumption and essential services.”<sup>25</sup> Financialization also plays a fundamental role in another key aspect of social reproduction: producing capitalist subjects – subjects that are disciplined through the money they owe. As their debt grows, women are forced to take up any type of work, under any conditions, in order to make repayments. In some cases, this even leads to the breakdown of communal ties as people become more concerned with paying off their individual debts, in order to be able to pay for their immediate needs, rather than finding collective solutions. As the Ni Una Menos statement makes clear, this puts women, especially poor women, in increasingly vulnerable positions as the crisis of social reproduction deepens.

## CONCLUSIONS

What the combination of these mobilizations, interventions, investigations, and analyses points to is the important back-and-forth between digital and nondigital realms both in organizing around issues related to social reproduction and for creating new forms of social reproduction. In its analysis of social reproduction, Ni Una Menos emphasizes the material and embodied practices that are responsible for reproducing life itself and through which capitalist social relations are reproduced or challenged. This understanding of social reproduction opens it up as a field of contestation that includes multiple acts. Along

<sup>24</sup> Ni Una Menos, “Desendeudadas Nos Queremos”.

<sup>25</sup> Verónica Gago, “Neoliberal Metamorphosis: Feminisms and Populisms in Tension”, paper presented at University of California, Berkeley, September 2018.

with the labor of cooking, cleaning, giving birth, and so on, reproductive labor also includes affective and care labor, some of which can and does take place through digital means. Through the movement's processes of investigation, assembly, encounter, and strike, these feminist activists have been able to not only recognize the multiple forms of labor that women are engaged in but also how these are interconnected and embodied in concrete processes. This implies an understanding of reproduction based on materialist categories and situated research rather than idealized or abstract notions. It is through focusing on these situated and concrete processes, which are made visible with the strike and other forms of mobilization, that the feminist movement has been able to draw a map of labor of social reproduction and the associated conflicts.

The feminist movement has recognized the role that the digital plays in social reproduction by using digital organizing tools and digital means to create new forms of sociality among women. For example, memes, photos, and articles circulate with advice for how to respond to male violence or with important information about reproductive health. These, besides providing information, also serve a role to autonomously and collectively empower women: both through encouraging them to be active agents and, through the sharing of the memes, demonstrating that they are not alone. They show, for instance, that women do not have to only fear male violence but they can also learn to defend themselves and fight it. Of course, these memes become most effective when they are supplemented by material practices, yet many times it is the meme itself that inspires women to come together to learn self-defense techniques, for example. And vice-versa: videos of women using these techniques in practice are shared online, thus inspiring more women to follow the same path. What these examples point to is the role of the digital sphere in certain elements of social reproduction, especially those related to education, affect, and subjectivity. Yet the digital is not an uncontested terrain, as shown by the Catholic Church's machine for promoting anti-choice memes or Facebook censorship of feminist pages.<sup>26</sup>

Yet social reproduction never occurs solely in digital spaces. Many elements of social reproduction are defined by their materiality: the processes of reproducing and caring for human bodies. And these practices are fundamentally what is being attacked by the contemporary violence against women and feminized bodies. Thus, by drawing attention to that violence, and how that violence aims to attack women's power and the possibility of nonhegemonic forms of social reproduction,

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<sup>26</sup> Lucas Malaspina, "La ola celeste que viene desde el norte", *Revista Crisis*, August 6, 2018. Available at: <https://revistacrisis.com.ar/notas/la-ola-celeste-que-viene-desde-el-norte> [accessed November 30, 2018].

the feminist movement also draws our attention, once again, to the importance of bodies and material practices of reproduction. This is not in contrast or opposition to the digital but a reminder that the digital is also made up of very material processes from the material infrastructure to the human bodies and subjects and their associated practices and knowledges that make those digital networks function. Ni Una Menos demonstrates how a process that combines digital and face-to-face encounters has been able to map out the relationships between violence and social reproduction starting from diverse women's concrete experiences and to create new bonds of solidarity between those women in order to overturn the conditions that make that violence possible.