

# You won't see me at the Women's March – it's a con job

Women's issues – even those that are impacted by race, class, religion, and ethnicity – are still woman-specific, but you won't hear about them at this march. I am in mourning for a vibrant and radical feminist movement. But this is not it.

by Phyllis Chesler



I have been marching for women's rights for a long, long time – with my feet, my voice, and my pen. I am still doing so.

Currently, the most high-profile activity of the so-called "women's movement" in the United States is one that saddens and outrages me. The Women's March (and more specifically, the Women's March leadership) in the US appears to have nothing to do with women or feminism. I never did care for the hats, but I still supported the grassroots marchers, many of whom were serious and long-time feminists in their communities. The

leadership, on the other hand, oddly seemed to have no track record in terms of fighting for women's rights.

I am in mourning for a vibrant and radical feminist movement. But this is not it. Rather, it is a shell game, a performance, a con job.

The Women's March leadership consists of women completely new to the movement, who are branded in the same way that actresses or reality show celebrities are. They are savvy about procuring corporate funding, and even savvier about getting Hollywood stars – eager to virtue signal – involved. They stage events, not revolutions.

Most concerning, though, is that the Women's March leadership appears to have no particular interest in the independent women's liberation movements. I have read their literature extensively and all I can find are issues, which, however worthy they may be, are not, strictly speaking, feminist issues. The Women's March addresses things like "immigration reform" and "police violence against black men;" they say they are "anti-racists," more than they are "anti-sexists;" and they prioritize "queer and transgender" politics, but never plain old garden variety women's issues.

Women's issues – even those that are impacted by race, class, religion, and ethnicity – are still woman-specific: sexual harassment on the job; rape; incest; domestic violence; economic, social, and legal discrimination; and of course reproductive rights, including access to birth control, abortion, and prenatal care.

But while the Women's March wants to talk about things like the criminalization of poor men and men of colour – something women of colour are definitely affected by, as it is their sons, brothers, and husbands who are jailed – women of colour and poor women are also [too frequently jailed for life](#). Women who are kidnapped or tricked into [suffer from PTSD](#) far more

than former combat soldiers do. Pregnant women are being accused of [often to their abusers](#) – every day in North America, (as well as in Europe and [I've studied this in depth](#). We sometimes hear about this when the mother in question is an immigrant trying to cross the border, but almost never when the mother is simply a citizen. North American mothers who allege that their child is being [remove custody](#) from “good enough” [January 21, 2017](#), the day after President Trump was inaugurated. At that time, the leadership gave lip service to general “women’s issues” and [The Gathering for Justice](#) (an organization dealing with racial injustice in the criminal justice system); Linda Sarsour, the director of [Harry Belafonte](#), La Donna Harris, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta – as well as Gloria Steinem, the only white co-chair. The Jewish co-founder, [pushed out](#) of the organization due to anti-Semitism on the parts of the other leaders, which was either never acknowledged or never condemned. She told *The New York Times* that one of the march leaders said they “really couldn’t center Jewish women in this or we might turn off groups like Black Lives Matter.” (Wruble went on to help found March On, a non-profit organization which has organized marches around North America to coincide with the Women’s March.)

It seems that certain identities matter much more than others, and that the identity of “woman” is not the priority. Many of the leaders work prior to joining the Women’s March happened within specific communities, their work did not specifically concern things like reproductive justice, the fight against sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, or feminism, more broadly.

While that first march was massive and galvanizing, the real revolutionary potential was yet to come. I am referring to the #MeToo movement which exploded in the fall of 2017, about eight months later. Women began speaking out, becoming whistleblowers, naming names, launching lawsuits, and holding demonstrations coast to coast and all around the world. This

activism is an evolved, digitally enhanced continuation of our early 1970s speak outs about rape, incest, domestic abuse, and sexual Harassment. The Women's March leadership is indebted to the #MeToo movement (as well as to the second wave women's liberation movement) and have piggybacked on it, but without adding to it.

Considering that the march began in response to a powerful man bragging about sexual assault, why has this issue fallen to the wayside?

Has the Women's March leadership been funding lawsuits for poor women who are being sexually harassed as they work in lettuce fields and on factory floors, whose harassers and rapists demand sex as the price to work for below-poverty wages? Maybe they have and have simply not claimed credit for it. Have they funded escapes for prostituted girls trapped in brothels, or to dissidents and women in flight from being honour killed? If so, they've kept quiet about it. What about women abused in pornography and in their homes, even?

In a sense, it is very welcome to see such diverse women taking action on a full range of issues. But are they doing *feminist* work? Do they approach their tribal, ethnic, sexual preference and racial communities with a feminist analysis? If so, what does that look like?

For the moment, I am willing to forget about the soul-shattering allegations of ["Satanic"](#) and as "termites." [Israel's alleged mistreatment](#) of a people (Palestinians) that did not exist until the mid-1960s.

I am also ready to put aside the alleged financial corruption and greed these leaders are accused of. According to [they have not distributed](#) to their grassroots activists. Rather, they have kept and/or used the money for themselves and for their new high lifestyle.

**McSweeney and Siegel also revealed that the March Leadership's**

used Nation of Islam members for their security. In other words, Islamists whose views of women are beyond questionable—instead of hiring former female police officers or military women as their guards.

This week, the Women's March published a "[Jewish](#)" to the list of identities the Women's March would like to claim to represent, the statement does not actually address the substantive criticisms made

The first person and photo presented as part of the new steering committee is that of Abby Stein, described as follows:

"A Jewish educator, writer, speaker, and activist. She was born and raised in a Hasidic family of rabbinic descent; she is the 10th generation of Baal Shem Tov – founder of Hasidic Judaism...in 2012, she left the Hasidic world to explore different world views. In 2015, Abby came out as a woman of trans experience. Since coming out, she has been working to raise support and awareness for trans rights and those leaving Ultra-Orthodoxy."

So, the first member of the steering committee is Jewish, but has left Judaism behind. What "a woman of trans experience" means is not explained. Is Abby a man who now identifies as a woman? Or a woman who identifies as "trans"? What does this mean? And what relevance does this have in terms of the *Women's March*?

Bamby Salcedo is the second trans-identified person mentioned as a new member – a "Latina transgender activist and President of the TransLatin@ Coalition." Yet another male, but one who focuses on [Bend the Arc](#), a Jewish advocacy group fighting "white nationalism," "racial justice," and "[murdered](#) in their pursuit of justice for black people. (Remember Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and [sponsors](#) of the March have [Israel National News](#).)

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