

Sydney Terris

November 14th, 2016

Politics of Rescue in the Global South

Despite the escalation of imperial liberation during the 20th century, Western interventions into the Global South continued under the guise of protecting women's rights and with the intention to preserve colonial power paradigms. By citing physical violence, sexual deviance, and cultural stagnation, Western society successfully constructed a distressing image of the Global South as unevolved, immoral, and barbaric in order to legitimize Western involvement in the domestic affairs of foreign nations. To this point, Inderpal Grewal's *On the New Global Feminism and the Family of Nations: Dilemmas of Transnational Feminist Practice* and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu's *Rethinking Global Sisterhood* highlight global political narratives of rape and cultural backwardness to illustrate the politics of rescue present in Western military interventions into the Global South.

To begin, international conventions on rerepresenting women's rights as human rights characterize women of the Global South as inherently victims of violence, especially in the form of rape, in order to employ rescue politics to justify Western military interference in foreign spaces. That is to say, "visual evidence...of women who [are] presented as having been raped... enable a voyeuristic male spectatorship [that] construct[s] masculinity as the condition of being unrapable and of being protectors of those photographed and enumerated rapable (female) bodies... universaliz[ing] the Third World as a region of aberrant violence," in which culture intrinsically victimizes women (Grewal 1). Centrally, presenting women of the Global South as victims of innately violent cultures depicts women as in need of saving by the self-proclaimed morally pure Global West. As a result, Western military forces justify intervention and provoked

violence in the region as necessary actions aimed at rescuing the women of a foreign space from a barbaric society. Additionally, by highlighting sexual violence such as rape committed against women in foreign spaces, Western military powers succeed in depicting women of the Global South as victims of their socio-cultural contexts that need saving and, consequently, adopt the politics of rescue to rationalize military intervention in the Global South.

Continuing, international feminist discourse on women's rights reinforces imperialist narratives portraying women of the Global South as inherent victims of a backwards, barbaric, and deviant culture, essentially positing Western societies as the modernizing saviors of women of the regressive Global South. In other words, "in their efforts to condemn repressive gender practices in these societies, Western women tend to reinforce colonial perceptions that these practices exemplif[y] the essence – that is, the backwardness – of traditional non-Western societies. In addition, they highlighted the need for Western women to rescue and modernize their less fortunate sisters" through military intervention warranted by rescue politics (Wu 194). At the crux, global political narratives of cultural deviance illustrate non-Western societies as backwards and barbaric, fundamentally characterizing the Global South as oppressive to women and incapable of modernization. By self-identifying as the morally superior, culturally advanced community, women of the Global West silence the voices and agency of women of the Global South and reiterate colonial power dynamics that justify Western military intervention into spaces of the Global South labeled as regressive, immoral, and uncivilized. Moreover, global political narratives proclaiming cultures of the Global South as deviant inherently portray women of non-Western societies as victims of oppressive socio-cultural environments, ultimately allowing for the politics of rescue to justify military intervention and occupation of the Global South.

In conclusion, Inderpal Grewal's *On the New Global Feminism and the Family of Nations: Dilemmas of Transnational Feminist Practice* and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu's *Rethinking Global Sisterhood* illustrate international political discourse on the cultures of globally southern spaces as victimizing women through sexual violence and cultural backwardness. Both Grewal and Wu delve into the politics of rescue fixated on women's rights employed by Western societies to justify military interventions into the Global South. Most importantly, Western characterizations of the Global South as inherently violence, backwards, and deviant innately exploit women's oppression as rationale for legitimizing Western occupation of foreign spaces.