

Transcript of “Feminist Responses to the Global Rise in Right-Wing Extremism,” held on March 22, 2022.

Please [visit the CRIAW website](#) to access the event recording and summary.

00:00:13:20 - 00:00:37:06

Jackie Neapole

And due to colonialism today, this land in this area is now known as Ottawa, Canada. If others here would like to take the opportunity and please note where they're joining from, you can put it in the chat, too. So I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge this legacy of colonization upon Indigenous Peoples in Canada and note that it's not stuck in history.

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Jackie Neapole

The impacts are ongoing. The process is ongoing, and it's embedded in our institutions. And so I take this opportunity in this acknowledgment to commit to continuing to learn and work in solidarity so we can take action to truly dismantle and eliminate colonialism and other systems of power and domination which continue to permeate here in Canada.

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Jackie Neapole

So as you probably just got a warning, I just didn't stop me in my steps. I do want to note that the main event will be recorded.

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Jackie Neapole

So but we hope to break into small groups later. The second part will be in small groups that will not be recorded. But if you don't want to be appearing on the recording can you please turn off your camera.

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Jackie Neapole

I guess what I'll do is I'll first start, just tell you a little bit about our organization and why we are doing this. So the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women was founded in 1976. We produced plain language research and research tools.

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Jackie Neapole

Using a feminist intersectional lens. So CRIAW, that's the acronym, is a national not-for-profit member-based organization. And we're comprised of academia based feminist researchers and also community based feminist researchers. And we conduct our research as a women's organization. We conduct our research specifically so it can be used for social justice and be taken up and be useful for work in the movement.

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Jackie Neapole

We provide research to feminist organizations and other activists use for social justice for all women. Our research has a purpose is action for women's equality.

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Jackie Neapole

Here we are today on "Feminist Responses to the Global Rise and Right-Wing Extremism." And so we're interested in this topic and why we're holding this is because we know that the right, the right wing and its various manifestations directly attacks and is a threat to the rights of women and girls. We know that the right operates both in overt and insidious ways.

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Jackie Neapole

The right can attack our human rights by passing legislation, so overt ways like banning, you know, our right for abortion, for example. And the right can also manifest in other ways that have an impact on the rights of women and girls, like cutting back on public services and other neoliberal measures that sometimes right-wing governments put in, but it can also, right wing extremism can also manifest not just through governments, but also through loose networks and organized networks

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Jackie Neapole

Online and in the streets, as we've seen recently in Canada with the trucker convoy.

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Jackie Neapole

So the rapid growth and mobilization of right wing extremist groups and right wing governments around the world threatens hard fought gains and limits progress on women's rights. We know this political ideology it spans borders. And so while I'm speaking to you all from Canada, where we do our work, we know that the right, the right wing knows no boundaries. And the rise of the right is happening all around the world today.

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Jackie Neapole

And it has been happening, frankly, for decades. Right. So it concerns all of us as feminists in every corner of the world.

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Jackie Neapole

On the other hand, feminists have written. So that's about the right. And why we think this is a pressing issue that we need to discuss. But also, feminists have written for decades about the importance of collaboration and collective mobilization in order to address the inequalities we face. Women's groups and our experiences are not homogenous, and that counts for in Canada, but also around the world.

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Jackie Neapole

Our experiences are not the same, and neither our methods of activism. We know it, but we know that working together and sharing knowledge, expertise, sharing strategies of resistance and working together as feminists makes our movement and our global movement stronger. So in a nutshell, we are holding this participatory parallel event, so we really want it to be participatory.

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Jackie Neapole

So we can discuss both the impacts of the rising right on women's rights from our different regions, but also to facilitate the knowledge sharing and network building to see how, as feminists, we can strategize and work together to counter this growing movement. So in terms of run of the show, what we're planning to do is to have two panelists speak to right wing extremism in their contexts.

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Jackie Neapole

And then we've reserved a bit of time for a brief Q&A after the presentation. So if you have questions, you can share them in the chat and we'll field some of the questions after the presentations. And we're really hoping that the presentations serve as a springboard for discussions in smaller breakout groups.

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Jackie Neapole

So you will all be put into smaller breakout groups and I'm hoping you all stay on because this is a really important part of this participatory parallel event. So we can really talk about what is, what does the right look like in our context and what type of actions, what can we do to counter this growing movement and ways that we can support each other.

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Jackie Neapole

So what we're going to do after the session is done is CRIAW will compile the information that's been shared in this session. And we'll share with you in a summary format. So without further ado, I would like to introduce our first panelist, Kavita Krishnan. And Kavita is a Marxist feminist activist living in Delhi.

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Jackie Neapole

She works with the All India Progressive Women's Association and the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist. She is the author of Fearless Freedom, published by Penguin in 2020. She writes widely on issues of women's rights, civil liberties and Hindu majoritarian threats to India's democracy in India.

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Jackie Neapole

I will pass it over.

00:06:53:16 - 00:07:26:11

Kavita Krishnan

Hi, everyone. It's really late here, nearly midnight. So I'm a little brain fog right now. But I'll take my 10 minutes to try and cover the ground, which I need to. I first like to thank all of you, and especially the organizers for thinking of having this session, because I think it's so important. The rise of the far right all over the world is a an extremely urgent threat.

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Kavita Krishnan

And usually it's very frustrating for us in India when the far right in India is not recognized as being a fascist authoritarian power. Rather, it's a very often, you know. There's a certain racist way in which politics in India is not recognized as politics. Fascism in India is not recognized as fascism by the world outside. And there's a tendency, for instance, just to give you an example, there was the German ambassador who came and visited the central office of the main fascist organization, Hindu supremacist organization in India, paid homage to a statue of the founder of the organization, who basically founded the organization of RSS, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, inspired by Nazi Germany, inspired

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Kavita Krishnan

by Hitler. And when he was asked about it, the ambassador said, oh, the RSS is just part of the mosaic that is India. So, you know, in India, you know, the far right are supposed to be all just part of the color, you know, local color, mosaic, whereas it is actually a threat to the existence of India's minorities, to the existence of India's democracy.

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Kavita Krishnan

And right now, it is a very frightening place to be, India right now with all these forces in power. So just to give you a quick summary of this, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was founded in 1925 and essentially it was not a nationalist group as in it was not an anti-colonial group. It stayed away from anti-colonial mobilizations throughout and basically focused all its attention on mobilizing against India's Muslim minority community.

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Kavita Krishnan

And later in subsequent days a Christian minority community. The founders of the RSS basically openly said that anyone who is not Hindu should not have a right to be a citizen of independent India. And they resented India's democratic constitution that was adopted and said that this was a foreign Western inspired document and so on. But in the initial days, the RSS had trouble finding support in independent India, partly because of the fact that they were linked with the assassination of Gandhi.

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Kavita Krishnan

Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu majoritarian man who had, who was basically a member of the RSS, although the RSS denied the connection. But, you know, that was a fact. So initially in India, there was a lot of you know, the RSS was not so popular in India, independent India but in subsequent years and especially since 1990, since the late 1980s and 1990 onwards especially, there has been a steep rise in its popularity and since 2014 the Modi regime, which was elected in 2014 and then reelected in 2019.

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Kavita Krishnan

So Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister, is basically a member of the RSS and his government is the strongest Hindu majoritarian government that India has had in previous avatars, that the Hindu majority political front of the RSS, the BJP, has been in power but only as a part of a larger coalition. And so it had to at least mask some of its more extreme ideas and politics to some extent.

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Kavita Krishnan

But this time because in 2014 and 2019, because there's this unfettered kind of power, they have gone, you know, to summarize a very large sort of fascist things that have been done, which affect women, of course, and affect minorities. They have changed India's citizenship laws. So basically it's a step in the direction of making Muslims second class citizens.

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Kavita Krishnan

Among the things that affect women, they have tried to enact laws in certain states where the BJP is in power to make it harder for a Muslim man and a Hindu woman to fall in love and get married. And there is an organized campaign against what they call love jihad, which is basically these kinds of relationships between Hindu women and Muslim men.

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Kavita Krishnan

And it's a violent campaign, and it's a campaign that draws on the anxieties of Hindu parents that their daughter will basically marry outside the caste community. They play on that anxiety, that larger anxiety, which is that in society, but they give it this added fascist edge by basically offering the services to the parents, saying, we'll get your daughter back, we'll kill the boyfriend and all of that.

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Kavita Krishnan

So it's basically a sort of state backed honour crime kind of thing. And it's a vicious political campaign that they run and the mass media in India, especially the television media and much, much of the journalists, much of the news, the newspaper and television media, electronic media is basically working for the BJP and so it peddles this kind of thing quite openly and works for them.

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Kavita Krishnan

There is also an organized attack on Muslim women. So Muslim women being targeted with online auctions, you know, well-known Muslim women, as well as ordinary Muslim women. Who may not be very well known. They'll randomly take the photograph and run these mock auctions saying these are women for sale and they're sexually available. And so on, the attack on Kashmiris and Kashmiri women.

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Kavita Krishnan

And of course, also more recently, that attempt to ban the Muslim girls from wearing the headscarf in schools in India. These are all examples that the last point I'd like to make. I think my 10 minutes must be almost up. The last point I'd like to make is to point out that Hindu women and Hindu girls are also mobilized by the fascist far right in India, the Hindu majoritarian far right.

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Kavita Krishnan

If anybody is interested in understanding how this works, then there are films available which you could see, especially a film which I would recommend is The World Before Her. That's a very interesting film which also follows around one of the girls who is part of this kind of

mobilization. So the idea is it's a very warped kind of mobilization for anti-feminist purposes as well as fascist purposes.

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Kavita Krishnan

So the idea is that Hindu women should obey, you know, caste norms obey patriarchal norms and they put them in that. But there's also the idea that you're allowed to your sense of rebellion and your sense of wanting to be active and fighting back is supposed to be all channeled against the Muslim community. So there are I mean, Hindu women have participated in terrible violence against the Muslim minority community.

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Kavita Krishnan

Including Muslim women. And so this is one of the most dangerous fascist forces, I would say, in the world right now. And it has connections with far right forces the world over. So I think that we need to keep a close eye on these developments, and the rise of the far right in the world and also in India.

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Kavita Krishnan

So I'm sure there's so much to cover and there's so little that I have actually touched upon. But I'll be happy to answer any questions later.

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Kavita Krishnan

Thank you.

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Jackie Neapole

Thank you so much, Kavita. And I'm sorry. It is very late, and I should have prefaced that, very late. And you're very on the ball, considering it's midnight. So thank you.

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Jackie Neapole

I'll just go back to my notes. So for our next speaker, it is Miriam Edelson. She'll be speaking on behalf of CRIAW. She is a social activist, settler, writer and mother living in Toronto. Her literary nonfiction, personal essays and commentaries have appeared in newspapers, literary journals and on CBC Radio. Her first book, *My Journey with Jake A Memoir of Parenting and Disability*, was published in 2000.

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Jackie Neapole

She coauthored CRIAW's paper, "The Rise of the Alt-Right in Canada: A feminist analysis" in 2021. She has a collection of essays coming out this spring called The Swirl in My Burl. And so I'll pass it over to Miriam.

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Miriam Edelson

Okay. Thank you very much, Jackie. And I appreciate being asked to present on the organization's behalf. And I thank everyone for their attendance today. And thank you, Kavita. That was very, very interesting. And it's something that I know nothing about. And I'm looking forward to learning more based on what you've said today. Okay. The alt right is an extremist ideology, and movement. At its core is a white supremacist ideology.

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Miriam Edelson

That attempts to maintain white supremacy, white nationalism, sexism, and other forms of hate. It's a movement as well consisting of different strands, including aboveground organizations as well as loose underground sorry, as well as underground networks, loose ad hoc groups or coalitions and online publications. The term "alternative right" was first coined in 2010 by Richard Spencer to refer to people on the right who distinguished themselves from traditional conservatives by opposing, among other things, multiculturalism and open immigration.

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Miriam Edelson

But it's important to note that racism and misogyny are not new in Canada and in fact, have very deep roots. For example, the high rate of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the residential school system, the Chinese head tax of 1885, and the continuous journey regulation of 1908 that restricted immigration particularly of Indian and Japanese peoples to Canada. All of these measures clearly show that our colonial foundation as a white settler state is built upon the genocide, dehumanization oppression of Indigenous people and Black people, as well as discrimination against Jews and immigrants.

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Miriam Edelson

The alt-right's activities and ideologies are often grounded in patriotic and nationalistic slogans around freedom and unity. The alt-right frequently organizes around grievances about employment and the economy, and they grow their membership by appealing to those who feel disenfranchised. This was evident in the recent so-called Freedom convoy that occupied Canada's capital city for more than three weeks in February. It's also important to note that the alt-right is not just about some individuals.

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Miriam Edelson

Alt-right ideology permeates and shapes the structures of our society, such as government, schools, colleges and universities, the labour market, the justice system, the police system, the political system, and the immigration system and so on. But the insidious character of the alt-right movement, coupled with the mainstreaming of many aspects of the ideology, can make it hard for the public to identify its sexist, fascist and racist nature.

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Miriam Edelson

By mainstream, we mean that their messages of hate are normalized in right wing and conservative political parties. Campaigns at the federal and provincial levels. While the alt-right may seek to distinguish itself from traditional conservatives, it is still part of the right wing movement and ideology. So what are some of the impacts on women and women's rights? The alt-right draws upon a foundation of violent misogyny, toxic masculinity, whiteness and patriarchal norms.

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Miriam Edelson

We know the alt-right ideology can span multiple issues, but the central feature is power and white male domination. Its activities are fueled by anti sexual and reproductive rights for women, anti-Muslim, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish, anti-Asian, anti-Feminist, hatred for Indigenous peoples and other racialized groups. Our goals of gender equality and justice, social justice, aim to dismantle power and systems of domination while the alt-right ideology seeks to maintain it,

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Miriam Edelson

enforce it, and strengthen its own grip on power. Excuse me for a sec. Many feminists warn about connections, interconnections between multiple systems of oppression and discrimination. bell hooks for example, suggests that we cannot eradicate misogyny unless we eradicate white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. We know that misogyny and racism are not individual problems. Instead, they are the outcomes of the patriarchal system.

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Miriam Edelson

And the alt right is no exception. Its ideology encompasses a broad range of these interconnected systems of hate and oppression. It incorporates misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and genderism.

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Miriam Edelson

And because of these intersections, racialized women, LGBTQ2SIA people, Indigenous women, Jewish women, Muslim women and Black women are a disproportionate risk from such a racist, misogynist movement. It's important to acknowledge that there are also non feminist women

who support and uphold this ideology and its agenda. But let's be clear. Some women can gain influence and power by upholding dominant power structures.

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Miriam Edelson

This ideology is about power and maintaining power despite the participation of women and in some cases, other marginalized individuals. This movement is sexist and racist at its core. Over the past 50 years, important yet incomplete gains have been made on human rights, women's rights, anti-racism, LGBTQ2SIA rights, and Indigenous peoples' rights, to name a few. The alt-right points to the progress on human rights, equality, diversity, and inclusion as damaging to white men's identity and traditional values.

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Miriam Edelson

And they deploy fear and violence to counter that progress. For example, we have seen over the past number of years many such racist, sexist attacks driven by alt-right ideology. One example is the massacre at the Quebec City mosque in 2017. But that's only one among many examples. We also see other manifestations of the alt-right through the harassment and targeting of different groups, including women online. Well, we know we have a long history of racism and sexism in Canada.

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Miriam Edelson

What is concerning about the alt-right today is the mainstreaming and mass mobilizing, now more visible and better connected than we have ever seen in previous decades. If this mainstreaming continues unfettered, many of our hard-earned gains will be derailed. And this is, I think, what Jackie was getting at in the introduction in terms of the stakes involved.

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Miriam Edelson

So the question is, what strategies have you use to counter this movement? I think it's important that we think about this movement as something that is festering and has festered for a long time. We know there is racism and sexism in Canada. This is why we do our work as feminists. We need now to join with others in civil society to have multiple deliberate and broad-based actions to counter the alt-right. We need to strengthen our feminist movements.

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Miriam Edelson

We must develop concrete plans to fight racism, sexism and misogyny using intersectional feminist approaches in all our initiatives and organizing. Our focus must be on bringing meaningful progressive change that can provide a foundation from which to confront the growing threat of the alt-right. Movement-building has to be an active and deliberate part of our work as advocates, in our organizations, in our schools, in our faith groups, and at our workplaces.

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Miriam Edelson

Building progressive movements is necessary to counter the growth and mobilization of alt-right extremism. We must out organize them. And finally, we need to change the public discourse. We must advocate for investments in public services and infrastructure. The state has a role to play in ensuring people are not disadvantaged and can meaningfully contribute by ensuring there are strong social safety nets and public services like health care, social assistance, child care, housing and employment insurance.

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Miriam Edelson

And we know that there is a growing sense by which many are being left behind. And disparities in wealth continue to widen. Examples like the Yellow Vests show us that economic concerns are fertile ground upon which the alt-right organizes. We must recognize and deal with the disenchantment some people feel and try to nurture it toward a progressive politics with a positive vision of a just society for all. Thank you.

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Jackie Neapole

Thank you, Miriam. So we didn't get a lot of questions in the chat. I was hoping that you would all have some questions, but we did get one about is the alt right anti-Jewish? Or why is the alt right anti-Jewish? I don't know if Miriam, you wanted to speak to that or.

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Miriam Edelson

Well, there's a, there's a long history of anti-Semitism by right wing forces and even during the recent convoy, for example, there were some Nazi flags that were presented or displayed. And I think that in addition to our own history here in Canada and I don't recall the exact year, but it was just after the war when one of the boats carrying Jewish refugees was turned away from Canada.

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Miriam Edelson

And they said that one was too many. One Jew would be too many. And I think the alt-right draws on that and draws on neo-Nazi kinds of regalia and ideas in thinking that they won't want to see more Jews inside the country. They don't want to see the impact of what they call non-white or non-Aryan reflected in the white ethno state that they envision. Does that answer it?

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Jackie Neapole

Yeah. Thank you, Miriam. And I think it's also probably important to note just and I'll just jump in, too, because, you know, I think the alt-right and what right wing extremism looks like also changes depending on the context. Right. To the paper that Miriam is speaking to was looking

at it specifically in Canada and what we've seen as the right wing extremism in Canada and the alt-right.

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Jackie Neapole

So I think that's something important to note. Like that we'll find commonalities probably, and differences in what we think the right wing extremism or far-right is in our context because that will take on different shapes and different forms and different groups will be the targets of the right wing. So I did want to circle back to a question here for you, Kavita, about and I think this is a really interesting question, how can we challenge the right wing in popular discourse, like this normalization? You were speaking to that at the beginning, how it's almost like people just ignore how fascist and right wing India is and authoritarian. How do we challenge that.

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Kavita Krishnan

People from various parts of the world to speak about what is happening in their parts of the world on this issue, which you are doing today. But so, I think that there are things which are in common when Miriam was speaking. There was so much that resonated with what I had said as well. And so there are so many things that are in common, but there are things that are pretty specific about different parts of the world and what can get weaponised by these far right forces.

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Kavita Krishnan

The other thing is that there is a very deliberate attempt to forge these connections on behalf of far-Right movements and groups where you have, you know, you had the Norway shooting, mass shooting some years ago and the person who did the shooting was a white supremacist guy called Breivik. I think Anders Breivik. And he had, you know, he was supposed to be some lone wolf kind of thing, but he wasn't. He had a whole range of you know, he had written material in which while he was extremely racist, in his vision for what Norway and you know, what, in his opinion, the world should look like,

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Kavita Krishnan

but he also, at the same time, you know, had connections with, had been reading the material of Hindu supremacist groups and, you know, taking concepts and so on from there. So I think that in popular discourse, I think what we need to do is still, also I mean, one of the things I think we need to do is to not always speak in terms of, and I say this as a left activist, okay?

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Kavita Krishnan

I say this as a left activist. But I think that the challenge is also not about simply people. People tend to shut themselves off these days and remain in little boxes of their own making. And facts and so on, you know, the way we used to work. But you could deconstruct something and say,

look, this is telling you, you know, this is a narrative, but here are the facts that show you different.

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Kavita Krishnan

But right now, I think there's a shrinking of that space that you can build a narrative based on facts. And so I feel that we need to also try and build spaces where people are encouraged to you know, be able to speak and think a little differently. Away from social media and so on, where there are small groups that are interacting regularly with each other.

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Kavita Krishnan

So it's not just a one time kind of thing where, you know, you actually get to where there are some rules for the conversation, but that conversation can be a sustained effort over time. That, I think, is where an impact is possible at the end of the day. But it's a very difficult thing to intervene in this. And in India right now, I can tell you that the tide of Hindu majoritarianism is

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Kavita Krishnan

extremely high. And, you know, there is a sense in which we are very, very aware of how close we are to India's constitutional framework basically being hollowed out entirely. You know, the output structure may remain, but internally, basically to just be a piece of paper while, you know, the actual way in which India is governed is literally changing every day.

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Kavita Krishnan

And the first in line for these attacks are the Muslim minorities in India and, you know, India's anti-colonial nationalism. We are celebrating 75 years of India's independence. So there's an attempt to entirely derogate that anti-colonial context of Indian freedom struggle and basically say that India has fought for freedom from the Muslims, which is absolutely nonsense because India has had all kinds you know, it wasn't like there was a Hindu nation which was taken over by Muslim rulers.

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Kavita Krishnan

You know, this part of the world has had that's one of the things, by the way, which I think if you're talking about India, then you need to call historians to actually talk about how this is being weaponized, this bit about history, because I remember that, you know, when I was in London some years ago, I was shocked because there was a Nigerian woman from a women's collective that had organized the food for a event that was being held against Hindu majoritarianism. So, you know, I was speaking to one of the women there who had not really attended the event, but had attended the last cultural session.

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Kavita Krishnan

And she was helping with the dinner. So she told me, what is this about? And I told her, she said, yes, but don't you think the Hindus, you know, they do want a country of their own because they've been oppressed by Muslims for so long. And I was like, where did

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Kavita Krishnan

You hear this? How, you know, how have you gotten this into your head? This is not true. But I could see that, you know, she was a bit skeptical and not really because it's so common to assume that India is Hindu and that therefore Muslims are basically, whereas in fact, India's anti-colonial struggle could not have happened had Hindus and Muslims not voted together and people of other denominations not fought together.

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Kavita Krishnan

There was nothing religious about this struggle. So these are all things, I think, that are hard to fight and win. But we have, one has to try. Thank you.

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Jackie Neapole

And I think that's a good end. And we can go breakout, a good way to start our breakout rooms.

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Jackie Neapole

Basically, as I mentioned at the top, we want this event to be participatory because we really think it is important to discuss and strategize how to counter the rise in anti feminism and right wing extremism. Like how can we organize and strategize together in response to this misogynistic, racist global movement? So we prepared a few questions, the small group discussions will be about 25 minutes to have time to talk in this small group.

00:36:44:21 - 00:37:06:23

Jackie Neapole

Obviously, it would be better if we were in real life together, but we're doing what we can with Zoom and you know, we'll then reconvene after the little breakout sessions and the facilitators from the breakout rooms will then give an overview of what was shared. And so I just want to introduce quickly the facilitators for the breakout sessions.

00:37:06:23 - 00:37:33:11

Jackie Neapole

They are Priti Shah. She is past president of CRIAW. Prabha Khosla, she's a CRIAW associate. Maitland Shaheen. She's a CRIAW board member. And Olivia Atsin is a project coordinator with CRIAW and Kenya Thompson is a CRIAW researcher. So you'll soon receive a notification to

join a breakout room. And I hope that you stay on and join because we have a lot to discuss, I think.

00:37:34:03 - 00:37:34:19

Jackie Neapole

Thank you.

00:37:52:22 - 00:37:55:15

Jackie Neapole

Sorry for tearing you out of your breakout rooms.

00:37:58:20 - 00:38:13:06

Jackie Neapole

I'm looking forward to hearing about some of the discussion that took place. And for having everyone sharing it back so maybe we'll start with Priti.

00:38:14:06 - 00:38:45:11

Priti Shah

Okay. Thanks, Jackie. We kind of addressed the first question, and the second and third were intermingled in terms of their responses, and we really didn't get sufficient time. But I think the highlights which are really, were very evident in the speaker's notes today, or presentations today. We're really starting to look at sort of starting from, yes, this movement from wherever folks are.

00:38:45:12 - 00:39:47:23

Priti Shah

So we had folks from Paris, USA, B.C. and, and then I forget the country, I think two from US. I think everywhere, the feeling that we have the same right wing movement was very strong and it mostly originated from nationalism, religion, Christianity, white supremacy. And really looking at the connections between this growing movement and between how they were in terms of having the power behind them, which was the connections with the government and the state and how that was really evident in almost all of us who spoke. There was a real focus on how the divide and rule is being used in terms of how people are divided and that people who are

00:39:47:23 - 00:40:15:15

Priti Shah

not feeling this sense of belonging, people who are losing jobs are very soon gravitating to this movement because they feel heard. They feel like this is where they belong and they don't want the racial and other kinds of diversities to be part of this country. So very much moving into that broader religion that dominate that particular country.

00:40:16:13 - 00:40:55:22

Priti Shah

In terms of India, it's Hinduism. In terms of US and various, it was Christian, Christianity, and both target minority groups and impact directly to almost all women's rights. Because indirectly, if you look at, and the whole part around our group was let's look at intersectionality, which as a feminist movement, maybe we didn't do this years back ago and we are back where we are now is because we've not had the intersectional lens to look at all the things that are happening to us.

00:40:56:03 - 00:41:45:15

Priti Shah

And so now again we are divided. The approach that one of the participants, I think it was [participant] who suggested, is really keeping clear about intersectionality and how the impact has to be looked at. Whatever movement we build have to be looked through that angle because we are exactly back where we had started. There was also a strong sense of police, how police works and some examples of what happened in B.C. and maybe other parts where the police itself is involved in supporting this larger right wing movement, compared to supporting alternative movements which are run by feminist or Indigenous women.

00:41:45:17 - 00:42:18:17

Priti Shah

And in fact, they are targeted, and violence is very much a part of that target and how they deal with other folks who are not in the right wing movement. We were talking about addressing the underlying fears of people who would join such right-wing movement like what are they seeking. A lot of them are seeking this purity of what they would like, purity of their religion, like their religion is getting distilled or impure because so many people are participating.

00:42:18:17 - 00:43:19:19

Priti Shah

And so I think looking at very basic concepts around why this is emerging, and I think deep down two key ideas came out. That we have to address the basics of the growing right wing movement and looking at how when we do address it, going to the basics and wanting to grow from there in terms of building our own movement and I think really looking at fundamentalism, looking at the police state collaboration. Looking at and considering, one of the key points also was considering public resources, keeping resources public and not privatized so that women will have access to better quality care and childcare, which eventually means that women would have less

00:43:19:20 - 00:43:49:19

Priti Shah

stress, better mental health to really participate in more of the movements and women's movement that we build. So that's where I am. Can I quickly ask my group if I missed a key point? Because I'm really rambling. I didn't get time to write my notes. Well, thank you. I don't see any hands up. So no really important piece I've missed. Okay.

00:43:49:19 - 00:43:51:23

Priti Shah

Thank you. Sorry, Jackie. Go ahead.

00:43:53:03 - 00:44:01:20

Jackie Neapole

Thank you Priti. It's very interesting to hear the report back. And Prabha you're next for your group.

00:44:04:02 - 00:44:28:14

Prabha Khosla

Okay. Thank you. Our group was Canadians from across the country and there were fabulous women in the group, I must say, with very insightful comments. We unfortunately were only able to cover the first two questions and not the third but there is a keen interest in the group to want to meet. Again.

00:44:29:14 - 00:45:17:22

Prabha Khosla

And maybe have, I guess, a longer time for everyone to speak. So we obviously had to begin with that convoy in Ottawa because it was such an overwhelming experience and try to shape what with some of the characteristics of the right in Canada. Which included sort of white supremacy, pro-capitalist, toxic masculinity, links with historical experiences of fascism, as with the Nazis, but it was also pointed out that the phenomenon is not new.

00:45:17:24 - 00:45:49:01

Prabha Khosla

It didn't just happen with Ottawa, but that prior to that in Alberta, there was the whole Yellow Vest movement, United We Roll, and that this mobilization had nothing to do with vaccine mandates, but were, but in fact is a lot more about white supremacy and its ties to other movements like the incels and the violence against women that is being perpetuated by men.

00:45:49:01 - 00:46:27:13

Prabha Khosla

So really you know, white supremacy and misogyny and apparently, out East in P.E.I. and Halifax, there is actually a growing anti-immigrant movement that's piggybacking with this, which is tying the housing crisis to immigrants in the East and thus the immigrants actually being blamed for similar problems. And also there is corresponding attacks against the development of shelters for women experiencing violence.

00:46:27:24 - 00:47:12:06

Prabha Khosla

And also because women are speaking out in this small communities, women are speaking out on sexual violence. There are in terms of the impacts on women's rights, which some I've mentioned, there was also a colleague with origins in the Caribbean who raised concerns about

how men are feeling disempowered because women are stronger. And so there is a tendency to be part of a very conservative values system because the women are not in the home doing what they were traditionally, you know, what the social norms said we should be doing.

00:47:12:12 - 00:48:01:15

Prabha Khosla

And that there seems to be a growing conservatism due to that. And so they could possibly be more susceptible to that conservative right wing agenda. But also in terms of the impacts on women, there were very important questions raised. Like what, that there is now a growth of a culture of fear for a lot of women and how will they stand up, and that how many women will now stand for political office and be subject to the kind of abuse that we know happens to women in political office and there is such a rise of online violence against women in senior positions and are willing, you know, will women really stand up for leadership and take

00:48:01:15 - 00:48:59:04

Prabha Khosla

that kind of abuse. Well, there was a very interesting question raised around why are people in the right wing more susceptible to messages of hate than other positive values that we also have in Canada around cooperation? And, you know, sisterhood, community. Finally, we did speak a bit more to the impacts on women's rights and I think there's a sort of a general conclusion that the framework of toxic masculinity, the patriarchal values wanting to control women more, when you control women in relationships, not being upset that women can work and maybe make higher wages and then that is really the backlash.

00:48:59:10 - 00:49:30:04

Prabha Khosla

I think that those comments very much speak to backlash against feminism and women's rights as why some men are becoming more conservative. And also I think what Priti had mentioned that if you are not happy in your life, you want to blame somebody else, you want to find somebody else, you want to otherize who that is and not take responsibility of changing maybe your own life.

00:49:30:12 - 00:49:36:20

Prabha Khosla

And thus you blame immigrants or Blacks or Muslims or. Okay, I'll stop there.

00:49:37:01 - 00:49:40:15

Jackie Neapole

Thank you, Prabha. Next, Maitland.

00:49:42:21 - 00:50:11:17

Maitland Shaheen

Yes. So a lot of what has been mentioned so far was also present in our group in terms of who is the far right. We were all in Canada from across the country, both urban and rural

environments. People mentioned that the far right is embedded in institutional and systemic racism, but also that people in the far right were their neighbors and people that they worked with and fought every day.

00:50:12:21 - 00:50:45:01

Maitland Shaheen

Often these are people who just wanted to blame someone else for shortcomings or issues in their own life and who felt like they were entitled to more. That was the big theme is entitlements. Often even people who are financially well-off but feel like they deserve something someone maybe has taken from them. There were some mentions of links to rural communities and issues in the far right in those areas, but of course that it exists outside of those as well.

00:50:45:23 - 00:51:13:01

Maitland Shaheen

And also some mentions that in more urban or maybe even government environments, that still exists. It's just a sugarcoated and hidden in different ways. People mentioned the convoy in Ottawa, anti-vaxxers, but also that the far right was growing within Canadian politics across the country, links with the military, [participant] in my group put a comment in the chat, she said.

00:51:13:14 - 00:51:40:19

Maitland Shaheen

Putting uneducated male 18-year-olds in uniform and throwing them into hypermasculine environments is a recipe for problems. And people also mentioned the States and Donald Trump, although [participant] also said, you know, this has been here since long before, since Donald Trump was elected, he might have made people feel more entitled to speak the way that they did or change their actions to be more open about their beliefs.

00:51:40:19 - 00:52:10:04

Maitland Shaheen

But this has always existed long before him. In terms of the impacts, people mentioned a lot of different manifestations of the alt-right, limits on abortion rights and fights against sexual education or teaching people about gender identity, and increased attacks on East Asian women in B.C. in particular, and just generally increased gender-based violence being an issue, especially during COVID around the country.

00:52:10:14 - 00:52:35:06

Maitland Shaheen

And also feeling like that was not getting the amount of attention that it really needed. These increased rates of gender-based violence and of course, systemic and institutional racism as well. We just briefly got to strategies. So a few things that were mentioned were trying to have conversations with people, although someone did mention attempts to do this that were just completely shut off.

00:52:35:08 - 00:52:57:00

Maitland Shaheen

So, you know, often it seems like even when you do try and meet people closer to the middle it's just not always going to work out. And trying to just call it out when you see it and you know, breaking apart the false idea that Canada is immune to this, that we're not racist, that we don't have a far right.

00:52:58:04 - 00:53:17:11

Maitland Shaheen

You know, there's a lot of sugarcoating. That was a great word that [participant] used. You know, we have this idea of Canada being so much better. But the reality is that we do have a far right in that there are significant impacts. So being more open about that and really calling it out would seem to be the one strategy that came up the most often.

00:53:19:15 - 00:53:24:13

Maitland Shaheen

And we were cut off a little bit. So someone else wants to jump in, feel free.

00:53:24:18 - 00:53:58:16

Jackie Neapole

Thank you. That was well put. So it is a lot to take in actually hearing all this feedback. And I think one thing is clear is there's definitely not enough time in the breakout rooms to really deal. With this issue because it is big and we have a lot of expertise, knowledge, points of view, perspectives to bring to this discussion. I would like to move to Olivia just so we can quickly try to report back from all of the groups if possible.

00:53:58:16 - 00:54:25:11

Olivia Atsin

Thank you, Jackie. Hi, everyone. So, yeah, we also had a pretty good discussion within our breakout room and I was even going through my notes before we got called out of the room. So I hope that everything that I say is exactly what we talked about before we got called out. And please, if there's anything that I missed, if anybody from my group would like to jump in, please feel free to do so.

00:54:25:23 - 00:54:44:22

Olivia Atsin

But I'm just going to be giving a really brief feedback on what we've talked about going. So we spent a lot of time on the first question, and then we spend a little less time on the second and third question. But we talked a little bit, we touched on that, too. So I'll be reporting very briefly on the main points of our discussion.

00:54:45:06 - 00:55:11:01

Olivia Atsin

So for the first question, who is the extreme right in your country or your region, so we mentioned white supremacist organizations like the Proud Boys, they have control of the media and control of the military industrial complex. And it was also mentioned incels and law enforcement as well as people around us who are indifferent or passive in front of those issues.

00:55:11:22 - 00:55:35:19

Olivia Atsin

And for the second question, we didn't spend a lot of time, it was very brief. What are the impacts on women and women's rights? So it was mentioned the safety of female politicians who speak up and violence against women increased during times of crisis. And for the last question regarding the strategies. So it was mentioned that we need to start with public education.

00:55:36:04 - 00:56:03:08

Olivia Atsin

There's, there is not much education, for example, about Indigenous history and struggle, even though we live in Canada. And we have to organize to not allow right wing politicians to be elected and also aggressively advocate for social protection like better care. So we create communities that feel safer, more empowered and not disenfranchized. And the social safety net is very important.

00:56:03:08 - 00:56:25:12

Olivia Atsin

And finally, we also need to consult on grassroots women's, consult with grassroots women and women's organizations. So that's everything that I wrote down, based on my notes, that I had to quickly give back, bring it together. So if there's anything else that would like to be mentioned from my group, please feel free to unmute yourself and just mention that. Thank you very much.

00:56:27:04 - 00:56:32:23

Jackie Neapole

Thank you, Olivia. And then I'll move to Kenya now for the last report back.

00:56:32:24 - 00:56:47:08

Kenya Thompson

Wonderful. Thank you. So it sounds like our group is similar to others where we didn't have quite enough time to reach everybody or everybody's full thought. Probably could have gone on for several hours longer. But a brief summary that, of course, people can add to after. But a lot of what you guys have said has been echoed.

00:56:47:08 - 00:57:23:12

Kenya Thompson

But in terms of the first question. Who is the extreme right in your country, your region? We had a lot of people from Ontario and who had lived in rural and urban communities across Canada, as well as someone from Indiana who gave us a South of the border perspective and basically a

kind of, had a commonality of people experiencing people who are, you know, part of the alt-right or its followers or people experiencing fear in response to changing demographics and are visible in their communities in terms of signage and co-opting phrases that are, you know, shown throughout.

00:57:23:12 - 00:57:46:23

Kenya Thompson

[Participant] made a note in the comment I saw about how in Canada co-opted feminist language and mantras, including, you know, "my body, my choice" but don't seem to recognize that that is co-opted from the women's movement and refers to a woman's right to choose for their own bodies. So, yeah, in our communities, churches, schools, organizations, as well as in elected offices and institutions such as the police.

00:57:46:23 - 00:58:08:07

Kenya Thompson

So larger organizations. For the second question, what are the impacts on women and women's rights? We didn't get into this one as much as the other two, but basically the alt-right is gaining power in leadership positions. Leadership positions and mass mobilizations. And we talk specifically about the convoy, and that's an example of, you know, both the U.S. and Canada.

00:58:08:10 - 00:58:38:00

Kenya Thompson

It was heavily U.S. funded. Participating in an act of white supremacy and the alt right perpetuating sexism and misogyny and hatred and discrimination from positions of power more broadly and just co-opting hard fought feminist progress and fostering misinformation that encourages resentments towards feminist organizing and kind of entrenches patriarchal and white supremacist ideologies. So as for the third, we had a lot of really constructive ways that could be used to counter the movement.

00:58:38:00 - 00:59:02:24

Kenya Thompson

And kind of the biggest one was one on one conversations and education as kind of the biggest strategy, particularly in the context of elected politics in, you know, when leadership positions are being brought forward, like what conversations can be had with voters to educate and yeah, just make people aware of what the alt-right is perpetuating.

00:59:04:09 - 00:59:29:13

Kenya Thompson

Yeah. So we kind of talked about conversation starters that could be shared across different organizations and different feminist leaders during the upcoming Canadian provincial and municipal elections in the fall, kind of come up with what do each party stand for on women's issues that could be a way to kind of distill what these different parties stand for, engage and inform the electorate, and also look at how these platforms affect women's issues.

00:59:30:09 - 00:59:59:00

Kenya Thompson

And also we talked about the influence of social media and how the right is really effective in organizing, using like online methods. And so the fact that, you know, mass mobilization certainly have their place. But, you know, ordinary people can do that just as well. And so looking at how to combat the kind of longer explanations that the left seems to foster, as opposed to the pithy, you know, freedom or my body my choice things that the alt-right takes and its followers run with.

00:59:59:05 - 01:00:24:00

Kenya Thompson

And we also make the distinction between leaders and followers as kind of requiring different approaches to address and challenge them. And then [participant] cited the example of the heal framework that was used in the Congo as a model that could be applied to Canada. And I note that she wrote a bit about that in the chat. So if anyone from the groups want to add anything but those are the notes that I was able to distill from our discussion.

01:00:24:00 - 01:01:01:20

Jackie Neapole

So I just want to thank everybody for coming and participating and for your time. And I think it's clear that we clearly need to have more discussions on this. And facing the alt-right, the right wing is an ongoing struggle that we face as feminists. And clearly, this isn't going to be the first, this isn't the first time or the last time that we'll be discussing this as feminists. And you know, one thing that speaks to me from all the report backs also is that I think the collective actions, the knowledge sharing are necessary right.

01:01:01:20 - 01:01:26:16

Jackie Neapole

And it, what also came through clearly is that we need to build a strong, progressive, intergenerational and intersectional movement so that we can really challenge and uproot the right wing and the alt-right so that we can ensure that we have the realization of human rights for all women and all girls, whether it be in Canada or across the world, across borders.

01:01:27:04 - 01:01:55:00

Jackie Neapole

And so I just want to end it there, but I do want to commit to sending everybody who attended at least a summary of this. And hopefully we can get together again and have another discussion, because I don't think it was enough time to truly tackle this issue. And, you know, getting together and being able to talk about it, I think, is the first step or one step of many that we will need to take if we're going to encounter this movement.

01:01:55:14 - 01:02:18:03

Jackie Neapole

So thank you, everyone. And take care.