

Women In Coalition --- WOMANifesto

Center for Women in Coalition- 2003 Document

An Open Statement for Creative Work and Action

1. Coalition: We understand that we come to the group with many differences among us: of ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, citizenship, language, education, religion, ability and status. We acknowledge that working together will mean having to work through some of these differences of power and privilege.

Sometimes, these differences will mean disagreement and difficulty in understanding each other. However, our hope is, that our difference will also be cause of celebration— not division.

This is why we affirm the word “coalition.” Coalition does not erase our differences. Coalition acknowledges that these exist and that we work towards understanding each other because of these differences.

We acknowledge that coalition work is hard— but when done with respect and honesty, then we have much to be strengthened by. We strengthen each other. We are empowered to work for others.

2. Inclusion: We have formed this group in a spirit of inclusiveness and openness. The group exists as part of an institution which is often not inclusive and welcoming to women of different class, ethnic, national, racial, gendered, religious, political and sexual backgrounds.

This is a space which is critical in the work it does around women’s status in the world. In that it is a progressive space. Some of our projects will be radical.

Yet, we want to affirm that many of us will come to this space with different languages, different ways of expressing many things. We seek patience, respect and kindness in the ways that we listen to each others ways of expressing: in talk, in laughter, in silence, in the sharing of food and life.

3. Conduct: Meetings will generally be conducted in an informal way. We usually have meetings in one of our member’s home and food is normally brought to these gatherings. If there is an action we are participating in or there is an issue that demands a distinct approach, then our meetings may be moved to a different location and conducted accordingly.

Regarding personal conduct during meetings, we only ask that as a member of WIC, you engage in the discussions in a respectful, amicable and honest manner. When approached by other groups and organizations for coalition work, please let the director know prior to making any organizational commitments on behalf of WIC. WIC strongly supports all social justice work being done, but needs to be notified when our support is being solicited.

4. Leadership: Because of its university base, the Director must be a faculty member. In the future, the group may decide to move out of this university base and this can be changed. So far, leadership has been open-ended and transparent. Members take initiative and move with their own projects.

5. Decision Making: When decisions need to be made about projects/actions, decision making is not top-down. It has been consensual. At some point, if agreement cannot be reached, or consensus cannot be reached, then a vote can be taken. We still have to work out how exactly this will work.

6. Progressive Work: Women In Coalition was envisioned as an “umbrella” organization— a space which can house a variety of creative actions. It is a space where you should feel free to “take off.” We welcome all creative energies.

Yet it is also a space that aims to do progressive and radical work around women’s issues. Many of us are brought together because of our interest and commitment to social justice. We want to do this through practice and action, less through theory. That remains a central part of our mission.

7. Participation: Your participation of WIC meetings and related events is highly encouraged, but completely voluntary. We understand that our members lead hectic lives and are not always able to be involved with every project. However, your cooperation and help in any of our projects will be greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to introduce new projects or topics to in our discussions. WIC is constantly looking for new projects to undertake and if you would like to lead the efforts to complete that project, then we will assist and support you.

8. Open Communication: WIC will be mostly using e-mail to notify our members of any actions, work or gatherings that will be taking place. Therefore, we ask that you keep us updated with your contact information. Since e-mail will be our primary means of communication, please let us know if this is not a viable form of communication for you and tell us which method is best to reach you.

We welcome all communication styles to our dialogues, but we request that everyone utilize a language that does not denigrate any community. As passionate as we may get about certain issues, we should preserve the integrity of our work and group.

9. Gentle Honesty: There are no “party-lines” in this gathering. We seek to be elastic and flexible but remain committed to social justice. Our commitment is firm, but it is also gentle.

Because much organizing of this sort falls apart due to “behind the scenes” work (gossip, back-biting, resentment), we would like state that serious problems that threaten a project/action should be openly discussed. The bottom-line is our work— and the long term goals of that work.

If disagreements occur, for whatever reason, which may directly jeopardize the spirit of work and sharing, we hope that we can first try and help each other work through the disagreement/misunderstanding individually. If this does not work, then the director can be a mediator. However, if the disagreement reaches a point where it is threatening the group or getting in the way of a project/action, then a conflict resolution task force will be selected to specifically handle this conflict. The task force will then need to meet with those parties in conflict before the next WIC meeting. Each instance should be worked through in its particular way. We strive for a way of working in which personal conflicts and resentments do not get in the way of long term goals. We seek a compassionate way of working through our problems.

10. Our Declaration: We are a group of progressive women who come together with hope, goodwill and compassion because we believe that work towards social justice has this at its heart. We are critical of capitalism, imperialism and other structures of domination. We support social welfare programs and labor unions/struggles. We are immensely concerned and involved with anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-sexist matters. We will disagree with each other, but we hope to work towards a space that both includes and does not dilute the important, difficult, questions and actions around social justice and inequality that we are going to take.