



Women and Activism

“Activism is my rent for living on the planet”

Alice Walker

The Violence against Women sector was borne out of women’s activism across the globe. Without survivors fighting for protection, services, such as Women’s aid, Rape Crisis and SAY Women, would never have existed.

Initially coming together to discuss a range of common experiences, women built a political consciousness around violence against women that remain the moral consciousness of feminism to date. A focus on the needs of those experiencing the most extreme forms of oppression is essential to address these and to ensure change is achieved for all women.

Catherine A. Mackinnon (2006) highlighted that, “Gender was not created in our minds after reading philosophy books other people wrote; it was not a Truth that we set out to establish to end academic debates or to create a field or niche so we could get jobs. It was what was found there, by women, in women’s lives”. This emphasis on the actual lived experience informs women’s activism in their communities.

The traditional, male party political system often focusses on academic research and theory, which sometimes does not reflect women’s lived experience, e.g. a focus on household income in relation to poverty, does not reflect the experience of women who enter refuge. When women escape financial abuse their household income may reduce, but they can access money easier. Feminism has developed as a theory from women’s lived experiences. It recognises the complexities of women’s lives and puts the oppression they experience, which is based on their sex, at the centre of feminist activism.

Women’s activism in communities is often undervalued. Caring for the frail, disabled and children, supporting one another through grief and bereavement, completing benefits forms and supporting women experiencing mental health issues to maintain households all reduce isolation, increase social networks and maintain the foundations of our communities. Activism may be less formal in the lives of women, but the impact is invaluable.

Throughout time, however, women have entered formal activism. This has often required them to confront misogyny and resistance within their chosen activist groups, before engaging in activity. The current global municipalist movement is confronting this and attempting to “Feminize politics” stating that, “We must continually insist on the central importance of feminism and its teachings as a form of political practice, because without feminism there can be no revolution: without an intervention in daily life, in what is happening all the time, no real change is possible.” (Barcelona En Comu, (2019), Fearless Cities).



EVENT RESULTS

THEME: Women in Glasgow have a powerful history of striving for equal rights and social and political status for themselves, their families and their communities. The Open Space Events were created to discuss women and activism.

PARTICIPANTS: Total of 67 women from local communities, representing a wide range of backgrounds, convened 20 break-out groups on issues with 60 proposed actions over two dates. **(Nov 2008 / Mar 2012)**

TOP PRIORITIES VOTED BY PARTICIPANTS (NUMBER OF VOTES)

Nov 2008	Mar 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to our core values 24 votes Network to consider funding application for consultation/research project to look at the barriers to women getting access to meetings/training/employment, focus to include childcare (secondment) 19 votes End violence against women 17 votes Campaign 15 votes Education – ourselves and the public 15 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact organisations facing cuts to offer active support and protest – Cadogan Street (ATOS – private company, assess for benefits and sickness. 33 votes Protest sexualisation: clothing and toys for girls; ‘lads’ mags. 25 votes From today I promise to say yes wisely, say no sometimes, look after myself and listen to my body and nurture myself. 22 votes Send email/letter to all counsellors and MSP’s re: Commonwealth games requesting budget and ask who was consulted. 19 votes

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Nov 2008	Mar 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigning/core values/demands of the women’s movement 75 votes Actions to address barriers to women’s involvement 33 votes Do we need a women’s network 28 votes Conflicts between equalities networks 16 votes Women’s network meetings 10 votes Care Commission – including service users 7 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education/Awareness raising. 35 votes Campaigning/Lobbying. 138 votes Individual action/mindset change. 25 votes Communication/making connections. 20 votes Community action. 13 votes

DETAILED RESULTS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

November 2008	March 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to Core Values. 24 votes Network to consider funding application for consultation/research project to look at the barriers to women getting access to meetings/training/employment, focus to include childcare (secondment). 19 votes End violence against women. 17 votes Education – ourselves and the public. 15 votes Campaign. 15 votes Collective Voice of Voluntary sector. 9 votes Eradicate snobbery within the voluntary sector ‘unpaid/voluntary work’, 9 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact organisations facing cuts to offer active support and protest – Cadogan Street (ATOS – private company, assess for benefits and sickness. 33 votes Protest sexualisation: clothing and toys for girls; ‘lads’ mags. 25 votes From today I promise to say yes wisely, say no sometimes, look after myself and listen to my body and nurture myself. 22 votes Send email/letter to all counsellors and MSP’s re: Commonwealth games requesting budget and ask who was consulted. 19 votes Reducing isolation – systems to increase women’s discussions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For GWVSN to consider more strategic marketing to encourage participation/raise profile of network. (9 votes) • Joint awareness raising/joint working adopting clear beliefs and values. 7 votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Email 'trees', phone 'trees'. ○ Social media training. ○ Increasing women's confidence/skills to develop locally. 12 votes • Challenge stereotypes (only if you can define who you are) – individually and in the community, face to face, virtually and through the media. 12 votes
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