

## Traveling Companions Quilt and Stories

Quilt Created by Kibber Miller and Caroline Stanhope

### **Bridging the Gap between Feminism and Participatory Action Research Conference**

The Traveling Companions Quilt is an outgrowth of the small working conference, Bridging the Gap between Feminism and Participatory Action Research (BtG). The 2001 conference was organized by Mary Brydon-Miller, Patricia Maguire, and Alice McIntyre. The goal of the conference was to bring together feminist and participatory



action researchers to explore and expand intersections between the two fields.



The quilt was pieced together from individual pieces of fabric brought by conference participants for an opening night introduction activity. After the conference, the actual quilt was designed and sewn by Kibber Miller, Mary-Brydon-Miller's mother, and Kibber's friend, Caroline Stanhope. At the end of this introduction, you will find each participant's fabric piece and story.

To enhance participatory and collaborative pre-conference planning and interactions, we used web-based communication technologies. Patricia Maguire's colleague, Roy Howard, created a website through which BtG participants could raise and discuss questions, share comments, and present aspects of their teaching and research. For seven months, participants utilized web-based threaded discussions to introduce ourselves, develop conference

themes, and upload and discuss rough drafts of conference papers. This was the yeast for the short conference.

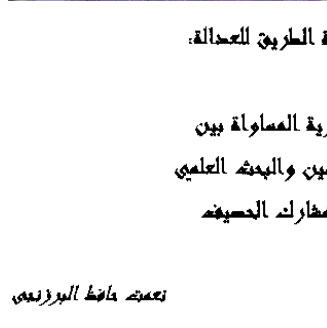
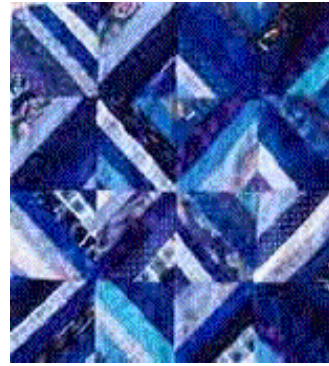
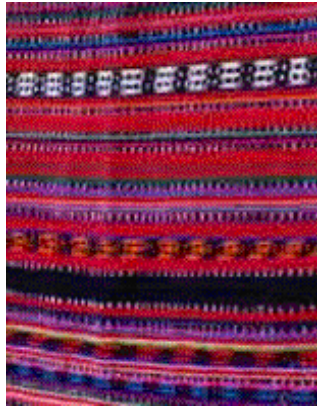
For the opening ice-breaker activity, we asked conference participants to introduce themselves via a piece of fabric. The stories the participants told via their fabric revealed diverse experiences, identities, and life events that informed our commitments to social justice and feminist or participatory action research.



We thought the introductions were being taped, only to later discover that the recorder had malfunctioned. Nearly a year later, for a revision of the conference's interactive website, we sent participants a digital photo of their fabric and asked them to re-create their fabric introductions, which are shared below.

We hoped the quilt image would be used for the cover of *Traveling Companions: Feminism, teaching, and action research (2004)*. Although that didn't work out, the book included a photo of the quilt and a link to a website with the quilt and stories. For years the conference website was available, and then, as happens with untended sites, it disappeared. It is a joy to once again share the traveling companion quilt and stories.

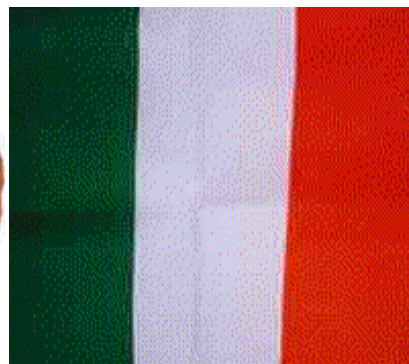
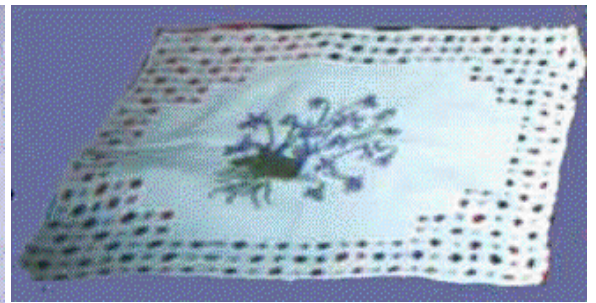
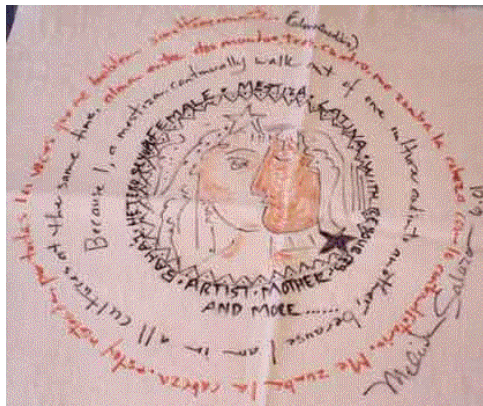




رونقة الطريخ للعدالة:

نظريّة المساواة بين  
الجنسين والبحث العلمي  
المشارك الحميم

تصميم حافظ البرزنجي

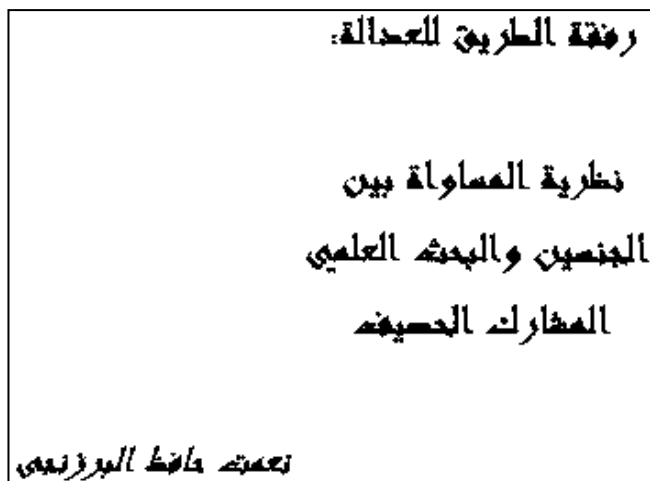




## **Nimat Hafez Barazanqi**

Women's Studies Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

I wanted to represent myself as well as other Muslim women with an Arabic rendition and calligraphy of the title “Traveling Companions.” My thinking is that if the Qur’anic worldview, the primary text of Islam, is the root of Muslim feminist work, i.e., a creative view of egalitarian participation in the community decision-making process, then their knowledge and work may not be furthered without the ability to read and write Arabic. Without directly reading and understanding the principles of justice rendered in the Qur’an, then neither the Qur’an, nor its oral and written interpretations may help the Muslim woman self-identifying with Islam, i.e., being a Muslim by choice, not by birth.



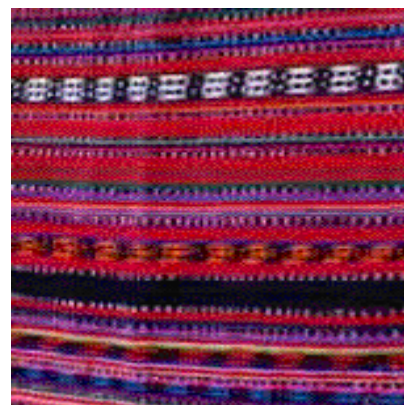
The word “Qur’an” in Arabic means “a reader” or “that is to be read.” One of my goals is making Arabic, the language of the Qur’an, accessible for all Muslim woman. Although the majority of Muslim women are illiterate in their vernacular languages (literacy among women in the 60 Muslim majority countries ranges from 10% in Afghanistan to 80% in Iraq, before the Gulf conflict) their local, oral knowledge is of value to decipher their own identity, interests and needs. To facilitate a conscious identification with the Qur’an, however, they need to be able to read Arabic in order to interpret it and be involved in decision-making process. Rendering the title of the book in Arabic is reflective of my life experience and goals for working with some Muslim women—to master the Arabic language to know the Qur’an without intermediary.

My reservations about bringing a piece of cloth to represent my participation in weaving the fabric of this Feminisms and PAR movement stems from my resentment to the sad realities of the majority of Muslim women and girls. As the majority of fabric weavers, carpet makers, etc., young girls (often underage laborers) and women who cannot weave a word of Arabic unless it is drawn for them, rarely use Arabic calligraphy even as a beautiful form of Islamic art because they cannot read and write. I resent any activity that takes women away from reading and writing, until they become full participants in the making of history and have a fair decision-making role in their community.

## **Kalina Brabeck**

Austin, Texas

This fabric is a piece of traje típico from Sololá, Guatemala, a highland town where I lived with my parents for a short while during my middle-school years. Guatemala has drawn me back eight times



since, to travel, to work, and mostly to visit with my “second family,” an indigenous family who wears this fabric on their huipiles. We call each other “closest friends,” and every day, I feel them near in thoughts and heart-- and yet we always address each other with the formal “Usted,” a symbol of the distance that will forever exist between us. Living in Guatemala, at ages 11 and 12, my consciousness and awareness was first sparked. Everything my comfortable-White-privileged-nurtured self can claim to understand about poverty, oppression, and suffering, as well as about courage, forgiveness, and grace, stems from my experiences and friendships there.

Throughout my life, I have waffled among many different career aspirations, but the criteria for the job was always the same: What career will be the easiest way to get back to Guatemala, with skills to offer? My sophomore year in college, (although I was an English major) I was invited to join a team of participatory action researchers engaged in developing an after-school program with urban, middle-school Latinos. It was then that I first realized Psychology might be the answer to my career question. I began to discover the work of, well, the very women and men at this conference, and to realize the potential for psychologists to engage in the movement toward social justice and to actually affect people’s lives. I decided to take a risky move and apply to grad school in Psychology—risky, because I had never actually taken a Psych class, and risky because I would be doing what I had sworn throughout my life I would never-ever-never-ever do: follow in the footsteps of my... mother.

It wasn’t until I began my first semester at the Ph.D. program in Counseling Psychology at University of Texas at Austin, that I realized just how marginalized most qualitative and action research is. No one had even heard of PAR, let alone be engaged in any on-going projects. I struggled to learn the procedures of empirical research and at the same time maintain a critical eye. I continue to struggle with adhering to the commitment I have to empowerment, bottom-up research, while still finding a voice in my department and keeping academic doors open. I find myself yearning for the mentors I once enjoyed in close proximity.

But it hasn’t been all bad! I only just began reading feminist psychological theory and writing within the last two years, and as a result of that reading, I continue to be convinced that the potential for contributing to social justice that I once saw in Psychology is, indeed, there. Moreover, I have gotten to actually meet many of these brave, thoughtful, and ethical women and men whose work I have been reading— imagine my surprise!; as my mom points out, being an English major, I was used to reading the work of dead people. I look around this room, and see those heroes sitting here, the biggest one of all (Mom), among them. The work of the women and men in this room gives me hope for Psychology, energizes me, sustains me, instructs me, and convinces me that someday, I will be back in Guatemala, where my adopted sister wears this fabric I hold here, and I will better understand the distance-- and the closeness-- that we share.

## **Mary Brabeck**

Dean

Carolyn A. & Peter S. Lynch School of Education  
Boston College

The fabric I have chosen is one of a set of coasters that my daughter, Kalina, gave me. The coasters were woven by Maya women from Guatemala, and I keep them on my coffee table in my office at Boston College. The fabric represents the ways I see my life as feminist and researcher during a time when my work is mainly administrative. My university, like all research universities, requires faculty excellence in the tripartite duties of teaching research and service. As an academic dean, my service is currently in the ascendancy and I see my main role to be cheer leader, enabler and supporter for faculty and staff. Coffee features dominantly in that role, and there is always "a cuppa" available for faculty, students, staff and fellow administrators. I serve big mugs of coffee that rest on the coasters as I listen to faculty, student and staff concerns, needs and problems. Making and serving coffee is, of course, 'women's work'; work that can facilitate conversation that can move a mountain by building trust, a collegial community and a shared mission.



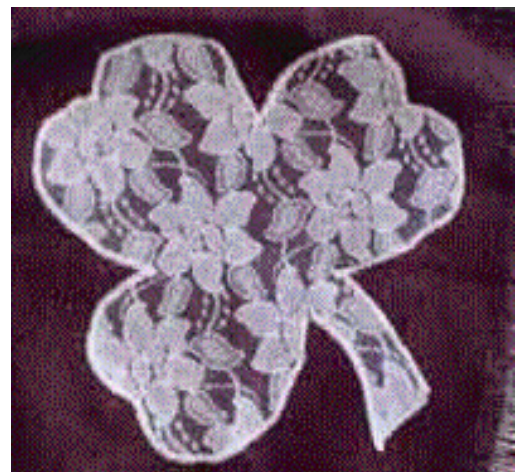
The fabric was a gift from my daughter, Kalina, and is, therefore, special to me. I have had the great joy of watching her grow into adulthood and become a feminist, social justice advocate and psychologist. There is no greater joy, than that of becoming friends with one's adult children.

Kalina knows of my feelings of solidarity with women, particularly women from Central America, where we both spent transformative time, and learned about the strength of women who transmit the culture through their weavings, work and stories - and of course, through making and serving coffee.

## **Mary Brydon-Miller**

University of Cincinnati, College of Education

Potatoes come in burlap sacks. And it was potatoes, or more accurately the lack of potatoes, that brought my great-grandparents to the United States. I once visited the small West Coast village in which she lived in the shadow of Croagh Patrick, the holy mountain of Ireland. Standing on the shore looking back up the road to the cottage in which she grew up, I wondered, "How she could leave, it is so beautiful?" And then I asked myself, "How could she stay?"... it is so poor. So the brown burlap represents the poverty and powerlessness that drove thousands of Irish immigrants away from their homes and families.



The "lace-curtain" Irish is an expression used to describe upwardly mobile Irish Americans, with the sense that these families, in beginning to make their way into the middle class, also began to look down upon those who had yet to make it. The white lace shamrock represents the sometimes condescending attitude of those who have made it toward those who have not.

But I recently read a description by the poet Margo Lockwood of her own experience with these same white lace curtains. She remembers taking part in the ritual of washing the curtains and placing them on the frame for drying. "Kneeling on the porch floor and taking the curtains out one by one from the starch water, out from the zinc tub, I would be allowed to place the curtains on the needles. I always slipped and pricked my fingers, and there would be blood on the borders of those curtains." But she accepted the pain because the curtains were so beautiful. "It meant we would suffer to have a nice house."

So my quilt piece, a white lace shamrock on a background of coarse, brown burlap represents opposing images of power and powerlessness, issues that have been central to feminists and to practitioners of participatory action research and that are at the core of my own recent work with refugee communities. It represents an awareness of my own heritage as an Irish American, the hardship that we have suffered, as well as the hardships we have sometimes inflicted on ourselves and on others. It is not a clear or untroubled legacy.

Finally, it is about finding beauty. I asked my mother to make this quilt square for me. She's now at work creating the quilt which will bring together all of the contributions we gathered for this conference. So many of us in describing our pieces of fabric spoke of our mothers or of other women who have been important in our lives. I am grateful that my own mother has been willing to be a part of this project and I appreciate the beauty that she brings into my life.

## **Jill Chrisp**

Te Kura Tu Tangata, School of Social Sciences,  
Waiariki Institute of Technology Whare Takiura,  
Aotearoa, New Zealand

Almost fifty years ago I was born into the fifth generation of white settlers in a country that for the past 160 years has been constitutionally underpinned by a treaty between the indigenous people (Maori) and the crown. Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, was signed in 1840 between Maori and the British monarchy in recognition of the difficulties arising from the arrival of increasing numbers of foreigners to Aotearoa. The Treaty was written in Maori and English and copies of one or other version were signed. Stories since this time have been differently recorded. Annals of history imposed on the early consciousness of each young person born since, sanctioned by the education system,



tells of the 'discovery of New Zealand' by British Captain, James Cook. The thriving communities of people existing prior to his visit have been ignored. History tells also of the benefits to the native people of the 'coming of the white man and his civilised world'. Stories of the almost complete annihilation of a people, their language and cultures were not told.

I was born into a time when resistance by Maori to the colonization of the European reached a new energy. Instead of being segregated by the physical location of state-housing blocks, and by signs outside public drinking houses, many Maori were (and continue to be) distinguished in hospitals, schools, courthouses and prisons by increasing incidences of social, spiritual, emotional and physical dis-ease. Whilst benefiting from the opportunities of a white upper-middle class family, I was also uncomfortable about this. I threw myself into social justice, community development activities with the naïve and single-minded energy of a young woman in her teens and twenties. I learned te reo Maori at Teacher's College and University, worked on marae, taught in poor, predominately Maori, rural areas of the East Coast, set up and worked in youth centres with unemployed youth, again predominately Maori.

During Te Roopu o te Matakite, (a march led by Whina Cooper in 1976 that travelled the length of the North Island in protest over land issues), I was stunned to be challenged by a young Nga Tamatatoa (Maori resistance movement) member. He demanded to know why I was there, said that I had no idea how things were for Maori, did I not know that I was the cause of his oppression, that walking with the march was not going to let me off the hook and that I had no place there. Blistered feet, confusion and outrage prevented me from realizing until a while later that he was right, that I was an outsider to his struggle and that my work was with Pakeha, not Maori. It had been easier to align myself with the oppressed than to challenge the oppressor, to recognize and be attracted by the 'other' than to seek myself. Needless to say his view was one of a multitude in the confusion of misunderstandings in a colonized and hurting country. From this time my direction and my perceptions of who I was changed. A whole set of new identities have been added to 'middle-class Pakeha' such as employee, mother of a son, divorcee, lesbian, partner, middle-aged and so many others that are both fixed and fluid.

Conventions around feminist practice have challenged me to negotiate the problematic of 'empowerment' in my teaching, research and community development work. The writings of many feminist theorists and practitioners have impacted on me – Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Somer Brodribb, Charlotte Bunch, Mary Daly, bell hooks, Renate Klein, Alison Laurie, Audre Lorde, Trinh Minh-ha, Robin Morgan, Daphne Patai, Janice Raymond, Adrienne Rich, Shulamit Reinharz, Barbara Smith, Dale Spender, Liz Stanley, Ngahua Te Awekotuku, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith.... The link with participatory action research that facilitates individual and collective political and social change has been a natural progression

This cloth depicts the koru/spiral, the tradition of which is sourced in both Maori and European symbolism. It embodies many things – newness and growth, interconnectedness and separateness, regeneration and nurturing, difference and similitude. In it is my story.



## **Michelle Fine**

City University of New York, Graduate Cent

Jews and fabric have a long history. “Always carry your clothes on your back. You never know when they’re going to come after you.” Raised as a working class Jew, I talk with my hands, dialect peppered with Yiddish. Daughter of refugees, I write feminist, think critical, organize loud, and I mother. I carry underwear wherever I go.



So I brought a pillow case to Boston College. “You never know when they will turn on you. You always need a place to rest your head.” Reared on chicken feet, marrow bones, varied excuses for cholesterol and paranoia, I was nourished with the standard working class immigrant Jewish diet. To date, I’m still never sure which fork to use in front of “company.” This was a problem when I taught at the University of Pennsylvania. Haunting thought: Is Jewish, immigrant, working class... my passport into a conversation about participatory action research, social justice and activism?

Plaid, flannel, warm, comforting, this pillow case sits sturdy alone, but also hungers for a bed. A bed – site for passion and loneliness, comfort and terror, depending on the hour and the company. Plaid – threads stream together, bleeding, blending, braiding. Warm lines of difference swim in a pool of color. Haunting thought: Do pillow cases only hide tattered pillows?

I arrive at this session, hiking past all the crosses, Saints and Catholic chatchkas. I arrive at the Education Building, Boston College, yearning to break into Yiddish, bags heavy with the presence of an absence. We speak tonight for/with/despite those who are ‘otherwise detained.’ Friends, women, co-researchers, Kathy, Iris, Judith, Donna, Midgalia, Missy, Pam. Still behind bars. Eager to speak about prisons, women in prison, the bars on the cells, the threads in the fabric, I stumble on the contradictions in our work. Lines that separate us also join us, I insist. I mean I hope, I know this is not entirely true, but in this plaid I am the background blue that looks like background but actually decides which lines can be seen, in contrast. Haunting thought: When is feminist participatory work, and its attendant ventriloquoy, actually colonialism with a sisterly smile? Shades of Judith Stacey...

Participatory action research behind bars, under surveillance, in the warm, fictional comfort of a space of women, simmering sisterhood in a scouring hell. At 10:57 a.m. on Tuesdays, some of us rush to leave; some of us panic, only to stay. In this women’s Correctional Facility, we are the research team. The ‘outsiders’ among us smuggle in grapes: now we giggle as sweet juices drip down our chins, and Cos watch – “Don’t call them guards, they’re Corrections Officers.” Some smile, others growl if they could.

Critical research among women, in a funny little collusive corner, behind bars, in prison, “interrogating” and “theorizing” college, T-tests, analyses of variance, Spanish, sex,

stories, voices, danger and pleasure, guilt and redemption. Only some of us are allowed to hold the tape recorder. Others had their cells searched last night... poetry journals smeared and confiscated. We dare not speak of our hatreds or outrage; we may go nuts, slowly or as a collective. Warm, comforting, flannel. Pillow cases smother the screams.

I am the youngest child of Rose, who is the youngest of 18 children of Rebecca. A long line of women who have seen, and across generations, have learned to be silent, hold secrets, not speak. Rebecca had no language for abuse, only the scars. Rose watched from the mask, the dream, the depression and the pleasures, of 1950's newly-minted/assimilated whiteness, heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood. Sherry and Michelle, the girl children, born to reveal the politics of the personal, stitching within multiracial coalitions of feminism and the left, scholarship, practice, passions and participatory action research. The threads of generations and struggles, voices heard and stifled, trying to tie back for Rebecca a world that she never met, for Rose, one she came to witness only through "the girls."

A pillow case covers, protects, shields and comforts. A fabric joins, as women of words and politics join, for a short weekend, to re-imagine what could be in the ashes of what is. And we remember the dead feathers within, plucked from bodies otherwise detained.

## **Budd Hall**

Dean, Faculty of Education  
University of Victoria  
Victoria, British Columbia Canada

Both of my fabric pieces are produced by methods invented and perfected by women over the years. The rectangular piece is a



batik which was produced in Sri Lanka from ancient techniques invented by women long ago and now spread around the world. The round piece is bark cloth, pounded from the bark of a tree and made in Uganda. Bark cloth was the earliest form of cloth created before weaving was common. As Africa was the home of the world's first human beings, it may well be that in addition to animal skins, this form of cloth is the oldest on earth.

The batik is in the form of the logo of the International Council for Adult Education. This design was created by Dora de Pedry Hunt, Canada's most famous medal designers. Dora was a refugee from Hungary who was forced to work doing housework when she first came to Canada. She eventually was able to recover her work as an artist and became the most celebrated artist in the design of commemorative medals in Canada.

The International Council for Adult Education provided an organizational home for the first international participatory research network which was founded in 1977 with centres in Toronto, New Delhi, Dar es Salaam Tanzania, Caracas Venezuela, Amersfoort

Netherlands and later Highlander Center in the United States of America.

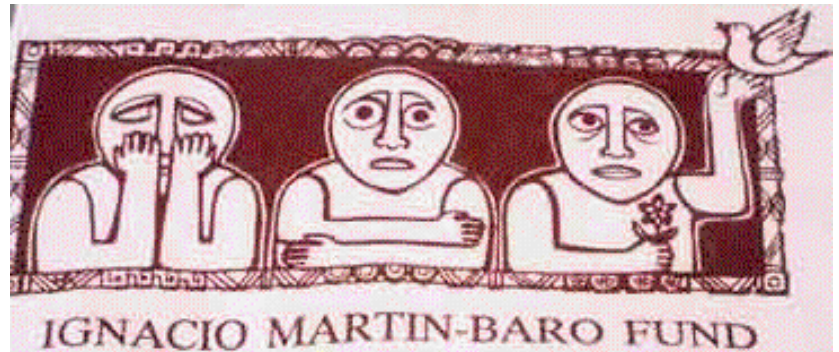
The design in the round piece is of Africa, where the term participatory research was first articulated in the early 1970s by Tanzanian and expatriate researchers who were looking for alternatives to the dominant colonial and hierarchical paradigms of the day.

## **M. Brinton Lykes**

Community/Social Psychology  
Boston College, Lynch School of  
Education, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

To introduce myself – from afar, as I was living and working in South Africa at the time of the workshop – I chose the logo for the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund

for Mental Health and Human Rights ([www.martinbarofund.org](http://www.martinbarofund.org)). The logo represents our work with survivors or “wounded healers,” whose experiences of war and state-sponsored political violence and the economic violence of globalization and structural adjustment inform alternative, community-based programs for confronting psychosocial trauma and its legacies. I was a founding participant of the fund, one of several sites for living into and out of my “multiple identities” – a “Southern belle” intellectual turned activist, and internationalist who accompanies local communities in the urban U.S.A., rural Guatemala, and, more recently, the North of Ireland, Euskadi/Spain, and South Africa.



My parents introduced me to the many worlds beyond the shelter of our upper class Southern Catholic home through postcards sent from my father’s business trips along the Eastern and Southern coasts of Africa, many parts of Europe, and then China and South Asia. The Religious of the Sacred Heart gave me an early understanding of inequality and the responsibilities that accompany privilege and 12 months in Paris in 1968 re-situated those understandings of charity and service within a Marxist political framework and a praxis of student protests forged with worker strikes. Several years of studying liberation and feminist theology at Harvard Divinity School and a study/conscious-raising group with other local Catholic women was a supportive context for naming for the first time the interstices I was living as oppressor/oppressed and culminated in my decision to join Mary Daly and other feminists in “walking out” of Memorial Church, Harvard Yard, in the early 1970s. From there I took up work coordinating the first Women’s Studies program at Harvard U. while exploring anti-racist, feminist alternatives to theological education at Grailville, a woman-run farm in rural Ohio. I live and work at what feels like a creative juncture/slippery slope between mainstream institutions and community-based alternatives seeking transformation (or revolutionary change).

Most recently that has meant engaging with local women and children in co-creating community-based participatory action research projects – work that re-presents a more “formal” systematization of the kinds of projects and programs I have developed and worked within for nearly three decades. University-based study and teaching provide a



rich base from which to “learn the jargons” of the contemporary global community of power and privilege as well as nurture my intellectual desires but the “heart of the matter” has been lived with local women and children in the majority world.

Feminist and womanist theory and praxis and PAR offer me a set of “orientations” that enable me to remain creatively engaged with these communities that I struggle to understand/stand-under: peasants in rural Guatemala confronting decades of poverty and war that followed centuries of repression of indigenous Mayan cultures; women and children on Garvaghy Road in the North of Ireland, and rural and urban South Africans transitioning from a brutal apartheid regime and challenged by the horrors of an HIV/AIDS pandemic. The arts and creativity are critical resources for forging resistance, bridging the gaps of head, heart, and soul – creating languages for crossing the many borders and boundaries created through centuries of colonial and now US aggression against peoples of the majority world. This workshop is one of those intermediary spaces for living and learning among those on similar or related journeys. Those gathered – on line and “in the flesh” –inform and energize my dance towards hope, my act of resistance and one of many witnesses to those martyred in the struggle for a more just and equitable world–Presente! Adelante!

## **Patricia Maguire**

Chair, Western New Mexico University. Gallup Graduate Center Studies  
Gallup, New Mexico

To introduce myself, I choose fabric that integrates feminist and indigenous southwest themes. This fabric symbolizes my life’s work

for the last 17 years in Gallup, New Mexico, a border town to the Navajo or Diné Nation and the Pueblo of Zuni.

You may be familiar with the image of Kokopelli, the hunchbacked flute player. Anasazi (Ancient Ones) petroglyphs and pictographs of Kokopelli are widespread throughout the Four Corners region of the southwestern USA. Considered a musician, trickster, and fertility symbol, he still figures in Hopi and Zuni legends. I love the fabric because it depicts female versions of kokopelli, playing flute and singing and dancing together in obvious celebration. Feminisms, participatory action research, and my work with Native Americans have all taught me, that despite adversity and injustices, it’s important to take time to celebrate our successes and efforts.



I first came to participatory action research in the early 1980’s while a graduate student at the Center for International Education (CIE) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I went there after working as a Peace Corps Volunteer in a very tumultuous Jamaica. CIE was well known for promoting Freirian, empowering non-formal education approaches in international development contexts. Struggling with how to make our

research and evaluation more congruent with the transformational and liberating possibilities of non-formal education, we were introduced to PAR by David Kinsey and Peter Park. Mary Brydon-Miller was being introduced to and doing participatory action research at UMASS during that same time period. That's how we first met.

My growing feminist awareness, nurtured by other women at the center, local activist work in women's groups, and feminist writings, helped me "see" the male-centeredness or androcentrism of much early PAR. I began to question, where are the women among the campesinos, the villagers, among "the people" described in the PAR case studies? Why were feminist theories omitted from discussions on the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of PAR? The PAR literature made it appear as if feminists had not questioned traditional social science nor offered alternatives. Even more mystifying, why were the well known men in the PAR world, self acclaimed activists committed to changing the world, essentially silent about this? That led me to try to develop a feminist approach to PAR while working with battered women in Gallup, New Mexico. Ever since I have been a voice, along with many of you, trying to bring together feminisms and participatory action research. How can PAR claim to be a force for justice and transformation if feminisms and women's varied experiences are ignored?

Economically northwest New Mexico is the south of the north. Our region, heavily Native American and Hispanic or Mexican American, is the only quadrant of the state without a full four-year university. I live in an economically poor, rural, culturally rich community. Most of my time since 1987 has been spent with a group of educators deeply committed to building and developing the WNMU-Gallup Graduate Studies Center. Our center is 250 miles from the main campus. We serve primarily full time teachers, administrators, and mental health professional who come from over a 100 mile radius to pursue graduate education. All of our graduate students (over 25% are Native American) work in challenging, under-resourced, multicultural contexts. More recently, we are trying to develop a center culture that supports and nurtures action research. Like the women in the fabric, we have much to celebrate. I am glad to be with all of you this weekend – as we celebrate our collective work and strategize how to move forward.

## **Susan McDonald**

The Crazy Quilt

In June 1994, I found my grandmother after she had been raped and killed by a home intruder. The process of grieving was complicated by many emotions such as anger, fear, and even guilt. In the year that followed, I was living on my own in downtown Toronto working to complete my law student training before my bar exams. For much of that time, I felt I was doing my best to not go crazy.

I had taken a quilting course the year before, always fascinated by the methodical and yet,



incredibly creative process involved in these works. In seeking some solace, I began to piece together a “crazy quilt”. I chose the predominant colour blue because I was feeling so sad most of the time, but allowed for lots of variations. The project, though modest, was never completed, but the time I spent on it did help to focus and calm me through some moments of craziness.

Years later as I was undertaking my doctoral research and conducting interviews with women, who had been abused, I had many recurring thoughts of my grandmother’s horrible death, and of my own experiences with violence. Once again, I did my best not to go crazy. I wrote a reflective piece about the experience which helped me to sort out what had been happening. That reflective piece of writing helped me to identify the gaps that exist between participatory and feminist research, which is the subject of this book.

It seems so fitting that my contribution to this quilt should be this “crazy piece”, which is truly a part of my academic and personal experiences

## **Alice McIntyre**

The piece of fabric I brought to the conference represents my identification as an Irishwoman – an identity that has significantly influenced the ways in which I engage the world. The tricolor is green, white, and orange – the green representing the Catholic population in the Republic of Ireland; the orange representing the Protestant population;



and the white representing the connection between the two. That connection is not so clear in the North of Ireland – a country deeply divided across religious and political lines.

Being a white, Irish female who was brought up in a large working-class Catholic family in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., I identify in a deeply personal way with the ongoing struggles in the North of Ireland. One way that I have been able to connect to the struggle for social justice in the North of Ireland has been to engage in feminist participatory action research with a group of working-class nationalist and republican women living in Belfast. Together, we are exploring how this group of women experience their lives having lived through a 30 year war and currently, living in and through a precarious peace.

I identify with how the women participating in the project engage their lives with a mixture of humor, alcohol, work, activism, and a “get over it – there is another fight around the corner” attitude. On the other hand, I find myself at an experiential distance from the women in many ways. My sense of place and self, of identity and positionality in the world, and the ways in which given locations have set the stage for my relationships in life, are distinctly different from the ways in which place, identity, self, and relationships mediate the lives of the women I accompany in this project – and who accompany me. Yet it is in and through the different ways in which we embrace and



resist our experiences together as we engage the PAR process that we have discovered friendship, trust, acceptance, and a willingness to co-create spaces of hope and possibility.

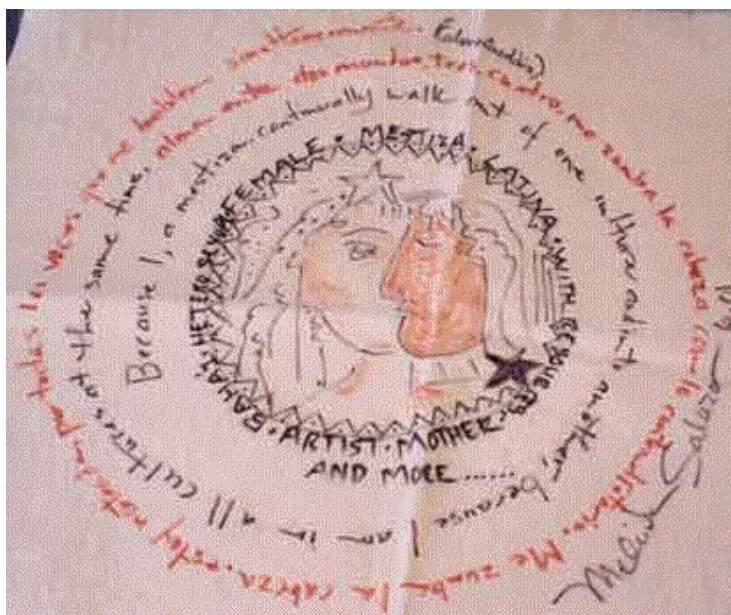
Despite the unpredictability, death, violence, and fragility that marks relationships born from survival and struggle, and despite the precarious moments of peace, conflict, loss, and structural change within the community in which I work, I have been able to maintain and sustain friendships with the women in Belfast that provide comfort, refuge, support, and validation for what I believe as an Irishwoman, as a practitioner of feminist PAR, and as an invited guest in the community in which I work.

## Melinda Salazar

Durham, New Hampshire

The words are Gloria Anzaldúa's. It was years ago and I was in a canoe, drifting among the lily pads on a pond in Maine when I read her earlier work, *Borderlands*. I began to feel, for the first time, my many and separate parts begin to coalesce. She spoke my story.

I created this fabric especially for *Traveling Companions: Feminisms and Participatory Action Research* not only to express how "I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another," but also to represent the naming of the gap between ourselves, feminist researchers, and the inquiry in which we engage. What does it mean to be in "all cultures at the same time?" For our soul to reside in many worlds?



Whether the cultural space be the words we use to describe our identities or the theoretical frameworks we use for our research, to be in all places at once, means to me, to be a woman. And, if "me zumba la cabeza" (my head spins) because I speak many languages—verbal and unspoken—cross (or mix) paradigms, and maintain multiple conversations at the same time or over time, it is because people like us dance as fast as we can; sometimes we get tired.

The woman in the center of my drawing represents the dichotomous splits in the self the modern Western world fabricates: the conscious and unconscious, the private and public, home and work, black and white, male and female. My divisions manifested in the pulls between my (Catholic) Colombian mother, my (Jewish) Ukrainian father, the Anglo community where I was raised, and the family of artists of which I am apart. As new emigrants to New York City, my mother rejected her indigenous roots and my father lost his heritage. Somewhere in all that, Spanish and English melded into

Spanglish.

Light dissipates darkness. The two stars in the drawing illuminate these women, both of whom are really parts of one whole. My wish, for myself and for the women whose stories I retell is a transformation from darkness into light, into wholeness, so that as we walk through many the cultures and step in the many worlds that the head finally stops spinning and that the soul finds its home.

I am traveling with my companions. Although I live geographically apart from the other authors in this book, I've been forced to ask many of the same questions as those presented here as I document a PAR case study with Quechua women and men in Bolivia about the influence of a gender development project. Questions lead to further questions, and like my drawing that begins and ends in a circle, the outcomes of action research are like the concentric ripples in a pond—always transforming.

## **Anmol Santiani**

Boston College

I introduce myself through this cloth. This cloth is a piece of my mother's dupatta, or veil which is worn in South Asia. A close relative, another mother and teacher of mine painted the floral design on this dupatta. My ties to my Hindu and Pakistani heritage and to my generations of mothers are exemplified through this cloth.

As a child, I saw my mother use her dupatta to cover her head, showing respect to elders, in-laws, to the gods in Hindu temples, and to the murshids or spiritual guides who had been buried in the Sufi shrines that we visited. Her dupatta would shelter her from the sun, from flies, and mosquitoes. She also used in cooking, particularly as a cheesecloth.

My mother also used it to wipe the sweat from her forehead when it was unreasonably hot and to wipe my tears when I had fallen down and hurt myself. I also saw my mother wear her this veil in a variety of ways, depending on the context or occasion. I viewed the dupatta as strong, versatile, and complicated. My mother once told me, "I want you to be as strong and flexible as this cloth." She has also tried to teach me about complexity, particularly through our discussions of her multiple identities.

I am new to Participatory Action Research. Aside from my multiple identities, experiences, and perspectives, I bring an interest in learning more about strength, flexibility, and complexity to this conference. I feel privileged to be a part of this conference and hope to continue to learn about PAR as I continue through my doctoral program in Counseling Psychology.



## **Angela Shartrand**

Boston College

This square is an upholstery sample from a Waverly factory in Adams, Massachusetts. I bought it with my mother when I was about 12 years old. My mother and I used to go to this factory early on Saturday mornings to buy scraps and bolt ends before they were discarded. Under normal circumstances, the fabric was quite expensive, so we delighted in rifling through the bins and shelves in hopes that we would find a large enough piece to make curtains or cover a chair.



This piece has been sitting in my closet, along with a collection of others, for a very long time. I've been hoping to make something with these scraps and squares, in part, because I'm attached after all these years and don't want to throw them out. The other part of this desire has to do with maintaining a connection with my past, and remembering where I came from. Engaging in domestic chores and projects is my way of maintaining some sense of continuity while I pursue a path that is strange and unfamiliar to those closest to me. It's appropriate, then, that this square will become both part of a quilt and appear on a book - perhaps it's a sign that there are ways to juxtapose (if not integrate) domestic and academic spheres.

Another reason I chose this fabric is because of the factory in which it was made. Many of my family members have worked in factories like this one, as sewing machine operators, solderers, welders, and printing press operators. Needless to say, writing and research is not something that anyone else in my family does for a living. Thus, it's a continual challenge for me to explain what I do in ways that are meaningful and relevant to those who are closest to me. This often results in a feeling alienation from both worlds, and probably is one reason that I'm uneasy with academic discourse that is exclusive and lacks practical relevance. It's also why I've always been drawn to participatory research. Finding an approach to research that invites multiple and alternative voices, addresses pressing social problems, and does so in ways that are meaningful to participants, no matter what their past experience, education, or background, is very important to me and helps me live between two otherwise disparate worlds.



## Rhoda Unger

Brandeis University

I chose the piece of fabric I brought to the conference for several reasons. It has two components: a dragon and an Escher design. Both of these elements have meaning for me. First of all, one needs to know that I collect dragons. I began to do so many years ago for a rather trivial reason. My young daughters were having a great deal of trouble finding presents for me. I suggested dragons because they were slightly difficult to find (so it would be something of a challenge for them), because they came in a great variety of forms and materials (so that they could have an opportunity to select something based on their own taste), and because they could be purchased for a little as well as a great deal of money depending on the material from which they are made. Eventually, I accumulated a substantial number of dragons because my husband, friends, and students joined in the “game.” I will not discuss the obvious problems of being known as the “dragon lady” at my university.



Dragons have, however, come to have much more meaning to me than the previous paragraph might indicate. They come in several forms—they can be wise and benevolent (most Eastern dragons are of this type) or they can be duplicitous and ferocious (more typical of dragons in Western mythology and fairy tales). Both types are often the guardians of valuable truths and must be approached cautiously. An encounter with a dragon is usually a learning experience. I will not belabor the obvious analogies to the study of gender in which one often does not know in advance what kind of a dragon is lurking in one’s study. Gender related effects are often subtle, provocative, and may have policy implications that are simultaneously positive and negative.

This latter point probably also explains my fascination with Escher drawings in which figure and ground both contain information but not at the same time. Which picture appears is dependent on the standpoint of the observer. Escher drawings illustrate clearly that there is no such thing as a reality independent of the perceiver. This is an important lesson for the discipline of psychology—which is often very positivist—to learn. It also reminds me of the large number of double binds implicit in feminist scholarship. Well intentioned actions can have negative consequences even when we try to “give power away.” This is not, however, an argument for inaction. For me, it is a only a reminder to continue to uncover and confront our dragons.

## Yoland Wadsworth

Action Research Issues Centre, Melbourne,  
Action Research Program, Institute for Social  
Research, Swinburne, University of Technology  
Victoria, Australia



The plain purple hankie\* comes to Boston.

This conference companion was already travelling when she heard about the need to bring a quilt patch. More - I was travelling largely (and intentionally) without baggage - both real and metaphoric, as this was not only three months away from home visiting participatory action research sites in the USA, UK and Sweden, but also a pretty serious genealogical journey to the sites of the ancestors and forebears in England, Scotland and Scandanavia. What could I use for this terrific idea of a travelers' quilt? What could I leave as a small illuminating introduction to myself?

I chose that fundamental item of the traveler's kit - the humble handkerchief. Mum would have approved - she always farewelled me, whether to school as a child or as a middle-aged woman returning home with "have you got a hankie?" So this indeed shows how we can always be ready for whatever we need to do!

And not just any handkerchief - I carried with me this violet-coloured\*\* hankie because I was going to a PAR/feminist research meeting. The violet colour and womens' symbol embroidered in the corner allude to the feminist thread that has drawn me here. The noting of the summer solstice and new moon fix it in time.

And fixing it in place is the map of Australia and winged seed - flying to Boston College across land and sea, to participate in our joining together for these current purposes. It is satisfying to at last greet and put faces to the names of travelling companions who have already journeyed together for a year via the web discussions.

In Australia, our particular cultural linguistic variant of English renders many nouns shortened and befriended with the end-addition of -ie or -ey. Hence breakfast becomes brekkie, biscuit - bikkie, barbeque - barbie... and handkerchief - hankie.

One of three international colours recognized by many, mostly western feminists as representing aspects of the women's movement. The English suffragettes saw violet or purple as the colour of dignity and respect (along with white for purity of purpose and green for renewed growth).

