Reflections on the Women’s March from the APC/GSWS Community

Feminist Apprenticeship

Wendy Grube,
- Practice Associate Professor
- Interim Director, Center for Global Women’s Health
- Director, Women’s Health Gender-Related Nurse Practitioner Program
- GSWS Affiliated Faculty

This was not my first protest. I was a college student in the 70’s. I cut my teeth on the Viet Nam war tragedy. What I remember most from past demonstrations was a sense of angry righteousness that compelled us to form hostile tribes hell-bent on screaming our way into recognition from authorities. The atmosphere always had the thrill of anger that you could sense from a long way off, and we were always prepared for being on the wrong end of the water hose.

The very air around The Women’s March in Philadelphia was different. It vibrated with excitement, as generations of women gathered together wearing pink hats and carrying signs that said things like “Love Trumps Hate” and “Girls just want to have fun…damental rights”. Mothers and fathers unified, with children hurrying alongside, and wheel-chair-bound elderly women cutting paths through densely packed groups. This crowd had a sensibility that could almost be describe as graceful in its own way. They moved in a kind of harmony and respect that took me by surprise. They smiled and hugged. They sang. This was not a place for violence. It was a place for voice made visible. I thought of the writing of Carol Gilligan, about how women develop a sense of
morality based on notions of responsibility and care, and a definition of self based on connection to others. That was evident in the flock of signs around me, and the little-girl legacies too young to wear the pussy hats but instead wore Hello Kitty caps that suggested feminist apprenticeship. There is always a little part of Mary Belenky’s work that simmers under my consciousness, and despite the damp chill of the day, it came steaming out of me like sweat. “Women used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined.” I understood these words in a new way walking in the middle of the crowd, marching for concepts of equality and justice for all, but especially the most vulnerable. What we witnessed that day in Philadelphia and from sister marches all over the globe was the collective identity of women joined by those who are woven into their world. Together they made an awe-inspiring entity, not because of anger, but because of that fierce righteousness of love and caring.