



Building Communal Feminism: The Struggle of Women in the Venezuelan Commune

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In Venezuela, there is a reality that resonates in every neighborhood and every rural community: women are the backbone of popular organization. We occupy the vast majority of spokesperson roles within communal structures, leading political life from the grassroots. This massive participation challenges traditional gender roles, as we not only assume community care tasks, health and food, but also construction work, political mobilization, and the leadership of productive projects.

It is essential to understand what the Commune means for us. It is not just a form of territorial and political organization; it is our strategic space for self-government. It is



where we politicize everyday life, where the struggle for food, access to basic services, or the construction of housing becomes a form of action that goes beyond the walls of the home. Through communal struggle, we forge ourselves as social subjects, build our consciousness, and interrogate reality in order to transform it. The Commune is, therefore, our primary space of learning, struggle, and construction of power.

However, the protagonism we have built within the communes hides a profound and violent contradiction.

Despite being the visible face of this struggle, we continue to face double and triple workloads. Studies show that we spend an average of seven hours per day on unpaid care work, in addition to the countless hours invested in community organization and paid labor. And while we sustain life, the patriarchal system continues taking it from us: sexist violence strikes us with alarming numbers, reaching the femicide of one compañera every 55 hours [1].

We came to understand that legislative initiatives, such as the Law on Women's Right to a Life Free of Violence [2], or institutional measures, such as the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, despite being important achievements, are not enough to transform our daily reality.

For this reason, it became necessary to build our own theoretical and political reflection, born from the stairways of the barrios and the sugarcane fields, at the foot of the struggle. We needed a tool to orient our collective action from a communal feminist perspective. The objective was clear: make a qualitative leap to ensure that building the commune also reconstructs the social fabric in a way that incorporates the needs, interests, and realities of half of every community, half of every people, and half of humanity: women.

Where Does Communal Feminism Come From?

Our communal feminism is not an imported theory nor a copied dogma. It is a category in construction, born from our own history and our own needs. It is a way of thinking that reaffirms Chavismo as a process of accumulating popular forces and that situates the Commune as our political project to build a new, anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist society.

Our practical roots are deep: they are grounded in the long history of resistance of the Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala and in the *cumbes* of our Afro-descendant ancestors who fought for their freedom.



To this historic practice, we add reflection. Our feminism is nourished by the diversity of critical currents from the Global South. We engage in dialogue with Marxist feminism, which taught us that the oppression of women is essential to capitalism because our unpaid reproductive labor sustains the entire system [3].

We are also enriched by popular feminism, which teaches us not to rank oppressions. We understand that capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy form a single web of domination. For that reason, we incorporate feminism into our strategy and demand that all social movements assume this struggle as their own, under the banner: Without feminism, there is no socialism!

This is why we fight within mixed-gender organizations. In our Foundational Congress of 2022, we waged an ideological battle that made it possible to understand that communal feminism does not divide the struggles of the people; it deepens them.

We also draw from Popular Peasant Feminism, inspired by our compañeras in La Vía Campesina. This perspective connects us to the concrete living conditions of rural women and to the importance of producing healthy foods through agroecology to guarantee food sovereignty.

It has also allowed us to make visible the knowledge women possess through their relationship with the land, such as the safeguarding of native seeds and the use of medicinal plants. These knowledges have been fundamental in defending the people's health, especially in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing challenges of the healthcare system.

And fundamentally, we learn from the community feminism of our Bolivian sisters, who offer the vital notion of *body-territory*. They teach us to unite the struggle against inequality in the land-territory with the struggle against violence on our own bodies [3].

For us, the territorial question is central. The commune seeks to construct new social relations of production and reproduction, democratizing wealth and power to build self-government. It is the defense of our vital space. This is why the founding act of a commune is to define its boundaries and construct its social cartography, identifying everything that exists on that land, which will henceforth be governed by our Foundational Charter.

It is beautiful to see territorial control in the hands of the people. The women spokespeople of the communes, communal councils, and CLAPs know their territory street by street, house by house. They know the name of each inhabitant; how many pregnant women, elderly people, or single mothers there are; where people with



disabilities live; where the water sources are; and which streets still need paving. They know everything, organize everything, and love everything.



Communal spokeswomen at the inauguration of the Liceo Simón Rodríguez Educational Unit, in the Buria parish, Lara State. Source: Lana Vielma

This is why we reclaim the word “feminism”: to recognize the contributions women worldwide have made to the liberation of humanity, as well as the role we have played in the construction of the Bolivarian Revolution, and the urgent need to fight for a life free of violence for women.

Likewise, we use it to question all hierarchies, even those reproduced among women, recognizing that Western thought is incapable of understanding our realities and our utopias. We created “communal feminism” as our own category because, as our beloved compañera Moira Blanco says, echoing so many others who struggle; “we don’t want to flip the tortilla; we want to change the entire recipe.”

The Route of the Flowers: Experiences of Feminist Struggle



Communal feminism is, above all, a practice. It is a story we write through daily struggle. “The Route of the Flowers” is the name we gave to the concrete experience of building and systematizing our feminist practices in several territories of the Unión Comunera¹.

The symbolism of flowers is not decorative; it is beauty as strategy. Flowers are necessary for life, subtle yet strong, capable of blooming wherever needed. This route was born from the compañeras themselves in their own territories:

- In the Vencedores de Carorita Commune (Center-West), women have worked for years on integral health. They named their struggle the Cayenne Route, after a flower that resembles our sexual and reproductive system.
- In the 5 de Marzo Commune (Capital Region), they chose the Bromeliad, a flower that grows supported by trees or rocks, its home, as a symbol of constructing territories free from violence.
- And the sugarcane-producing women of the 5 Fortalezas de la Revolución Bolivariana Commune (East) chose the Coqueta, a flower representing resistance and the ability to multiply, just like our productive and reproductive labor.

1. Route of the Cayenas: Women’s Comprehensive Health

Historically, our sexuality has been taboo, not because of “modesty” or “morality,” but as a political project of patriarchy to control our bodies, sever our connection with ancestral knowledge, and discipline us [4].

In the Cayenne Route, we dared to politicize the personal. We created spaces to talk about our menstrual cycle, menopause, pleasure, consent, contraceptive methods, and motherhood. This route focused on recovering ancestral knowledge about medicinal plants as a concrete response to the limitations of the healthcare system. We organized activities to prevent unwanted pregnancies and cervical cancer, in coordination with health centers and feminist scientists from the Ministry of People’s Power for Science and Technology, treating debates on sexuality as a public and communal matter, not a private one.

¹ The Unión Comunera is conceived as a National Political Movement of Communes that, grounded in the principles of socialism, anti-imperialism, communal feminism, and environmentalism, advances the Bolivarian and Chavista project of the Communal State. Its central objective is to move toward the creation of a National Communal Federation and to strengthen the Communal State as a means of overcoming bourgeois social structures. The organization also seeks to consolidate the Communal Path to Bolivarian



Anaís Márquez, National Leader of the Unión Comunera, laughing during a conversation on sexual and reproductive health. Source: Rome Arrieche

2. Route of the Bromelias: Eradication of Violence

Violence against women is a painful reality that persists in our communities. We know that the phrase “dirty laundry should be washed at home” condemns us to silence and isolation.

Thus, this route focused on creating care networks and safe spaces. In the 5 de Marzo Comandante Eterno Commune, for example, we established the “Purple House.” It is not only a physical space; it is a site for awareness-raising, loving support for survivors of violence, legal and psychological guidance, and, above all, a place to be heard with love, without judgment, and with sorority. We understood that in the face of sexist violence, the most powerful response is collective organization and mutual care. Jenifer Lamus set the objective clearly during a communal feminism training course in the Capital District:



“When someone messes with a woman in the community, we should all rise up and say: ‘Hey, what you do to her, you do to all of us!’ And they should never again dare to mistreat a woman.”



The Purple House of the 5 de Marzo Comandante Eterno Commune: Conversation on violence against women on the barrio stairways. Source: Colectiva Tejiéndonos Mujeres

3. Route of the Coquetas: Feminist Economics

Marxist feminism taught us that our unpaid labor sustains capital. The Coqueta Route seeks to make visible this care work, which sustains communal life but is not recognized by the formal economy.

The struggle for economic autonomy is central. For the communal women, the principle is clear: “A commune that does not aim for the liberation of women cannot be called a commune. And a commune that is not productive cannot be called a commune.”

This is why the route supports communal productive projects led by women. A strong example is the sugarcane mill in the 5 Fortalezas Commune, where women lead the productive process, organize communal dynamics, and serve as true protagonists of their people’s liberation. We are certain that when women lead Socially Owned



Enterprises², we can ensure that surplus is directed toward policies that meet our needs [5].



Women producing adobe blocks for construction of the Communal Sugarcane Mill. 5 Fortalezas Commune of the Bolivarian Revolution. Source: own production.

At the same time, we debate the communalization of care. In this process, experiences like those of the compañeras of the El Maizal Commune, with their Maestra Isabel González School, have been fundamental. This initiative not only frees up time for mothers but also recognizes children as social subjects, providing education that challenges the patriarchal order and affirms the communal horizon of Venezuelan society. Thus, we build an economy where sustaining life is at the center.

² A Direct Communal Social Property Enterprise (EPSDC) is a productive unit owned by the organized community and managed directly by the structures of Popular Power (such as Communal Councils or Communes). Its primary objective is not individual profit but rather the production of goods or services that benefit both the workers involved and the broader community. For this reason, any financial surplus must be reinvested in social projects and community initiatives aimed at improving collective well-being.



Children at the Maestra Isabel González School learning about agroecology. Source: Lana Vielma

Building a Political Line

The experiences of the Route of the Flowers were not isolated events. Together with other key initiatives, such as the training spaces of the women’s and gender equality committees in the Andean communes, the organization of the Lilies Route by the women of the plains, and the childcare spaces (*cirandas*) promoted in political gatherings, they became the foundation that allowed us to construct a unified political strategy as the Unión Comunera. All these experiences contributed directly to the creation of the “Action Lines of Communal Feminism of the Unión Comunera.”

This was a bottom-up national construction process. Starting from the most urgent needs in each commune, we began articulating a feminist agenda from the grassroots. We held regional meetings across the country in November 2024, culminating in a large National Gathering of Communal Feminism in March 2025, where more than 1,600 women participated.



From this collective debate emerged our action lines, a fundamental tool to strengthen feminist leadership in all communal territories.

And the struggle continues. Today, the National Course on Communal Feminism is taking place. In it, 70 territorial women leaders from communes across the country will deepen their study and analysis of our realities. The strategic horizon is to channel all the strength we have accumulated in order to make a qualitative leap that guarantees the good living of women and de-patriarchalizes all territorial politics.



Poster for the call to the 1st National Gathering of Communal Feminism. Source: Utopix

Conclusion: Let Us Build and Organize Communal Feminism

Communal feminism is the practice and reflection of the women who sustain life and struggle within the communes of Venezuela. Our protagonism is a challenge still under construction. But we have shown that our participation is no longer an empty discourse,



nor is it limited to raising our hands in an assembly to follow others' directives. It has become a concrete reality, born from the learning acquired through social struggle. We have demonstrated our ability to organize, dispute, lead, struggle, and win.

From this trench, in the words of Jenifer Lamus, “we send a message to all women building communes in Venezuela and around the world: it is necessary to believe collectively! We must trust in our own capacities, value our actions, and recognize them as real power; these are the necessary ingredients to transform our local realities and project that strength nationally.”

We know that transformation will not come from “behaving well.” Transformation is born from mobilization, organization, and the constant challenging of the sexist culture that oppresses us. It is this struggle that is making a feminist politics bloom from the people.

Without feminism, there is no socialism! Commune or nothing! Let us build and organize communal feminism!

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