

Against Forgetting, Nurturing Resistance: Body Politics, Agency, and the Memory of the Women's Movement from the New Order to Reformasi

Editorial

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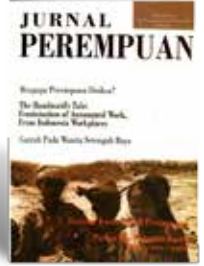
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Against Forgetting, Nurturing Resistance: Body Politics, Agency, and the Memory of the Women's Movement from the New Order to Reformasi

The New Order (1966-1998) was a pivotal era for the women's movement in Indonesia. During this period, the state centralised political and economic power and shaped normative constructions of women's roles through the ideology of state *ibuisism*. First coined by Julia Suryakusuma (1987), this term was later elaborated upon by Blackburn (2004), who described it as the New Order's gender ideology. According to this ideology, women were expected to be wives and housewives for the sake of social stability and national development. Within this framework, women were represented as companions to their husbands and caregivers to their children. This ideology was institutionalised in various policies and reinforced through organisations such as Dharma Wanita and PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment), which limit women's roles in the public and political spheres. Women's bodies were often positioned as instruments of development through initiatives such as the Family Planning programme, civil servant wives' organisations, and family role structuring. These initiatives reduced women to reproductive functions that were naturalised through the discourse of 'inherent nature' (Blackburn, 2004).

However, despite the limited space at that time, the women's movement continued to demonstrate its strength. Various organisations, including *Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan*, *Kalyanamitra*, *Solidaritas Perempuan*, LBH APIK, *Fatayat NU*, and *Flower Aceh*, continued to raise awareness of fundamental issues, such as gender-based violence, the rights of migrant workers and women migrant workers, and the right to health and bodily rights. They did this through public education, case documentation, and research, thereby strengthening women's position in society. They also built solidarity with social movement networks at national and international levels and enriched women's intellectual capacity through knowledge production. Before and after 1998, new consolidations such as the establishment of the Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI) broadened the scope of advocacy. In the late 1990s, *Jurnal Perempuan* consistently raised feminist issues and contributed to gender justice discourse through research, advocacy, and education, thereby laying the foundation for social change (Arivia in Gina, 2019).

This dynamic demonstrates that the Indonesian women's movement cannot be separated from the wider socio-political context in Asia, where gender issues are often intertwined with labour, human rights, and poverty alleviation movements. As Arivia and Subono (2018) have observed, a notable characteristic of the feminist movement in this region is that it tends to evolve from various social movements rather than a single ideological current. Although prior to the Reformation, the feminist movement in Indonesia was not organised as a cohesive, autonomous political movement, feminist work during this period paved the way for the subsequent emergence of a more open and reflective movement.

Susan Blackburn's (2004) historical analysis shows that the Indonesian women's movement since the early 20th century has been shaped by two main forces: nationalism and developmentalism. Women played an active role in the struggle for independence and the formation of the nation-state. However, women's issues, such as marriage law reform and the rejection of polygamy, were often sacrificed for the sake of a national unity project controlled by the male political elite and overshadowed by concerns about resistance from Islamic groups. Although those involved in the movement rarely used the label 'feminist', their experiences demonstrate that Indonesian women's struggles were substantive in their fight against discrimination and in their demand for gender justice. Therefore, the history of the women's movement in Indonesia is a history of continuous negotiation between demands for women's autonomy and pressure from national projects and patriarchal cultures.

The 120th issue of *Jurnal Perempuan* is titled 'Against Forgetting, Nurturing Resistance: Body Politics, Agency, and the Memory of the Women's Movement from the New Order to Reformasi'. This edition is a collective effort to document and analyse the history of the Indonesian women's movement, as well as to examine the strategies and discourses that emerged in response to limitations. All of the articles highlight the relationship between the state, women's bodies, and power; forms of resistance that emerge in repressive environments; and present structural research that traces state power and contemporary resistance strategies.

As Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner (2011) explain, autoethnography critically bridges personal experience and cultural context, transforming self-narratives into tools for socio-political analysis. By focusing on the body, emotions, and memory as sources of knowledge, this method reveals the power relations that shape everyday experiences and opens up new spaces for representations that have long been silenced. This puts the classic feminist slogan 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970) into practice: women's personal experiences are never separate from the power structures that oppress them, and, through self-writing, these experiences can be politicised into transformative knowledge. Therefore, most of the writers in this edition use an autoethnographic approach, whether individual, reflective, collective, or collaborative, as a methodological and political choice to present feminist history from the perspective of women's bodies and experiences. Conversely, several articles combine historical approaches, critical analysis, and participatory research to explore the dynamics of state power, women's organisational strategies, and the transformation of the feminist movement within a broader socio-political context.

This edition is thematically structured around three intertwining threads that, together, provide a comprehensive overview of the history of the Indonesian women's movement. Firstly, feminist genealogy and historiography, which explore the long-standing relationship between women, the state, and nationalism, including the politics of memory that shape gender constructions. Secondly, women's agency and resistance strategies in spaces of repression, documenting the individual and collective experiences of women as they negotiate spaces and confront state power during the New Order era. Thirdly, structural analysis and feminist research examine the power relations between the state and women's organisations, and the collective resistance strategies that emerged from the grassroots to the policy realm.

The first theme takes us on a journey through the long history of women's involvement in national projects and nation-building. In their article, 'The Role of Women's Organisations in the Struggle for Independence and the Struggle for Nation Building', Mia Novitasari and Ani Widayani Soetjipto highlight how women have contributed to the struggle from the colonial period to the early days of independence. However, they also show how nationalism often influences and even limits women's agendas. Many women's issues

were sacrificed for the sake of national unity, and women's representation in history is often overlooked. Meanwhile, in their article 'The Antagonisation of *Gerwani* and State Motherhood (*Ibuism*)', Aulia Rafika Husna and Anjanie Ardhana Adiyuka examine how the New Order regime exploited the antagonisation of *Gerwani* and the institutionalisation of state *ibuism* to shape collective memory and perpetuate gender hegemony. The article maps the links between political repression, the formation of gender narratives, and the framing of women's roles within the New Order's social order. The study's findings reveal how state strategies shape public memory and gender constructions within social institutions, while also highlighting various forms of community resistance amidst these efforts. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana's writing in 'Bridging the Gap between Women's Wounds and Freedom towards Policy Change' complements this theme through a political autoethnography approach. From the experiences of forced marriage, resistance to legal discrimination, to the establishment of strategic organisations such as *Solidaritas Perempuan*, *LBH APIK*, *KPI*, and *KAN*, she illustrates how women's personal experiences are closely linked to the structural struggle against the patriarchal state. This narrative shows that the history of Indonesian feminism encompasses not only organisations and movements, but also wounded and resilient bodies and life experiences that have been transformed into political strategies and institutional change.

The second theme is central to this edition, demonstrating how women, even under severe repression, find ways to negotiate space, voice injustice, and build collective strength. In 'Voicing Women's Injustice during the New Order Era', Sita Aripurnami recounts her personal experiences as an activist who was interrogated, censored, and subjected to state terror while campaigning for reproductive rights. Her experiences demonstrate how women's bodies become a political arena and how resistance often stems from deeply personal experiences. 'Women's Movement Without Labels' by Titiek Kartika Hendrastiti and Sulistyowati Irianto introduces us to the practice of subaltern feminism that grows at the grassroots level. This resistance does not always identify itself as "feminist", yet it embodies feminist values in everyday actions. The article challenges mainstream feminist historiography, which often overlooks the role of ordinary women such as farmers, fisherwomen, and traditional guardians.

Meanwhile, in 'The Encounter between Secular and Muslim Feminists', Lies Marcoes-Natsir shows how cross-base collaboration between secular and Muslim feminists has succeeded in expanding the space for advocacy and enriching feminist ideas through Islamic boarding schools, universities, and organisations such as *Fatayat NU* and *Aisyiyah Muhammadiyah*. Feminist organisational strategies for confronting patriarchal hegemony are further elaborated on in 'Women's Agencies: Three Narratives of Kalyanamitra'. Ratna Saptari, Myra Diarsi, and Ruth Indiah Rahayu demonstrate how feminist consciousness is formed through direct engagement with women's labour groups, gender training, and pro-democracy movements. This section continues with 'Reflections on the Protest of the Voice of Concerned Mothers' by Gadis Arivia, Karlina Supelli, and Wilasih Nophiana Kunta Adjie, which records the Voice of Concerned Mothers' (Suara Ibu Peduli/SIP) protests in 1998 as strategic feminist political actions. By using the symbol of "mother" and the issue of "milk", activists were able to circumvent state repression and open up broader spaces for political intervention. These actions marked an important turning point in the emergence of civil resistance prior to the collapse of the regime and demonstrated that the symbol of motherhood could function as a subversive political language. Meanwhile, in 'Between High Jump and Severe Injuries: The Early Movement for the Defence of Women Migrant Workers', Tati Krisnawaty uses an autoethnographic approach to describe the structural conditions in villages following the Green Revolution that forced women into the international labour market. Through personal and historical reflections, she illustrates how *Solidaritas Perempuan* emerged as a pioneering organisation that dismantled patriarchal and state relations within the contexts of migration, agrarianism, and the political economy of development.

The final theme focuses on structural analysis and feminist research, which together broaden our understanding of the dynamics of state power and women's resistance strategies. In 'Resisting State Violence: The Role of Local Women's NGOs', Nur Iman Subono, Gadis Arivia, Faiz Abimanyu Wiguna, and Gloria Sarah Saragih present the findings of their focus group discussion (FGD)-based research with five local women's NGOs: *Yasanti*, *Flower Aceh*, *PIKUL*, *ALDP*, and *Fokupers*. The article identifies seven characteristics of women's resistance to state repression, including camouflage strategies, underground work, grassroots bases, solidarity and networks, alternative knowledge production, participatory approaches, and multi-layered issue struggles. The study confirms that the work of women's NGOs is not only resistant but also productive in creating alternative spaces and counter-memories to the history of state violence.

The ten articles in this edition reveal one important fact: the Indonesian women's movement is not a single, homogeneous entity, but rather diverse social practices that continue to engage with power, ideology, and the contexts of their times. From domestic spaces to the streets, from Islamic boarding schools to factories, from historical archives to the production of alternative knowledge, this movement continues to forge a path amid repression and limitations. Its members are not only witnesses to history, but also its authors. Recording feminist history is therefore not just about the past, but also the present and the future. By tracing the roots of the struggle, understanding resistance strategies in the face of repression, and dismantling dominant narratives, we can formulate new strategies to confront the ever-changing forms of patriarchy, capitalism, and state power. *Jurnal Perempuan* 120 invites us to re-read history from a woman's perspective — not as an afterthought, but as the centre of the narrative of social and political change in Indonesia (Abby Gina Boang Manalu).

Abstracts

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The Role of Women's Organisations in the Struggle for Independence (Nationalist Movement) and the Struggle for Nation Building (Nationalism) in Indonesia

Manuscript Code: DDC 305

Journal of Women Vol. 30 No. 1, 2025, pp. 1–10, 14 References

In discussing the nation-state, Nira Yuval Davis provides an overview of how gender relations influence and are influenced by national projects, and how women are positioned within them. The role and struggle of women's organisations before and at the beginning of Indonesia's independence can be seen from this analysis. This paper revisits the situation of the women's movement during Indonesia's independence. Does nationalism as an ideology domesticate or liberate women? Did the agenda of women's organisations during that period run parallel to the nationalist agenda, or did it merge with the priority agenda of achieving independence? This paper finds that gender influences and is influenced by Indonesia's national and nationalist projects through a discussion of various women's organisations that existed at that time. This includes efforts to suppress and silence progressive and critical women's movements of the time, including *Gerwani*, to prevent them from disrupting the political power structures of the era.

Keywords: women's organisations, independence struggle, Indonesian nationalism, *Gerwani*

Aulia Rafika Husna & Anjanie Ardhana Adiyuka

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The Antagonisation of *Gerwani* and State *Ibuism*: The New Order's Strategy of Shaping Collective Memory and Gender Hegemony

Manuscript Code: DDC 305

Jurnal Perempuan Vol. 30 No. 1, 2025, pp. 11–21, 22 References

This paper explores how the New Order regime used the antagonisation of *Gerwani* and the institutionalisation of state *ibuism* as ideological strategies to shape collective memory and maintain the hegemony of gender power. *Gerwani*, as a symbol of the progressive women's movement, was erased from history through narratives of moral depravity and political threat. At the same time, the concept of state *ibuism* is institutionalised through organisations, such as *Dharma Wanita* and *PKK*, with its inherent doctrine of subordination. This paper uses the process tracing method to examine the relationship among political repression, the formation of gender narratives, and the framing of women's roles within the New Order's social order. The results of the analysis show that the strategy was not only successful in suppressing critical women's movements but also in creating gender constructions in social memory and institutional structures in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Gerwani*, state *ibuism*, women's organisations

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Bridging the Gap between Women's Wounds and Freedom towards Policy Change

Manuscript Code: DDC 305

Jurnal Perempuan Vol. 30 No. 1, 2025, pp. 23–36, 1 List of figures, 33 References

This article charts my journey of becoming a human and women's rights activist through an autoethnographic lens, situating my personal experiences within broader political struggles. Using autoethnography, I weave my life narrative with cultural critique to highlight how individual experiences are entangled with social structures. I consistently opposed the militaristic regime of the New Order and the patriarchal legal system and kept fighting for women's empowerment. Traumas from my youth, when I helplessly watched some of my friends being trapped in forced and abusive marriage practices, motivated me to study law. In this sense, my story affirms the feminist principle that the personal is political: intimate experiences of violence and injustice became the ground for political resistance and legal activism. After graduation, I worked in the fields of human and women's rights and co-founded several organisations, including Solidaritas Perempuan, APIK, and KPI. I also participated in two major tribunals: the Tokyo Women's Tribunal in 2000 and the IPT in 1965. Both within parliament and outside it, I drafted and fought for several laws defending women's rights, including the Domestic Violence Law. Through collaboration with feminist bureaucrats and academics, I found that personal stories of trauma, when connected to collective feminist knowledge, could transform the social and legal system and contribute to gender, social, and ecological justice.

Keywords: autoethnography, activism, women's rights, forced and child marriage, feminism, people's tribunal, legal reform, and policy change

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Understanding, Voicing, and Addressing Women's Issues in a Limited Space during the New Order Era Pre-1998 Reformation

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This article explains the experience of voicing women's injustices in Indonesia during the New Order before the 1998 Reformation. It begins with the chronology of the author's encounter with women's issues and feminist perspective. The State challenged these efforts during the New Order. The State challenged those in several forms, such as interrogation, terror, and threats. This article analyses women's struggles using Walby's concept of patriarchy and Young's politics of differentiation. It also explains why the failure to fulfil one form of injustice for women, namely reproductive rights in the family planning program in Indonesia, became a point of contention between women's issue activists and the State. Even though they faced challenges from the State, as long as the sense of injustice remains real, women activists will continue to work to overcome the problem.

Keywords: feminism, women's reproductive rights, New Order in Indonesia, patriarchy, politics of differentiation

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**Unlabelled Women's Movements: Finding the Subaltern
Feminism of Pre-Reformation Indonesia**

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This article revisits the struggles of grassroots women during Indonesia's New Order regime to highlight forms of feminist agency that were never formally labelled as "feminist". Building on long-term fieldwork and reflections with rural women's communities, it challenges elite-centred feminist historiography that privileges urban, middle-class, donor-supported organisations. Instead, it foregrounds the lived practices of subaltern women - defending communal land, sustaining livelihoods, and navigating the state ideology of state *ibuis*m through everyday strategies of survival and resistance. These often silent yet powerful acts demonstrate that feminism in Indonesia has always been broader than its official archives. By recovering and centring their narratives, this article offers a feminist historiography that is more inclusive, decolonial, and rooted in local agency - recognising "unlabelled feminisms" as foundational to both past struggles and future movements.

Keywords: subaltern feminism, Indonesia, New Order, feminist historiography, decolonial feminist analysis

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**Reading at the Terras of Pesantren: The Encounter between
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This article reflects my involvement in Indonesia's Islamic feminist movement through gender training activities in *pesantren* and a re-evaluation of classical texts from a feminist perspective. In these ways, the concept of gender and key elements of equality and justice, such as women's reproductive rights and political rights, can be widely accepted by the Muslim community. In Egypt, the feminist movement, according to Saba Mahmood, has failed to understand the agency of the fundamentalist women's movement. But in Indonesia, active collaboration has occurred between secular and Muslim feminists. They opposed the discourse of identity politics and the patriarchal political ideology legitimised by the New Order regime. They built concepts and collective action through *pesantren*, Islamic universities, and the networks of two Islamic women's organisations, *Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Aisyiyah Muhammadiyah*. The convergence of these two streams of feminism is a key strength and essential feature of the Islamic feminist movement in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Kitab kuning*, feminist Muslim, political identity

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**Women's Agencies Addressing Gender Inequality at
Various Levels: Three Narratives of Kalyanamitra**

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Jurnal Perempuan Vol. 30 No. 1, 2025, pp. 63–75, 14 References

This article presents narratives from three members of Kalyanamitra about their strategies against sexual and class inequalities in the context of the New Order regime. These personal narratives illustrate individual strategies and subjectivities in the effort to combat the state's patriarchal hegemony, organisationally. Ratna Saptari's narrative shows her involvement with women workers' groups, which became the background for the formation of Kalyanamitra; Myra Diarsi's narrative illustrates the development of critical gender thinking within the existing power structures through gender training; while Ruth Indiah Rahayu's story provides an overview of Kalyanamitra's struggles in the Pro-Democracy social movement, through gender training and other social activities. These three narratives depict the interconnection between individual agency within a feminist organization and the existing authoritarian political context based on different social spaces and temporalities.

Keywords: subjectivity, patriarchal hegemony, sexual inequality

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**Reflections on the Protest of the Voice of Concerned
Mothers: The Struggle of Women Activists to Achieve
Reformasi and Resist the New Order**

Manuscript Code: DDC 305

Jurnal Perempuan Vol. 30 No. 1, 2025, pp. 77–87, 1 List of figures, 2 Lists of tables, 13 References

The demonstration by the Voice of Concerned Mothers (SIP) on February 23, 1998, is often reduced in the public narrative to a spontaneous action by "housewives" demanding affordable milk prices. However, these narratives obscure the political complexity, strategy, and courage of the feminist activists who initiated the action amid the New Order's repression. The history of the SIP demonstrations is not just a story about rising milk prices, but an organized effort to "break the silence," create space for political intervention amid the economic crisis, and reject the authoritarian Soeharto regime. The authors agree that the SIP action of February 23, 1998, was the first openly feminist political action to be carried out to overthrow Soeharto. The strategy of using the symbol "mother" and the "milk" issue is not a coincidence, but rather a clever camouflage to protect the movement from subversive accusations and to build a bridge of empathy with society. This paper traces the history through a collaborative autoethnographic approach, utilizing the personal experiences and narratives of the SIP demonstrators who were arrested as the primary data. This study examines the layers of strategy, emotion, and dynamics that shape the collective meaning of the SIP movement.

Keywords: demonstration of the voice of concerned mothers, feminist activism, collaborative autoethnography, milk politics, New Order

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**Between High Jump and Severe Injuries: A Lesson from
the Early Solidaritas Perempuan Movement for Women
Migrant Workers**

Manuscript Code: DDC 305

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The situation of female migrant workers from Indonesia is closely linked to the conditions in their home villages. The green revolution initially established Indonesia as a nation capable of ensuring food security

for its population, but this status lasted only five years. Subsequently, the agricultural land could no longer sustain the farmers' livelihoods. For women in rural areas, finding employment overseas has become a necessity. There are almost no alternatives. Sadly, the nation perceives migrant workers merely as sources of foreign currency, and their susceptibility to the challenges of working abroad is not met with an adequate protective framework. Consequently, many fall victim to extortion and violence, resulting in serious injuries. *Solidaritas Perempuan* is the pioneering organisation focused on advocating for female migrant workers through a feminist and human rights lens, specifically by challenging the patriarchal gender system and holding the state accountable for ensuring the human rights of its citizens. This article employs a feminist autoethnographic approach to trace these dynamics through lived experience and activist engagement. By situating personal reflections alongside structural analysis, the study reveals how state policies, patriarchal systems, and the global labour market reshape women's intimate lives in rural communities.

Keywords: migrant workers, green revolution, livelihood of farmers, *Solidaritas Perempuan*

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Resisting State Violence: The Role of Local Women's NGOs during the New Order Era

Manuscript Code: DDC 305

Jurnal Perempuan Vol. 30 No. 1, 2025, pp. 101–114, 1 List of figures, 1 List of tables, 30 References

Using a feminist methodological approach and focused group discussions (FGDs) with five local women's NGOs from *Yasanti*, *Flower Aceh*, *PIKUL*, *ALDP*, and *Fokupers*, this study explores seven characteristics of local women's NGOs in their resistance to authoritarian and militaristic state repression. The characteristics are: camouflage strategies, clandestine work, grassroots bases, solidarity and networks, alternative knowledge production, participatory approaches, and multilayered issue struggles. Empathy-based activism serves as a political force for local women's NGOs to underpin the fight for gender justice. The theoretical framework of postcolonial and decolonial feminism is employed to analyse how the state constructs women's bodies as objects of power. The research confirms that women's NGOs' work is not only resistive but also productive, creating alternative spaces and building a counter-memory to the country's history of violence and impunity. The findings enrich the discourse on justice in Indonesia that sustaining democracy depends on recognising the experiences and efforts of women's NGOs, which are often overlooked or erased from history.

Keywords: state violence, women's bodies, local women's NGOs, decolonial feminism, transitional justice

AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Jurnal Perempuan (JP) is a quarterly interdisciplinary publication in the English language that aims to circulate **original ideas in gender studies**. JP invites critical reflection on the theory and practice of feminism in the social, political, and economic context of Indonesian society. We are committed to exploring gender in its multiple forms and interrelationships.

The journal encourages practical, theoretically sound, and (when relevant) empirically rigorous manuscripts that address real-world implications of the gender gap in Indonesian contexts. Topics related to feminism can include (but are not limited to): sexuality, queer, trafficking, ecology, public policy, sustainability and environment, human and labor rights/ issues, governance, accountability and transparency, globalization, as well as ethics, and specific issues related to gender study, such as diversity, poverty, and education.

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