
MANIFESTO ON THE UNSPOKEN VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN LIVING IN POVERTY

Achocalla, May 7, 2023

The violence experienced by women living in poverty is not given visibility or acknowledged by society which believes that all women experience the same violence.

Working together in a participatory process, using the Merging Knowledge methodology, 10 women with lived experience of poverty (ATD Fourth World activists), six domestic workers, six academics and seven professionals/experts, reflected together on these acts of violence, putting the knowledge of the experience of the women living in poverty first and combining it with the knowledge from academia and activism.

WE BELIEVE:

The worst form of violence is to live in poverty. Women living in poverty and extreme poverty have nothing and survive by desperately seeking opportunities in order to live in dignity.

The violence experienced by women in poverty traumatises them, turns them into people that they are not which leads them to abandon and dislike themselves. Violence and poverty lower their self-esteem, fear leaves them without a voice and they have no energy to go on and keep fighting.

Women and girls living in poverty are subject and condemned to carer roles. From a young age, they are forced to be responsible for looking after their younger siblings and grandparents and to prepare meals. Poverty forces them to work from a very young age. Often they even have to live alone, far away from their families and exposed to many dangers.

Women living in poverty are forced to accept any kind of work to survive. They do not have the freedom to choose their source of income. They must endure exploitation, assault, scams, low pay and unfair dismissal due to employers who take advantage of their precarious situation.

Women living in poverty often perform housework due to their lack of education, coming from a rural area or not knowing how to speak Spanish well. This makes them more vulnerable to violence and abuse. In domestic work, employers often severely abuse women verbally, physically, sexually, psychologically and through their work by not paying them the minimum wage, not respecting working hours, isolation and dismissal without welfare benefits.



For the most part, women living in poverty do not have access to justice. Ombudsmen, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Municipal Integral Legal Services (SLIM), which are the main institutions that should look after women's welfare and uphold their rights, make them travel extensively and mistreat them. Women are not attended to or are poorly attended to, they are discriminated against, the authorities lose their documents, they unduly charge women and they are made to wait for a long time. Justice is only for those with money.

The reproductive rights of women living in poverty are violated. They are not free to choose when to have children and how many children to have. They are often forced to have children. They often experience marital violence. They cannot make decisions about their bodies. They are forced to continue with a pregnancy even when it is a product of rape. Women living in poverty with many children find it even more difficult to improve their situation.

Women living in poverty experience cultural and misogynistic violence. They are taught that men have more rights and privileges. They are made to believe that they do not need to study or learn a trade. Without an education or a trade, women living in poverty find it difficult to progress. They are mostly condemned to poverty.

From birth, women living in poverty are told that they must tolerate mistreatment, abuse and violence. Although they disagree, poverty leaves them without other options. The horror of violence leaves them without a voice and unable to defend themselves.

All forms of violence are taught through a capitalist, individualistic, patriarchal and misogynistic system. We must urgently devise and build another way of living in which women in poverty are valued in all spaces without exception and are guaranteed freedom, autonomy and well-being.

The rights of women living in poverty must no longer be violated. It is our collective responsibility to break the silence, and fight against the humiliation, discrimination, and injustice faced by women in poverty.

We demand that the violence experienced by women living in poverty also be taken into account in all the places and spaces where violence against women is discussed so that it can be eradicated.

We will continue to speak out!

We will continue to demand dignity!