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Introduction to the Second Special Issue of the World Conference on Women's Studies, Colombo Sri Lanka JIWS

By Madhavi Venkatesan¹ and Diana Fox², Editors

We are pleased to present to you the second installment of the special issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies*, a follow up to Vol 19, No. 3, of the selected papers from the third iteration of the World Conference on Women's Studies (WCWS). The conference was co-organized by the editors of this volume in partnership with The International Institute of Knowledge Management (TIKM), and Bridgewater State University, as the sponsoring university. The conference took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka in May of 2017. The Conference, like the selected papers represents a range of topics related to Women's Studies and feminist thought, and this diversity is also mimicked in the geographies represented. Patricia Mohammed's opening piece about the challenge for feminism in addressing differences among women while simultaneously seeking to build coalitions across differences, frames the issue. Subsequent articles offer insights into women's positionalities across multiple geopolitical, gendered, ethnic, religious, occupational, ecological, literary, and reproductive spaces, challenging readers to seek out potential points of intersection without eradicating, or glossing over important differences.

In addition, this issue represents the second special issue of the JIWS coming out of the WCWS. The papers included increase awareness of issues faced by women across and within nations, emphasizing both local and transnational struggles and achievements. They also help to fulfill the mission of the JIWS, which is to provide a platform for the publication of articles by women largely, but not exclusively, from the global south, to highlight the range of feminist discourses, promoting conversations across the power divides of the publishing industry.

¹ Madhavi Venkatesan is a faculty member in the Department of Economics at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Her present academic interests focus on sustainable economic development and the role of women in fostering sustainability. She serves as the Executive Director of Sustainable Practices, a 501(c)3 non-profit she founded in 2016. Sustainable Practices is focused on increasing financial and economic literacy to facilitate sustainability. Madhavi earned a PhD in Economics from Vanderbilt University, a Masters in Environmental Management from Harvard University, and a Masters in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School. She is the author of numerous peer reviewed articles and book chapters on the subject of sustainability and economics as well as the texts *Economic Principles: A Primer*, *A Framework for Sustainable Practices*, *Foundations in Microeconomics*, *A Framework for Sustainable Practices* and *Foundations in Macroeconomics*, *A Framework for Sustainable Practices*.

² Diana Fox, Professor and Chair of the Anthropology Department at Bridgewater State University, is a cultural and applied anthropologist, scholar-activist, and documentary film producer. Her work focuses on the Anglophone Caribbean, particularly Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago where she researches issues of gender and sexual diversity, women's social movement activism for ecological sustainability, women's human rights and transnational feminisms and activism. She serves on a number of boards and committees including the Sexualities Working Group of the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA), the international advisory board of the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP) in Trinidad and Tobago, and is the Founder and Editor of the open access, online *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Dr. Fox is the executive producer of two documentary films, *Earth, Water, Woman: Community and Sustainability in Trinidad and Tobago* and *Many Loves One Heart: Stories of Resilience and Courage* about the LGBTQ movement in Jamaica. She is the recipient of three Fulbright awards and many other grants and has published a number of books and articles.

With the release of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016, there has been an increased visibility of the role and significance of women in fostering sustainability. Though SDG 5 specifically addresses gender in its mandate for gender equality, women and gender differentials are addressed as attributions of other goals including SDG 1, no poverty; SDG 3, good health and well-being; SDG 4, quality education; SDG 8, decent work and economic growth; SDG 10, reduced inequality, and SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities. With 12 years remaining to attain the aggressive targets set, fostering greater understanding of the present role of women, the obstacles they face, and the policies they are forging to promote equality.