



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Department of Humanities



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Archiving women's history in the Global South

8-9-10 March 2027, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy.

Call for papers

The WO-NAM research project, based at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and funded by the European Research Council, is dedicated to the history of women's activism in Non-Aligned countries during the Cold War.

Using different sources (archival documents, biographies, interviews and memoirs), the project wants to counter Cold and Post-Cold War narratives on global socialist feminism and left-feminist international networks, building an alternative archive on different generations of women activists, from state feminism to second wave feminism (De Haan 2010; Ghodsee 2019; Bonfiglioli and Ghodsee 2020; Bonfiglioli and Fidelis 2025). Apart from Yugoslavia, located in South-east Europe, the other case studies of the WO-NAM project are located in the Global South (Cuba, Egypt, India, and Tunisia).

We invite submissions for an international conference on women's and gender history, dedicated to examining, locating, and interpreting women's activism through the archives of the Global South in the twentieth century. Archives are shaped by power, access, and historical silences. While women have been globally marginalized in archival records, in the Global South they often experience a double marginalization, for a variety of reasons, within the continually challenged processes of memory-making and preservation (Mohanty 2007; Crozier-De Rosa 2026; De Araujo and Roy 2023; Shrivastava 2016). Censorship presents an additional challenge, one that does not necessarily involve the physical removal of material, but rather the historical and political power dynamics that shape what is preserved, how it is accessed, and how it is ultimately contextualized. The process of knowledge production entailed in archive-making determines what

counts as knowledge, and what is dismissed or distorted (Stoler 2009; Freeland and Hodenberg 2024). The biographies of many left-wing activists in the Global South are shaped by the failure of post-colonial socialist projects, authoritarian coup d'états and state repression (De Haan 2023).

What is present, what is absent, and what is made absent are central questions that women's archives pose to researchers, particularly within contexts of colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, authoritarianism, and patriarchal exploitation. What epistemologies can we mobilize to unravel the body politics of memory production and to destabilize the hegemonic function of archives (Fonseca Santos, Hernández Rivas and Mitjans Alayón 2023)? More concretely, we also ask whether and how "archives strike back," exploring the ways in which grassroots women's archives founded after the second wave resist such marginalization. Have physical archives been subject to scrutiny, transformation, or revision in relation to previously under- or misrepresented women activists over time? What role has oral history played in addressing archival injustice? More broadly, how might gendered absence or presence be understood in postcolonial archives? Has the digital sphere created alternative sites of memory-making at the local and transnational level? (Crozier-De Rosa 2026). Ethical and practical challenges are also central to these inquiries, particularly in relation to institutional power structures that shape archival legacies, as well as their "gender troubles" (Butler 1990).

This conference seeks to foreground the diverse ways in which women's histories are documented, contested, and reimagined in regions and languages historically underrepresented in

dominant archival narratives, with a specific focus on the Global South in the twentieth century. A selection of papers will be collected in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal, edited by the WO-NAM team. Conference participants are asked to submit a draft of their papers before the conference.

We welcome contributions on (but not limited to) the following themes:

- Finding women's history in state archives
- Herstories of women's and feminist grassroots archives
- Archives of women's anti-colonial struggles
- Archives of transnationalism and cross-border solidarity
- Cold War polarizations and their impact on archiving
- Archiving women's left feminism in the Global South
- Women's archives under authoritarianism
- Archival silences, fragmented histories and censorship
- Archives of feminist campaigns (health, education, labor)
- Oral histories, storytelling and generations
- Feminist archival practices, methodologies, and epistemologies
- Decolonial, postcolonial and intersectional knowledge production
- Emotions and affective responses to the archive
- Digital humanities, digitization, and access in resource-constrained contexts in contemporary times

We strongly encourage submissions from early-career researchers and independent scholars, particularly those based in the Global South. We especially welcome contributions from/on countries affiliated to the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. We are committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible space for dialogue. Limited funding is available to cover travel expenses and accommodation for scholars without institutional support or limited funds. The conference will take place in presence in Venice, Italy. An online panel might also be set up, depending on the number of requests for online participation.

Please submit:

- An abstract of 500 words (specifying connections with one or two of the chosen themes above)
- A short bio (200 words max)

Apply through Google Form here:

<https://forms.gle/ZRZQxG6QMkoi7U8E7>

Important dates:

- Submission deadline: **31.7.2026**
- Notification of acceptance: **30.9.2026**
- Circulation of preliminary papers: **15.2.2027**

Organizing Committee:

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Project Website:

www.unive.it/wo-nam