ANNUAL REPORT
WOMEN SPACE ACTIVITIES IN 2012

ANTIFASCIST PROGRAM

Within this program we organize and participate in street actions as members of Antifascist Collective Niš and also we organized Antifascist Studies pilot course this year. Course started in February and continued throughout 2012 consisting of series of lectures, film projections and other activities thus building upon our previous work regarding antifascist program.

Antifascist Studies Pilot Course 2012

This alternative educational program offers possibilities for participants living and working on the territory of south Serbia to hear and be informed about antifascist heritage and values cherished in our city, country but also globally. Throughout this activity we try and support space for nourishing critical opinion, promoting diversity and combating discrimination while at the same time resisting radically right oriented retrograde ideologies and growing fascisation of the society. Lack of timely and strong reaction against nationalism, xenophobia, racism, homophobia, sexism and other elements of extremism represents responsibility for all of us. It seems that today in Serbia there is a great degree of tolerance towards hate speech, violence, hooliganism, threats and there little if any society segments liberated from these.

Lectures and film projections organized within Antifascist Studies course:
abolishing patriarchy and creation of a just and equal society

we are an activism driven organization empowering women from marginalized social groups and change our environment with a goal to create a just and equal society

• Forgotten history: Antifascists heritage of our city, Ana Jovanović and Marko Stefanović, historians;
• Antifascist Women Front 1942-1953; mass women organization experience: Vojvodina example, professor Gordana Stojaković PhD.;
• Contemporary Antifascist movement in ex Yugoslavia, discussion facilitated by Dario Milenković, sociologist and activist;
• The Wrong Word – war retribution to Roma and Sinti in Germany, introductory lecture by Rena Raedle;
• Fascism and history revisionism in Serbia today, professor Olivera Milosavljević PhD.;
• Crisis and fascism – ideology and characteristics, professor Đokica Jovanović PhD.;
• Film projection “Sophie Scholl – Last Days” with a following discussion.

Antifascist Collective Activities

Women Space is a member of Antifascist Collective Niš which is comprised of activists from civil society organizations: Human Rights Board, Center for Local Democracy, Center for Civil Resources Development and Center for Girls.

During 2012 we have commemorated important antifascist dates together:

• International Day against Racism – March 21st: Women Space organized a street performance “All That I Am”. This performance deals with different identities of Roma people and problems they face within the official institutions in our country. One of the previous performances can be seen at http://vimeo.com/43659797
• International Day against Fascism – November 9th: We organized an action week in our city with several activities: round table within the City Hall where forced Roma resettlements and evictions from Belgrade were discussed, growing hate speech, discrimination and way we can address these; street action where we distributed materials containing anti fascist and antiracist messages; youth workshop entitled “Human rights and tolerance”.

Month of Roma Women Activism - Campaign

This activity represents one of the key Women Space annual events where we mobilize entire Roma Women Network of Serbia with a goal to direct public attention to Roma women position within our society, but also to activism of Roma women organizations and informal groups in our country.

During 2012 we organized “Month of Roma Women Activism” for the third time during the period March 8th – International Women Day through April 8th – International Day of Roma men and women.
Annual campaign gathers great many activists in numerous activities while being supported by women organizations, art groups and many individuals. We have also received governmental support through organization, now traditional, meetings within the Serbian Parliament.

This year “Month of Roma Women Activism” was presented within 29 localities (Aleksinac, Babušnica, Beočin, Belgrade, Bela Palanka, Bujanovac, Dimitrovgrad, Kruševac, Lazarevac, Leskovac, Ljubovija, Niš, Novi Bečej, Novi Sad, Odžaci, Pančevo, Pirot, Prokuplje, Ruma, Smederevska Palanka, Subotica, Šabac, Trstenik, Vlasotince, Vranje, Žabljak, Kragujevac, Žitište and Jagodina), with about twenty different activities including: projection of “Different” documentary [http://vimeo.com/43650166](http://vimeo.com/43650166), street performance “All That I Am”, March 8th street march in Belgrade, presentation and promotion of the research and its publication regarding state efforts to improve Roma women health position, two dozen discussions organized throughout Serbia regarding Roma women position.

With the total of 63 media coverage regarding this year campaign we conclude that media interest regarding this event raises and now we had, on the average, two non-stereotypical media stories about Roma women and our activism per day.

**Public Hearing in the Serbian Parliament**

We have had the honor to participate in the 37th Session of Gender Equality Board in the Serbian Parliament on April 4th. The same as last year, this session was dedicated to Roma women in its entirety and entitled “Roma women in Serbia – Roma women activism for system solutions”. Roma Women Network members presented results of our efforts to initiate local action plans for Roma women position improvement and distributed certificates to the most agile and cooperative local units: Municipality of Barajevo, Municipality of Lazarevac, Municipality of Pirot and City of Leskovac.

**INITIATING LOCAL ACTION PLANS TO IMPROVE ROMA WOMEN POSITION IN SERBIA**

Women Space continues to work on initiating system solutions for Roma women position improvement in our country through instigating LAPs in Serbia’s local units. By this time, and with the inclusion of Roma Women Network members such documents received their adoption in Pirot, Lazarevac and Leskovac; while at the same time we have a still open process in other localities we worked in: Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Pančevo, Šabac, Žitište, Novi Bečej and Bela Palanka.

**TRAINING „LGBT YOUTH – Combating stereotypes and prejudice“**

Women’s Space was a partner organization in the project supported by Serbian Ministry for human and minority rights within the program “Calendar of Human Rights” together with Lesbian Human Rights Organization – Labris from Belgrade.

We organized and delivered this training on June 16th 2012 in Niš discussing terminology relevant for LGBT community, prejudices youth may have against this community and organizing
“Living Library” of two young individuals who offered their personal stories aiming to bring closer this topic to their peers. Seminar was ended with the screening of “Assume Nothing” documentary.

Additional activity planned within this project was to display a rainbow flag onto one of the institutions in our city but we were unable to receive officials’ approval for this. We interpret this lack of cooperation as a clear indicator that LGBT activism is much needed in our city with strong sensibilisation of the decision makers regarding LGBT rights and rights to diversity.

**STRENGTHENING ROMA WOMEN NETWORK CAPACITY IN COMBATING MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION**

Another continuation of the process we avidly work on: through working with young activists, mostly students in humanities we organized training for reporting under the CEDAW and comprising an alternative (shadow) report for Serbia regarding Roma women position to the United Nations Committee scheduled now for early summer 2013.

State institutions provided support in this process through offering representatives from the Office of Ombudsman and Equality Protection Commissioner who discussed with trainees issues of discrimination and national mechanisms available in preventing it.

Direct result of this training is a group of ten young women collecting cases of discrimination against Roma women that will be included within our report to the CEDAW Committee.

Several Roma Women Network organizations participate in the process of alternative CEDAW reporting, amongst which Women Space.

**FEMINIST SUMMER SCHOOL**

Another annual event organized by Women Space for the fourth time this year attracted many young women to apply and thus confirmed our belief that such activities are much needed and invaluable to empower women both individually but also provide fresh strength to the feminist movement in our country but also the region – as we had several participants from ex Yugoslav countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

With the total of fifty participants, volunteers, facilitators and organizers this was the largest school so far and we talked about: patriarchy in our lives – resistance modes, feminist approach to violence, personal stories about discrimination, history of the feminist organizing and movement, practical feminism through empowering voice and body, self-defense for women, emotional literacy. Feminist alternatives through presenting newly organized group “Amazons”, discussions regarding neo-liberal capitalism, women in new technologies and we have given a critical survey of women within different traditions and culture.

Lecturers included long term activists and academia members from Serbia, but also guest from Macedonia an activist and one of the international Roma women movement leader.
Lastly, but perhaps, most importantly, we offered opportunity for young women to network and self-organize thus empowering and providing them with information needed to take action.

**FEMINIŠ – FESTIVAL OF WOMEN ACTIVISM AND ART**

This year, Niš feminist organizations organized for the third time this festival from September 20th through 25th. As before we offered presentations of current topics regarding new publications, films, art exhibitions, fresh discussions and workshops, and a premiere of Eve Ensler’s “The Good Body” theater performance by Center for Girls activists.

FemiNiš 2012 was organized by Women Space and Centre for Girls, with the support from the local public institutions and organizations of culture.

**VAGINA MONOLOGUES**

FemiNiš Festival was supplemented by an extra activity – reading performance of Vagina Monologues with the presence of Eve Ensler alongside famous Serbian actors: Ana Sofrenović and Katarine Gojković. Public Theatre was too small to accept everyone who wanted to see this event on April 5th. This was the first time author Eve Ensler visited Serbia, on her world tour promoting “One Billion Rising”, global action directed to awareness raising regarding the violence against women. Prior to the performance, Mrs. Ensler held a workshop in our city for a large group of women activists from Serbia.

**WOMEN COURT**

Women Space activists participated in this activity which was organized by Women in Black Network from Belgrade. During November and December we organized public presentations of this important activity where different topics were opened by the participating young women and men. Screening of several relating films, documentary and full feature followed this activity.

**PUBLICATIONS**

„Achieving Roma women human rights in Serbia: Analysis of existing institutional measures implementation“

Together with Tatjana Perić MA, PhD Cand., we analyzed progress regarding Roma women human rights in Serbia from the standpoint of national and local action plans relevant to Roma women implementation. Selected institutional practices, international organizations endeavors and domestic foundations and NGOs programs were presented and recommendations for further actions in this area were provided.
However, having in mind the broadness of research, lack of transparency within many institutions with the data regarding the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and additional problem of neglecting to disaggregate data by sex, this report cannot pretend to be all inclusive but more directed to illustrating some of the key trends relevant for Roma women in Serbia.

English version of this publication can be seen at:  

„Implementation of measures to improve Roma women health and health protection under the Ministry of Health open calls - experiences“

We finalized our research from 2011 done in a broader territory of Serbia regarding projects Ministry of Health implemented through its local institutions and funds received on account of Decade for Roma Inclusion. Research and analysis was done within the total of 17 localities (Kruševac, Trstenik, Vrnjačka Banja, Niš, Doljevac, Surdulica, Zemun, Lazarevac, Zrenjanin, Smederevska Palanka and Velika Plana). 22 Roma NGOs and 96 end beneficiaries participated in our research covering the total of 33 projects, out of which 11 solely directed to women. Moreover, we interviewed health institutions’ representatives in charge of these projects, the total of seven health institutions accepted to share their experiences on the implementation of these projects with us.

This research provided data relevant to the efficiency of measures and activities of Roma organizations who partnered with Ministry of Health projects to improve Roma community health position, female beneficiaries and health system institutions which provided coordination to these projects.

Publication is available in Serbian language at:  

WOMEN SPACE PROGRAM WAS SUPPORTED DURING 2012 IN SOLIDARITY BY:

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