

Editorial

1 In light of recent political developments on a global scale a thematic focus on women and power proves to be disturbingly topical. The massive backlash against gender equality and diversity, particularly in the United States and in Europe with a long history of women's movements, threatens to undo the achievements of past decades with regard to human rights for all.

2 Instead of Hillary Clinton's election as successor to Barack Obama as the first female after the first African American president in the U.S., Donald Trump, a declared opponent of past endeavors towards a more open and inclusive society as well as a livable planetary future carried the day. Hailed by European right-wing movements with a similar reactionary agenda, the new president's inauguration speech and his first days in office evoke frightening expectations, but have also provoked an impressive counter-movement signaled by the Women's March one day after the inauguration on a national and international level.

3 To address these current political, social and cultural developments from different disciplines we invite contributions to be published independently from the planned gender forum issues.

4 This gender forum issue assembles a number of essays on women in power from different angles: The contributions of Leah Hutton Blumenfeld and Yuwei Ge focus on the role of women and the notion of the family in American politics past and present, probing into the gendered relation between the public and the private spheres. This resonates with Anneke Ribberink's essay on the biographies of two outstanding Scandinavian feminist politicians, faced with the question of balancing career and family within a still patriarchal social framework. Marta Kelleher complements the focus on power in the political arena with her analysis of the gender bias in the public media response to transgender punk woman Laura Jane Grace.

5 **Leah Hutton Blumenfeld** traces the concept of republican womanhood as wife and mother in the United States and its impact on the role of women in public and political life from its beginnings to the present day. While this concept historically served to justify a political role for women as cultivators of republican values within the family, the persistence of this concept today testifies to the ongoing limitations of professional women in the political arena. Blumenfeld's historical analysis of the importance of the concept of family and its gendered role patterns can explain the gendered implications of contemporary American (party) politics, as her references to politicians from Hillary Clinton to Sarah Palin show.

6 The impact of the gendered distinction between the public and private spheres on contemporary women in politics is taken up, albeit differently, in **Yuwei Ge's** essay on Hillary Clinton's autobiography *Living History*. Foregrounding the foundation of Clinton's feminist politics in the notion of the Private as the Political, Yuwei Ge links Clinton's deliberate use of gendered metaphors to indicators of a specific alternative leadership style. Counteracting critical feminist engagements with Clinton's life, Yuwei Ge reads her autobiography as an example of and inspiration for women's empowerment on a global scale.

7 The exploration of the private and the public spheres in the European context is the subject of **Anneke Ribberink's** essay on the lives of two Scandinavian Feminist Politicians before and after the Second Women's Movement, the Swedish representative and cabinet minister Alva Myrdal (1966-73) and the first Norwegian woman Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1981, 1986-9, 1990-6). Ribberink analyses the difficulties in working towards a gender-equal work-life balance as a political goal for the benefit of the country and the realization of this goal in the life of a woman politician. Set in the second half of the twentieth century in two Scandinavian countries, arguably among the most advanced in terms of gender equality, Ribberink's article highlights the ongoing topicality of the issues at stake.

8 The persistence of and the necessary resistance to gender stereotypes recurs in **Marta Kelleher's** discussion of the media response to punk rock musician Laura Jane Grace's transition in interviews as well as in the Emmy-nominated non-scripted web-series *True Trans*. This apparent difficulty to embrace uncertainties, ambiguities, and inbetweenness discussed in Kelleher's essay, seems to be at the core of the current backlash against all forms of diversity. This testifies to the ongoing need to relentlessly resist the simplifications and exclusions implicit in seemingly clear-cut boundaries and hierarchically organized binaries on the way towards a more inclusive and diverse social fabric.

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Leah Hutton Blumenfeld, PhD, has been Assistant Professor of Political Science at Barry University in Miami, FL since 2010. She teaches courses in U.S. Government, Political Theory, and Comparative Politics, and has previously taught courses in International Relations and Women's Studies. Her research interests include the militarization of the international Drug War, U.S. – Caribbean relations, political participation, and the status of women. She received her doctorate from Florida International University, graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from Harvard University, and holds a Master's Degree in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Connecticut. Dr. Blumenfeld has presented her research at numerous academic conferences, including the Caribbean Studies Association and Florida Political Science Association. She is ex-officio past President for the latter. Dr. Blumenfeld was appointed to the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women in 2009, became chair of its legislative committee in 2012, and was elected Member-at-large of the executive committee in 2014.

Yuwei Ge is a doctoral candidate at Philipps-Universität Marburg. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on female political leadership in the United States. Yuwei received her BA degree from Xi'an International Studies University in English and American Studies and her first MA degree from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Chinese and Bilingual Studies from 2006 to 2012. She received her second MA degree from Philipps-Universität Marburg in North American Studies with her thesis focusing on American politics in television series. Her research interests include gender studies, postmodern literature, media studies, autobiography studies, American politics, and American television series.

[Anneke Ribberink](#) is affiliated to the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as a political historian. She received her PhD in 1998 with a dissertation of the early phase of the second wave of feminism in the Netherlands, '*Leidsvrouwen en zaakwaarneemsters. Een geschiedenis van de Aktiegroep Man Vrouw Maatschappij (MVM) 1968-1973* (Hilversum: Verloren). At the moment she is working on a book about five important female political leaders of the twentieth century in Western Europe - Alva Myrdal (Sweden), Marga Klompé (the Netherlands), Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom), Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) and Angela Merkel (Germany). In recent years her national and international publications and other activities dealt chiefly with Thatcher and Brundtland, and also the second wave of feminism.

Marta Kelleher, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, is an ethnomusicologist living and working in Athens, Georgia. Marta holds degrees in Music (Cello) from Ithaca College, and in Musicology from the University of Georgia. Her work explores the intersections of music and gender, specifically the ways in which transgender, and gender variant musicians make careful choices regarding voice, affect, and image to both subtly and overtly convey messages about multifaceted, and non-binary gender identities. Marta currently works as an undergraduate academic advisor in the University of Georgia's Hugh Hodgson School of Music. She hopes to begin doctoral studies this coming fall

Diego Garcia Rodriguez, born in Albacete, Spain, is a doctoral candidate in Gender and Sexuality Studies at University College London. Diego received his BA in Journalism from the University Complutense of Madrid (Spain) with two scholarships to study at the University of Tampere (Finland) and Korea University (South Korea), and his MSc in Asian Studies from Lund University (Sweden) via a semester abroad at the National University of Singapore. His work focuses on LGBT emancipation through Islamic faith in Indonesia, exploring the strategies used by LGBT Muslims to construct their identities and looking at the possibilities of an overlapping queer and religious agency in both secular and religious settings. His research interests include gender and sexuality studies, Indonesian studies, Islamic studies, Foucauldian theory, and queer theory. He is the co-founder of the project Binan Indonesia (www.binanindonesia.com) and can be contacted on diego.rodriiguez.16@ucl.ac.uk.