COFEM



Tip Sheet 3:

Leveraging Tech for Rest, Resistance, and Joy

Key Points



Joy is a form of feminist organizing and resistance.



The online spaces we build are political choices. Feminist online spaces can hold celebration and grief simultaneously, while refusing productivity culture that treats care as a distraction.



When WROs control their own storytelling – through podcasts, video, zines, and art—they resist the extractive relationship between mainstream media and the Global Majority. Telling stories for and by communities, aligned with their linguistic and cultural traditions, is an act of reclamation.



Algorithmic suppression requires collective solutions. As tech corporations systemically suppress feminist and queer contents, feminist organizers respond through community engagement and coordinated documentation of suppression.



Feminist evidence is an act of love. Community-led data collection, mapping, and visualization are acts of refusal and memorialization that insist on protecting the worth and legacy of women's lives.

Introduction: Joy as Strategy

The introduction and first two tip sheets in the *Bytes of Resistance* Feminist Pocketbook provided a background of evidence on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), explored practical ways to safeguard feminist activists from TFGBV through digital hygiene, and outlined the links between TFGBV against female public officials and democratic backsliding. While the previous pieces in the series addressed harm, policy and safety, this one reclaims technology to leverage joy, healing, and community as legitimate forms of feminist solidarity and resistance. Although TFGBV is a serious threat that warrants multi-scale and multi-stakeholder engagement, we also recognize that the somber conversations about technology can dilute the extraordinary ways in which feminists use digital tools to nurture community, resist and counter disinformation, and foster space for laughter, movement, and friendship.

Tricia Hersey, founder of the Nap Ministry, reminds us that rest as resistance "disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy." Choosing to "rest, dream, resist, and imagine," the tenets of the Nap Ministry, means "to soften into the powerful proposal of thriving right now. Of not waiting for permission from a toxic culture that blocks justice and moves from a spiritually deficient place."[1]

What would it mean for your organization to measure success beyond reach, policy wins, or service provision, but also by how much joy and genuine connection your work produces? In between mindless scrolling, work meetings, and the relentless avalanche of stories on war, displacement, ecological destruction, and authoritarianism, feminist activists have the power to repurpose technology beyond its violent and extractive impact, to realize its revolutionary potential.

What follows is a variety of ways that feminists are innovating work across different tools and platforms. We begin with the online spaces we are building, move into how we tell the stories about and within these spaces, and finally, suggest ways for protecting and asserting our visibility. Each section includes a mini toolbox, prioritizing free and low-cost services that can help inform the work of feminist activists. We hope that Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) can use this tip sheet to make room for rest, connection, and imagination in their work to liberate women and gender diverse people from online violence.



[1] Hersey, Tricia. *Rest is resistance: A manifesto*. Hachette UK, 2022. 82

Cultivating Restful, Joyful, and Defiant Online Solidarity Spaces

What is the difference between a digital platform and an online space? Digital platforms are infrastructures owned by corporations, while spaces comprise the relationships shared among a community or communities. Feminist online spaces are defined by the values, care, and accessibility they choose to incorporate.

Some strategies for building meaningful spaces include:

Integrate care, grief, and acknowledgement

As mentioned, rest is a political practice. Dedicating intentional time to ground the space, such as through yoga, somatic practices, or even a collective acknowledgement of our environment can help set the tone for the time together. As activists working to end VAWG, this can also mean making space for mourning or grief,[2] including marking difficult anniversaries or recent witnesses to experiences of violence. In each of COFEM's Learning & Dialogue sessions, we ensure that a skilled self/collective care facilitator opens and closes the session with a self and collective care practice with which participants can choose to engage. COFEM also holds quarterly, intentional spaces for collective care that range from mindfulness exercises, pilates and dance, to arts-based exercises that tap into your creative potential.

Asynchronous design

Fitting in everything your community needs in one virtual call is unrealistic. Low-pressure engagement helps build more sustainable engagement over time. For instance, We are Feminist Leaders, which examines power in the workplace and strengthens capacity for feminist leadership, established the Good Trouble Collective (GTC). GTC provides specialized sessions on feminist leadership, resources on collective care, and weekly prompts on Signal for participants to collectively respond and discuss. Participants can engage in any medium at their discretion.

Proactive moderation

Moderation can break or make a feminist space. Establishing clear policies and transparent reporting and accountability mechanisms through community agreements (e.g. explicit sets of values upon which the space rests) can help ensure convenings are conducive for bold, reflective, and safe conversations, whether in agreement or disagreement. Feminist moderation aims to uplift contributions from participants, carefully navigates issues of participation, and holds oneself accountable to shared values. For activists working on VAWG, trauma-informed moderation can be particularly valuable to minimize chances of retraumatization and/or attend to secondary trauma.

Mutual aid

Given the funding climate, feminist solidarity spaces can consider either individual or organizational mutual aid chains. Members can request and provide material support from folks in their community, or emotional, political, and technical solidarity across borders (e.g. providing research support in exchange for proposal writing services).

Joyful gathering

Joy helps us build the relational trust necessary to sustain our organizing work over time. Feminist spaces should actively design for laughter, play, and celebration. Consider building in regular moments of unstructured connection: virtual game nights, creative activities, co-creating music playlists, or collective watching of films/performances (if your bandwidth allows).

[2] Blair, Kristine, Radhika Gajjala, and Christine Tulley, eds. Webbing cyberfeminist practice: Communities, pedagogies, and social action. Hampton Press (NJ), 2009.

For millions of women and gender-diverse people – especially young people, queer communities and those in contexts where offline space is scarce or dangerous – digital platforms are themselves sites of feminist and queer joy, identity formation, and solidarity:

Gaming

Feminist gamers and streamers are building audiences and communities that center joy, humor, and solidarity while actively challenging the hostile norms of mainstream gaming culture. Organizations like AnyKey support diversity and inclusion in gaming communities globally.

Dating apps And digital intimacy

Digital spaces can be powerful forces of intimacy, particularly for the many folks in countries where being queer is criminalized or highly stigmatized. Apps like Her can provide opportunities for dating, friendship, and chosen family for queer women and gender-diverse people.

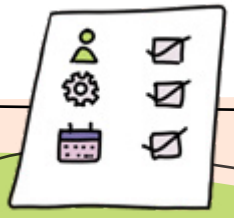
Fashion and beauty

Fashion and beauty communities have become significant spaces for Black, Indigenous, and women from the Global Majority to celebrate aesthetics that defy Western beauty norms. Content creators use social media platforms to center and reclaim beauty traditions, reflecting the political stakes in hair, dress and presentation.

Choosing to move beyond the demands of a capitalist ecosystem that craves constant productivity can be uncomfortable, especially when we have been told to attach our worth to our outputs. Building spaces where rest, grief, and celebration coexist is a political practice that shifts us from catering to donor priorities to fulfilling our desires for connection, curiosity and pleasure.

Ethics and risk

Feminist values operate across the chain of inception, production, and closing of digital media endeavors. Developing content risk assessments can be useful accountability tools, providing a checklist of safety implications regarding faces, locations, and identifiable characteristics about the protagonists of different digital content. Tools like ObscuraCam can blur faces on a smartphone before the footage is distributed. The Global Fund for Women has a public "Ethical Storytelling Guidelines" that may be useful to guide your own work.



Reclaiming Narrative Power through Multimedia Storytelling

Controlling your story is an act of joy and of safety; it represents the difference between being viewed as a subject or an object. For centuries, academics, international media, governments, and development organizations have studied, co-opted, exploited, and commodified the stories and artifacts of women and gender diverse people, particularly in the Global Majority.[3] Within our work to end VAWG, we have witnessed short project timelines and donor mandates turn survivors' stories into fundraising pitches or log frames that transform multi-dimensional human beings into stale, passive indicators. Digital tools, when grounded in an ethics of care, can provide one antidote to this extractive relationship by ensuring that the main characters of these stories have agency over how their story is told, from who holds the camera, to what language best conveys their emotions and experiences.

If WROs have control over their storytelling–as opposed to mainstream media, donor communication departments, or big tech algorithms–they can define what counts as resistance, harm, and success. Dominant storytelling about the Global Majority often falls on two ends of a spectrum: the suffering victim or the exceptional hero. This binary fails to leave narrative room for the ordinary complexity of life: the collective, mundane, joyful, ancestral, and the unresolved. Joy, humor, and absurdity also serve as impactful narrative approaches; storytelling that makes people laugh, celebrates the small but powerful moments in everyday life, or expresses desire and pleasure is just as politically significant as storytelling documenting harm. When feminists tell stories on their own terms, communities can serve as the protagonist and the audience: stories for and by the people.



A United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF) assessment learning from UNTF-funded civil society organizations on building feminist power defines narrative power as "working to shape and influence societal narratives, attitudes and social/cultural norms towards the support of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) and intersecting gender/social justice causes, and increasing the levels of public understanding of and attention to these issues."[4]

[4] de Sousa Santos, Boaventura, and Maria Meneses, eds. *Knowledges born in the struggle*: *Constructing the epistemologies of the Global South*. Routledge, 2019.

[3] Lehrer, J. 2023. "Building Power in Feminist and Women's Movements to End Violence against Women and Girls: Learning from Civil Society Organizations Funded by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against

What are some tools for building narrative power?



Audio

Podcasts have become a powerful storytelling format due to their low-cost, personal, and accessible nature. Voices carry perspectives that text doesn't always capture, especially in places with rich oral heritages where storytelling has been a major channel to transmit generational knowledge and lessons. Producing feminist podcasts should consider the quality of production and the dissemination strategy. Beyond sharing on platforms such as Signal and Whatsapp, you can distribute podcasts offline via Bluetooth, USB, and/or community listening sessions that provide collective space to learn and discuss. Transcription tools can also make audio content more accessible for people with hearing disabilities, as well as in low bandwidth settings.



Video

There are many tools for creating videos on small budgets. Short-form videos have enhanced access to information significantly: a 60-second clip can travel further than a 20-page report. Similar to podcasts, the imagery and sounds in videos add elements to your messaging that more effectively humanize subjects. Videos can also serve as institutional memory and archive of the work that your organization is doing. Rather than choosing a single "video person," consider organizing a training or sharing resources with your colleagues on low-barrier entry to video recording. By inviting different team members to capture their unique perspectives in videos, you can build a living archive for your organization.



Zines, graphics, and art

Visual storytelling through zines, infographics and illustration has deep roots in feminist activism, democratizing knowledge through non-traditional methods. Historically, women of color and women from the Global Majority face limitations in accessing more formal knowledge pathways like academic journals or traditional media, thus make literature, art, poetry and other creative methods appealing and even compulsory. With tools like Canva, Adobe, and Inkscape, even non-designers can create striking imagery. Thoughtful selection of details like colors, fonts, and imagery can challenge mainstream Western aesthetics. Zines have an especially subversive quality, as they have the capacity to bridge offline and online communities through physical and digital distribution.

Spotlight

Association for progressive Communications (APC) and #feministtechjoy

Since 2023, APC has provided organizations with small grants under the initiative #FeministTechJoy. APC considers feminist tech joy imperative for collective sense making and preserving feminist communities' historical contributions. Among the grantees include HOLAAfrica, a Pan-Africanist digital platform elevating conversations, archiving, and creating space to discuss sex and sexuality. They created an audio anthology of queer people from Africa and across the diaspora. Additionally, a collaboration between the Filipino Foundation for Media Alternatives and and Canai and Char Kuey Teow of Malaysia produced also produced a project at the intersections of disability, gender, and sexuality to "challenge stigma, reclaim agency and express joy."

Cultural, Indigenous and Linguistic Sovereignty

Reading, writing and organizing in your own language is an act of identity reconstruction, reclamation, and decolonization. Most digital safety tools, platforms and resources remain accessible only to those whose primary language is English. However, feminist organizers have long asserted their linguistic and cultural sovereignty online, generating content in their local languages, refusing to "moderate" or "soften" their activism for Western audiences. For instance, IndigiNews is a Canadian, Indigenous-run newsroom owned by an Indigenous media nonprofit organization tâpwêwin[5] media, which seeks to decolonize journalism and amplify Indigenous media content. In Kenya, Masakhane, isiZulu for "we build together," is working to make sure that African languages, knowledge systems, and communities are represented in AI. In Mexico, the Chiapas Media Project has supported Indigenous Zapatista communities to produce their own videos, including videos on gender equality: "We are Equal, Zapatista Women Speak." Over a two-year process, they used raw footage to spark transparent discussions that turned into debates and, eventually, consensus-building activities on gender issues, especially domestic violence, in their community.

Spotlight

Open Font Case Study



THE QUICK BROWN FOX
Feminist Open F

In 2023, Numun Fund and Huruf facilitated a participatory process with 55 activists and designers from 11 countries in the Larger Majority/Global South. The process included discussions on the politics of design, copyleft, and activist stories to collectively develop a feminist open font. Huruf Collective argues that typography is not just "craft and technicality" but also the study of "texture and grain of the written voice at the interface of language, history, and culture." They suggest that people often presume that typography is Latin-based, which, in their context, denies the reality of Malaysia's diverse linguistic landscape. The collective seeks to counter the emphasis on Latin typography by prioritizing multilingualism in their work.

[6] According to IndigiNews, "tâpwêwin is a Cree term that speaks to truth-telling, integrity in one's recounting of events, and the responsibility of being a reliable witness."

Hacking the Algorithm

Making visible the everyday acts of resistance among feminist activists is an insistence that community stories deserve to be seen, amplified, and respected as legitimate forms of knowledge. Powerknowledge, a term coined by French philosopher Michel Foucault, describes how knowledge collection is a political process: power circulates through knowledge such as what are acceptable forms of methods (e.g. the development sector determines what is "rigorous" or "evidence-based"), and those same methods reproduce conclusions and knowledge that reinforce the same power structures (e.g. by prioritizing Western forms of data validation, we create a knowledge hierarchy).[6] Tech corporations create algorithms that are biased to suppress feminist, queer and activist content, especially from women of color and gender-diverse people in the Global South.[7] Suppression occurs through processes like shadowbanning, in which platforms restrict the reach of content, such as on abortions or images of female bodies[8] In response, organizers have employed several strategies to resist suppression and assert the right to be heard:

Strategic hashtag ecosystems

The strategic use of hashtags can help feminists enter existing conversations, reach new audiences, and employ collective hashtags that move beyond a single campaign to institutionalize the circulation and archive of news.

Cross-platform mirroring

By posting the same content across different social media channels, feminist organizations protect against suppression on any individual platform and reach different audiences.

Direct audience content

Setting up newsletters, blogs, SMS lists, and RSS feeds is an inherently algorithm-proof strategy, with content going directly to subscribers without platform interference.



Coordinated appeals

Collective documentation of algorithmic bias can help increase pressure for change, both to tech corporations and to state/regional regulators. Consider establishing a documentation strategy for any experiences of suppression, in case of future appeals.

Community Engagement Pods

While initially pioneered by influencers, pods are small groups of individuals/organizations with shared interests or goals, who make a commitment to amplifying one another's work through reposting in order to build greater collective visibility.

[6] The Keywords Feminist Editorial Collective, The Keywords Feminist Editorial Collective. "Biopower." *In Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*, vol. 13. New York University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479808168.003.0013.

[7] Golunova, Valentina. "A misogynistic glitch?: A feminist critique of algorithmic content moderation." *Law, Technology and Humans 7*, no. 2 (2025): 40-52.

[8] Ibid

Spotlight

#ChallengeAccepted and Turkey's Campaign on Femicide Visibility

In July 2020, an ex-boyfriend murdered Pinar Gültekin, who became the 50th Turkish woman murdered in that year. The murder overlapped with plans from the Turkish government to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. During that same summer, a social media campaign called #ChallengeAccepted, in which women shared black and white selfies, went viral predominantly in the US, UK, and Canada. Turkish feminists re-appropriated the campaign by flooding the existing hashtag with advocacy around femicide and the Istanbul convention. After three days, 12% of the English-language tweets referred to Turkey, yielding increased references to Gültekin, and ultimately prompting global dialogue and international media coverage on the femicide crisis in Turkey and beyond.[9] Even though Turkey withdrew from the Convention, this campaign prompted global dialogue and international media coverage to an issue that may have gone overlooked otherwise.

Feminist activists have long sought to reveal what, or who, is deemed too "political" or "controversial" by those in power. With their rights under attack and at risk of deterioration, women and gender-diverse individuals continue to insist that their existence is a form of resistance, and that algorithms cannot conceal the beauty in diversity.

Data, Mapping, and Feminist Evidence

Feminists are innovating alternative ways to capture data and document harms that are too often ignored by mainstream institutions by looking beyond traditional mechanisms like charts or graphs. Importantly, feminist evidence provides equal weight to the final product and the process by working with communities to design research questions, co-own data, and determine who uses the data and how. Feminist data visualization is designed to prompt action by revealing harm, success, and insight. For instance, feminist journalists and activists founded Feminicidio Uruguay to fill in the gap of missing data on femicide. They combined photographs and biography to memorialize each woman lost from femicide, honoring her legacy and life beyond a small data point. In 2010, the volunteer initiative HarassMap crowdsourced anonymous documentation of incidents of sexual harassment and assault across Egypt onto Google Maps. The report detailed the location, date/time, description, and type of harassment. The map provided testimony and data so that activists can adapt their programs and campaigns in real time.[10]

[9] Comeforo, Kristin, and Berna Görgülü. "Negotiating the challenge of# ChallengeAccepted: transnational digital flows, networked feminism, and the case of femicide in Turkey." Review of Communication 22, no. 3 (2022): 213-230.

[10] Fahmy, A., Abdekmonem, A., Hamdy, E. & Badr, A. 2014. Towards a Safer City – Sexual Harassment in Greater Cairo: Effectiveness of Crowdsourced Data. harassmap.org/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Towards-A-Safer-City_executive-summary_EN.pdf, 5 June 2017.

Balancing Joy and Safety

Every day, activists put their reputations, relationships, and lives on the line, knowing that, in the words often attributed to Maya Angelou, "*no one of us can be free until everybody is free*." Community care and digital security are expressions of the same value — an insistence to live fully and freely. Using the tools outlined in this tip sheet demands a strong political commitment to flourish in spite of the forces stacked against us. These tools are equally capable of documenting what we are building as what we are fighting against — our joy, our creativity, and our community are evidence worth documenting and celebrating.

Tech Toolbox

Multimedia

Transcription /captions

Whisper
Wordly
Kapwing

Video

CapCut
Canva Video

Podcast

Streamyard
Funkwhale
Buzzsprout
Spotify for Creators

Design

Canva
Adobe Express
The Greats

Online Spaces

Decentralized and Community-owned platforms

Mastodon
Discoursev
Pixelfed
Loomio
PeerTube

Data, Mapping, & Evidence

Data Collection

KoboToolbox
Open Data Kit
Airtable
Tella
eyeWitness to Atrocities
Uwazi
Secure Drop

Data Management

OpenRefine
MaxQDA

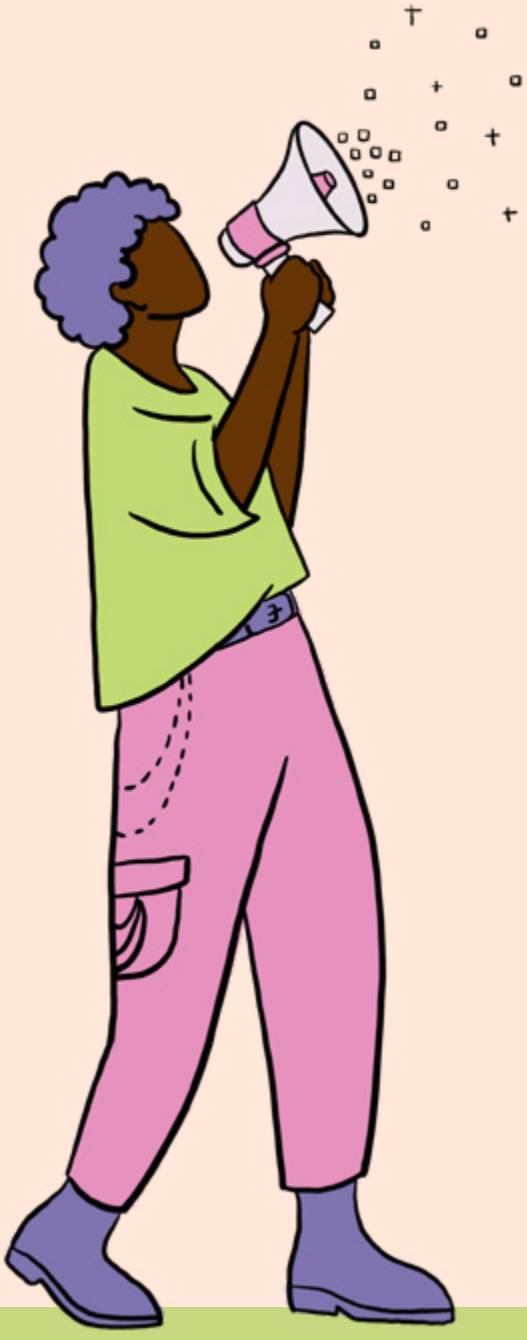
Mapping

Ushahidi
uMap
QGIS
Mapbox
StoryMapJS

Data Visualization

Flourish
Datawrapper
RAWGraphs
Tableau Public





Acknowledgements

This piece was written by Leah Goldmann and reviewed by Jennifer Chinoye Amadi, Lauren Messina, Joy Watson, and members of UN Women's EVAW team, designed by Amarawati Ayuningtyas and Léa Drougard, and illustrated by Sarah Imran. This publication was produced by COFEM under the EU-funded UN Women ACT to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme. Its contents are the sole responsibility of COFEM and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or UN Women.

Suggested Citation

Coalition of Feminists for Social Change. Tip Sheet 3: Leveraging Tech for Rest, Resistance, and Joy, *Bytes of Resistance: Addressing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence* (2026).

Tip Sheet 3:
Leveraging Tech for Rest, Resistance, and Joy

COFEM