Introduction

*Cultivating Feminist Accountability*

If we ask ourselves the most simple questions, such as where do we get our food from, we can see that we are tied up in networks of relationships with millions of other people. Our actions are constantly creating, recreating, challenging and transforming the networks of relationships that make up the fabric of our shared world. We influence the fabric of society by the choices we make, about whose actions we choose to acknowledge and whose we choose to ignore; by where we take a stand and where we choose not to; by how we treat others and how we expect to be treated.


What does it take to build communities to struggle against the multitude of injustices we face and to create the social change we envision necessary for the world in which we want to live—a world with love, liberation, and justice at its center? How do we work together to transform the deep historical, structural, and interlocking systems of oppression and violence that shape our relationships with one another without reproducing these same systems and the violence they produce?¹

In thirty-plus years of participation in antiracist, feminist, and queer antiviolence critical-consciousness community building, organizing, and activism, the most important lesson I have learned is that our praxis often reproduces the very power dynamics that we are seeking to transform. So often the hierarchical and inequitable divides produced by global capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity get played out in our relationships and communities as well as in our organizations, activism, and advocacy. In teaching, writing, and organizing around the everyday oppression and violence that
saturate our communities locally and globally, I am often haunted by the questions Aimee Carillo Rowe poses in her book *Power Lines*; she asks, “Whose well-being is essential to our own? And whose survival must we overlook in order to connect to power in the ways that we do?” I would suggest that these questions are integral to building theory, research, and action against the entrenched violence that shapes the conditions of our lives. They reveal how much our choices—as individuals, organizations, and communities—are often embedded within these systems, rather than resistant to them. They are questions thus that compel us to become more critically aware of and to take accountability for the impact of the ways we imagine, embody, and live the world that we envision for a future not yet here.

They are also questions I ask myself daily as I make my own choices in the midst of pervasive interpersonal, community, and state violence produced by the interlocking systems of oppression and in the context of my lived experience as a white, professional-class, queer, cis-gendered, monolingual, English-speaking woman with US citizenship, with deep love, belonging, and commitments within my multiracial and transnational families, communities, and movements for change. Because of how embedded I am, and we are, in these systems, our emotional, intellectual, and political responses to oppression and violence as well as our strategies and visions for change may reproduce the very violence that we are striving to transform. This is the case not because we are individual failures but rather because of how enmeshed we are in the very systems we are organizing to change. As Morgan Bassichis, a former collective member of the Oakland-based Communities United Against Violence, so aptly notes, “the very systems we are working to dismantle live inside of us.” And yet we often act as if these structures, ideologies, and power lines are outside of ourselves, our groups, and our efforts, and so we do not consistently question how they are shaping our identities, our relationships, and our organizations, as well as our ideas, strategies, and visions.

These inequitable divides and the culture that supports them are the fault lines that undermine, fracture, and disable feminist antiviolence efforts. For instance, despite the critical efforts of many, the most prominent and funded feminist and LGBT antiviolence organizations have become mainstreamed into social service, advocacy, and policy reform
projects. These projects tend to replicate, rather than undermine or disrupt, the institutional, structural, and community-based power lines built through historical and interlocking systems of oppression. They tend to resist naming the multiple power lines that differentially shape the lives of the different communities they serve, that structure the relational hierarchies within the organizations, and that shape their agendas and practices. Their work is often embedded in the dominant ideologies, norms, and perspectives of neoliberal capitalism. This means they often approach violence through a social service and criminal legal lens that understands violence as an individual and interpersonal issue, rather than a social and political one. This means they often ally with, rather than significantly challenge, the state institutions, policies, and systems that underlie and contribute to the endemic violence we are facing.

The results of these dominant approaches are that under the broad rubric of feminism and LGBT activism, we witness uncritical commitment to entrenched carceral frameworks that rely on the police and the criminal legal systems for protection, incarceration, and punishment despite their brutal impact on poor, immigrant, queer, and trans communities of color. We witness support for US militarism and war grounded in Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism as a way of securing women’s and LGBT rights. We witness silence in the face of police brutality and murder of people of color in the United States and of US militarist violence and occupation through the war on terrorism, including violence against women and queer, gender-nonbinary, and transgender people. We witness the white middle-class heteronormative ideology and practice of antiviolence social services and legal advocacy turn away from women, queer and trans people, and/or immigrants who are impacted by the sex trade, who are non-English-speaking, who live in the United States without legal documentation, who live with disabilities, who are formerly incarcerated, and/or who are struggling with drug or alcohol addictions, and more. We witness rape crisis agencies that do not speak out or offer support and advocacy for women, queer, and trans folks raped and assaulted by the police, immigration officials, and prison guards across the world. We witness resistance to creating the necessary space for front-line workers, often working-class women of color, to process the trauma, grief, and exhaustion connected to the work and to the daily impact of oppression and violence because our accountability
is to the funders and their expectations, rather than to those most impacted by violence. And we witness resistance to the voices and perspectives of feminists of color, queer and trans feminists, and transnational feminists who seek to address internal power lines within the movement that contribute to the pervasive violence facing those most marginalized in the service of preserving the framework that serves the organizational funders, including the state. At the same time, many activists, writers, healers, artists, and scholars are organizing projects and movements of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and Arab feminists, including queer, transgender, and disabled feminists of color as well as antiracist and transnational feminists (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter, Assata’s Daughters, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, Transnational Feminists against the War) that offer significantly different analyses, organizing frameworks, strategies, and actions in response to interpersonal, community, and state violence. These projects are based in the interconnected historical legacies of women of color feminisms, third world feminisms, and antiracist/anti-imperialist feminisms responsible for the theoretical lenses of intersectionality, community accountability, transformative justice, and transnational feminisms. They challenge the carceral and imperial feminist frameworks that have become so dominant in the US mainstream, and they offer ways of building community to transform violence that do not rely on policing, surveillance, punishment, or state and military violence. Rather than building feminist antiviolence projects around singular issues or unidimensional homogeneous identities, these projects seek to build relational accountability for the power lines and structures that create the endemic and ongoing oppression and violence that differentially impact our multiple, heterogeneous, and interconnected identities and communities.

Intersectionality as a Bridge to Accountability

Over the past thirty-plus years, many feminist, queer, and transgender scholars, writers, and activists of color have developed the theoretical and analytic lenses of interlocking systems of oppression and privilege, antiracism, and postcolonial and transnational feminisms. These lenses foreground the way the historical structural systems of patriarchy, white
supremacy, capitalism, compulsory heteronormativity, ableism, colonialism, and imperialism are integrally related to one another, albeit differently depending on the historical and social context. They shed light on how these systems simultaneously shape people’s lives, ideas, relations, and politics. Most importantly, they underscore the significance of taking accountability for our differential relationships within these systems as a praxis of critical analysis and action as well as alliance, coalition, and solidarity.

A feminist accountability approach, according to Fellows and Razack, makes visible how interlocking “systems of oppression (capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy) rely on one another in complex ways.” They draw critical scrutiny to the ways that these systems “came into existence in and through one another so that class exploitation could not be accomplished without gender and racial hierarchies, imperialism could not function without class exploitation, sexism, heterosexism, and so on.” View the matter through this lens enables the recognition that each of us is shaped by and implicated in these systems—our identities, our experiences, our ideas, our actions—and that our relational ties are guided by the power lines that link us together. As Mary Elizabeth Hobgood also suggests, “[P]rivilege and oppression do not simply coexist side by side. Rather the suffering and unearned disadvantages of subordinate groups are the foundation for the privileges of dominant groups.”

This approach draws our attention to how, for instance, in a white supremacist, capitalist, heteronormative patriarchy, white women and women of color are situated in hierarchical relationship with one another, and so our lives and relationships are interconnected through these hierarchies. This is evident, for instance, in the differential interpretation and response to sexual violence against women. Within the US system, social institutions idealize white, middle-class femininity by associating it with purity, virginity, and passivity, an image that is set up against social constructions of Black and Brown femininities as associated with criminality, sexual promiscuity, and aggression. This socially constructed idealization/criminalization binary produces the differential institutional responses to sexual violence, such that the criminal legal system, the media, and educational as well as gender-based social service and advocacy institutions are more likely to criminalize men’s violence against white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women.
when it is perpetrated by men of color, whereas they respond with silence, social apathy, and/or victim blaming when men commit violence against women of color, including queer and trans women, trans and gender-nonconforming people, poor women, and women in the sex trade, particularly when perpetrated by white men.\(^8\) White, middle-class, heterosexual men’s violence against white women is mostly denied, minimized, ignored, and/or treated as an individual anomaly.

Feminist theories, analyses, and strategies that do not approach these issues through an intersectional lens often contribute to systemic interpersonal, community, and state violence and the social and structural power systems that fuel it. Beth Richie’s book, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America’s Prison Nation*, offers a powerful analysis of the brutal and painful consequences of an institutionalized feminist antiviolence movement in which poor Black women and gender-nonconforming people’s genders and sexualities are devalued and stigmatized. She shows how institutionalized antiviolence efforts contribute to the pervasive interpersonal, community, and state violence that Black women experience, both by reifying white, middle-class feminine innocence and by remaining largely silent about and unresponsive to pervasive intimate, community, and state violence against Black women. By not critically struggling against the racism, classism, and heteronormativity of the criminal legal system, she argues, the service and advocacy organizations have bolstered the development of a prison nation, including the buildup of the prison industrial complex, the “war on crime” and racist criminalization of Black people and people of color more broadly, policies of gentrification, and more.

Relatedly, while the so-called protection of the fragility and innocence of white women is held up as a justification for the buildup of a prison nation through incarceration, as well as through imperialist war and occupation, white, middle- and upper-middle-class, heteronormative women are simultaneously positioned as heroic and superior in relation to women of the global south. As a result, US neoliberal feminist projects often feed into the US imperial project of “saving” poor women of the global south that actually reproduces and expands the systems of oppression and the violence that they experience. Organizations like the Feminist Majority Foundation or CARE, for instance, approach women’s rights— and gender-equity-development projects through
gender-myopic lenses that are oriented to changing “other cultures” to become more like “us,” but do not account for the ways US militarism and global capitalism have contributed to pervasive conditions of poverty, ill health, illiteracy, and violence. The so-called superiority of white western women and men that shapes these “civilizing projects” mostly feed, rather than challenge, US foreign policy and development projects that work to control the future of these communities and countries to serve US interests. In each of these contexts, neoliberal feminist projects thus contribute to the structural inequities and subsequent injustices and violence experienced by women most marginalized by these interlocking systems.

Intersectional approaches to violence make visible how our responses to some forms of violence contribute to other forms of violence and to the systems that underlie them. In this way, a praxis of intersectionality builds a path toward accountability in that it requires that we name and take responsibility for the power lines that connect us to one another through hierarchical structures and the logics, discourses, and actions that maintain them. It makes more visible how our feminist theories, research, and activist work maintain, reproduce, and/or challenge and transform these systems of oppression. According to Razack, accountability is a “process that begins with a recognition that we are each implicated in systems of oppression that profoundly structure our understanding of one another.”

By centering structural relationships between ourselves and others, as well as by focusing on how our praxes maintain these systemic hierarchies, Razack suggests that feminists move from a politics of inclusion (come join us on our terms) or saving (we’ll come save you so that you can become more like us) to a politics of accountability (we work in solidarity, recognizing that our lives are interconnected and that we are responsible for the shape of that interconnection). As she writes, if we recognize how we are implicated in the “subordination of other women,” then our “strategies for change” will “have less to do with being inclusive than they have to do with being accountable.”

The significance of this framework was made apparent to me ten years ago when I heard about the struggle of a group of immigrant domestic laborers in Chicago to find an organizational home for their work to address low wages, lack of health benefits, sexual and racial harass-
ment, and violence, among other issues. A wide array of organizations they approached did not see the immigrant women's identities, lived experiences, or issues as significant to their agendas. Women's employment organizations would say that they do not deal with immigration issues, immigration organizations would say that these were women's issues, and labor organizations would say that these were women's and immigrant issues, not labor issues. In other words, each organization suggested that this group of women and its particular set of issues belonged to some “other” organization.

Their struggle was not an unusual one, and underlined for me the ongoing necessity of shifting from the compartmentalized, identity-based approach of inclusion to an approach grounded in intersectionality and accountability. When feminists who are US citizens and white, middle-class, monolingual speakers of English understand the realities of immigrant domestic laborers as simply different and separate from ours, we may simply ignore their struggles or offer to “help” them. In the latter case, we might plunge into a hierarchy by seeing their issues as located in their identities and cultures, unrelated to our own locations of structural privilege and entitlement. On the other hand, if we start from the premise that we ourselves are implicated in the dynamics and structures that shape the experiences of immigrant domestic laborers, then we might stand a better chance of recognizing our direct relationship and accountability to their plight.

In other words, if feminist scholars and/or projects took account of how we are implicated in the structures supporting low wages for domestic labor with no healthcare or Social Security benefits, and/or in the global capitalist system that creates the conditions for migration and flight, our responses would be quite different. Rather than locating the problem in the immigrant identities, our work of accountability would focus on the places of feminist complicity with the systems of oppression that are shaping their lives. This would require reexamining organizational assumptions of “women's labor issues,” “immigrant issues,” or “violence against women.” It would mean making it a priority to challenge the devaluation of paid housework and childrearing that leads to very low wages and lack of benefits. It would mean working to address the transnational conditions that underlie sexual and racial abuse and mistreatment of immigrant women, including social isolation, the hos-
tile racist and xenophobic climate against immigrants from the global south, and/or the marginalization of immigrant domestic workers in liberal feminism.

Another powerful example of the difference between a politics of “inclusion” and one of “accountability” is given by Simona Sharoni in her book *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. She offers an analysis of alliance efforts between Palestinian and Israeli feminist groups during the first Intifadah. She found that the alliances were quite fragile, particularly when Israeli Jewish women came to alliance building under a rubric of shared identities, experiences, and oppression as women, and did not want to discuss the Israeli occupation and its impact on Palestinians. This approach rubbed up against Palestinian women who came seeking allies in their struggle for justice. For them, the differences between them were political, structural, and economic, not cultural. As Sharoni writes, “Because their long-term goal was to bring about the end of the occupation, they saw their encounters with Israeli women as an important vehicle for influencing public opinion in Israel in that direction. For them, dialogue was not perceived as a means for overcoming differences and establishing personal relationships with Israeli-Jewish women, but rather a tool of social transformation and political change.” They were looking for a solidarity based in accountability, not simple inclusion based in shared experiences as women with an assumption of political neutrality. The alliance efforts that most succeeded were those grounded in collaboration and solidarity, where “the differences, injustices, and inequalities separating Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish women” were recognized from the outset.

A praxis of accountability draws our attention to the ways in which identities, cultures, and communities are produced through historical, structural, and systemic inequities. It draws our attention and action to the ways in which historically based power systems produce identities and differences, structure our relationships to one another, and become internalized into our individual and collective identities and consciousness as well as our political analysis and strategy. Rather than evading how these systems shape our collective work within communities, organizations, and movements, and rather than locating the causes of oppressive behaviors and actions in individual “bad apple” behavior, a praxis of accountability makes the inequities and divides open to ongoing
ing collective scrutiny, intervention, and transformation. This process of scrutiny is not about calling out individual or organizational failures as anomalies, but rather about making visible the fault lines of structural inequities that distort and undercut the relational possibilities for individual and social action and transformation. If we cultivate critical and compassionate consciousness and skills to address these structural inequities as they manifest in our identities and relationships as well as in our theorizing, research, organizations, political visions, and strategies, we build more collective accountability within our antiviolence work to transform rather than to deepen these systems of oppression and violence, and to create the spaces where we can practice creating the world we envision.

Cultivating Accountability

The feminist intersectional and transnational theories and praxes that have gained visibility across the United States over the past forty-plus years are the ones at the heart of Feminist Accountability. In the book I bring together three areas of work around the concept of accountability—antiracist feminisms, community accountability and transformative justice efforts to end intimate and interpersonal violence, and transnational feminisms. I explore some of the emerging praxes of accountability, transformative justice, and transnational feminisms that have arisen in response to institutionalized carceral and imperial feminisms that reproduce rather than undermine the interlocking systems of oppression and privilege that produce pervasive violence. Each chapter draws from these emerging practices and tells stories about living, theorizing, analyzing, strategizing, building, and organizing that seek to build feminist individual and collective accountability for the ways in which we may participate in and contribute to these systems while we are also seeking to dismantle them. The chapters overlap in ideas, themes, and arguments, although they are purposefully given different emphases so that they can stand alone outside of the other chapters. Throughout the book, I share stories from my own experiences of teaching and organizing as well as from the many community organizers and scholar-activists, mostly women and queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming people of color, who have been developing these intersectional and
accountability-based approaches to endemic interpersonal, community, state, and imperialist violence. These stories build upon and expand the possibilities for critically engaging and developing an ethics, politics, and practice of accountability across inequitable divides as a way of strengthening communities and movements for change.

In the book I emphasize the term “cultivating” as a reminder that accountability is a practice, not an end, and it is a continuous process, rather than a single act. As I try to remind myself and the reader throughout the book, this process of taking individual and collective accountability is an ongoing one, and it requires a willingness not only to name oppression but to understand our relationship to its perpetuation. In other words, rather than a practice of locating the problem outside of ourselves and the movements with which we affiliate, it is a practice of awareness about how our ideas, organizations, policies, and activism are often embedded in the logics and structures of power. This awareness creates the potential for taking active accountability in ways that lead to change and transformation.

This book is grounded in my experiences of learning about and practicing different methods of accountability—personal, interpersonal, communal, and collective—through my living, writing, teaching, strategizing, and organizing with others against oppression and violence. Most of this experience has been in the context of my involvement with feminist-of-color-led, queer, antiracist antiviolence efforts in Chicago. It is also informed by my participation in efforts to challenge US feminist contributions to US wars and occupations connected to global capitalism, white supremacy, and imperialism and to engage in transnational feminist efforts toward accountability for our contributions to and complicity within global divides. I am indebted to the amazing knowledge, wisdom, practical strategizing, community-building approaches, and vision of so many feminists of color within Chicago and across the United States whom I’ve had the opportunity to know, learn from, and collaborate with, as well as the many white feminist co-strugglers who are stepping up into the work of building solidarity, accountability, and new ways of living. The book would not be what it is outside of all those with whom I have been living in community and struggle. I am immensely grateful for the community, inspiration, ideas, and challenges from the following people, whom I am naming alphabetically by first
Introduction

name: Adaku Utah, Aimee Carillo Rowe, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Alice Kim, Ana Romero, Andrea Ritchie, Barbara Ransby, Beth Catlett, Beth Richie, Brian Ragsdale, Cheryl West, Chez Rumpf, Choua Vue, Claudia Garcia-Rojas, Cricket Keating, Daisy Zamora, Deana Lewis, Erica Mein- ers, Erin Tinnon, Francesca T. Royster, Harvette Grey, Hiranmayi Bhatt, Iliana Figueroa, Jen Curley, Joey Mogul, John Zeigler, Laila Farah, Lara Brooks, Laurie Fuller, Lourdes Sullivan, Lourdes Torres, Manju Majen- dran, Mariame Kaba, Mark Hoffman, Mayadet Cruz, Michelle VanNatta, Mimi Kim, Misty DeBerry, Namita Goswami, Natalie Bennett, Penny Rosenwasser, Rachel Caidor, Rachel Herzing, Sandra Jackson, Sanjukta Mukherjee, Shakti Butler, Sharmili Majmudar, Sheena Malhotra, Shira Hassan, Sumi Cho, Tanuja Jagernauth, and Tony Alvarado-Rivera. I would also like to recognize my dear friend and collaborator Aparna Sharma (who passed away in 2013), who was a continuous support for this work. I also have deep gratitude for my community in women's and gender studies and the Women's Center at DePaul, particularly with the Building Communities, Ending Violence Project, a project that creates space for building knowledge and skills for community accountability and transformative justice. This is a project I co-initiated, -created, and -envisioned in 2010 with Michele Emery, an MA student in women's and gender studies at the time. Since then, I've had the great opportunity to work with many students and staff at DePaul who have contributed to creating this space for learning and practicing community account- ability and transformative justice practices, including Anna Kochakian, Asher Diaz, Buki Ogundipe, Caitlyn Lomonte, Clare Stuber, Erin Tinnon, Hannah Arwe, Jill Kuanfung, Joy Ellison, Katie Heinekamp, Katrina Caldwell, Mary Hazboun, Michael Riley, N. A. Clark, Nihan Can, Olivia LaFlamme, Satya Chima, Shana Bahemat, Stefani Mikos, and Sydney Halliburton. I have deep gratitude for Laurie Fuller and Misty DeBerry, as well, who have been co-collaborators on the project at DePaul and beyond. I'm also grateful for the DePaul groups that have shaped my perspectives over the years, including Difficult Dialogues Committee, Feminist Front, SURVIVE, GRRRL House, and Dykes Against Oppres- sion. Chicago-based organizations that I have learned and drawn in- spiration from include Chicago Freedom School, Community Justice for Youth Institute, Dyke March Collective, Just Practice, Love and Pro- tect, Project Nia, Queer to the Left, Queer White Allies Against Racism,
Survived and Punished, Women and Girls Collective Action Network, Young Women’s Action Team, and Young Women’s Empowerment Project, among many others. I am also deeply greatly for the learning I have gained through my engagement with groups outside of Chicago, including Communities United Against Violence, Creative Interventions, Critical Resistance, Generation Five, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, Philly Stand Up and Philly’s Pissed, Stop It Now, the Storytelling and Organizing Project, and Ubuntu, among others. And, as will be clear from reading the book, I am always learning from and being inspired by an amazing array of theorists, writers, artists, community organizers and educators, activists, healers, and more.

Organization of the Book

_Feminist Accountability_ is a collection of chapters that reflect on what it means to engage in a praxis of accountability. The book is divided into three major parts: The first part, “Accountability as Intersectional Practice,” consists of three chapters that explore accountability as a praxis of community and movement building that embraces critical engagement with the power lines of racism and white supremacy that shape our identities and politics. In this introduction, “Cultivating Feminist Accountability,” I introduce the concept of cultivating accountability as a praxis that brings conscious awareness to how much our work as antiviolence scholars and activists is impacted by and implicated within hierarchical and intersectional relations of power. Chapter 1, “Building Communities,” explores what it might look like to address everyday oppression and violence in communities by practicing, rather than avoiding, taking accountability for the impact of our words and actions. Chapter 2, “Navigating Speech and Silence,” reflects on how the feminist call to speech as _the_ method for personal and social transformation often reproduces rather than challenges inequitable power lines. It examines the compulsion both to speak and to be silent in feminist spaces, and offers strategies to resist structural and relational inequities in our efforts to build connections and solidarity across these formidable power lines. In the last chapter in this section, “Disrupting Whiteness,” I reflect on my experiences teaching and my efforts to disrupt and resist the gravitational pulls of white-supremacist, patriarchal, imperialist capitalism
that compel us toward the callous disregard of the pain and suffering of others in order to accept and assimilate into the hegemonic normative systems of power.

The second part, “Community Accountability and Transformative Justice,” includes four chapters that explore the concept and practice of community accountability and transformative justice within the context of US-based feminist antiviolence movements. It begins with chapter 4, “Shifting Paradigms to End Violence.” This chapter explores the 1970s shift in the feminist antiviolence movement from radical social change to institutionalized social services and exclusive reliance on the criminal legal system as a method of accountability for the perpetuation of violence, and the more recent shift in the 2000s toward (re)politicizing the movement with innovative approaches based in community accountability and transformative justice. These approaches have emerged from grassroots radical women and queer people of color antiviolence efforts. Chapter 5, “Collective and Communal Support,” explores communal and collective methods of support and healing. Rather than seeing support as something offered to an individual as they cope with the experiences of interpersonal or state violence, a community-based approach to support recognizes the power of healing in community, and that when violence occurs within or against a community, all suffer, and thus all can benefit from participating in collective healing and justice. Chapter 6, “Everyday Responses to Everyday Violence,” opens up the possibilities for collectively responding to everyday harassment, abuse, and violence. Rather than perceiving that the only option is calling the authorities (e.g., police), this chapter explores the possibilities of building knowledge and skills for everyday individual and collective interventions that do not rely on the police or other external authorities. Chapter 7, “From Punishment to Accountability,” explores alternative methods of creating individual accountability for the harm of violence that do not rely on punishment, shaming, and oppressive systems of violence such as the criminal legal system. Recognizing not only the failures of the criminal legal system in fully supporting and affirming survivors of interpersonal and intimate violence but also the ways in which the system itself only perpetuates oppression and violence through its implementation, this chapter asks, what are the alternatives?
The third part, “(Re)Imagining Feminist Solidarity,” includes two chapters that explore how a framework of accountability can help to disrupt and disentangle US-based feminist storytelling about the issues facing women of the global south that are embedded in US imperial discourses, logics, and social policies. Such a shift is essential for making visible the deep and historic relationship between and across these global divides and for creating possibilities for a solidarity based in mutuality, reciprocity, and respect. In chapter 8, “Disentangling US Feminism from US Imperialism,” I explore how enmeshed mainstream feminist discourses are in US empire building, and offer ways of disentangling US ideas about solidarity from efforts of imperial conquest. The chapter takes as a case in point the “war on terrorism” as it has played out in the US occupation and war in Afghanistan since 9/11. Then, in chapter 9, “Resisting the ‘Savior’ Complex,” I offer critical reflections on the book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. In the chapter, I critically interrogate the underlying white-supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal, imperialist discourses in the book. Drawing upon transnational feminist theories, the chapter offers an oppositional rereading of the stories through a lens of accountability. Putting the book in the context of an increasing focus on the “empowerment” of women and girls in western development projects and in US militarism and foreign policy, this chapter deconstructs the myths of western superiority embedded in these discourses and builds toward a critical lens of accountability, rather than pity and altruism.