

Participatory Action Research - Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers

Maguire, Patricia (Host). (2023, July 1). Peggy Antrobus, Norma Shorey, and Chris Ashton: Caribbean Feminists, WAND, and PAR (No 12) (Audio podcast transcript)

<https://www.parfemtrailblazers.net/episode-12-with-peggy-antrobus-norma-shorey-chris-ashton-caribbean-feminisms-wand-par/>

Transcript – Host Patricia Maguire. With Peggy Antrobus, Norma Shorey, and Chris Ashton: Caribbean Feminists, WAND, and PAR (No 12). Original Broadcast date: July 1, 2023

© 2026 Participatory Action Research - Feminist Trailblazers & Good Troublemakers

Patricia Maguire - Welcome to the Participatory Action Research Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers Podcast. We're bursting with pride that this is our 12th episode. It's the finale of Season One. Season One, aren't those sweet words? I'm your host, Patricia Maguire. Our podcast lifts up the contributions of feminist trailblazers to participatory and action research, and we talk with trailblazers about their successes and their struggles bringing feminist values and ways of being to PAR. And what we're trying to do is promote an action research that's both deeply informed by intersectional feminisms and well connected to PAR's radical transformative roots.

Today we showcase the work of trailblazing, Caribbean feminists, Peggy Antrobus, Norma Shorey, and Chris Ashton. And we'll also talk some about their colleague Pat Ellis, who is no longer with us.

[00:01:07] Before I do a brief introduction to each of you, let me welcome you. Peggy, welcome!

Peggy Antrobus: Hi. Good to be here.

Patricia Maguire: Norma.

Norma Shorey: Oh, it's great to be here. Thank you for inviting me, Pat.

Patricia Maguire: and Chris, welcome.

Chris Ashton: Thank you, Pat.

[00:01:23] **Patricia Maguire:** Each of our guests has their own distinguished career and international development. Today we're going to talk about a small slice of that work and we're going to connect some dots, if you will, of their early commitment to participatory values and processes and development and their work as global south Caribbean feminists.

[00:01:44] From 1974-77, Peggy Antrobus was the Director of the Women's Bureau in the Office of the Prime Minister of Jamaica. And Peggy moved from Jamaica to Barbados in 1977, and in the following year set up the Women in Development Unit or WAND as we'll call it today at the extramural department of the University of the West Indies in Barbados. And Peggy filled a number of positions there, including being the head of WAND from 1987 until her retirement in 1995. And she was also general coordinator of the network of Third World Women Promoting Development Alternatives with Women called DAWN from 1990-96 and DAWN still exists.

[00:02:32] From 1977 to 1987, Norma Shorey was a program officer at WAND. Norma left WAND to be a development officer for the Canadian International Development Agency Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean. And a skilled facilitator and trainer in participatory methodologies. Norma founded Catalyst Consultants, which focuses on change facilitation, leadership, and organizational development.

[00:03:02] Chris Ashton was a young adult when WAND launched the Integrated Rural Development Project in Rose Hall, St. Vincent, the project that we're going to talk quite a bit about today. Chris became a member of the Rose Hall Community Working Group, a decision which she said influenced her career and much of her politics. So, for several generations, Chris has worked as an independent consultant in the field of social policy and programs.

[00:03:28] Peggy, let's start in the 1970s with your work, creating the Women and Development Unit or WAND of the Extramural Department of the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Through your leadership, WAND became a powerful and far-reaching incubator or catalyst, and you valued and nurtured participatory methodologies of all kinds - participatory training, participatory popular education, participatory evaluation, participatory community development planning, and I think you grew and nurtured global south English speaking Caribbean feminisms. So Peggy, tell us about your vision for the WAND unit and its orientation.

[00:04:12] **Peggy Antrobus:** Well, Pat, as far as the vision is concerned, I have to put it within the context of the United Nations Decade for Women. I think without that decade, I would never have done the things that I have done. It was an incredible experience. I was there at the very first conference in Mexico City in 1975 representing the Government of Jamaica at the time.

For the first time, women from all over the world came together. Now many of those women had already been involved in their own struggles, in their own movements, many movements. Some of them were in the government conference, some of them were in the

non-governmental Tribune. But for the first time we came together to really focus on our issues and the incredible diversity of that. So, I would say that my vision really came out of that. My feminism came out of that. My commitment to using participatory methodologies comes out of that, that awareness of the importance of women speaking for ourselves. WAND itself was the result of a recommendation from a regional seminar that took place in Jamaica, just as I was about to leave Jamaica for Barbados.

[00:05:28] And that meeting took place because I wanted women from across the English-speaking Caribbean to, to come up with a common position. You know, we are part of Latin America. As part of Latin America, we're very marginalized within that Latin American Caribbean configuration. Our situation is so different from Latin American, particularly in terms of our governance systems and even our relationships within the family. That I thought was really important for us to have our own voice. And we had that regional meeting, and it made many recommendations, including a recommendation that the university should set up a focal point within its outreach program that would be a focal point for women's organizing in, in the English-speaking Caribbean.

[00:06:15] There were many other recommendations, but this is the one that I kind of followed through on. We chose the extramural department because there was a presence, the university had a presence through the extramural department in every country in the region, but also because extramural had a legacy of responding to the needs of people in that particular country. [00:07:00]

I didn't use the word feminist. WAND was grounded, but WAND was grounded in feminist values. I had not even heard the word feminism before I was involved in this work. And the values that were important to me were first and foremost respect for women.

[00:06:57] A focus on the issues defined by women's realities, an awareness of all the factors that limited those opportunities for living a safe and productive life, and a commitment to challenge and change them in solidarity with women. So those are the basic principles, values of feminism. All of these, this consciousness, this commitment to challenge and change in solidarity with women are all feminist.

[00:07:24] So our objectives of WAND were very broad in general because we wanted to respond to ideas coming from the field. But we also had an idea of doing things, experimenting and of having pilot projects. We recruited women who had experience working with women in the region - that was the most important qualification - a sense of the region.

[00:07:48] Although we were part of the university program, we didn't require women to have degrees. In fact, one of the people I recruited as a program officer came to us because

she had been working in one of those factories, those garment factories, those infamous garment factories. And she had resigned because she was outraged at the way the women were treated, and to me that was a great qualification. Most important, I saw WAND as a space for learning and responding to what we learned. And early on in Jamaica, when I first started there with the Women's Bureau, I learned this applied behavioral science methodology, which was in a sense the beginning of this process of action, reflection, analysis, generalization, and internalization, which is at the heart of participatory action research. We call it ARAGI, and it's just part of my DNA now that is how I operate.

[00:08:46] **Patricia Maguire:** Let's talk about then one specific WAND project, which was the Rose Hall Participatory Evaluation and Research project. And in 1980, Rose Hall started out as a WAND pilot project for the integration of women in rural development and it was a participatory project in all aspects, starting with consulting the community about their interest in even hosting the project, identifying community people to lead it. I think it was in-part managed by Pat Ellis, who was one of WAND's program officers. At that time in the 1980s, it was common for international development agencies and foundations to assume that you should focus community development work on income generation projects. So how did you and WAND come to focus on something much broader than income generation?

[00:09:42] **Peggy Antrobus:** Before I say anything more, I want to just make a special note of Pat's role in this. You know, you have a project, but the person that takes a leadership is the person that breathes life into that, and that is really Pat Ellis. Pat was the person who interacted the most with Rose Hall. But before we even got into the field, I remember we had a staff orientation, and I think this is very important. Because we were based in the university, I wanted to be sure that the WAND people did not go into that community, who invited us in, with any preconceived ideas of what we are going to do. So our very first interaction as WAND was going to be that training in participatory methodologies. But we had the orientation before we went to say, look, we are not going there to teach anybody anything, in fact, we hope to learn. We hope to learn from our interaction with Rose Hall. And that in fact is what happened. And so we did not have a particular project, particularly we said no income generating project. So that was it. We had the workshop.

[00:10:55] **Patricia Maguire:** Chris, you were one of the young people in the Rose Hall community who got involved in that project. I think at the time you were an assistant teacher, and you led the adult education program which was the first program that was identified by the community through the participatory community needs assessment. So tell us how you got involved and about the impact of the participatory methods on the community.

[00:11:19] **Chris Ashton:** My involvement was not straightforward. I was not part of the core of trainees. I worked as a teacher and I was teaching outside of the community. During the days when most of the activities, when the training was done, I was away. And in fact, I wasn't aware of the coming program until the training started. And so, when I would get home on evenings, I would mill around, you know, check in at the workshop, observe, and I think at the launch of the working group, I became involved because then it was open to residents beyond those who would've had the training.

[00:12:05] And also by then too, an assessment was done during the workshop. A community survey to determine what residents saw as their main areas, the main areas they would like the project to focus on. And so, when we started the group, we started the group knowing that adult education was one of the areas we would like to tackle. And that was my initial hands-on involvement. There were few of us. We had someone who was like the foundation stone, Anesta Rodney, who is also deceased. She was an older teacher and someone with lots of years in education. I was a young person at that time. And so, most of the initial work was done by Anesta and myself.

[00:13:05] We had to develop materials from scratch, once we decided that we would start the program. And lots of people were interested, mostly women though there were a few males. And we decided that one of the things we were going to have to do was to try to transfer literacy and numeracy skills to these people.

[00:13:29] They were mostly semi-literate or not literate at all, but we recognized that we couldn't do it in the way we taught at schools. And how best can we transfer these knowledge and skills without embarrassing people and allowing them to keep their dignity while they grow and develop. And that was the driving force behind all that we did.

[00:13:57] **Peggy Antrobus:** Rose Hall already had a history of cooperation before this project came into the community. Could you say some more about that?

[00:13:57] **Chris Ashton:** It's the highest inland village in St. Vincent. It's at the highest elevation. And it's the last village where it is located in the northwest. So it was kind of isolated and this was at a time before electricity was widespread, before pipe-borne water was widespread, and I think even paved roads. And the community then had got together and had bought a bus for transportation. And it was by pooling whatever resources - they had a cooperative that they formed themselves. The bus was operated as a cooperative with officers and everything like that. And so that foundation there at that formal organizational level. Also, not to be slighted at the informal level, there was several elements of cooperation in the community, that cooperative spirit. I can remember as a child, it was quite frequent that families would have to move their houses, physically move

their houses from the spot where they lived. And then usually on a weekend you would have a group of men who will go and lift the house and take it to the new spot.

[00:15:37] So the idea of the working group, while some elements were new, such as the focus on women, the idea of a community group in itself was not new. And even though you have the idea of the women's group was new from a developmental standpoint, there were church women's groups. For example, my mother was a member of her church women's group and I learned some years later that the church women's group had also participated in the National Women's Counseling in St. Vincent and Grenadines, which is a national body that focuses on the needs, the concerns, the issues of women. So, when I reflect on it now, the whole thing was not altogether new, except from a developmental standpoint.

[00:16:34] **Patricia Maguire:** Well, that raises an important issue that the community, the notion of collaboration wasn't something brought in from the outside. It was something already embedded in the community ethos of how people work together, the women's church group, the cooperative bus, that there was already foundational community values around collaboration and participation.

[00:17:00] **Peggy Antrobus:** Yes, and what WAND did was to provide the tools in participatory methods and needs assessment, planning, and evaluation. And so a number of projects came out of that, Chris. I wonder if you could say a little bit more about the variety of projects that came out of the community's own assessments of their needs.

[00:17:11] **Chris Ashton:** Yes, once the working group got going, the group would meet regularly and from time to time we would do our own assessment and see even if we had an original list to retest those ideas. And so several things which came out, we had a farmer supply shop. Farming was and is the main livelihood base of the community. And we had a bakery, that was one of the more difficult activities to get off the ground. Sometime after we also had a preschool. If I could say though, one of the good things about the group was the structure that it had. Yes, we had the community working group, but within the community working group, there were several subcommittees.

[00:18:12] Each area of focus had its own subcommittee. The subcommittees allowed for the working group leadership to continue to function with the women who were trained and who were the primary facilitators and the subcommittees allowed for leadership of men and women based on the individual's aptitude, skills, you know, et cetera. And I think that was one of the better things - the structure that was created that allowed the space for people to contribute, for people to grow, and for people to participate in the development of their community without being confined and constrained.

[00:19:00] **Patricia Maguire:** Chris, one of the things that you said is that initially there were more women involved, particularly in the adult education component, and I think one of the most unique things of the Rose Hall project over time was the eventual inclusion of men and masculinities in the project. And I know Norma, you were a program officer at WAND, working closely with Pat and in preparing for the podcast, I found a mimeographed copy of the 1983 report that Norma you wrote about Women and Men in Development Workshop that the Rose Hall Community Committee and WAND organized. And you wrote that that Women and Men in Development Workshop was trying to increase the sensitivity to the various roles and relationships between men and women in the community. So Norma, tell us about the Women and Men in Development Workshop and its outcomes because I think that's one of the ways that you began to become aware of how you might draw more community men into the project.

[00:20:07] **Norma Shorey:** One of the things that we did that I feel very positive about and had a very positive impact was a workshop for men and women. It was a novel idea, and it grew out of the recognition that women were capable of, and they were already playing many roles outside the traditional roles as Peggy and Chris have already identified. But the contributions of women were not always recognized, and we saw that as we interacted with the working group and moved forward with that. And also we recognized that many men resented the leadership and the assertiveness that women were beginning to show in the community. So that workshop was designed to help men and women to have a better appreciation of each other. And I want to say that that workshop was not a lecture focused type workshop at all, instead of which, because of our background in WAND, we used a variety of participatory techniques, roleplay, storytelling, small group discussions to enable men and women to have frank dialogue and exchange of ideas.

[00:21:28] What was so exciting about that workshop, was the impact that it had on both men and women. How we got started is we got men and women separately to think of words which they use to describe themselves and other men and women. And then when they shared those with the opposite sex, they were amazed at the difference between how they saw themselves as men or women, and the negative ways in which they often saw the other sex.

And this then led to a lively, oh my gosh, was it lively, exchange of views and perspectives, which helped both men and women to appreciate that their perceptions of their roles and other people's roles were not the same as other people. And it opened people's ideas to be more receptive to seeing things differently and to things that they had not consciously thought about.

[00:22:34] I'll give an example. Very often people saw women as weaker than men. Women saw women as weaker than men. But yet how much strength was required for women to do agricultural work and exert physical strength in other areas? And then, talk about strength, after a full day of work in the fields, women had to return home to do what? Cook, clean, look after the children. While, not all of them, but many men went to the rum shop, to lime and chill out and relax. So, we began to look at strength and capacity in different ways.

The participatory approach just opened their eyes so that the community activities then took on a different feel because they saw, yes, they're already collaboration, but even greater respect of the contributions of women. And also opened people's ideas to the types of opportunities that were open to men, which were often close to women. And it really really built a great appreciation for the roles that both men and women played in building the community and it enhanced that collaborative approach that was already there that Chris spoke about.

And what I want to say is that, yes, we didn't use the word "feminism", but what we were talking about was empowering women so that they could play a much more effective role in building their communities and to build the appreciation of the value of the contribution that women could make when men listened to them and adopted some of their ideas for improving the community.

[00:24:29] **Patricia Maguire:** Chris, is there anything else you want to add on to that as a person who was a community member, say the longer-term implications of that workshop having for the relationships between and roles that men and women played in in Rose Hall?

[00:24:45] **Chris Ashton:** Well, men became not just more respectful of women's abilities as leaders, but admired women's role as leaders. There was a genuine healthy respect. As Norma was speaking, I was thinking of then and now, the preschool is still going on and the preschool is still in independent hands. In many of our districts, in many of our communities, you have preschools that are part of the formal education system in terms of their management and structure. The preschooler at Rose Hall is still an independent entity. Most communities have their either call community centers or some other form of community meeting place. But the persons who were members of the working group and those who have succeeded the members of the working group are also still intimately involved in the management of that community resource center, which actually was constructed with the pushing, the advocacy of members of the working group. There was no meeting place in the community other than the school when the group started, and it was one of the things that was recognized. And the working group mobilized the community and started to gather building materials for a concrete structure. Members of the working group also approached the then Prime Minister for governmental assistance. And the

government assisted and was willing to assist because of the initiative of the community. It's a multipurpose structure and it also has a space for the preschool and when the bakery was functioning, also had space for the bakery. That's one of the physical legacies of the initiatives and efforts of the working group.

[00:27:02] **Patricia Maguire:** Chris, I think that part of what you're talking about is that the Rose Hall Project and the working group created not only a physical space, which was the community center, but then also if you will, a greater psychological space, so to speak, or a social space for women to use their voice, express their leadership, and men to appreciate that in different ways and the insights that men and women had about each other and their skills and strengths and assets then changed - having those spaces, both a physical space and a sociological space, if you will. Is there anything else, Norma or Peggy, that you want to come back in on that?

[00:27:49] **Norma Shorey:** I would like to make the point that my working with the Rose Hall project then helped to develop my own sensitivity, a greater sensitivity to feminism, to the empowerment of women and because of the workshop in Rose Hall, I then in my work throughout the Caribbean, because I was involved in many other different community initiatives and programs, I ran other workshops on women and men in development. I ran a workshop with the social work students at the UWI in Jamaica, just helping them to appreciate their own biases and how they could be more sensitive, why and how they could be more sensitive to the gender dynamics and how those would help to empower both men and women in the community.

I was invited through WAND to do work with trade unionists to help them to do that, that same job because trade unions were dominated and are still dominated in many ways by men. But it gave women a stronger voice in advocating for women, for women's work, for the value of the work that workers do at many different levels. And so it wasn't just Rose Hall, it was expanding that experience that I gained through WAND, through the Rose Hall linkages with other groups. And then in my own business, after working with WAND, I was the gender focal point at the Canadian International Development Agency's operations in Barbados for the Eastern Caribbean. I was the gender link. And then I have also in my own business, worked with many different agencies on environmental issues, on disaster management, ensuring that because of my own sensitivity to gender, I infuse the gender perspective into the many activities that I'm doing. So, I'm conscious of it and I integrated not only the gender, but also a participatory approach, which gets people to think rather than you telling them. And all of that has helped me to be more effective as a consultant, as a facilitator in empowering and sensitizing both men and women to the roles and the contributions of each other.

[00:30:33] **Peggy Antrobus:** I wanted to say that we didn't use the word empowerment at the time, a lot of these words come after you've actually done the practice and then the words fit the practice. But certainly empowerment and Chris, you remember that the Rose Hall Working Group had a song. The time has come...

Chris Ashton: "The time has come when we must share and to assist in anywhere."

[00:30:54] **Peggy Antrobus:** Yeah. Basically, to get together to build up our community. I think what that's told the community, that when women lead the whole community benefits. It's not just the women benefit, the whole community benefits. And, the other thing I have to mention, Pat, you'd mentioned everybody had talked about an income generating project, and we at WAND said, no, we're not, that's not what we're doing. We're doing a training workshop in participatory methods. And Chris, you remember that one of the first projects was not a income generating, but an income saving project. The community wanted every child in the community to have a school uniform, remember that? And so the sewing skills were used not to generate income for individuals, but to make sure that every child in the community had a school uniform. And I love the way in which, you know, women's priorities; a daycare center, a uniform for every child, a bakery integrated into the things that, that men are primarily interested in. So I just think it's such a wonderful example of women's leadership. When you give women leadership how they use that leadership.

[00:32:10] **Norma Shorey:** And I want to say it wasn't just coming from WAND. WAND was a stimulus point, but because we use a participatory development approach our aim was to encourage and focus and build the skills of women and men in the community so they could move forward on their own journey. So it was not just about the WAND people, it was about the people in the community taking that leadership and involving people like Chris who were younger then into the process so that the next generation began to see things in a different way.

[00:32:48] **Chris Ashton:** The younger men were willingly adapting roles that were considered female roles. Younger men were very willingly began doing their own laundry, assisting more with household chores and, and things like that. The stigma of that had started to break down. In terms of wider impact, let's not forget that when the initial training was done, the training included people beyond Rose Hall. It included practitioners from various government departments and different communities. And the intention was that the methodology would be taken to other communities as well. So, some of that did happen. Also just as Norma, through how her practice impacted in other areas, other islands with other agencies, I think my work has had a similar impact in St. Vincent as well as in the Windward Islands.

[00:33:50] **Patricia Maguire:** Let's talk about the evolution of WAND as an organization. I think, Peggy, you've said elsewhere that you thought that one of the successes of WAND was that it evolved to become more political, analytical, a more activist organization, which I think that each of you are bringing in with your recollection. So, how did WAND evolve that way, and what were some of the challenges of that evolution?

[00:34:16] **Peggy Antrobus:** The thing that I want to really emphasize about the evolution of WAND is to say that it evolved in the same way that my own consciousness and the consciousness of other people that we were involved with WAND, evolved. Because to me, feminist consciousness raising is an ongoing process and it is very transformative. And it transforms the lives of people who are involved. By that, I mean is, I go back to the ARAGI thing, you know, there's a constant process of reflection, analysis, and generalization. So, the evolution of one has to do with that process. Every year we had a WAND evaluation. It was a participatory formative evaluation, and we had three levels for evaluation. The first was what was going on globally. So, right from the beginning we had that global, I suppose it came out of my own deeper understanding of global structures. It was an analysis of structural adjustment policy framework, which was beginning to take place throughout the region. The evolution comes out of the process of personal transformation as a result of feminism and participatory process of reflecting. So, the first level was what's going on in the world, second level, what's going on in the region.

Now that's very important because WAND wanted to respond to what was happening in other parts of the region. So just to give you two examples. One of the recommendations from that workshop was that the CARICOM Secretariat, that's the government regional Secretariat, would set up a women's desk. And once they did that, it was no longer necessary for WAND to be involved in lobbying governments to set up their own women's desks and women's bureaus, which are now called Gender Bureaus. So, we're constantly saying, this is what other people are doing. Does it make any sense for us to continue doing this? And if no, then what should we be doing?

Another example was the, the Women's Studies program in the university. We deliberately chose to situate WAND in the outreach program, but I think I recognized the need for teaching women's studies.

[00:36:36] So there was a major research project going on when WAND started on women in the Caribbean, which was social science research. And that is fine, that was wonderful, but there was no teaching. And so WAND was the catalyst for getting that started. And then once that started, again, we didn't feel the pressure to be like a university program. I think Norma had mentioned, you know, one of the pushbacks people were always expecting us

to give lectures and we never gave lectures. We always had these participatory workshops, which is not what people were expecting from university people.

So, I can't talk about the evolution without talking about DAWN. So in 1984, the end of the Decade for Women, again, within the context of that decade, there was a major end of decade conference and a group of women from the south, from Africa, Asia, America, and the Pacific and the Caribbean were convened by somebody that we had met in the course of the decade.

[00:37:35] Again, it wouldn't have happened without the decade because the decade provided that opportunity for meeting people on a consistent basis and really building relationships. We were going to prepare a platform document for that end of decade non-governmental forum. And the methodology we used in that was storytelling basically. We came from all of these places, convened in Bangalore, India, and we just told our stories. The question was, what has happened to women in your country in the last 10 years?

And the women from the Pacific were talking about militarism. The women from Asia were talking about religious fundamentalism. The women from Africa were talking about drought and desertification, and the women from Latin America were talking about this thing called structural adjustment, which was a new policy framework, which people call the Washington Consensus then, now is basically globalized neoliberalism. And we began to reflect on that from the perspective of poor women living in the South, Okay, So that's a participatory method. Also, one that takes into account class. Had to be the perspective of poor women because poor women would be affected in a different way from women, you know, who had means. It also took into account colonialism and neocolonialism. So, in a sense I learned about intersectional feminism really from being part of that DAWN group. I mean, we didn't call it intersectional feminism, again, there's a word that becomes very popular, but in fact, that was our practice. We had an analysis of women, the lives, what was happening to women which linked colonialism, class, race and ethnicity, as well as the macroeconomic framework, so, that linking of the macroeconomic framework to the reality of lives of women, like women in Rose Hall.

[00:39:38] So in a sense, my own contribution when we were doing the DAWN analysis was based on what I had learned from Rose Halls. It really deepened my analysis when I got involved with DAWN people who incidentally my feminism came from working class women in Jamaica, making me look at myself and see myself differently and from women from the south who were doing this macroeconomic analysis. So that link between the macroeconomic and the realities was something that WAND did more and more after DAWN, and after 1984.

And I like to remind people in the region that the group that first challenged our government about that policy framework, and Chris, you remember that your Prime Minister, St. Vincent introduced structural adjustment as his policy framework when he first came to office in 1984. And in fact, you know, that is where my own doctoral study was making that link between the macroeconomic framework and what has happened to women at the community level, as in Rose Hall, as a result of that. In the case of my doctoral work, I also asked a question, to what extent did that community-based project mitigate the worst effects of those macroeconomic projects, policies? And my conclusion was that it helped. And here I found another word that I'd not used before, didn't know before, 'social capital'.

[00:41:06] Because in a sense, that project, Chris, in Rose Hall, the relationship that that project created between people like agricultural extension officers, public health nurses, teachers, and the community, was building social capital. I didn't know anything about that until I did the research for my doctoral work, and I said, yes, that social capital really made a huge difference.

[00:41:33] The evolution of WAND, more and more we were involved after 1984, in advocacy and challenging Caribbean governments about structural adjustment policies. It was not the economists that did it. It was not the academics that did it. It was the women in the region using the WAND, the DAWN, framework of analysis, which starts with what is happening to ordinary women because of this and that policies that cut social services, cut subsidies to the poor, privatize things like water, opens up the market so that there's competition and, and small businesses cannot survive. That's the main way in which we evolve. But I want to emphasize that the evolution is an ongoing process, and it never leaves out the grounding. If I were to draw a picture of WAND's evolution, it would be a spiral because coming back to the work we did in Rose Hall.

[00:42:33] **Patricia Maguire:** Peggy, I think what you've just done there is, is connect the dots, if you will, of WAND being a catalyst, an incubator for analysis of structural adjustment, for activism, for communities, and showing the connection between WAND and DAWN and Caribbean feminists and Latin American feminists, analysis of structural adjustment. You've sort of connected all those dots for us.

Let's continue with some of the discussion that you've had, each of you about your own growth over time, if you will, as feminists, recognizing that many times, you've said, well, I was operating with feminist values, but we didn't call ourselves feminists and there's a lot of baggage of course, with that term. But might each of you, as you're comfortable, talk about your own growth and development over time as a feminist.

[00:43:36] **Norma Shorey:** I was involved in development work before I joined WAND, that's why I did my Master's in social development. But coming to WAND and working with Peggy just heightened my own awareness and then another significant factor in my own development was being able to participate, in fact being recommended by WAND through Peggy's linkages and our regional linkages, to attend the first conference for women in Latin America, the Caribbean, by the organization of American States, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). They held a workshop on women in social production. I represented WAND at that. It was just a mind-blowing awareness-building opportunity for me, which reinforced many of the things that I had been doing and learning about through my involvement with WAND. My commitment to women's empowerment, to feminism, maybe not expressed in those words, but our sensitivity to gender issues is something that I have built in, in my own work throughout the years, and also advocating for women and leadership in many different sectors. In all of the activities that I have done, it may not have said that you're going to integrate gender, but I made sure that I integrated gender and awareness of women's and men's role in the contribution of women and men.

And, let me just say that even now as I am involved in a number of other women's organizations like the International Women's Forum, where we are actually promoting the women, the roles of women in leadership at many different levels. So I can say that my activist willingness was really elevated, was further accelerated by my involvement in WAND and the discussions that we had.

And I want to just come back to something that Peggy said. If you are going to grow, you need to reflect on what you have done and the impact it has and what you can do better. Many other organizations don't do that, both for the organizations and for the individual. And I think that that was one of the motivating factors for me, myself, as a professional. What have you done? What is a reflection? What are you learning from this? And therefore, what would you do differently? And that participatory approach, as Peggy has said, that is now definitely embedded in my DNA in terms of how I approach things. Thinking about it's not just here, what's the end goal? Have you reached it? What are some of the things the, sidelines, the side roads that you have had to take to reach the end? And what have you learned that you would do differently? And that is part of my growth as a facilitator, as a professional, embedding both feminist and gender sensitivity issues into my own work and life.

[00:46:58] **Peggy Antrobus:** Well, I've said a lot about my own feminist journey and how transformative it was. It changes you, you change your work, and your work changes you, and it is an ongoing spiral of deepening knowledge. Feminism is what helped me to see

women in their totality, not just in silos, not just in terms of their roles, but in terms of their full humanity.

And yes, it's been challenging because of course there came a point where governments didn't want to hear my name. If, if you mention Peggy Antrobus, they would say, no, we, we don't want to have anything to do with her. The other turning point was DAWN. After DAWN, every lecture I gave was prefaced by a whole analysis of structural adjustment. So I became known as Peggy's structural adjustment. You know, don't ask Peggy Antrobus to speak because she's gonna bring in this whole macroeconomic stuff, which we really don't want to hear.

[00:47:52] **Norma Shorey:** Or, let's ask Peggy Antrobus to speak because we know that she will make the linkages to many different things and that is, it depends on who you're talking to, right? Because I think that in the region, so many people, both men and women have valued the contribution that she has made and that she empowered WAND to make. And she empowered not just WAND as the organization but the people in WAND who have moved on at many different levels.

[00:48:22] **Patricia Maguire:** I think across the world today, there's some pretty challenging times. There's a lot of pushback, sometimes very virulent pushback on our fights for economic justice, climate justice, reproductive justice, social justice. There are a lot of attacks on authentic avenues for citizens participation. So, what can the three of you, what can you say to our listeners about how and why feminis- informed participatory action research and participatory processes of all kind, still matter?

[00:48:59] **Chris Ashton:** It's essential, regardless of what the issue is, and regardless of how much we are willing to be advocates of whatever discipline, whatever methodology, it is essential that we create spaces for people and we give people the tools to be their own advocates and to make their decisions and to fight their own causes.

[00:49:30] **Norma Shorey:** There is a tremendous pushback from people who have power to those who don't have power, and for those who have power to make sure that those who do not have power do not get it. And that enters the whole question of diversity. We know from our experience that when there is diversity in decision making, it benefits organizations at so many levels, both in terms of how effective they are, as well as in terms of how they operate with their team, staff, stakeholders, et cetera. But, people in power don't want to have this. And I think that across the world, we are seeing so many examples of ordinary people saying, we want a voice. We want a voice in the south, we want a voice in Africa, Latin America, Asia, to come to the table. No, G7. It's just, it's not just what you want, but it's also what impacts our livelihoods. And we are seeing even, even in the

developed countries, a growing, uh, an increasing voice, especially with young people, of saying, no, there is need for climate justice, for better balance, for diversity, for recognition of many different types of work. And I think that the underlying perspectives and principles coming from feminism, from the whole question of diversity, from the whole question of dealing with structural adjustment and economic development, all the factors which impact how we work together.

[00:51:27] and I believe that when women have a voice at the table, there is greater equity, there's a greater search for equity, there's a greater search for justice, and it's an equity, not equality, equity in terms of how things are done. And that is where I feel that I have been empowered, that I have made a contribution and that there is still a contribution to be made.

[00:51:53] **Peggy Antrobus:** And I would say it matters more than ever because of some of the things that Chris and Norma were saying. In this context, governments are paying more attention to the interests of large corporations. Let us face it, even the most, but I don't want to say progressive because I really don't know many progressive governments now. They've all caved in. It's a corporate led world. I think the participatory, feminist informed participatory approaches, is absolutely essential for the following reason. You know, people talk about, I learned this at CIE, Patricia, different approaches to social change, okay? So there is the professional technical, and then it's a certain kind of knowledge that is used, and some people have that knowledge and other people don't have it and Chris described it very well. There's the political approach which says, no, it's political power that matters and we can change things. But the truth of the matter right now is that the formal political power is not operating in the interest of ordinary people. So, you have the social movements and then there's a countercultural approach. And I really want to say that we hardly have a talk about that countercultural approach. I want to say that feminist informed participatory methodologies is the one that brings together that countercultural and the political and the professional because it really focuses on people who are in their own situation. So, the governments are not listening to people. So what are we going to do? How are we going to, how are people going to live? And the people that Chris is most concerned about, poor people, are going to live with, survive with joy, and in the midst of these crises. And it's only a methodology that's grounded in listening to the experiences of women that can do that.

[00:53:52] And at this stage of my life, I want to spend my time now focusing on helping communities to organize themselves in a way that the Rose Hall community organized itself to survive these threats. Not just the climate, the persistent inequality, the violence that we see everywhere, the pushback against our rights. I think that we really need to

come back to that level. And it's only this methodology that is not just the participatory methodology, but one is grounded in women's experience. We need the women's voice particularly because it's women's experiences that really matter. It's women's experiences - we saw that in the pandemic. It's women's experiences and their capacity to organize to survive that is going to see everybody through.

[00:54:42] **Patricia Maguire:** Well, I want to thank you, Peggy and Norma and Chris for sharing your reflections on a part of your life's work with us today. I want to thank our listeners. It's been a privilege to be with you for season one of the Participatory Action Research Feminist Trailblazers and Good Troublemakers Podcast.

You can help expand our listenership by sharing the podcast link with your colleagues, your friends, your networks. A transcript of today's podcast and additional information will be posted on our companion [PAR-FEM Trailblazers website](#). We'll be back September 1, with Season Two and meanwhile as Civil Rights icon, John Lewis urged us, go make some good trouble of your own.

© 2026 Participatory Action Research - Feminist Trailblazers & Good Troublemakers