

## Introduction

**Kate Bedford\***

In June 2009 a coup occurred in Honduras. The left-leaning President, Manuel Zelaya, was ousted by political opponents backed by the military, and forced into exile. Honduras was expelled from the Organization of American States, and many countries cut diplomatic ties. A peaceful resistance movement emerged against the coup, uniting diverse sectors of the population. An alliance of feminist groups, Feminists in Resistance, was formed to represent women's voices. In the words of the group:

For the women involved, resistance signifies a fight for a substantive democracy that will transform existing relationships of power and generate a new and egalitarian social pact. This goes far beyond Manuel Zelaya's return. From their perspective, struggling for the restitution of the constitutional president to his office is a condition for democracy and a point of departure for the process of re-establishing the Honduran State by recognizing diversity, citizen participation, gender equality, and human rights.<sup>1</sup>

Although Zelaya has since returned to the country, the fight for a substantive democracy continues.

Last year *feminists@law* received a submission from an academic and activist participant in Feminists in Resistance, Breny Mendoza. She wrote about the limits, and possibilities, of constitutional reform as an activist priority in the aftermath of the coup. This issue is pressing not only for Honduras, but also for a range of other countries in the region undergoing constitutional reform processes that seek to involve social movement actors and achieve substantive, transformative political change. *feminists@law* sought out some interlocutors who have written about, and been involved with, these processes. Their remit was to discuss Breny's paper, and to kick start some broader conversations about feminism, constitutionalism, and transformation in the region. Breny then responded to their comments.

We hope that this exercise in virtual discussion and debate will generate additional conversation, in *feminists@law* and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> See Honduras Action Monitor, *Honduras Feminists in Resistance*, 2009. Available at [http://justassociates.org/actions/honduras/hn\\_feministaresistencia.htm](http://justassociates.org/actions/honduras/hn_feministaresistencia.htm).

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