

Dresda Emma Méndez de la Brena
3rd GEMMA Graduation

I would like to start my speech by saying thank you. Thank you to the Rector of the University of Granada Pilar Aranda Ramírez, to the Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Institute Ana Ma. Muñoz Munoz, to the GEMMA Consortium Coordinator Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, to Maria Dolores Ferre Cano, General Director of Universities – Andalusian Regional Government, to all the members of the consortium and to all the families and friends who accompany us today. I feel honoured to have been given this opportunity to express what GEMMA has meant for me and to share it with all of you. As the feminist struggle I belong to has taught me, the personal is political; therefore, I cannot speak but from my own story. Because GEMMA has been, and still is, a personal and political journey; both constantly evolving and irrevocable.

To ask myself what GEMMA has signified in my life brings me to navigate through crossroads of convergence and divergence. GEMMA has meant converging with friends and forging deep bonds with other women, with whom I could build projects, conversations and networks of affection. Friends who have accompanied me through heartbreaks and defeats, through joy and anger. It has also meant divergence, because GEMMA has taught me that relationships do evolve, that they have a pace, and that, in order to create caring and affective networks, we sometimes have to step back, reconsider and, if we are lucky, perhaps coincide again. GEMMA has meant learning that sorority is like a thread which unites us in both agreements and disagreements; a thread which weaves and unweaves us, always in mutual recognition.

To me, to be GEMMA means to be a nomad. It means returning home knowing that you see the world differently. It means displacing relationships, leaving behind family, friends and community. It means not having roots, really; but rather, keeping all your life and memories in two suitcases. It means to constantly carry a bridge on your back. It means speaking in tongues that are not yours; sharing your life views in new contexts, academic spaces and classrooms. It means creating new communities, networks and ties of affection. It means embracing nomadism both as a lifestyle and a political identity. It means that in a sea of constant change, the only anchoring will be the feminist and gender perspective as a tool through which to look at the world.

To be GEMMA means to experience love and heartbreak. Diverse love, which has taught me different meanings and possibilities of sharing, from different positions and identities. GEMMA has also given me the tools to leave in the prospect of patriarchal love structures, to identify power relations, emotional violences to set boundaries. GEMMA has taught me the harsh lesson of recognising myself loving in a patriarchal way: from insecurity, from fear. But above all, GEMMA has taught me to deconstruct what love means, and to try to build my connections —sometimes successfully, sometimes not— through freedom, self-care and care towards the others.

Being GEMMA means privilege. As I learnt on my first days of school from my classmate's wisdom, privileges are inalienable; and so is being GEMMA. Therefore, it is also a responsibility, a genealogical debt. A debt with those who were not granted a scholarship or other means to be able to study here, with those who were not selected into the programme. It is to honour our mothers, sisters, grandmothers, ancestors, and those who are no longer with us. It is to honour those who fight every day, transforming feminist practice and resistance into theory inside our classrooms. Because we are the sum of all the women in our lives and because, thanks to them, we can complexify what it means to be a woman/women in a world against us.

Being GEMMA means rupture and internal healing. It means to recognise oneself as violent, patriarchal, and contradictory in some moments of life. It is to recognise that we make daily

agreements with patriarchy. It is to understand the complexities of being a feminist; it is to forgive ourselves and move on. It is to know yourself as a lesbian, bisexual, transgender, asexual or all of them at the same time. It is to acknowledge yourself as complex, mean, irreverent, a kill-joy, and to know that these are political ways of being. It is to reclaim our right to complexity.

Being GEMMA means academia. It means meeting great teachers, both in the classroom and in life. It means to have found in their words new vocabulary, new ways, new standpoints from which to understand the world. But also, GEMMA means activism, it means to be part of a living network, which keeps moving, and moving us with it. It means to feel connected to the world; it means to create worlds. Being GEMMA is to do embodied politics. It is to use your body as a battleground; it is to block streets, to occupy squares. Because now more than ever, in times of the extreme right, intersectional feminisms are the resistance.

I do not expect my story to represent any of you. Perhaps, however, you find resonances with it; or with the story of the woman sitting before you, or by your side or behind you. My voice is just one of the many voices of GEMMA, and for this reason, I want to invite you to share your stories here, outside and everywhere. Because when feminisms speak, patriarchy remains silent. This is our challenge, our struggle; this is what it means to be GEMMA.