

UCI Department of History & UCI Global Middle East Studies

COLLOQUIUM

Biography of a Generation:

Women’s political activism in Egypt in the period of

“second wave” feminism (1972-1995)

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The 1970s were a key the decade for feminism, seeing women intellectuals and activists around the world claiming a political agenda for “liberation”. But words have a history and a context. What did the word “liberation” implied for Egyptian women activists in the period of the so called second wave feminism? This paper examines the genealogies and the trajectories that led to the emergence of second-wave independent secular feminism in Egypt, covering the period between the publication of *Women and Sex* (1972) by Nawal al-Saadawi, and the 4th UN Beijing Conference on Women in 1995.

Tues Nov. 13, 2018
3:30-5:00pm
SBSG 3323

The over 70 oral histories I have collected in Egypt between 2011 and 2018 with grassroots feminist activists, professionals in international organizations, intellectuals and artists reveal a tension between the agendas of independent women’s organizations, the government, and international feminist organizations. Narrating feminist history in Egypt through the collection of personal stories, which compose a collective enterprise of feminist cultural and political activism, this paper shifts the focus from the institutional accounts produced by the government to activists' lived experiences, and it weaves a narrative that overcomes the paradigms of “exceptional women”, enabling “social biographies” to be composed.

