Women’s Solidarity During Patriarchal Backlash:
High-Risk Feminism in Colombia & Mexico

DR JULIA ZULVER, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow
Oxford School of Global and Area Studies
& Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM
Cynthia Cockburn: “Men and women die different deaths and are tortured and abused in different ways in wars, both because of physical differences between the sexes and because of the different meanings culturally ascribed to the male and female body” (2004, 35-36).
How do we explain why women put themselves directly in harm’s way by mobilizing? Why, when the response to acting collectively can be threats, stalking, violence, or murder, do women decide to assume this risk?
Gender lens on high-risk collective action:

- Leadership is critical when it comes to convincing a specific population to mobilize, despite the risks this entails.

- Leaders can frame the **comparative benefits** – both material and non-material – of mobilization to those who operate in a domain of losses, where non-participation does not guarantee safety.
In contesting violent dynamics women compound the violences to which they are exposed. These threats are three-fold:

1. Women are daring to disturb imposed social order by mobilizing against armed groups;
2. Women transgress socially-acceptable gender norms by making demands
3. Women make demands for women’s rights and gender justice.
Putumayo, the reconfiguration of armed conflict, and patriarchal backlash
New project: Women’s high-risk leadership in Mexico
Gendered leadership in the search for missing and murdered family members
Gendered leadership and activism against GBV (in Indigenous communities)
Gendered leadership
and feminicide
Conclusions

- Women’s mobilization is a careful political calculation, and does not take shape automatically.

- Implications for how we fund and provide resources for high-risk activists - in a feminist way.

- Implications for how we ensure guarantees of protection, especially when encouraging women’s participation in conflict-affected or fragile settings.

- Importance of grounded, context-specific understandings of gendered risks, and self-protection strategies.