The Day Women Marched in Mexico

On Women's Day 2020, tens of thousands of women risked their safety to protest femicide throughout Mexico.

At Shondaland, we’re all about courage. Whether it’s saving lives on the frontlines of wildfires or disease, or just peacing out from an uninspiring career or relationship, acts of courage can transform us. We’re taking a look at how being bold and brave leads us not only toward growth but ultimately toward greatness.

Covered in fake blood and clothed in purple, thousands of women marched into the streets of Mexico City with chants of “Not one more, not one more murder.”

Though mostly strangers to one another, they were connected in solidarity. Through social media, the women had organized to protest femicide — murdering women on account of their gender, typically by men — on March 8, 2020, for International Women’s Day. More than 80,000 women showed up.

Courage: A Shondaland Series
Although femicide is a global problem, in Mexico, like much of Latin America, the scouring of women is exacerbated. A 2020 report published in local news media found that 14 of the 22农村s’ cities have the highest femicide rates in the Latin America.

In Mexico, more than 10 women are murdered on average every day, according to the National Human Rights Commission of the National Public Security (CNDH). Those numbers are increasing in 2020. In the first quarter this year, nearly 2,500 women were killed – 72% more women murdered and 24% were victims of femicide, according to CNDH. That’s nearly 9% higher than the same period of time for the 2019.

According to the number released on April 28 by the Executive Secretary of the National Public Security Secretariat (CNDH), between January and March of this year, 2,494 females and 726 intentional homicides against women were registered in Mexico’s territory, the highest ever since 2015.

Prominent cases have doubled in the last five years in Mexico, according to Leonor Fonseca, Associate Director and Associate Fellow at the Americas Program for the Strategic and International Studies, a think-tank think tank in Washington, D.C.

According to Amnesty International, in Mexico, two-thirds of girls and women aged 15 or over have experienced gender-based violence at least once in their lives, and 77% of women in Mexico report feeling unsafe, according to a 2019 National Survey on Urban Safety published by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

And a Twitter search for #Hermanas, which means “sister’s names” in Spanish, or #HermanasEnEcuadorBeacon, will pull up thousands of tweets.

Risky their safety to take a stand

On March 8 of this year, Mecha Georgina Oropesa, 35, of Mexico City, was among the protesters. More than a decade had passed since she last marched in protest of violence against women.

“I was tired of it and the new government would have more legal and procedural changes that would fundamentally change the situation of violence against women,” Oropesa said in 2022, “now, the new regime closed domestic centers and took away resources from civil society organizations that dealt with problems of violence against women.”

There were rumors, Oropesa says, that some people were willing to attack and throw acid on anyone who participated.

Now she says the government organizations and charities working women, claiming their children are not safe and for this many mothers will become criminals.

The new regime, led by Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who took office in December 2018, “transformed the economic independence of women in part of the country’s problems,” Oropesa says.

“Women’s voices from going out into the streets is growing, and domestic violence continues,” Oropesa says.

The head of the National Women’s Office on February 2, 2022, helped start the protest. The 72-year-old, who lives in Mexico City, was killed in 2004 by her four-year-old daughter, who later drowned in drinking water and recovering her organs.

Vendors such as Rafa and Lu Peters published photos of the content of her drowned body with prominent leaders like “We Won Capitol Hill” and “Sweeney,” which provided protests and a public apology from Lu Peters.

To protect the girls’ faces, videos began flooding internet and Twitter with photos of flowers, roses, and landscapes alongside the hashtag #FeminicidioMascarado and images of women with closed eyes and prominent jewelry.

May your soul find peace and your memory find justice,” said Rosaura González on February 8, 2022.

Over social media channels, the hashtag #FeminicidioBeacon, female journalists promoted the way that women’s voices covered femicide and gender violence, which fell into new demand and attention.

“We present against the #FeminicidioBeacon to enumerate women, publishing photographs of their bodies, instead of focusing on the perpetrators of violence and cases in the authorities, Presidente Unidas Feministas (PUE) and in a public statement.”

The movement is part of the #FeminicidioBeacon, which has also been covered in Mexican and international media.
A few days after Oaxaca’s massacre, on February 15, seven-year-old Reina Cecilia Aldrighetti Anzola’s dead body was found wrapped in a plastic bag after being abducted and sexually assaulted in Mexico City. The brutal killing of the girl sparked outrage and a series of small protests that led to the nationwide protest on March 8.

In days leading up to the march, federal and state government authorities tried by all means to discourage participation in the protest, Oropesa says. For instance, announcements were made that public modes of transportation, the Mexico City Metro and Metrobús, would not be operating after 1:00 am. There were rumors, Oropesa says, that some people were willing to attack and throw acid on anyone who participated.

Despite attempts to stop the march, nothing worked, Oropesa says.

That morning of the march, she was able to get on the packed metro surrounded by women in purple, pink, or green scarves, colors that represent feminism in Mexico. Some of the younger women had their names, phone numbers, and blood type painted on their arms. Some began chanting: “Now that we are together, now that they do see us, down with the patriarchy, it is going to fall, it is going to fall!”

“We all looked like real friends, even though we could hardly breathe, pressed against each other,” she says.

Looking around at other women, Oropesa knew she was going to make history that day. Feminical violence does not discriminate between socio-economic status, age, or political party. This was evident that day from the women surrounding her. In one corner of the metro, an older woman sat in a wheelchair accompanied by a boy waving a sign: “I can’t go, but I accompany them from here!”

“We understood that we are all in the same boat and only together we will make a change,” she says.

Thousands of protesters moved towards the Monument to the Revolution, a monument commemorating the Mexican Revolution in Plaza de la República in downtown Mexico City. By noon, they had filled the plaza and nearby demonstration sites.

Oropesa marched from the intersection of Paseo de la Reforma and Avenida Insurgentes, the main avenues that run through Mexico City to De la República, the city’s main squares, once the ceremonial center and most sacred temple for the Aztec Tenochtitlan.

“In the midst of the march, our voices were not heard, not moral merit, but physical attributes,” Oropesa says. “Women are seen as objects, subject to guardianship.”

Some shouted, “I bring medicine if you need it! If you need voice, tell me.” On the sidelines of the march, groups of masked women gathered and destroyed fences surrounding monuments. Some women with hammers smashed windshields and stores or burned doors of buildings, while others yelled “No violence.”

“Damaging private property isn’t the way to do it, but I understand why they were doing it,” says Nadia Sanders, 42, a journalist who lives in Mexico City and also marched that day. “Many women ask, ‘Why don’t you have the same indignation when a woman is murdered? (as you have with the vandalism)’ Why is a piece of wall or metal more important to you than the life of a woman or a five-year-old girl who was raped?”

Thousands of protesters mobilized toward the Mexican Revolution in Plaza de la Republicas.

Demonstrators march during March 8 protest in Mexico. 
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No somos números somos vidas

66.6 millones de personas no tienen acceso a agua potable y los niños son menos vulnerables por no ser reconocidas oficialmente. No somos números, somos vidas.
Moving toward solutions

There isn’t much magic, a one-size-fits-all solution for solving freeway and pedestrian violence, but since the Sandi and the dozens of other people we are working to
at the University of California in the hopes of finding a solution to reduce the violence.

Sanders says the first solutions is creating stronger public policies to protect women at all levels of human activity.

"People need to start by saying this is not normal," Sanders says. "This is not the way things should be. It is an avoidable and we can stop it today."

That course teaches, ensures, donates, and empowers to become more secure received, says Sanders.

"One of the first phone calls on emergency lines are from neighbors," Sanders says. "From people who see what’s going on in that flat or the house next door and think the call. They feel the violence is the whole thing and can speak more freely so we can do that in less severe violence."

People need to start by saying this is not normal. This is not the way things should be. It is avoidable and we can stop this.

"If the life is 17 years old girl and I’ve finished school and getting off the bus, I can be at my brother’s house, my brother knows less than the walking home," Ouyang says. "Any of you can have what when you just follow."

When the bus is in the street, the phone can ou a Google Play application and ask to be backed up a bus and makes sure it is ready on your
contact phone. The video potentially score the attacker who might not want to be observed, or at least want more extreme scenarios.

"So even if your phone is destroyed, you can show who was the perpetrator or people looking for you," Ouyang says. "There’s that it’s the least thing you are able to do."

Regardless of the country, Ouyang says having peers that feel home secure violence shows more in Korea especially in more important in seeing with more protocols and adding more files.

"We think these issues will slowly start to lead to changing that macho culture," Ouyang says. The same size of the March 8 protest helped bring international attention to Mexico’s abortion problem. Through women who showed up put their safety on the line, they became the best in their ability to express power on the demonstration. This, along with the protest’s harrowing images — the violence, the police, the closing — hopefullyudge the Mexican government to take the problem more seriously to limit these perpetrators, bring them to justice, and create a community-wide culture of less macho violence, one that rebuilds trust and move them as human beings who have the right to live in.

Ouyang notes in a review Chicago journalist who has written for more than 40 outlet, including The New York Times, The Independent, and World Report, Chicago Tribune, The Atlantic, The Daily Beast, and others, among others. The key argues her over the Dallas Morning News and Tampa Bay Times. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram.