

PEN International Women's Manifesto

PEN International was founded in London in 1921 to promote friendship and intellectual co-operation among writers everywhere, emphasize the role of literature in developing understanding, stand for freedom of expression and act as a powerful voice on behalf of writers harassed, silenced, imprisoned and sometimes killed for their views.

THE PEN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MANIFESTO

Passed with unanimity at

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International

83rd World Congress in Lviv, Ukraine

21 September 2017

***Presented by Jennifer Clement, PEN International President
and seconded by Margie Orford, PEN International
Board Member***

PEN international endorses the following internationally recognized principles:

NON-VIOLENCE: End violence against women and girls in all of its forms, including legal, physical, sexual, psychological, verbal and digital; promote an environment in which women and girls can express themselves freely, and ensure that all gender-based violence is comprehensively investigated and punished, and compensation provided for victims.

SAFETY: Protect women writers and journalists and combat impunity for violent acts and harassment committed against women writers and journalists in the world and online.

EDUCATION: Eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by promoting full access to quality education for all women and girls, and ensuring that women can fully exercise their education rights to read and write.

EQUALITY: Ensure that women are accorded equality with men before the law, condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and take all necessary steps to eliminate discrimination and ensure the full equality of all people through the development and advancement of women writers.

ACCESS: Ensure that women are given the same access to the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to enable the full and free participation and public recognition of women in all media and across the spectrum of literary forms. Additionally, ensure equal access for women and girls to all forms of media as a means of freedom of expression.

PARITY: Promote the equal economic participation of women writers, and ensure that women writers and journalists are employed and paid on equal terms to men without any discrimination.

PEN International *Women's Manifesto*

The first and founding principle of the PEN Charter asserts that 'literature knows no frontiers'. These frontiers were traditionally thought of as borders between countries and peoples. For many women in the world – and for almost all women until relatively recently – the first, and the last and perhaps the most powerful frontier was the door of the house she lived in: her parents' or her husband's home.

For women to have free speech, the right to read, the right to write, they need to have the right to roam physically, socially and intellectually. There are few social systems that do not regard with hostility a woman who walks by herself.

PEN believes that violence against women, in all its many forms, both within the walls of a home or in the public sphere, creates dangerous forms of censorship. Across the globe, culture, religion and tradition are repeatedly valued above human rights and are used as arguments to encourage or defend harm against women and girls.

PEN believes that the act of silencing a person is to deny their existence. It is a kind of death. Humanity is both wanting and bereft without the full and free expression of women's creativity and knowledge.