Raden Adjeng Karini was one of the great women pioneers around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. She has been hailed as Indonesia’s first feminist. But she was more than that – one of the first nationalist writers, and concerned with social justice. Her memory has been appropriated by successive generations of political leaders and feminists alike. In this lecture I will trace that memory, and chart the development of the women’s movement since its inception. Starting with the pre-liberation women’s movement, I will discuss how issues such as women’s rights and sexuality were conceptualized by successive and competing waves of women’s organizations. In the pre-1965 period the focus will be on Gerwani versus religious and more rightwing organizations. In the New Order I will analyse ‘busy housewife’ ideology. The last part of this lecture will be on the post-Reformasi period. First hopes for a women’s rights agenda were raised by a progressive Minister. At present the Ministry is a very conservative institution, characterized by a focus on religiously-inspired ‘gender harmony’ based on the “happy family” (keluarga sakinah). As the Ministry is also tasked with LGBT issues I will close with an analysis of the present wave of homophobia, which marks a revealing moment in the road towards a conservative neo salafist society.

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