

# WOMEN

*in Action*

1/95 Isis International-Manila



## Focus: Violence Against Women

- Prostitution as Choice
- No Excuse!

## Special Feature: What Men Are Doing

## Focus: Violence Against Women

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Isis International is an international non-governmental woman's organization founded in 1974 to promote the empowerment of women through information sharing, communication and networking. Its network includes more than 50,000 individuals and organizations in 150 countries. It coordinates its activities from two offices, one in Santiago, Chile, and the other in Manila, Philippines. In 1983, another completely new project was launched-- Isis-WICCE, a Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange originally based in Geneva, Switzerland. The project was relocated to Kampala, Uganda in 1993.

The major components of **Isis International-Manila** are: the Resource Center and Information Program, which links local and regional centers of information to bring women, ideas and resources together; the Communications Program, which publishes *Women in Action* three times a year, the monthly newsletter *Women Envision*, as well as information packs and books; and the Research Program, which designs and carries out research on the most important issues affecting women in the region and is conducted in partnership with other women's groups in the Asia-Pacific. address:  
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**Isis International-Santiago** offers an extensive Information and Documentation Center primarily to women in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. It is linked with groups in Latin America, the United States and Asia through the use of new technological instruments and procedures. Isis Santiago created a women's health network involving women of the Latin American and Caribbean region in 1991. Since 1988, the Santiago office has worked on the goal of eradicating violence against women its the Program on Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. It publishes journals, newsletters and books in Spanish. address:

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**Isis Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange** in Kampala offers a Documentation Center with a network of 15,000 contacts in 152 countries and individuals. The Kampala Women's resource center is action-oriented. It offers training programs in documentation and information processing. The International Feminist Network (IFN) mobilizes international support for campaigns organized by women, while the Exchange Program offers women activists, especially those in developing countries, the opportunity to meet and share ideas, skills and experiences. Isis-WICCE's Publications Program produces a bi-annual magazine in English and French, and a women's information update in English, Spanish and French. An important part of Isis-WICCE'S task is the strengthening of collaboration within the Africa region as well as between Africa and other regions.

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## From the Staff

Doing an issue on Violence Against Women demanded tremendous effort. We wanted to be comprehensive in our selection of particular topics relating to crimes against women, and here, we had to find some compromise between the "finiteness" of the magazine and the unspeakable, apparently infinite, pervasiveness of the problem of Violence Against Women. As it turned out, the volume of material we had to forego for lack of space—articles on Violence Against Women in specific settings, such as in religious institutions, in the workplace, at home, in state penitentiaries; personal testimonies; even profiles of organizations tackling the issue, or poems—would be more than enough to fill another issue. The implication: Violence Against Women is a universal, almost endemic malaise that is equally, if not more, deserving of the world's attention as for example, the violence of international terrorism.

We were certain of what we wanted to do—to put out an issue that underscored the gravity of the problem at the same time that it empowered readers to continue combatting it. An issue that would highlight the work of different women engaged in the effort to eradicate Violence Against Women. Times were that while working on a story, with the horror the victim had experienced unfolding before us, we were tempted to simply succumb to the outrage or despair. The WOMEN IN ACTION staff needed each other during these times,

propping one another up when one of us would be overwhelmed by the wife batterer or rapist we encountered in the stories we were preparing. So too it must be with the struggle to eliminate the violence we women are constantly subjected to *everywhere*. While admirably courageous, the efforts of an individual woman who sets out to undo the violence she has suffered remains inadequate when we contemplate the enormity of the problem. We need one another's support.

It must be said that in doing this issue, we were once again reminded of the courage of the many women who confront this giant monster in the person of the abusive husband, father, boyfriend or brother *face-to-face* everyday in their work and their lives, taking small stabs at him numerous times, wondering when this evil will ever end. With this issue, we salute the women who have survived their own terrible experiences and moved on to try to change a society that permits these atrocities. WOMEN IN ACTION joins your tireless efforts and sacrifices, and thanks you for the strength you inspire.

### P.S.

By the way, WOMEN IN ACTION looks slightly different now. We hope you like the changes we've made and welcome any feedback.

## THE CONTRIBUTORS

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### Women in Action is ours!

We welcome your letters, stories, articles, poems, drawings, photos—any contribution that will make Women in Action truly a women advocates' magazine for *everyone, everywhere*. Let us know about your work, your plans, your questions—what you feel and think women need to know.

The August issue of *Women in Action* will have as its focus Women and the Law, while the December issue will be a celebration of the Thirty-some years of Feminism. Send in your suggestions of what both issues should include.



## Large firms sued for sexual discrimination

**THIRTY-THREE** women from three people's organizations filed sexual discrimination suits against Korea's giant corporations—the first such suit filed against the country's conglomerates.

Members of the National Teachers' Labor Union, the Korea Women's Association for Democracy and Sisterhood, and the Citizens' Group for Genuine Education lodged discrimination charges against 44 representatives of major industries last May 25. They complained against the conglomerates' hiring practice of requiring physical attributes such as a certain range for the heights as well as weights of prospective female staff.

The complainants argued that the industries seriously violated the Equal Employment Opportunity

Act in specifying qualifications such as 'over 160cm, under 60kg and good appearance' in their advertisements for

## Lesbian celebration—an art spree

**M**ore than a hundred women came to take part in 'Women-Loving-Women Celebration', which turned out to be a major cultural and literary event, complete with music, story-telling, poetry reading, improvised theater and dancing.

The huge turn-out of friends and supporters at the affair proves "once again that women-loving-women do support and reach out to help each other grow," the lesbian publication *Switchboard* raved.

The occasion was held last February 13 in the New Age-style Dreams Cafe, located in the heart of Manila.

Women artists who performed included the popular singer Susan Fernandez-Magno. Writer Tezza Parel read an excerpt of 'Every Full Moon' (by Nice Rodriguez) from *Throw it to the River*. Former spokesperson of the National Democratic Front Bobbie Malay read an obit-poem while Pia Arboleda silenced the crowd with a reading from Jeanette Winterson's erotic collection *Sexing the Cherry*. Activist-writer Aida F. Santos gave the opening remarks and read a number of her poems in the anthology *Woman to Woman*, the first lesbian anthology to be published in the country.

Lesbond gave a mime performance which essayed the travails of a modern-day lesbian heroine. Ome Quijano was inimitable in her coming-out. The complex comic-advice portion done by Cris Brigoli as a counselor gone wrong was likewise hilarious.

Giney Villar and university professor Joy Barrios also read a piece each from the *Woman to Woman*, while Kathleen Maltzahn read a poem published in a previous issue of *Women in Action*.

More songs were rendered by Tess Raposas, PaMaSa and activist singer-song writer Aster Delgado.

Dancing lasted until the wee hours of the morning after the program ended at about midnight.

from *Switchboard*, February 1995



## News and Notes

female employees. Some of the establishments involved even stipulate these recruitment guidelines to high schools that recommend their graduates, the complainants added.

(*Korean Women Today*, Summer 1994)

### Women sidelined by economic liberalization

IN SOUTH Asia, where half of nearly one billion people live below the poverty line, governments have yet to take steps that will help millions of women workers in the informal economy.

The worst hit by such neglect is the textile and garments industry, which employs the second largest number of women in the region, after farming. Yet, the industry, however, is the region's top export earner and fastest growing sector.

Instead of improving livelihood, the strategy of economic liberalization has worsened the conditions of women in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. 'Global Trading Practices and Poverty Alleviation in South Asia—A Gender Perspective' revealed.

The growth of exports in the textile sector has pushed up local yarn prices, forcing handloom cooperatives, where the bulk of women are employed, to reduce their workforce. Women are fast losing jobs and incomes as a result.

A field study by India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), which is based in the western state of Gujarat, found that women workers were often turned away because of a shortage of yarn in factories run by the Gujarat Handloom Corporation.

### New US program to keep girls in school

THE CLINTON administration has created a program to help keep girls in school in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The first year of the 10-year-program will cost about US\$11.7 million, the US Agency for International

*Writer-columnist Ellen Goodman finds something amiss in current Congress discussions on the US welfare program which, when approved, will deny minor mothers any cash welfare benefits. Why are the fathers, who are usually much older, left out in this debate? By mistake, by design, or by instinct?*

# Jailbait

by Ellen Goodman

Do you ever get the feeling that someone is missing from the debate about US welfare reform?

The other parent? The father? The sperm donor? Men?

As the US Congress writes ever more punitive scenarios for mothers and children, the male of the species barely gets a cameo role. The only part he plays is as deadbeat dad. The only interest the lawmakers have shown is in establishing his DNA. The only policy they are talking about is getting a better grip on his wallet.

I have no problem with these proposals. But much of the welfare debate is focused on the never-married poor mothers—the women who get on welfare the earliest and stay the longest. The men in their lives don't exactly have deep pockets.

The favorite proposal of the moment, to deny cash benefits to any minor mother, comes with a prayer that it will prevent other pregnancies. The theory is that if the government gives girls an economic reason to say no, they'll control male sexual behavior.

But in real life, as opposed to think tanks and hearing rooms, the picture is a little different.

In real life, three quarters of the girls who have sex before they are 14 say they were coerced. In real life, two of every three teenage mothers are impregnated by a man over 20. In real life, 30 percent of the 15-year-old mothers have partners who are at least six years older.

We are not talking about powerful girls in equal relationships. In the inner-city culture that sociologist Elijah Anderson describes with terrible poignancy, a sexual 'game' goes on.

"The girls have a dream," he says, "the boys have a desire. The girls dream of being carried off by a Prince Charming who will love them, provide for them and give them a family. The boys often desire sex without commitment or babies without responsibility for them."

## News and Notes

Development (USAID), program administrator, said.

"Investing in the health and education of women and girls is essential to improving local prosperity," Hilary Clinton said during the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen last March.

The program has several broad aims, said Dr. Nils Daulaire, chief policy adviser to the USAID. At primary school level, it will pay for expert help in determining the reasons for the low enrollment rate among girls. "In some countries, especially as they reach adolescence, girls don't attend school because parents fear they are not safe," Daulaire said. Teachers will be trained to accept and integrate girls into a classroom, where they are usually ignored.

For older girls and young women, new literacy projects will incorporate lessons in health and sanitation to benefit the family, the USAID officer said. (Today, 9 March 1995)

### Year of the Family— fiction only

PAPUA NEW Guinea should not be

In this game, the older male is an easy winner. A 13-year-old girl is by no means on a level playing field with an 18-year-old boy. Nor is a 15-year-old on a par with a 26-year-old.

To put it bluntly, a substantial number of the men are what can only be called sexual predators. A substantial number of the teenage mothers are what we used to call jailbait.

Remember jailbait? Maybe we ought to think about changing the sexual behavior of men as well as women. Maybe statutory rape is an idea whose time should return.

Statutory rape was the creation of a double standard. It implied that a girl below a certain age was too young to consent to sex. The object of the law was to protect female virtue. The subject of the law was likely to be a 17-year-old boy hauled to court by the irate parents of a 15-year-old girl.

But in the era of sexual liberation and equality, the old laws were re-written. We went from a double standard of gender to a single standard of power.

Today the object of the law is not female chastity but sexual abuse. And

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*"The girls have a dream, the boys have a desire. The girls dream of being carried off by a Prince Charming who will love them, provide for them and give them a family. The boys often desire sex without commitment or babies without responsibility for them."*

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the subject is generally an older man or woman who has sex with an underage child.

I know that dusting off the laws and applying them to men who father children with young teens has its limits. We have different views of coercion and of consent than we used to. Teenage mothers could become more reluctant to point the paternity finger. I'm wary of matching policy that throws mothers on the streets with one that throws fathers in jail.

But look at the figures. Look at the culture. We're talking about adult men and adolescent girls.

We're talking about 'the game.' You don't have to be a Victorian to believe that society has an obligation to defend our young. Or that we have an obligation to state this clearly, publicly, unequivocally.

These days we are quick to attack teenage mothers. How about trying to protect them? Tell the girls they're too young. But send the word out to men. The word is 'jailbait'.

from Today, 26 February 1995;  
Macrimo Building, 1666 EDSA corner Escuela Street  
Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines



## News and Notes

celebrating the International Year of the Family when women in the country are being raped, beaten and treated like animals, the National Council of Women said.

Council president Dame Josephine Abajiah stressed during a Family Life Seminar in Port Moresby that women are the central point of any family life and should be treated with respect. In Papua New Guinea, however, women have been subjected to various forms of subordination and abuse by their own spouses. Abajiah challenged Papua New Guinea's men to recognize women as human beings and accord them the dignity and equality they deserve. (WINA, Vol.1, No. 1, 30 November, 1994; WINA-Women, Information & News Agency, P.O. Box 439, Republic of Nauru)

### Perverse preferences in Tokyo

**CATERING TO** sadomasochists, fetishists and perverts, Tokyo's myriad sex clubs offer almost every conceivable perversion that degrades women.

For example: One club allows customers to abuse pregnant women; another sells female excrement. A third allows men to grope girls made up as old ladies. "The fee is ¥30,000 (US\$316), everything included. You can choose up to two girls and play with them for two hours," answered a male voice on the telephone.

Another place was a five-story condominium on a back street in the Shinjuku district. In one of them, the room resembled a magnificent drawing room of a daimyo's mansion.

Men pay between ¥50,000 and ¥160,000 (US\$526 and US\$1,684) to tie, whip or burn women with dripping candle wax or give them enemas. (Today, 11 March 1995)

## The glass is really there

Three years ago, Elizabeth Dole, then US secretary of labor, initiated an investigation into the so-called glass ceiling. The glass ceiling, women and members of minority groups charged, was what they crashed their heads against as they climb up the corporate ladder. You can go only this far, the men on the top rungs seemed to say, and no farther.

The bipartisan Glass Ceiling Commission has now reported that, yes, indeed, such an invisible barrier exists. Despite 30 years of affirmative action, 95 percent of senior management positions are still held by white men, who constitute only 43 percent of the workforce.

Affirmative action has borne more fruit at lower levels. White women hold close to 40 percent of the jobs in middle management, but black women hold only 5 percent and black men even less.

Something blocks their further advance up, other than a lack of qualifications or capable candidates. Thirty years since, and the number of women and minority members who have acquired the education and skills to move up has risen considerably. But the time lag appears still not long enough to erase the fears and stereotyped preconceptions employers bring to female and minority candidates. No employer would assume that a white male is too lazy or ill-trained, or even genetically bound to fail. Yet those assumptions are constantly brought to bear on Hispanic, black and female applicants, the report suggests. Moreover, women and minority members have no access to the kind of mentoring and other forms of support that white men automatically receive from other white men.

The commission report should be required reading for Senator Bob Dole, who sponsored the legislation establishing the commission but is now trying to end the very programs that may one day demolish that glass ceiling. He might also reread the autobiography he wrote with his wife several years ago. On her first day at Harvard Law School, Elizabeth Dole recalled, a male classmate asked her what right she had to take the place of a man who could be counted on to make good use of a high-powered legal education. Although Mrs. Dole later crashed through the glass ceiling, right at that moment, she had a very clear view of its reality.

from *International Herald Tribune*, 18-19 March 1995



# Fierce, tireless grandmother

An interview by Luz Maria Martinez

**B**ack in 1977, I did not know of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (the Association of Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo); I had no need for them—I had no disappeared loved ones,” says Rosa ‘Rosita’ Roisinblit, vice-president of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, a group of grandmothers in Argentina pursuing the search for *desaparecidos*, loved ones who disappeared during the military regime in the ‘70s to early ‘80s. “But in 1979, my only daughter, eight months pregnant at the time, also disappeared.”

The Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo’s main goal is to find their grandchildren, who were infants at the time the Argentina dictatorship forcibly took them and their families away. The group is also looking for those children born in concentration camps to the regime’s political prisoners.

A fit, blond, blue-eyed woman with a sprint in her walk, Rosita speaks with unmistakable pride of her organization’s struggles and accomplishments. She is constantly travelling, exposing the injustice suffered by the victims of State aggression.

“The Abuelas is a group of grandmothers formed specifically to demand first, the return of our children and our grandchildren, and second, the investigation into their disappearances,” she says. The past dictatorship, she explains, found a potent tool of repression in the children of many men and women activists. These children were abducted as a way of deterring a new generation from growing up with subversive ideologies. Argentina could not risk these children following in their parents’ footsteps.

“Our children disappeared, and for many of us, we have given up hope of seeing them again. But our grandchildren must know that they were not abandoned, that they were kidnapped by the same people who killed or allowed their parents to be killed. These children have been deprived of their real families, their identity, their religion,” Rosita says.

Most of the children were ‘adopted’ by the torturers themselves or by families of the regime. “The parents of these children were intelligent, and the regime realized that their offspring would also be intelligent. There was a waiting list from military families for children of the detainees. They specified the sex, the color of the hair and eyes, and other features they wanted in a child.”

Babies born in the detention camps were given away to those on the list whose specifications for an adopted child matched. “But not all the children were adopted. Some were placed in orphanages,” Rosita notes.

Rosita, who is in her seventies, recounts her own story as mother and grandmother with sadness in her eyes, even though she has told this over and over again.

“My daughter, who was eight months pregnant then, and her husband were taken from their home one day. The 15-month-old-baby was left behind. Why the military people left her, we do not know, but they did. I searched for my daughter and would try to speak to women who, I had heard, shared the same prison with her. Some of them remember her and remember her delivering a baby boy. No one knows what happened to my daughter after her delivery.

“My suspicion is that the boy was abducted by a military

man who had been her jailer. I have pieced this together through the bits and pieces of information I gathered over the years.

"I no longer have hopes that my daughter is alive. I know that if she was still alive, she would have contacted someone, at least to know how her daughter is doing. We never heard from her since the day she was abducted. However, I do have hopes of finding my grandson. I know he is grown-up now and may not want to return home, but I want him to know that he has a family that loves him. His sister writes poems to him and stories about him. She thinks of him often. She too has hopes that one day, we will find her brother."

Rosita looks away for a few minutes, as if collecting her thoughts. "We have found over 49 children. We have on our organization families of more than 200 children reported as missing. They are active in the search for their loved ones."

Another landmark achievement for the Abuelas is the successful lobby it mounted for the passage of a law that created a genetic databank on the families of the disappeared. In 1987, the Abuelas, together with the Durand Hospital, established the National Bank for Genetical Data, which was envisioned to help the families track down their disappeared relatives. The databank now contains genetic information on 345 individuals belonging to families of disappeared children.

The services of the genetic databank are free of charge to the Abuelas members.

The organization offers legal counseling, assistance in investigations and psychological support for the searching families, and helps receive, rehabilitate and reorient those children who have surfaced. "We support the grandmothers at all stages of the investigation and

recovery. We publicize our investigations and recoveries, as well as the steps we take in our searches." The group also conducts training and seminars on human rights work.

Rosita's advocacy is straightforward. Although articulate and diplomatic, she is all passion as she lashes at the current government's policy on *desaparecidos*, fire flaring in her eyes. The government, she decries, promotes impunity as its strategy to clear away the horrors of the past.

Rosita rejects discussions of reparations, maintaining that reparation and reconciliation with the past can happen only when justice has been served.

Despite the relative space that came with a change of dispensation, the road ahead remains tough for the Abuelas. The group is receiving less and less funds nowadays, because for many funding groups, the problems of Argentina are all over. For donor agencies, there are now many other countries faced with more pressing problems that demand their attention.

For the Abuelas, however, the past remains very much alive, haunting them. They will know the meaning of peace only when they have recovered their grandchildren—the key that will finally seal yesterday's terrors. (Editor's Note: Human rights groups in Argentina are in the midst of a big campaign demanding action from their government, following the revelation by a former

military personnel of new information that sheds light on the human rights atrocities committed as the country's "dirty little war" raged.)



*Our grandchildren must know that they were not abandoned, that they were kidnapped by the same people who killed or allowed their parents to be killed.*

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# Beating violence against women

**A** US road safety campaign used the slogan "Belt your wife and save her life". Many people thought it was clever and humorous. But although the slogan meant well, it inadvertently condoned the concept that hitting one's wife may actually be funny.

Such brand of humor is not confined to American, or Western society. Women throughout the world have been victims of violence aimed especially at them. Figures from the United Nations (UN) show that in Asia, for instance, violence against women has been in-

creasing. In the case of Thailand, a UN-sponsored seminar entitled Violence Against Women, which was held in Bangkok in 1993, confirms this. A speaker for the seminar, Siriporn Skrobaneck, executive director of the Thai Foundation for Women, noted the

marked rise in violence committed against the women. "Last year, for example, our telephone counseling service received calls from 240 women who had been beaten up, raped or abused. In the majority of cases the perpetrator of the violence was the boyfriend, husband or some relative of the victim."

Statistics from the Foundation for Children's Nutrition Centre compiled in 1985 (latest figures) also confirmed the Thai society's increasing violence against women. Mothers of 25 percent of children at the home said they were beaten up or assaulted by their husbands. Many said their children were also abused.

### Across classes

Dr. Saisuree Chutikul supported Siriporn's observation that more Thai women are experiencing violence, adding that she was dismayed to observe that it occurs in all classes of society. "It is not, as you may think, confined to the uneducated. It happens even among so-called educated people.

Just recently, I learned of a woman who was badly beaten by her husband. I won't name him but if I did, you would probably recognize him immediately. He is a well-known doctor."

The incident is not an isolated one. "There are many like it," continued Saisuree. "Another case I know involves a Thai diplomat with a C6 ranking. Those who are familiar with the civil service system will know that this means he is a fairly high-ranking diplomat. But that didn't stop him from literally kicking his wife out of his car in a moment of anger. And do you know where he did it? In front of the Justice Ministry!"

### Prostitution

In some countries, the forms of vio-

lence perpetrated against women include infanticide, the abortion of female fetuses, female circumcision and what is known in India as dowry burning. But in Thailand, the women sold into prostitution or as mail-order brides are most likely to experience violence.

"Both are problems in Thailand," Siriporn told *Focus* after the seminar. "Thai women and girls are sold into prostitution and forced by brothel owners to have sex with as many clients as possible.

The girls have no choice in the matter. So, the sex amounts to rape. Often they are also beaten up by the clients or brothel owners."

Various studies on prostitution in Thailand estimate the number of prostituted women in the country at between 100,000 and 200,000.

### Mail-order brides

Peril awaits girls who are sold overseas as prostitutes and mail-order brides. "These girls are usually tricked into going abroad with the promise of a well-paid job and often don't realize what awaits them."

Once in a foreign country, the mail-order bride is even more defenseless. "The law in some foreign countries is particularly unfair because it does not offer protection to prostitutes. The law says that if a woman's status has been determined as that of a prostitute, she has knowingly allowed herself to have sex with a customer and it therefore cannot be rape," Siriporn pointed out.

### Psychological abuse

The definition of violence must also include various forms of psychological violence, including the verbal abuse of women by their spouses.

"This is another common problem in Thailand, but it is rarely recognized. Many people think that shouting at their wives or insulting them is a normal thing," said Siriporn

The other forms of psychological abuse often overlooked, she cited, are cases of husbands keeping their wives locked up at home or constantly scrutinizing and restricting their movement.

Psychological violence is particularly cruel and women who are abused by men are often forced to accept it because they are financially or physically dependent on them. "They may be afraid to leave their husbands because they have no means of surviving on their own or because they want to keep the family together for the sake of the children," Dr. Chutikul said.

A published UN report on domestic violence against women says that in all societies, responses to domestic violence are influenced by social values.

"The family is considered a private place where outsiders should not intervene, even when problems are serious. The maintenance of the family as a unit may take precedence over the safety of women. Social inequality between the sexes leads to women's subordinate position within the family. As a result, many societies condone the disciplining of wives, and tend to ignore or trivialize severe incidences of domestic violence," reads the report.

### Search for solutions

If the subject is difficult to come to reckon, finding measures to solve the problem of violence against women can be just as complex. There are no easy remedies and even experts in the field are divided as to how to approach the problem, with some arguing that the problem should not be regarded as gender-specific.

“We should approach it as a human rights problem and not as one that affects women. After all, men are also victims of violence and men find themselves in many of the same situations that you have described. There are male prostitutes who are abused, men who are raped by other men, and even men who are battered and/or verbally abused by their wives,” a participant of the UN seminar said.

Others consider violence against women an issue in itself.

True, not enough studies have been made on the relationship between violence against women and violence in societies in general.

Worse, few women’s groups address the problem of violence against women. The government and the community as a whole have yet to recognize the issue as a real and serious social problem.

source: *Voices of Thai Women*, No. 9, June 1993; Foundation for Women, P.O. Box 47, Bangkok 10700

## Forms of Violence Against Women

**PSYCHOLOGICAL** isolation, restricting freedom, threats, humiliation, abuse of privilege, denial of love and attention, denial of support, threat or act of abandonment, threat of harm

**ECONOMIC** destruction or snatching of property, forced dependency, neglect of other person’s needs

**SEXUAL** incest, molestation, forced sexual activity, inappropriate sexual attention, unwanted touching or intercourse after assault

**PHYSICAL** pushing; shoving; punching; slapping; the use of arms, feet, objects or weapons for discipline’ personal controls on clothing, behavior, association and action.

(Taken from Gladys Gwashure, Program Director, Musasa Project, at the Seminar on Violence Against Women, 31 August-3 September 1993, in Harare, Zimbabwe)

source: *Speak Out/Taurai/Khulumani*, No.27, 1994; Women’s Action Group, P.O. Box 135, Harare, Zimbabwe

## Why, pray tell?

### Reasons why women remain in abusive relationships

#### Emotional

- lack of inner strength
- fear of the future
- hope for change
- loving him even though he hurts her
- belief in the myth “I asked for it”

#### Economic

- unemployment
- no family to go to
- the children’s economic well-being

#### Social

- advice from family, friends and the church to stay
- lack of support from the community
- poor response from the police

source: *Speak Out/Taurai/Khulumani* No. 27, 1994

# No safe place

by Naina Kapur

*Women and children are constantly warned against the violence of the streets. Yet, some of the worst forms of violence could be taking place at home. Naina Kapur points out how the premium that Indian society assigns to the family—on keeping this intact and preserving its honor—may yet be the key to preventing the country's high incidence of domestic violence.*

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*Rather than confront the abuse going on, most parents will opt for silence and avoidance.*

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**S**tatistics relating to domestic violence in India paint a grim picture.

- A Bangalore study of 348 college women showed that 47 percent of the women had experienced sexual abuse, with 15 percent undergoing serious forms of sexual abuse including rape, attempted rape and forced oral sex. Majority of the abusers were family members.

- In a separate all-India survey of 220 women, (see "Preliminary Report of Workshop Series and Survey on Childhood Sexual Abuse of Girls," by Anita Ratnam Ganesh, Samvada) sexual molestation ranked the most frequent form of abuse experienced by respondents, most of whom were below 10 years of age at

the time. Again, in two thirds of the reported instances, the abuser was known to the child.

- Official statistics for 1991 indicate that a woman was slapped, beaten, dragged, insulted, abused and/or harassed by her husband or his relatives every 33 minutes.

Not only is the incidence of abuse against women and children in India high. The perpetrator is too often a figure vested with respect and authority in the family—which accounts for the near dearth of information about such abuse. The trend contradicts all norms and notions of family as a solid, stable social institution haven. Any effort to expose the ugly side

of family relations is received with apprehension and even discouraged. For each opportunity to examine the extent of abuse within the family, the response has been characterized by reluctance. Not long ago, a leading institute of mental health conducted a random survey of disturbed children and discovered a high incidence of child sexual abuse. Despite the finding, however, the institute opted not to include tests for sexual abuse as part of the routine psychological check-up of children.

## **Omnipotent value of family**

Statistics describe only part of the picture. The other part pertains to what recourse, if any, abused women and chil-

dren have. Across the board, whether with the police, the judiciary or the family itself, the women victimized by domestic violence must contend with a system that upholds traditional, gender-specific views

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*A more comforting set of dynamics continues to operate for the abusive husband—he can continue to enjoy social and economic sanction throughout, along with the support of parents, family and work.*

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of the family. These constitute a major obstacle to any redress they may need. Even if the victim has come out in the open to report the case and to request intervention, the social fabric—which has the family as its basic material—offers little or no reprieve, and the victim is forced to return to the abusive home instead.

The mechanisms supposed to be supporting and assisting abused women are the same ones imposing the overriding importance of 'family values'. Even today, the legal system prefers to believe that a woman with a black eye and broken ribs simply fell down the stairs and could not have been beaten by her husband. Indian law and social responses remain ill-prepared to acknowledge that wife battering is something other than a 'domestic dispute'. The law directs the battered wife to be tolerant because the marriage should stay intact. A woman is expected to bear the pressures of marriage, including physical abuse and other forms of harassment, in silence. And when she

fails to, those judging her are often guided by a second family value—compromise and adjust.

Such logic has legitimized a broad spectrum of violence as routine "wear and tear of wedded life" (Shobha Rani vs. Madhukar Reddi, AIR 1988 SC 121, par. 19), in effect depriving the wife's complaint of its validity. Humiliation or ill treatment arising out of "stray domestic quarrels by mother-in-law... crude and

uncultured behaviour by the in-laws or the husband toward his wife" are considered "mundane matters of normal occurrence in the traditional Hindu joint families." (Smt. Padmabai vs. State of Madhya Pradesh, 1987 Cri. L J 1573, par. 14)

The woman who challenges this value of "compromise and adjust" and seek a divorce, for instance, will constantly have to justify her behavior, whether to her parents, children, friends, relations, the police or the law. A more comforting set of dynamics continues to operate for the abusive husband—he can continue to enjoy social and economic sanction through-out, along with the support of parents, family and work.

### **As a rule**

The emphasis of India's 40-year old marriage and divorce laws, and century-old civil procedure code laws is,

first and foremost, reconciliation. The argument is that reconciliation works in the best interests of the family so that even when a woman files for a divorce based on violence, the fact of her abuse is sec-



ondary to preserving the marriage. In 1984, rather than serve as a means of settling gender concerns such as child custody, property and maintenance, the new Family Courts Act again compromised women in favor of reconciliation and preservation of the family. Cruelty or harassment for dowry was reduced to a 'quarrel' between two equal partners. A woman in such a situation would simply be told to go home. (State of Maharashtra vs. Vasant Shankar Mhasane & Anr., 1993 Cri. L J 1134)

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*The stranglehold of family and traditional family values is most perverse—it prevents a girl's own family from coming to her rescue.*

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# Violence Against Women

The responses of the abused wife's parents are even more appalling. Society has always tolerated a certain degree of violence, commensurate with the subordinate status of the daughter-in-law. In addition, it has always held that once married, the woman belongs to her matrimonial home. In most cases, therefore, the woman's parents will refuse to help rescue her. Besides, in doing so, in taking their daughter back, the parents simply invite the burden of raising dowry again for her in the future.

In one case, the abused wife escaped to her relatives' house twice, hoping that her family would rescue her. But in both instances, despite her stories of torture, she had to return to her matrimonial home. Finally, she wrote her parents and uncle to take her back, or she would commit suicide—which she did. The woman's family is always aware of her situation, directly or indirectly, and conveys its displeasure either by not sending her to the natal home at all (Suresh Nathmal Rathi vs. State of Maharashtra, 1992 Cri. L J 2106; see also State vs. Laxman Kumar & Ors., 1985 4 SCC 476, par. 57) or by not fetching her from a visit there. It is here that the stranglehold of family and traditional family values is most perverse—it prevents a girl's own family from coming to her rescue. In such a situation, women have little option but to bear the burden of violence. And in such a case, the 'family' is then equally or even more at fault than the actual abuser.

## Child sexual abuse

With most families, discussing sex with children is almost taboo. As for child sexual abuse, the thought of holding a

discussion on the issue does not even occur to most. Why? One obvious reason is society's own resistance to accepting that child sexual abuse is a reality.

Child sexual abuse is seen as something to do with a particular individual's deviancy or mental affliction, not as a social issue. Most are unable to imagine

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*Children themselves are brought up with the notion that the family is the ultimate altar of protection, which makes abuse within the family so much more traumatic.*

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that a neighbor, a friend or a family member is capable of sexually assaulting a niece, daughter or son of a friend.

Advocates are also up against sexual ignorance and fear about sex and sexuality common in young people. They are not asking questions about natural sexual changes and urges, and not necessarily because this is taboo but because they would not know how to phrase the questions.

Any effort at discussion with groups is often met with disquieting giggles, offended parents, and an adult's own lack of knowledge or comfort with the issues. Most Indians grow up in a context where talk of anything remotely linked to sex is taboo, and it is this gap, this silence, this inability to communicate that has become ideal terrain for sexual abuse to

flourish.

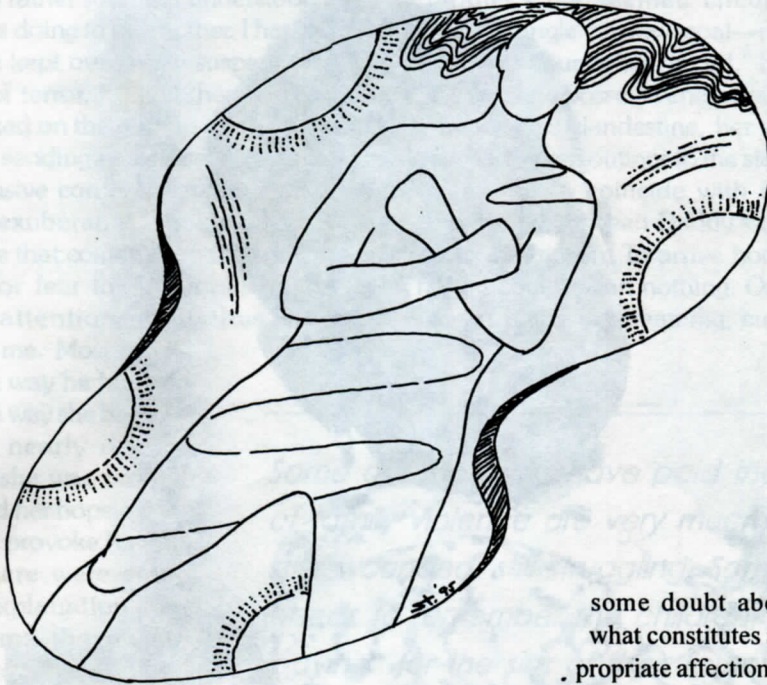
Indian law defines sexual abuse as rape, and the definition applies equally to adult women as it does to minors. But abuse also includes fondling; exhibitionism; kissing; having a child touch or fondle the sexual parts of another person; and oral, anal or vaginal sexual intercourse with a minor.

In other countries, the most comprehensive definition includes

*any sexual behaviour directed at a person under 16 without that person's informed consent. Sexual behavior may involve touching parts of the child or requesting the child to touch oneself, itself or others, ogling the child in a sexual manner, taking pornographic photographs, or requiring the child to look at parts of the body, sexual acts or other material in a way which is arousing to oneself; and verbal comments or suggestions to the child which are intended to threaten the child sexually or otherwise to provide sexual gratification for oneself. It must be defined by every circumstance in which it occurs: in families, in state-run and private institutions, on the street, in classrooms, in pornography, advertising and films.* (Driver & Droisen, 1989)

The broad range of experience speaking of abuse finds no expression in the existing law or social understanding of child sexual abuse. When tackling the issue, the most common obstacle is disbelief that such violence indeed takes place in the family. This is clearly dem-





onstrated in the responses of the immediate family where considerations like 'values', 'privacy', and 'family honor' hold sway. Children themselves are brought up with the notion that the family is the ultimate altar of protection, which makes abuse within the family so much more traumatic.

### Protective mantle of silence

Families remain silent because of the fear of social humiliation and potential family breakdowns especially if fathers are imprisoned and children removed to special care. Against these possibilities, silence and self-sacrifice seem preferable.

As for law enforcement and other intervening authorities, they avoid involvement because given the broadest definition of abuse, they are often unsure of the degree of sexual contact that can be classified as abusive. There is also

some doubt about what constitutes appropriate affectionate contact within the family, which is specially problematic because in some communities such as in Rajasthan where sexual abuse of daughters has been imbibed as a father's right.

At a Child Sexual Abuse and Female Sexuality Workshop held last September, a participant articulated her young son's total resistance to adults who insist on hugging him and pinching his cheeks. For many, such gestures are valid expressions of adult affection, yet for the child, such contact may be both unwelcome and traumatic. The dilemma parents seem to face in such situations is how to shelter their children from demonstrations of affection without offending their relatives or friends. That initial reluctance to 'offend' is what governs much of family response even when that demonstration of affection becomes clearly abusive. Rather than confront the abuse going on, most parents will opt for silence and avoidance. The cultural taboo on sexuality has extended

to the refusal to recognize the abuse.

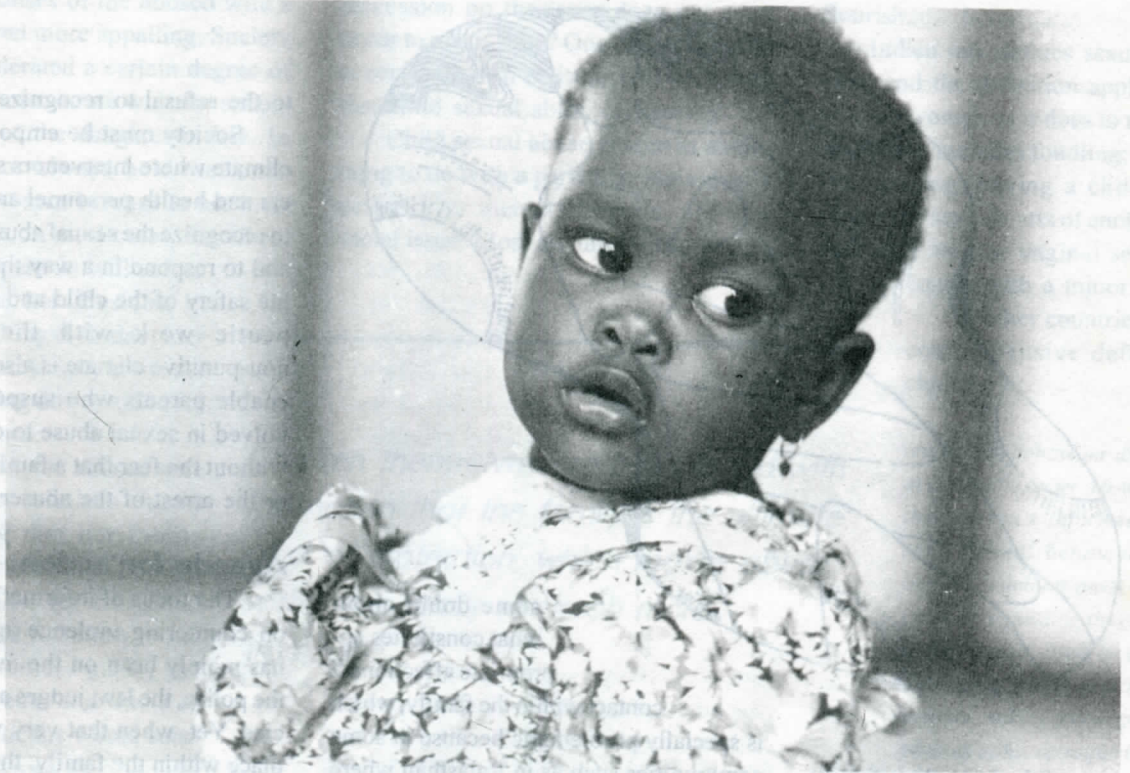
Society must be empowered with a climate where intervenors such as teachers and health personnel are encouraged to recognize the sexual abuse of children, and to respond in a way that will ensure the safety of the child and initiate therapeutic work with the family. A non-punitive climate is also necessary to enable parents who suspect or are involved in sexual abuse to come forward without the fear that a family breakdown or the arrest of the abuser is inevitable.

### Agenda for action

The focus of information and action on countering violence against women has mainly been on the inadequacies of the police, the law, judges and other agencies. Yet, when that very violence takes place within the family, the one obstacle advocates avoid criticizing is the family itself. For years, women and children have been protected from and warned against the wanton violence of strangers, only to find that the ultimate safe haven is a worse perpetrator of the abuse they most fear. Addressing violence within the family means first acknowledging that such violence does exist, and ultimately rejecting those values (i.e., 'compromise and adjust', silence about child sexual abuse) that allow such violence within the family to flourish. And that raises the toughest challenge—unlearning the very basis of what family means.

Naina Kapur is a feminist lawyer as well as coordinator of Sakshi, a violence intervention center.

source: *Voices*, Vol. II, No. 2, 1994; Madhyam Communication; Box 4016, 59 Miller Road, Benson Town, Bangalore 560 046, India



# Remember the children

by Rosemary L. Bray

*When we look at the issue of domestic violence, our attention is drawn mainly to the direct victim—the wife. Rosemary Bray points out that we forget one very important actor in the equation, the children. How does one compute for the total effect of enraged, ranting fathers and petrified mothers as the children grow up? And decades after, when the children enter into intimate relationships, bringing along their baggage of fears, the anger, the despair?*

I hated my father soon as I understood what he was doing to my mother. I hated the way he kept our family suspended in a state of terror. I hated the way he always kicked on the door to announce his arrival, sending us kids scurrying to an unobtrusive corner. I hated to suppress my exuberance about life, an exuberance that comes natural to most children, for fear that it would draw Daddy's attention—and thus his wrath—to me. Most of all, I hated the way he hurt my mother, the way she became so quiet, nearly docile, whenever she was around him. I hated her hopeless efforts not to provoke him, as though there were some rational explanation that made Mama the reason Daddy threw plates of food all over the kitchen, ripped phones out of the walls, pulled out big handfuls of her hair.

As I grew older, I understood more about his own miserable childhood, his passive father, his embittered and unaffectionate mother. My paternal grandmother was apparently a kind of woman who would wait until her children were in school, then sell their beloved bicycles out from under them. Once long ago, I listened to my father's brother talk, with a curious nostalgia, about getting beaten by his mother with belts made of harness leather. It was the kind of discipline my father knew best, the kind he enforced with us, using his own buckled belt, whipping if from the loops on his pants and doubling it in two. One night when my husband and I were dressing to go out, he removed his belt from a pair of pants in that same way, and was startled to see me jump away from him as if I were on fire—the force of a grim habit.

My mother's life seemed circumscribed by a single narrow goal—not wanting to “get your father started.” His fierce jealousy and possessiveness made all her friendships clandestine, her activities suspect. Even outings to the store were measured to coincide with the uncertain period between Daddy's departure and his return. To arrive home after he did could mean nothing. Or it could mean hours of screaming, curs-

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*Some of those who have paid the price of family violence are very much alive, still wounded, still struggling. Someone needs to remember the children, still paying for the sins of their fathers.*

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ing, fighting that moved from room to room, with Daddy punching and kicking, Mama deflecting blows with her arms and legs, and the four of us kids in varying stages of anger and tears. There was never any blood; even now, I can think of reasons to be grateful. He never broke any bones. He never beat her senseless; he never killed her. That was what I feared more than anything—that he would live up to his constant, rageful promises and kill her.

When we think about the toll domestic violence takes, we first think—and rightly so—about the women who are the targets of this violence. It is absurd that the most dangerous place for a woman in the United States is the very place where she should feel safest. But too often, we forget about the witnesses to domestic

terror, the children who grow up in violent homes. We understand that it's not good for them to see such a twisted version of male-female relationships. What we don't talk about is the profound effect a violent home has on the children who must live in it, people even more powerless to escape than their mothers.

I can promise you that the effect is real and lasting on the Simpson children, and on millions of other children. I can promise you that such children know the sound of every blow, the vibration of every wall as their mothers' bodies hit, the pitch of every voice raised in anger. I promise you that at least once, and probably more than once, those children lie crying in their beds, praying (if they have words for prayers), begging God or someone to make Mama and Daddy stop fighting, to make Daddy stop hitting, to make Mama stop crying. And if the beatings go on long enough, and no one helps and nothing changes, I promise you that they begin to make promises to themselves: I will never let anyone hit me, ever; I will never have children, so they will not have to live like this; when I have children, they will never hear this.

I know these worlds because some of them are my own childish promises, made in the frightening dark, listening to my father raging against my mother three decades ago. Though many of us forgive, do not delude yourselves: we never forget. What we remember colors much of our intimate lives forever—whether we manage to love a man or trust him, much less marry him;

## Violence Against Women

whether we learn to have an honest argument without fear; whether we risk the vulnerability of parenthood; whether we can teach our children what we wish our parents had known about love.

The man I married had to share my struggle to see him as a separate person, a man who was not my father.

For years, Bob had to wade hip-deep in my own terror of the person he might be, reminding me in his steady, ultimately exasperated voice, over and over: I am not your father. I am nothing

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***I can promise you that the effect is real and lasting on the children. I can promise you that they know the sound of every blow, the vibration of every wall as their mothers bodies hit, the pitch of every voice raised in anger.***

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like your father. After all this time, what kind of man do you think I am? It took years for me to answer the question accurately, to see him clearly, to separate him from what my father had taught me about men.

I couldn't get a grip on all this until my son was born, until I came to know him—as well as you know a person who can't yet talk and who depends on you for everything. I had to meet Allen, see him and his father together, see him open his eyes and his infant heart to the world. That was when I realized that the answer to my fears was currently unavailable—that, like all parents, I would have to wait and see.

While I am waiting, however, I realize there is much to do. The feminist sensibility that was always mine has deepened and broadened. I know that feminism must begin at home, so Allen will see all the trials and delights of an egalitarian marriage and have a realistic picture of what such a marriage is like. He will definitely see his mother and his father angry with each other.

He will know that Mama is likely to pound on tables and yell; he will see that Daddy is likely to slam a few doors and raise his voice, too. But he will also see us take a breather and return to one another, ready to try again. He'll come to know that one of us will say something funny and the other will try like hell not to laugh. And he'll come to expect that what Mama and Daddy fight about this week becomes a family joke next week. But he will not see us raise a hand to each other—or to him. I hope.

My husband, whose childhood was the polar opposite of my own, regards spanking as a viable option. "Not 'hitting'—spanking," Bob corrects me when I ask him about hitting Allen. "There's a world of difference, you know." That's the problem—I don't know. I can follow his arguments intellectually—spankings are to be used only as a last resort, a kind of attention-getting strategy that is completely useless once a child is seven or so. But our discussions about how to discipline our growing son are also the last battleground between myself and my demon memories; what I know in my head and

what I know in my gut are two different things. I know Bob would never hurt me or my son. He has any number of ways to deal with the inevitable frustrations of marriage or children or life. But I never want to see in Allen's eyes the fearful look that was so often in mine. I never want him to think that hitting people is a good idea, except in circumstances that require him to protect himself. I want with all my heart to stop this cycle, to let it end with me.

That is another fear that visits itself on the children of domestic violence. We worry about the kind of people we will become. Sooner or later, we wonder whether we will end up like our mothers, become like our fathers. But I worry more about whether I have learned enough to handling my own anger. I wish I could be sure about never hitting Allen; the very idea that I might revisit with my own son that old, dreadful territory is horrifying.

The first time I became truly angry at my baby was one of those classic occasions, the inconsolable crying in the middle of the night. At some point, when I had sung all of the songs I knew and tried everything else I could think of, I could feel the waves of anger toward him washing over me. I understood from all my conversations with new mothers and all the books I'd read that these were normal feelings. But for those of us who grew up with rage, our own rage is terrifying. I had to close the door to his room, go into the living room and sit in the dark, convinced that it was safer to let him cry than to be with him. It was certainly safer for me; the idea that I might hit him or shake him or scare him was too awful to contemplate. To react to Allen that way would have been my father's final victory. And I was not having it.

***What I really want most, however, I can never have. I sit with friends and listen and listen to them talk about their fathers, and would give anything to think of my daddy the way other women do.***

**M**y understanding of my father's pain came with adulthood, with the safety and distance that his death provided, with several years of therapy, with my growth as a woman and as a feminist.

Frankly, it took all those things to come to terms with his violence and with my fears—my fears about men, my fears about the cost of independent womanhood. But understanding Daddy has taken me only so far. It has shown me some of what I need to be watchful about, it has calmed some of my resentment of him. What I really want most, however, I can never have. I sit with friends and listen to them talk about their fathers, and would give anything to think of my daddy the way other women do. I hear stories about the first man in their lives, men who used even the narrowest definition of masculinity to shield their children, not to wound them, and something in me still hungers for that protection.

I used to think it was some regressive part of me that wanted a man to look after me; I questioned my own claims of independence. But I know better now. Looking at the way my son looks at his father, I realize that there is still a girl in me that longs for her daddy. Watching Allen's delight when Bob and I play with him together, I

realize there is the child in me that still wants a happy home, where Mama and Daddy laugh and people are rarely angry.

For every child like Allen who lives surrounded by love, for every woman like me who knows she is safe and happy at home, there are others who are living out my childhood terrors. We can find a stack of numbers that testify to the costs of domestic violence - what we spend on hospitals, courts, police. Yet no one has ever computed the wages of fear and mistrust that are the legacy of violence at home; it's not possible. Domestic violence leaves a wrenching legacy that many of us learn to put behind us if we can. For some, though, it becomes a deadly, soul-crushing inheritance.

Whenever we speak of the lives lost to domestic violence, we can't stop with those who have died.

Some of those who have paid the price of family violence are very much alive, still wounded, still struggling. Someone needs to remember the children, still paying for the sins of their fathers.

source: Ms., September-October 1994, P.O. Box 50008, Boulder, Colorado, USA

# No excuse!

An interview by  
Ma. Victoria Carbrera-Balleza

**In 1992 alone,  
almost four  
million American  
women were  
physically abused  
by their husbands  
or boyfriends.  
Forty-two percent  
of women who  
were murdered  
were killed by  
their intimate  
male partners.**

*In the United States, a woman is physically abused every nine seconds. Two-thirds of attacks on women are committed by someone the victim knows often the husband or boyfriend. Leni Marin, senior program specialist of the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF), discusses more of the issue of domestic violence in the American context and what women are doing to counter the problem.*

**Q.: Tell me about the Family Violence Prevention Fund what kind of an organization is it and what does it do?**

A: The Fund (FVPPF) is a national organization with its base in San Francisco. It's a policy and education institute. We look at public policy so that we can improve responses to domestic violence. For example, with battered immigrant women, our work toward public policy reform requires our looking at the immigration laws of the United States because in their particular case, the law actually fosters domestic violence. A lot of US citizens or "green card holders" (permanent legal residents) married to immigrant women are able to exert power and control over their wives because they are the ones with the legal right to petition them. Only then when the woman is petitioned does she attain legal status. So, unless the law is changed, what you're basically doing is increasing the abuser's power and control over an immigrant woman.

In communities of colors, African-American or Asian, calling the police is not necessarily something they look forward to doing. For many immigrant women, calling the police poses some risks they might ask for her green card, or they might deport her. In African-American communities, because of prejudices in this country in treating minorities, the penal system has not always been even-handed. The message "call the police" does not really work that well for certain communities.

The Fund has also worked hard on the Violence Against Women's Act, a major piece of legislation that was passed last year. The law mandates the government's allocation of resources for the training of police and judges as well as funds for shelters. We're hoping that through the Act, there will be more concerted effort to respond to violence against women.

So, our job is to take the government to task and to tell them, you need to deal with this issue. At the same time, we're also telling them to improve the laws.

**Q.: Does the Fund have other strategies aside from public policy reform?**

A: One of the most exciting things that we have embarked on in the past year was our public education and media campaign. We conducted a major poll to determine what the American public really thinks about domestic violence and if people know anyone who has been a victim of domestic violence.

Majority of the respondents said that yes, they know someone; that the issue is not a mystery anymore. We realized that people are aware of the extent of the problem. They know a cousin, a sister, a mother, a



*Leni Marin: "Even among men themselves such as golfing buddies, those who batter their wives should be exposed so that they get ostracized in public by their own peers."*

neighbor, you can go on and on. The question for most of them was what to do about it, how to intervene. And this is a valid concern. Sometimes, it's very dangerous being a bystander when a person gets violent. You could also get involved and that's part of the public cost of domestic violence. Sometimes the batterer goes into the office with a gun and just starts shooting. What we're working for is to modify social behavior so that domestic violence is no longer tolerated. Twenty-five years ago, if someone obviously drunk goes inside the car and drives this, nobody thought too much about it. But because of the work of the group called Mothers Against Drunk Driving or MADD, this is no longer socially tolerated.

That's our objective—for people to refuse to tolerate abusive behavior. Our ad brochure says, if it were loud music from your neighbor's house, you would call the police or you would tell your neighbors to shut it down, but if it's a woman getting beaten, you think it's not your business and you don't do anything. Even among men themselves such as golfing buddies, those who batter their wives should be exposed so that they get ostracized in public by their own peers. In effect, the men would be saying, "I don't know how I can play golf with you when you're such an abuser."

We have a toll-free number that people can call so we can send them our community action kit which gives examples on how they could organize their community to act on the violence, similar to the "Crime Watch" that people concerned about the rise of crime in their neighborhood have been organizing. This time, people could organize a Neighborhood Watch so that when they hear of [a man abusing his wife], they could show their support for the woman. Somehow, the man then gets the message that the neighbors are concerned. There's some social pressure applied. Also, through such an action, the message is again sent that we don't think domestic violence is okay. That's the preventative portion of the work that we are doing now.

In the long term, we have a lot of work to do in convincing the people that domestic violence is not a private matter, that it's society's concern. Otherwise, we can train and train people, judges and police, and build jails, put everyone in jail, but the problem will stay with us.

**Q.: Many organizations will be interested in knowing how the Fund conducts the public education and media campaign you mentioned. Can you share some more details? How massive a campaign is it?**

**A:** We launched the campaign last year, and we are fortunate that here, there's an organization called Ad Council, a big non-profit organization funded by major corporations. As you know, commercials are big-time money-making business. The Ad Council pools resources from those who are able to sell through their ads, then looks for social causes and awards deserving groups such as those which promote education or those campaigning against drug abuse. Last year, the Council selected the issue of domestic violence as a campaign it wants to do for three years and awarded the Fund. This means we get free airtime on all the major channels and

## Violence Against Women

cable TV for three years, equivalent to millions of dollars. What we have to do is to produce the spots. For example, two months ago, after a tele-drama on the O.J. Simpson case I don't want to review this show but anyway, at the end of it, our spot was aired.

**Q.: How has the media responded to your group's efforts?**

**A.:** We work closely with opinion makers in different fields. The media will respond well if you have mainstream opinion makers taking a stance on domestic violence. When we launched our "There's No Excuse for Domestic Violence Campaign", we had the president of the American Medical Association saying that domestic violence is a major health problem, an epidemic, and that we have to stop it. If you have the Attorney-General saying that domestic violence is a crime and we have to do something to stop it, then they listen.

**Q.: The O.J.-Nicole Simpson case has been sensational, even outside the United States. The trials are aired on TV, people listen to the radio and read the papers specifically for developments on the case. How has the Simpson case affected the general American public's consciousness of domestic violence?**

**A.:** It has become a national teach-in on the whole dynamics of domestic violence. The good thing about it is that people are now aware that domestic violence is a major problem in our society. They know now that domestic violence can be lethal. The case is complicated though because O.J. Simpson is African-American and as I told you earlier, the criminal justice system does not bode well for a lot of African-Americans, especially for the men. Part of what the defense is claiming is that that there was racism in the way that the evidence has been collected. There's a suggestion of a frame-up. I don't disagree that there's racism in this country. There

might have been some messy way of collecting evidence, but that's always happening. Our point is that should be united with battered women in ensuring justice for them at the same time that we are also united with the African-American community in ensuring justice for them all. So the process is very tedious and as you say, sensationalized in many ways. But overall, I think it's been, for lack of a better word, good for the issue in terms of people becoming more aware of the problem of domestic violence. Phone calls to shelters and other crisis lines have increased by 150 percent since the O.J. Simpson case blew up. More reporters have been calling us as well to ask about domestic violence.

### Frightening Facts

In India, eight of 10 women are victims of violence by their husbands.

Forty-nine percent of women polled in San Jose, Costa Rica say they were being beaten even when they were pregnant.



**Q.: How do you assess the efficiency of the American government in implementing the Violence Against Women Act?**

A.: There's bureaucracy here. The good thing about the Act is that it was passed after three years of hard work. It was major victory for the women's groups. Right now, the control over this Act is under the US State Department of Justice which has actually formed a Violence Against Women Act Office to administer the grants for shelters and other domestic violence programs, including rape crisis shelters, and for the training of personnel in law enforcement and the judiciary. We coordinate extensively with this office to ensure that the types of programs that are funded are the ones that will really help.

**Q.: I heard that you have been active in the preparatory meetings for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. How do you weigh the Beijing conference in terms of calling attention to the issue of violence against women?**

A.: Beijing is going to be crazy. It's going to be a big but terrifying prospect, a wonderful and great opportunity, and a very powerful experience. The Fund is commenting on the VAW (Violence Against Women) section of the Platform for Action, and one of our main points of emphasis is for long-term prevention and community-based sanctions for the international community to look beyond the criminal-justice system and the crisis-oriented individual. For the NGO Forum, I'm organizing a workshop which will study the policies of the G-7 countries on migrant women—the countries where the feminization of migration has taken place over the last five years. The growing trend of anti-migrant sentiments and xenophobia is getting to be [pervasive]. There's a gender-based edge to such sentiments. The other question is, how are women's rights organizations within those G-7 countries taking up the issue of migrant women? There's an easy tendency for women's rights organizations to see it as an immigration problem. But it's not, it's a women's rights problem. The workshop I'm designing will bring together women working on the issues of migrant women and women's rights from the G-7 countries.

**Q.: How has your work with The Fund or your exposure with battered women affected you as a person?**

A.: The bulk of my work is on policy reform, organizing, coalition building, developing materials and resources to improve services. We're not a shelter. We provide counseling to Filipino women, but not on a day-to-day basis. I think the key is the variety of work I do. If it were a constant, day in and day out, just hearing the stories and figuring out every single day how I can help an individual woman would be very draining. But I know that pursuing policy work is helping a lot of women whom I will never see, and for me, that is very rewarding. I also feel challenged in challenging women's rights organizations to take up the issue of immigrant women, in challenging whatever stereotypes they may have of non-white women.

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# Prostitution as choice

by Cecilia Hoffman

By their consent, some women do choose to be in prostitution. Cecilia Hoffman tears this argument apart.

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*The men wanted mere machines they could use for sex; the women hoped for relationships and to become wives.*

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**N**ina is a young woman who can be found most evenings along Quezon Avenue with other 'pick-up girls'. She has already been caught twice in police street raids and arrested for vagrancy. She has served a short jail sentence (three days); her second will certainly be longer.

Nina was sent by her grandmother from the province to the capital to finish her schooling. During an evening out with school friends Nina used to hang out with, she was raped by two boys. Nina drifted to the streets after that and has been there for two years.

Malou works in a club in Angeles City as a dancer who can be taken out by clients upon payment of a 'bar fine'. She was once married, worked in a factory, and also as a domestic helper in Hong Kong.

The fact that many women return to the street, the bars and the clubs on release from jail, or after factory, household or other employment, is generally considered proof that the problem of prostitution lies with incorrigible women who continue to choose prostitution.

True, several other women are tricked, kidnapped, raped or otherwise

coerced into prostitution. Particularly in countries in the South, countless others in dire economic straits find in prostitution their survival strategy. Untold numbers more have been so abused in childhood or in later life that the experience of prostitution becomes merely part of the cruel logic of their lives. But again, what of the women who appear to choose to be in prostitution?

When Malou worked in the canning factory, rising at dawn to be on time, doing a ten-hour shift, receiving just a bit less than the minimum wage set by law and no social benefits, having to

parry off the sexual advances of her supervisor, wasn't she, at least, a laborer toiling with honor? And anyway, didn't her male colleagues have to put up with the same working conditions?

In fact, aren't men equally poor, equally oppressed by an unjust economic order and the same bad labor conditions, as hard-hit by natural disasters or the effects of militarization on rural populations, as women are? Why then didn't Malou's male colleagues go into prostitution as well? Why didn't they apply at the countless bars, clubs or beer gardens that have signs announcing openings and where no references, no school degrees, no particular skills or qualifications are required?

The question is disingenuous, the answer obvious: Prostitution is about women selling their bodies.

### Male social system

But prostitution is not about women at all. It is a about male social system in place to ensure the satisfaction of male demand for sexual servicing and for objectified sex. The requirement, therefore, is abundant supply of women's bodies, although increasingly, such debased and dehumanized sexuality is also finding use for children's and men's bodies.

Male clients can specify the shapes and colors of bodies they want to use. On a strip of Quezon Avenue in Metro Manila, 'health' and 'entertainment' clubs have display windows of women wearing numbers for men to choose

from. In Japan, agencies openly advertise the full range of bodies offered, from virgins to pregnant women. In Germany, Denmark and elsewhere, one can subscribe to catalogs of women and children, specially those from the South, offered for sale for sexual use. In increasingly technologized and sophisticated forms and representing huge money interests, pornography is a global growth industry that describes, informs, suggests and teaches the uses of those bodies.

In prostitution, it is not with human beings that men interact, but with objectified, dehumanized bodies. A sign in

female body." (Hannah Olsson, *Prostitution*, Stockholm: Liber, 1981.)

### Question of consent

In such a system, Nina's or Malou's individual consent or choice is completely irrelevant. Should they not consent, women are obtained through other ways—through trickery, threat, abduction and sophisticated forms of trafficking—for the supply must be ensured.

But patriarchy, through its social construction of sexuality, also creates the conditions and the conditioning to ensure women's consent. In countries such



a bar in Angeles City, once home of the United States' offshore military facility, reads: "What is a woman? A support system for a pussy." The woman as human being does not exist in the enactment of male sexuality that is prostitution. A Swedish study describes prostitution as "male masturbation in a

as the Philippines, femininity continues to be firmly constructed around notions of pleasing and serving men, sacrificing for them, depending on them. Marriage and prostitution rest on the same premises. Social mores reinforce on the women themselves the notion that their existence and fulfillment are hinged on

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## Violence Against Women

a man. Rewards await those who conform to the traditional role of women in the family and adhere to the ideals of female sexual attractiveness, such as ubiquitous beauty titles, entertainment careers and the plum prize—marriage to a wealthy man. The non-conformists, on the other hand, are slapped with social sanctions. In such a situation, how significant is the whole issue of consent? As Kathleen Barry points out, "Consent to be objectified is a condition of oppression." (Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1995.)

And what do women consent to sexually? Filipino women, when referring to sexual intercourse with their husbands, partners or prostitution clients say: "He used me." Under patriarchy, whether in marriage or outside it, sex is a male prerogative, a male need, a male pleasure, a male right that must be socially recognized, including by women. Rape, marital rape, sexual harassment and prostitution are clear expressions of sexual power.

In some cultural traditions, genital mutilation is an even more extreme expression of sexual power, imposed on 80 million African and Muslim women to ensure that sexuality is totally appropriated by men and totally denied women.

How do women live with the prostitution exchange of their bodies? Knowing full well how their own selves are not seen, let alone wanted, by their clients, women create a prostitution identity—other names and life histories, and all manner of pretenses that conform to customers' specifications. These

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### ***Malou and her friends talked of sometimes "falling in love" with clients.***

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created identities and personalities also serve to hide away and protect the real self that continues to exist outside of prostitution. And recognizing the dehumanization done to their bodies, the women of Angeles City tell of bolstering their prostituted selves with drugs and alcohol to "drive away the shame," to "force themselves" to carry out what is required. With the years, says Malou, "What I couldn't take earlier, I now manage to accept."

There is yet another aspect to the prostitution of destitute or socially disadvantaged women, particularly women of a long-colonized people. The foreign or white client could be a potential savior from poverty and backwardness if he can be brought to see and value the human being before him. A term that servicemen from the US military bases that occupied Philippine territory for almost a century coined to refer to the women they used gives this naive and touching hope of a "white savior" cruel irony. The term is *LBFMs*, for "little brown fucking machines fueled by rice".

The men wanted mere machines they could use for sex; the women hoped for relationships and to become

wives. The women of Angeles and Olongapo, where the largest US docking station in the Pacific once was, hoped to "become lucky" and marry US servicemen. The few women who actually did were a demonstration of that possibility.

Malou and her friends talked of sometimes "falling in love" with clients. In this sense, prostitution was no mere money exchange for the women; it also meant the possibility of a true human relationship.

### **Crippled sexuality**

Does prostitution, this expression of male class power, then leave men unscathed? Are they always the profiteers of their own social arrangement of sexuality? Can men act out depersonalized, dehumanized, brutalized sex in prostitution, and a truly human experience of sex in an equal relationship with a non-prostitute woman?

Prostitution continually produces and reproduces a male sexuality crippled of emotion and of true human interaction, and that reduces the human experience of sexuality that can and should be fulfilling, joyful and life-enhancing to the empty, the cruel and subhuman.

"The prostitution exchange is the most systematic institutionalized reduction of women to sex. It is the foundation of all sexual exploitation of women. It is the prototype, the model from which all other sexual exploitation can be understood," Barry said.

It is the men who choose prostitution that are the debasement of women and of human sexuality itself. With their choice, they diminish the humanity of all women and men.

# Migrant worker held hostage

**W**hen Mi-yong recounted her story in the office of the Kanagawa City Union in March 1993, her initial complaint was that of unpaid wages from the club she worked in. It became clear as the Kanagawa City Union, and three other groups—the Kanagawa Women's Space Mizura, Yokohama Diocese Solidarity with Foreigners and House for Women Salaa—pursued the case, however, that Mi-yong was a victim of far worse than unpaid work: She was being forced by her employer, a certain Ri-Miran, to have sex with a regular customer of the pub and repeatedly subjected to sexual assault.

Mi-yong's only goal when she came to Japan in 1992 was to learn the management side of running a restaurant. Back in Seoul, she was introduced to Ri-Miran by her brother-in-law, and shortly after, she signed a contract for employment in Japan as a kitchen worker in Ri-Miran's pub. Under the contract, she was to receive ¥15,000 (US\$150) in wages daily.

Mi-yong entered Japan on a 15-day tourist visa. Her first job was as a waitress in the Korean night club Sezon. She was eventually approached by Ri-Miran with a proposal that she become a hostess. "We need a hand," her employer said. Mi-yong thought to herself, "I will quit as soon as I receive my pay." Mi-yong had no idea that from that point on, however, Ri-Miran would withhold her salary for several months.

One of the regular customers at Sezon was a certain Kami, who worked as director of Kouei Corporation. After Mi-yong was cornered into becoming a hostess, Kami began to visit the club more often. Ri-Miran instructed Mi-yong to sit next to Kami and be the one to entertain him each

time. Mi-yong dreaded the assignment. She could never get used to such a job as hostess—she did not even speak Japanese. She considered going back to Korea and demanded her salary several times.

One time, Ri-Miran ordered Mi-yong to go shopping with Kami and before Mi-yong knew it, she was being pushed into Kami's car. She was taken to a hotel room where she was overpowered, then later raped.

Mi-yong demanded her salary from Ri-Miran repeatedly, which led to constant arguments between the two. The only reason that she could not quit was because she still had to collect her unpaid salary. In the meantime, Ri-Miran continuously insulted her for not providing good 'service' to Kami who violated her repeatedly.

On November 11, Ri-Miran told Mi-yong to resign. Her brother-in-law came all the way from Korea to help her out negotiate for her salary. Finally, Mi-yong was paid ¥620,000 out of a total ¥1.45 million due her.

The non-payment of salaries is a common problem that Asian migrant

women working in Japan's night clubs bring to the attention of NGOs.

In Mi-yong's club, for instance, the salaries of four other hostesses were also held, and the women were forced to survive on money they received through the 'Dohan'—a system where a hostess receives pocket money from a customer, whether directly or through the employer, for going out on with him on a date. (Dating customers is a regular task of hostesses.) One variation is the Dohan Shukkin where a hostess has to set a date with a customer, outside the club, beforehand and comes to the club with him.

The club manager usually sets the Dohan or commission that hostesses receive, and some pubs even regulate the minimum number of Dohan commissions (customers) a hostess should maintain per week. In any case, a hostess' regular salary is different from the commission or pocket money received from Dohan customers. In the case of Mi-yong, however, her employer apparently made no distinction between the workers' Dohan payments and their

## Violence Against Women

regular salary. Ri-Miran believed that because she arranges her workers' profitable relationship with their customers, the Dohan commissions they receive are already part of the salary due them.

The Dohan system does not always involve sexual relations; in fact, some restrict hostesses from engaging in sexual relations with customers as a policy, arguing that such prostitution would ruin the club's reputation and discourage customers. In Mi-yong's case, Ri-Miran forced her into prostitution by withholding her pay. Ri-Miran also held Mi-yong hostage with her "overstaying" visa—another common strategy of employers to maintain their workers—and constantly threatened her with arrest or deportation. According to Mi-yong, most of her colleagues were contented with the pocket money received from the Dohan system and even berated her for demanding a 'separate' salary. "Why don't you just tolerate it like everybody else?" they asked her.

In the beginning, Mi-yong's case was pursued as one of unpaid wages by the direct employer. The NGOs sought to enter into collective bargaining with Ri-Miran on behalf on Sezon. In the course of the investigation, however, Ri-Miran closed Sezon as well as another Korean night club, the Busankou, abandoned the apartment she lived in, then vanished. The groups learned that Ri-Miran offered the sale of the Busankou to Kami. In November 1992, Matsumoto Company, a subsidiary of Kouei Corporation where Kami works, loaned money to Kami for him to take over Busankou. Between October and November 1993, the Kanagawa City Union appealed for collective bargaining with Kouei Corporation, negotiated twice for compensation for Mi-yong's unpaid salary and lodged



a complaint of sexual violence.

As president of Kouei Corporation, Kami, along with a certain Mr. Matsumoto, president of Matsumoto Company, denied any responsibility for unpaid wages to Mi-yong. Both insisted they had no direct employment relationship with her. The Kanagawa City Union pointed out that in view of both Ri-Miran's disappearance and the Matsumoto Company's purchase of the Busankou club, the two parties are now accountable for the original employer's unpaid wages.

As for the charge of sexual violence filed against Kami, he admitted to having had a sexual relationship with Mi-yong but insisted that with Mi-yong's consent. Moreover, Kami said, he paid her each time, making the case one of prostitution, not sexual violence.

Mi-yong's case turned out to be a learning lesson to the Kanagawa City Union itself. As the organization pursued her case, it became clear that some Korean members of the union itself have neglected and even 'mishandled' women's issues. They made light of Mi-yong's struggle, adding to the victim's anguish and resentment and making empowerment all the more difficult for her. But the union is learning from its mistakes.

The four organizations involved, the union, as well as Mizura, Salaa and Solidarity with Foreigners, have agreed on three tactical points to redirect their joint struggle: first, to respect Mi-yong's brave appeal as means to improve the conditions of overstaying women migrant workers who are deprived of their rights as provided for in Article 13 of the Japanese Constitution and Labor Standard Law; second, to pursue Matsumoto Company and Kouei Corporation's accountability; and third, to incorporate the women's movement in the campaign to make the employment policies and working conditions that women face equal to those applied to men. The groups now realize that special attention should be given to women migrant workers, whose choices are restricted by the limitations in the types of work available to them.

source: Solidarity with Foreign Workers, 1098 Kashimada Saiwa-Ku, Kanagawa, Japan; phone: 81-44-511-94-95

*Dancing With Another Bird*





## Resource Center Update

ISIS International Resource Center invites you to feast on our latest acquisitions of books in this latest update. This issue's update features 16 selections covering agriculture, trafficking, ecofeminism, healing, refugees, female sexual energy and other equally stimulating themes.

We have also included reviews of three books in our collection plus one that we hope to add to our shelves. Four perceptive women have woven together these incisive reviews which you will find in our book reviews section.

In this issue, our poetry comes from the Pacific and Bangladesh. Let the poems of Grace Molisa from Vanuatu, Cita Morei of Palau and Taslima Nasreen speak to your heart about their pain and struggles in their cultures.

And, of course, we have not left the fun out of our pages. We have an easy-to-follow recipe for recycled paper for your creative hands and a visual treat for the restless mind in our regular Recipes, Clicks, Ideas & Puns section.

The Resource Center Update of Women in Action is a regular section put together by the staff of the Resource Center and Information Program (RCIP). It is our way of sharing with you information from our collection of books, journals, films, arts and crafts, information packs, conference and workshop reports, and other unpublished material.

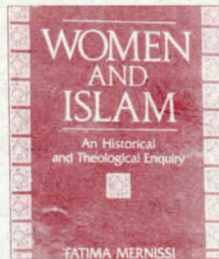
If you have any suggestions about books and other material that we ought to stack in our shelves, we would like to hear from you. We are also looking for reviews of books and films for publication in this magazine. Our next issues will be out in August and December.

If you are after information, contact us by phone, mail or E-mail. We can provide photocopies of non-copyright publications upon request. We may not be able to provide you all the information you need, but we do our best.



## From the Isis Shelves

Mernissi, Fatima. **Women and Islam: an historical and theological enquiry.** Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1991. 228 pp. (CUL 02040.00)



Mernissi sheds light on the status of women in Islam by reassessing literary sources as far back as seventh-century Islam. Ample historical evidence portrays women in the Medina, the Prophet's city in the seventh century, as they liberate themselves from slavery and violence to become participants in the making of Arab history.

Women fled aristocratic tribes in Mecca by the thousands to enter Medina because Islam promised equality and dignity for all—men and women, masters and servants. During that time, women could gain access to full citizenship, the status of *sahabi* (the Prophet's companion). They enjoyed the right to enter the councils of the Muslim umma, to speak freely to its Prophet-leader, to argue with the men, to fight for their happiness, and to be involved in managing military and political affairs. The evidence is found in the works of religious history and in biographies of *sahabiyat*. Later impositions on women such as the veil were never the Prophet's intention.

Available from:  
Kali for Women  
B1/8 Hauz Khas  
New Delhi 110 016

Rogers, Barbara. **The domestication of women: discrimination in developing societies.** London: Tavistock Publications, 1980. 200 pp. (DEV 02042.00)



How do development planners deal with women's issues? The first part of the

book discusses Western male ideology about gender distinctions and the division of labor. It explains how interpretations of other societies are used to bolster myths about women's "natural place" in society. The second part analyzes this process. It focuses on discrimination against women in development agencies, distortions in research and data collection on which development planning is based, and the relegation by planners of Third World women to the domestic sphere. The third part delves into the discriminatory impact of the planning process in subsistence agriculture, the sector in which most Third World women are concentrated.

Available from:  
Tavistock Publications  
in association with  
Methuen, Inc.  
733 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017



**Women writing in India.** Vol. I: 600 B.C. to the early 20th century; and Vol. II: the 20th century. Edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita. New York: The Feminist Press, 1993. (LIT 02041.00)

The two volumes offer more than 140 texts from 13 languages never before available as a collection or in English, along with a new reading of cultural history that draws on contemporary scholarship on women and India. These illuminate the lives of Indian women through 2,600 years of change, and expand the historical understanding of literature, feminism and the making of modern India.

Volume II brings the history begun in Volume I up to the present day. It offers poetry, fiction, drama, memoirs, critical introductions, and biographical headnotes. These map women's shifting roles and varying responses to the great social, political and cultural upheavals wrought by the struggle for independence,

the establishment of the Indian nation, modernization, and the women's movement.

Available from:  
The Feminist Press  
City University of New York  
311 East 94 Street  
New York N.Y. 10128

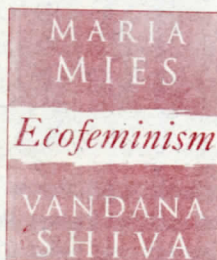
**Minding our lives: women from the South and North reconnect ecology and health.** Edited by Vandana Shiva. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993. 164 pp. (ENV 02045.00)



*Minding our Lives* is based on the seminar on "Women, Ecology and Health: *Rebuilding Connections*" held in Bangalore in southern India from July 17 to 22, 1991. It centers on the cultural and political roots of the ecological and health crises; the link between environmental degradation and women's health, and between ecological and social breakdown; the impact of new technologies on women's health and ecological stability; and the strategies that women—and men—are using to respond to violence against nature and the related violence against women.

Available from:  
Kali for Women  
B1/8 Hauz Khas  
New Delhi 110 016

Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva. **Ecofeminism.** London: Zed Books, 1993. 328 pp. (ENV 02044.00)



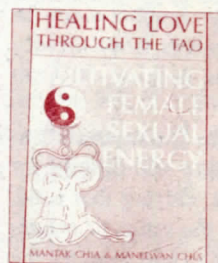
*Ecofeminism* shows the ways in which ecological destruction disproportionately affects women, particularly those in developing countries. It addresses the inherent inequalities in world structures which permit the North to dominate the South, men to dominate women, and the frenetic plunder of ever more resources for ever more unequally distributed economic gain to dominate nature.

Ecofeminism grew out of various social crusades—the femi-

nist, peace and ecology movements—in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It thrives on connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing. It recognizes the value of the feminine principle that is caring, nurturing and sustaining, and brings this to ecology. Feminism has politicized ecology in describing patriarchy's domination of the earth.

Other issues discussed: the concept of knowledge, poverty and development, industrialization of all life forms, the search for cultural identity and rootedness, the search for freedom and self-determination on a limited earth.

Available from:  
Zed Books Ltd  
7 Cynthia St.  
London N1 9Jf, UK, or  
Kali for Women  
B1/8 Hauz Khas  
New Delhi 110 016



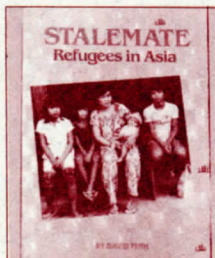
Chia, Mantak and Maneewan Chia. **Healing love through the Tao: cultivating female sexual energy.** Makati, Philippines: Institute for Inner Studies, 1986. 328 pp. (ENV 02045.00)

Sexual guidance and exercises are introduced plainly to the Western public for the first time. For thousands of years, a Taoist Master taught these secrets only to very small numbers of people in the royal courts in esoteric circles, who were sworn to silence. Now, the Chias are sharing their knowledge with the world.

According to them, there are two main practices for women to cultivate and enhance their sexual energy. One is ovarian breathing, which can shorten menstruation, reduce cramps, and compress more life-force energy (CHI) into the ovaries for more sexual power. Another is the orgasmic upward draw, which can be done solo or with one's sexual partner. When this practice is mastered, one can experience "total orgasm" beyond the ordinary vaginal kind without losing the life-force energy.

Available from:  
Institute for Inner Studies, Inc.  
2nd Flr., Evekal Building  
855 Pasay Road corner Amorsolo St.  
Makati, Metro Manila

Feith, David. **Stalemate: refugees in Asia.** Victoria: Asian Bureau Australia, 1988. 92 pp. (HUM 02048.00)



There are somewhere between 10 and 15 million refugees in the world, mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They are neglected by-products of the many conflicts that this century has witnessed. They are "a sign of the times."

*Stalemate* depicts their lives and problems. Feith traces the history of the main refugee groups in Asia and how the international community has responded to their problems, including their search for asylum and protection. He presents three conventional solutions to a refugee situation: returning home; staying permanently in the country of first asylum; and resettling in a third country. Finally, he discusses what has become a de facto fourth "solution": long-term residence in a refugee camp.

Available from:

Asian Bureau Australia  
173 Royal Parade Parkville  
Victoria 3052, Australia

World Health Organization. **AIDS home care handbook.** Geneva: WHO, 1993. 178 pp. (HEA 02047.00)

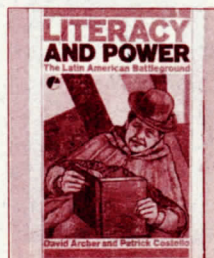


AIDS is a chronic disease lasting months or years. A person with AIDS may move several times from the home to the hospital and back again. Thus, much of the care of the afflicted occurs in the home, relying on two strengths—family and community. The handbook provides health care workers with information to help families gain confidence about their own ability to give safe, compassionate and helpful care to people with AIDS in their homes.

Part I is a teaching guide about HIV and AIDS for the community, the sick person, and the family, or anyone training to become a community health worker or a volunteer. Part II is a reference guide with detailed information about common AIDS-related problems and causes, what can be done at home to alleviate these problems, and when to seek further help.

Available from:

World Health Organisation  
CH1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland



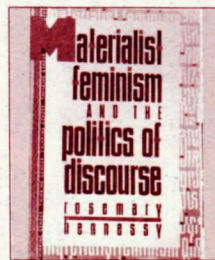
Archer, David and Costello. **Literacy and power: the Latin American battleground.** London: Earthscan Publications, 1990. 206 pp. (EDU 02043.00)

The often bloody struggles of Central America have long dominated the news. Behind the headlines lies the story of an enormous population of the desperately poor, who are impoverished even more by widespread illiteracy.

What actually counts as literacy, however, is less clear. Archer and Costello describe some of the most exciting and innovative programs designed to overcome the problem and, having worked with many of the people, how varied and controversial these are. The authors illustrate some of the political issues and problems of the continent (i.e., El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Ecuador, Mexico, Chile, Bolivia and Guatemala) through specific case studies, highlighting the impact of popular education on people's daily struggles.

Available from:

Earthscan Publications Ltd  
3 Endsleigh Street  
London WC1H 0DD



Hennessy, Rosemary. **Materialist feminism and the politics of discourse.** New York: Routledge 1993. 177 pp. (IDE 02051.00)

The book is a powerful account of creating feminist theory that appropriates the best of materialism and postmodernism.

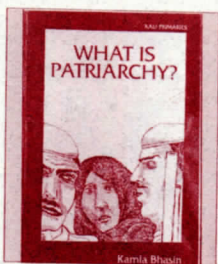
Hennessy stresses that her work is not an overview or a genealogy of materialist feminism, that it does not offer an introduction to materialist feminism or plot out its organizing concepts. It is, instead, an argument for and within a materialist-feminist problematic that takes as its particular focus the problem of the subject—more specifically, the discursively constructed subject. She also shows how some of the conceptual frameworks that Western feminists have found most valuable blind us to the regressive global politics that they advance.

Available from:

Routledge  
29 West 35th Street  
New York, NY 10001-2299

## RESOURCE CENTER UPDATE

Bhasin, Kamla. **What is patriarchy?** New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993. 31 pp. (IDE 02049.00)

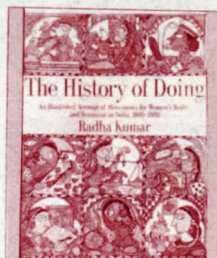


Has patriarchy always existed? How can we recognize it? Does it subordinate all women in the same way, everywhere? Is it a system of discrimination that has been institutionalized? Are all institutions patriarchal? Do all men benefit equally from it?

This booklet unravels the many strands of patriarchy in a lucid and accessible question-and-answer format. Focusing on South Asia, it locates women's struggles for social change in a context where the patriarchal control of major social and political institutions makes for specific forms of discrimination against women.

Available from:  
Kali for Women  
B1/8 Hauz Khas  
New Delhi 110 016

Kumar, Radha. **The history of doing: an illustrated account of movements for women's rights and feminism in India 1800-1990.** New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993. 203 pp. (SOC 02052.00)



This thematic history of the women's movement in India, both before and after independence, covers the nineteenth century to the present. It looks at how women's issues were raised, initially by men and as part of the movement for social reform, and then involving women in the nationalist movement.

Using photographs, old and new documents, excerpts from letters, books, and informal writings, the author chronicles the growing involvement of women and the formation of the early women's organizations. She examines the foregrounding of the women's issue during the reform and nationalist movements and its subsequent disappearance from the agenda of public debate until it reemerged in the post-independence period of the Sixties and Seventies.

The book raises key questions regarding the nature of the contemporary movement, the issues it has taken up (such as rape, dowry, environment, work and health), its directions and perspectives, its differences from Western movements, the role of autonomous women's organizations, and their relationship with

political parties, especially those of the Left. A wealth of information comes through accessible writing that should appeal to a wide cross-section of readers.

Available from:  
Kali for Women  
B1/8 Hauz Khas  
New Delhi 110 016



Eisler, Riane Tennenhaus. **The chalice and the blade.** New York: HarperCollins, 1987. 261 pp. (IDE 02050.00)

The story of our cultural origins is told, based on interwoven evidences from art, archeology, religion, social science, history, and many other fields of inquiry.

War and the "war of the sexes" are neither divinely nor biologically ordained. The book affirms that a better future is possible, one firmly rooted in the haunting drama of our past.

Eisler reexamines society from a gender-holistic perspective, using a new theory of the cultural evolution: cultural transformation. This theory proposes that underlying the great diversity of human culture are two basic models of society.

First is the dominator model, simply known as patriarchy or matriarchy—the ranking of one half of humanity over the other. Second is the partnership model, with social relations primarily based on the principle of linking rather than ranking. Here, diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority.

The theory further proposes that our cultural evolution originally moved toward partnership. But, following a period of chaos and almost total cultural disruption, a fundamental social shift occurred.

Available from:  
HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.  
10 East 53rd St.  
New York, NY 100022



Dorkenoo, Efa. **Cutting the rose—female genital mutilation: the practice and its prevention.** London: Minority Rights Publications, 1994. 196 pp. (VAW 02054.00)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the official term for the partial or complete

## RESOURCE CENTER UPDATE

removal of the external genitalia. This medically unnecessary, painful and extremely dangerous operation has been performed on tens of millions of babies and young girls throughout Africa and many other parts of the world. No anesthetic is used. The instruments used are unsterilized knives, razor blades or even shards of glass. Tetanus, septicemia or severe hemorrhaging may result. Death is not unknown.

This book presents the facts about FGM. It gives comprehensive, up-to-date, incisive information and shows how the cooperation between health professional and local and international bodies is essential to eliminate this vicious abuse of the human rights of women and children.

It points out a number of ideas for action. (1) African women who are researching and organizing against the practice should be listened to and supported. (2) While voluntary organizations can play a valuable role, only governments can take the necessary steps to initiate and coordinate work against the practice in their own country. (3) Western governments should allocate funds in their overseas development budget to specific programs for African women's health, education and welfare, related to the elimination of FMG. (4) UN agencies should sponsor research, coordinate action, and give practical support to governments and NGOs working against FMG.

Available from:

Minority Rights Group  
379 Brixton Road  
London SW9 7DE, UK

Johnson, Janis Tyler. **Mothers of incest survivors: another side of the story.** Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992. 162 pp. (VAW 02055.00)

The book is a direct account of incest-family mothers. Six women relate their experiences in accounts that challenge the collusive-mother model. The collusive mother is described as a cold, frigid, withdrawn, physically ill or psychologically impaired woman who resigns from her expected roles of responsible wife and mother. She pushes her daughter into taking on her duties in the family, including satisfying the emotional and sexual needs of the father. The collusive mother

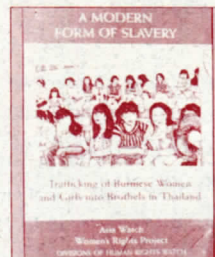


denies the incest between her daughter and husband. When confronted with its reality, she either disbelieves or blames her daughter. And following disclosure, she chooses her husband over her daughter.

The accounts detail how the mothers discover the incest, why they keep it as a secret, how they respond to and explain events, and how they interpret the consequences for their daughters, husbands, families and themselves.

Available from:

Indiana University Press Publicity Department  
601 N. Morton Street  
Bloomington, Indiana 47404  
phone: 812-855-8054



Asia Watch & The Women's Rights Project. **A modern form of slavery: trafficking of Burmese women and girls into brothels in Thailand.** New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993. 160 pp. (VAW 02053.00)

Based on in-depth interviews with Burmese victims, this study reveals violations of internationally recognized human rights. Most of the interviews took place at emergency shelters for trafficking victims run by nongovernmental organizations in Chiangmai and Bangkok. Some of the girls were detained at the Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok. They found out that Thai police and border patrol officials are involved in both trafficking and brothel operations, but these authorities routinely escape punishment, as, for the most part, do brothel agents, owners, pimps and clients.

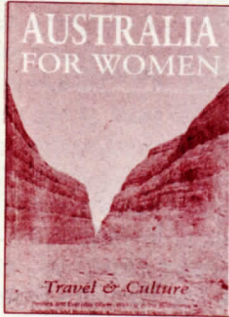
The Human Rights Watch assesses the responsibility of the Thai government. It presents detailed recommendations to the Thai and Burmese governments and the international community for improving the protection of the women and girls and ensuring the prosecution of their abusers.

Available from:

Human Rights Watch  
485 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10017-6104

From the Publisher

A Tour "Down Under"  
for Women



**Australia for Women: Travel and Culture**  
Susan Hawthorne and Renate Klein, eds.  
Feminist Press Travel Series, September 1994  
US\$17.95, illustrated with 68 black-and-white photographs  
ISBN: 1-55861-095-2  
Distribution:  
Consortium Book Sales and Distribution  
1045 Westgate Drive  
St. Paul, MN 55114, USA  
phone: (800) 283-3572

The Feminist Press at The City University of New York has launched an innovative series of travel guides for women with *Australia for Women: Travel & Culture*. Deliberately designed for browsing as well as absorbing reading, *Australia for Women* reads as if a convivial, entertaining feminist friend turns up in every locale to conduct an insider's tour. With 57 women writers from the featured country contributing to the volume, *Australia for Women* is a brilliant, entertaining portrait of Australian women and their contributions to Australian society and culture—today and in the past, complementing all available conventional guides to hotels, tours or restaurants.

*Australia for Women* is divided into three main sections. In Part 1, essays, stories, and poems reflect on Australian history, culture, and everyday life. From Aboriginal origins to convicts sent to the colony the British called "Botany Bay" two centuries ago, the book moves on to the stories of some famous, and ordinary women, including the nurses of World War II and leaders of the modern women's movement.

"Australia is the only country in the world with a continuous cultural history of 60,000, possibly more, years," observe editors Hawthorne and Klein in their introductory essay. "And Aboriginal women have been central to that cultural development."

Other chapters in Part 1 give evidence of the diverse society which is Australia: "Memories of Sydney's China Town" by Mavis Yen, "Multiculturalism" by Sabine Gleditsch, "Feminism and Colonialism" by Uyen Loewald, "Lesbians in Australia" by Diana Starski, "Koori Women: Racism and Politics" by Destiny Deacon, "Women Composers Have Got Australia Covered" by Sally Macarthur and "The Women's Art Scene in Australia" by Merren Ricketson.

Part 2 is entitled "Cities-Country-Rivers." It opens with engaging portraits of the flora and fauna found throughout the sprawling island nation, followed by a practical guide by regions: after all, Australia the nation is also a continent!

*Australia for Women* combines colorful and straightforward introductions to landmarks, national parks, and urban centers with essays by contributors imparting

the spirit of places or a sense of firsthand experience and lifestyles; Eliazbeth Jolley's "A Sort of Gift: Images of Perth," Tania Lienert's "Growing up in Woomera," Ruby Lmagford's "The Fencing Circus" (a memoir of Queensland and New South Wales), Jan Teagle Kapeta's "Darwin: A Letter," Jenny Maher's "Rural Women's Syndrome," and Kaye Johnston's "The Revolutionary Nature of Lesbian Organic Gardening" reveal the multiplicity of perspectives in this section of the book.

Part 3, "Resources," features a one-of-a-kind gathering of information (addresses, telephone and facsimile numbers) on women's networks today: travel agents, hotels, restaurants, night clubs, radio stations, bookshops, health and sexual assault services, and legal resources in Australia, as well as recommended books, periodicals and newspapers, making any women's adventure to Australia as complete as possible.

*Australia for Women: Travel & Culture* inaugurates the Feminist Press Travel Series. "Greece for Women" and "Italy for Women" slated for publication in 1995 and 1996, will provide further options for women travelers to the most popular destinations.

A poet, novelist, festival organizer, and publisher, Susan Hawthorne has lived and traveled in Australia for many years. She is co-editor of four anthologies of women's writing and has been active in the Australian women's movement for more than 20 years.

Renate Klein is Deputy Director of the Australian Women's Research Centre and Senior Lecturer in Women's Studies at Deakin University. She is known internationally for her work in Women's Studies and women's health. She has written and edited numerous books.

source: *The Feminist Press*, The City University of New York

## First Accurate Translation of a Major Work in Western Feminism



### The Answer/La Respuesta

by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz  
critical edition and translation by Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell  
includes a selection of poetry  
(English translation alongside original Spanish text, 1994)  
Consortium Book Sales, distributor  
1045 Westgate Drive, St. Paul, Minnesota 55114-1065  
phone: (800) 283-372

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648/51-1695), “the first feminist of America,” “the tenth muse,” “one of the most important women poets of the Spanish-speaking world” and “precursor of the 18th. century enlightenment,” remains a commanding figure in the history of the women’s struggle for intellectual freedom.

After she was commanded to acknowledge learning as unbefitting a woman and a nun, Sor Juana composed her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* (1691), now seen to be a key document in women’s emancipation. It remains one of the most moving prose works in Spanish, with its elegant defense of learning as a proper task for women and its eloquent criticism of a society dominated by men and a church dominated by the Inquisition.

“Other translations of the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* exist in English; this one differs by more fully drawing in and upon the spiritual, cultural, social and female context in which the author lived and wrote her *Answer*, and to which she refers in the text,” explain editors/translators Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell.

Stephen Greenblatt, The Class of 1932 Professor of English Literature at the University of California, applauds just this concern for rendering Sor Juana’s original linguistic intent: “The excellent translation and scholarly commentary are particularly sensitive to feminist concerns in the context of a nuanced understanding of the history and culture of Sor Juana’s time.”

In 1668 Sor Juana entered the Hieronymite convent in Mexico City, where she composed music, conducted scientific experiments, kept a 4,000-volume library and received intellectuals, while pursuing a polymathic literary career until threats from church officials silenced her remarkable voice.

Enjoying the favor of New Spain’s vicereine and viceroy

as well as great popular acclaim, Sor Juana wrote sacramental and secular plays, poetry and essays that are erudite and witty—writings that embroiled her in ongoing, and ultimately dangerous, controversy. Sor Juana’s work evidences a profound and subtle intellect, a spirit deeply opposed to the sexist standards of both society at large and the church hierarchy. She boldly critiqued accepted values which condoned for women only marriage, childbirth and religiosity. Her emphasis on secular knowledge conflicted with her status as a “bride of Christ.” She championed the rights of women and defended slaves and Native Americans in her texts.

Sor Juana’s social and intellectual independence inevitably generated hostility from the fathers of the church. Criticism reached a climax in 1690 in the form of a letter from the Bishop of Puebla. Hiding behind the female name ‘Sor Filotea de la Cruz,’ the bishop condemned Sor Juana’s theological views and her neglect of religious literature.

*The Answer* is Sor Juana’s final defiant salvo in her battle for free expression. She wrote only a few more pieces before she ceased all writing and renounced the world in 1694. After disposing of her books and instruments, she then devoted herself to penance and contemplation. A plague devastated Mexico City in 1695 and Sor Juana fell victim to it while tending the sick.

“Sor Juana used her art and her religion to be a scholar, and she used her scholarship to create a piece of literary art that defends the sacredness of poetry (as well as of women). She understood the power of language and ideology, and the unstated gender issued embedded in both. That is precisely why... Sor Juana seems so ‘modern’ and why she continues to rivet our interest.”

source: *The Feminist Press*, The City University of New York

## POETRY

Cita Morei is a teacher and an activist who fought for the Independence of Palau.

### KNOW THAT I AM . . . (for Linus)

Washed in life's thickets  
white walls with crickets.

Dismisses as a displaced person  
Dying to live with reason.

Don't think I am not trying  
Open your heart I am crying.

"I have been there," HE said.  
I have heard you.  
and I am sorry for you.

I've been watching your closed doors;  
waiting by your drawn curtains;  
waiting to let My Light shine in.

Why be a prisoner in yourself?

You are free.  
I AM with thee.

I AM in the spectrum of the rainbow;  
present at your ship's bow.

I AM the sunrise you see at Desbedall;  
the sunset you savor by Icebox wall

I AM the rolling waves you see on the reef;  
more with you when you are in grief.

I AM in the grain of sand you feel on the  
beach;  
there, when your mom and loved one seemed  
to preach.

I AM in the rain you hear over the old tin roof;  
... AM waiting, others are waiting, you need  
no proof.

I WAS with you on the bus trip from Oregon;  
there, on the bike accident by safeway  
store.

I WAS with you on the long flight home.  
I AM with you, but you choose to be alone.

Why maintain your prison?

I cannot open your door;  
Your shutters are locked;  
from the inside;  
You have the key.

©Cita Morei, 1992

### BELAUAN WOMAN

She is all there  
on pages of history  
weaving herstory in living legends.

She was melted down carefully for you  
and cast down to cradle  
to care for you through the ages

Belauan woman—she has always been there,  
a sister, a love, a mother  
She is a bastion after a tropical storm,  
an unwilting wild flower among the thorns.

She is rooted in the land,  
loving in the field of life.  
She is exceptional.

Belauan woman—she became a "mengol"  
a way she knew as protocol,  
which brought money and fame  
it was not a shame.  
You see

She is more than that.  
She sat in the "bai"

Your tattooed woman in command.

This is not an experiment.  
She sees to balance north and south  
an obligation she does with pride  
a love for home she could not hide.  
She is harmony.

Belauan Woman—she is all there  
she restored hope in the laws of man  
and peace unto the land  
when all did fail to see  
justice was meant to be.  
She is admired.

Belauan Woman—she is there.  
Keeping Faith with present joys  
Deferring the vice of flesh with poise  
Cherishing the womb that wisdom bore.

Belauan Women—Walk boldly in Truth  
my sister  
And do not deign to give.  
Remain secure through pain and gain  
to help preserve thy home, thy heart.

©Cita Morei, 1992





Taslima Nasreen, a Bangladeshi poet, essayist, novelist and doctor, used her prose and poetry to battle social injustices in her country. For this, she was sentenced to death by hanging and hounded by the Muslim fundamentalists which forced her to flee to Sweden.

source: *Manushi: A Journal About Women and Society*, No. 85; c-202, Lajpat Nagar-I, New Delhi-24, India

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I don't believe in God.

I look at nature  
with my infatuated eyes,  
I walk ahead holding  
the hands of progress.  
But the crooked ways  
of the society  
pull me back  
holding me by my sleeves.  
I wish I could  
walk over the entire city  
in the middle of the night,  
sit down somewhere  
all by myself,  
and cry.

I don't believe in God.

Religionists secretly  
divide houses into sects,  
separate woman from humanity.  
I too get divided,  
I am deprived  
of human rights.  
The hard-boiled politician  
gets his ovation  
talking about class exploitation,  
but he cleverly camouflages  
words about exploitation of  
women.

I know all these characters.

The world over  
religion has spread its eighteen  
fingers.  
How much can one, alone,  
break one's bones  
challenging all these?  
How can the outspread  
nets of inequality  
be broken?

## ENJOYING A WOMAN

On the third day  
of our acquaintance,  
you questioned the way  
we should address each other.  
After seven days,  
you wanted to take me  
to Madras, Bangalore,  
Kathmandu and Calcutta.  
On the eighteenth day,  
you wanted to touch my fingers.  
In two months  
you demanded a kiss  
and in three months and a half,  
my body.  
What all you'll get  
in this beautiful body,  
you will also get  
in a full-time wife,  
in half a dozen office girls

and in cheap harlots.  
But then you go about  
wearing down you reels,  
talking nineteen to the dozen  
trying to drag me  
close to you, by deception.  
All these translate into one thing.  
Unless you enjoy a woman  
after some tactical moves,  
there is no satisfaction  
in such enjoyment.

And since I know that,  
before you can spit on my body,  
I spit twice over  
into your aberrant mind.

## ON THE EDGE

Go ahead I must  
though all my folk want me back;  
My child pulls me by my sari,  
My husband stops me by the  
door,  
Go I must.  
There is nothing before me,  
only a river;  
that I'll cross.  
I know how to swim,  
but they won't allow me  
to swim and cross it.

There is nothing  
beyond the river,  
only an open field.  
But then I want to touch  
the void once.  
I'll run against the wind.  
I feel like dancing;  
I must dance one day,  
and then come back.

For a long time now,  
I have not played  
my childhood games.  
I will play them one day  
shouting to my heart's content,  
and then I'll come back.

For a long time,  
I have not cried  
with my head in the lap  
of loneliness;  
I'll cry myself empty  
and then I'll come back.

There is nothing before me;  
only a river.  
And I know how to swim.  
Why shouldn't I go?  
Go I must.

BLACK STONE



Grace Mera Molisa worked as Executive Secretary to Father Walter Lini, former Prime Minister of Vanuatu.

Statelessness

?  
 the  
 native  
 aboriginal  
 autochthonic  
 heir begotten  
 of mother earth  
 legislated stateless.

Matrimony  
 the grafting  
 of a male  
 to a female

The parasite  
 saps and smothers  
 the female  
 so to flourish  
 and bloom  
 in resplendent glory.

A woman  
 has no future  
 no identity  
 the backbone  
 hidden  
 by Man's exterior.

Women  
 wanting to grow  
 into entities  
 in their own right  
 do not marry.

Marriage  
 terminates  
 growing  
 thinking  
 independence  
 identity.

Marriage

The morgue  
 of the living dead  
 bedazzles  
 suicidal moths  
 swarming  
 in their hordes  
 to inevitable  
 slaughter.

The hallowed  
 institution  
 of holy matrimony  
 a sanctified  
 social order  
 for security  
 guarantees  
 property right.

Basic  
 political unit  
 of power  
 imbalance  
 root-cause  
 off-shooting  
 social order  
 and disorder  
 in human relations  
 and organization.

Wedded bliss  
 is ne'er amiss  
 wearing, tearing  
 aging  
 and seeding  
 the female  
 transforming

nubile form  
 to formless blob  
 of vegetating glob.

Considering  
 the realities  
 walking the aisle  
 should be  
 the last thing  
 in life  
 if at all necessary  
 for women  
 of good sense.

The formality  
 of marriage  
 involving  
 esteemed socialites  
 guarantees  
 the binding bonds  
 of bondage  
 confining  
 the spirit  
 within  
 the prison fortress.

The commendably  
 courageous  
 defy  
 insurmountable  
 odds  
 to choose lovers  
 and have children  
 forfeiting  
 the dictatorship  
 of a Husband.



### *As Need Dictates*

A joker  
cracks jokes

A nature  
freak  
extols  
the beauty  
of the golden  
daffodil.

A foreigner  
raves  
about  
the orchid  
exotica

A tourist  
fantasizes

waving palms  
white sands  
glassy seas.

The lonely heart  
romanticizes  
the glorious  
sunset  
and silvery moon.

My verses  
not intended  
as jokes  
provoking  
merriment  
raise issues  
stimulating  
second thoughts.

### *Delightful Acquiescence*

Everybody loves  
a self-effacing  
submissive woman

Vanuatu men and women  
love self-effacing  
acquiescing women.

For better or worse  
we force  
talented women  
into acquiescence.

The power echelons  
and hierarchies  
thrive  
on acquiescent women.

Vanuatu pays homage

to foreign women  
womanaples ino gat ples.

Vanuatu supports  
liberation movements  
in other parts of the world.

Half of Vanuatu  
is still colonized  
by her self.

Any woman  
showing promise  
is clouted  
into acquiescence.

Vanuatu loves  
self-effacing, acquiescing  
submissive, slavish, women.

# Between Love and Intimacy

by Luz Maria Martinez



**I Asked for Intimacy: Stories of Blessing, Betrayals and Birthings**

Renita J. Weems, author

California: LuaraMedia

7060 Miramar Rd., Suite 104, San Diego, California 92121

*"The only thing worse than loving a man who doesn't love you is loving a man who loves someone else. Perhaps the second thing worse than loving a man who doesn't love you is loving a man who loves your sister. And the only thing worse than all of the above is having sex with a man who hates you. Of course, he doesn't hate you enough to leave you—after all, what man can resist a compliant woman. Rather, he hates you enough to make sure you remain dependent upon him. And, unfortunately, you don't love yourself or hate the situation enough to leave him."*

Throughout her book, Renita J. Weems strikes resonant chords with her personal stories and exploration of the relationships that mold women's lives. In this collection, she shares herself intimately with readers as she brings compassion, wit, and balance to issues that confront women daily.

"One night I wrote until my knuckles were swollen. When I finished, I said to myself, 'Surely now I am healed' . . . more than eight years have passed . . . and the demons have not vanished. We are just more cordial to one another. I asked for intimacy. But in the relationship between mother and daughter, I found a frightened little girl instead."

She confronts such painful memories honestly, poignantly, without judgment or bitterness. Her candid tales blend with those of other women of biblical times and this century. These charming stories make this a "finish all in one sitting" book.

The collection gives me a new framework for recalling and telling my own personal stories and those of my friends and other women I know. It makes me think of women who have touched my life but whom

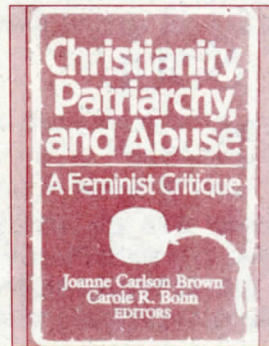
I have not seen or spoken to in years. I wish I could share with them these stories, which can give insights into their own needs. In Ms. Weems, I have found a new friend, who I wish could share with me more of her stories.

In the end, the author finds the intimacy she is searching for. She searched for this intimacy in her parents, female and male friends, lovers, religion, ministry, and self-development, and in an ironic twist finds it in a relationship she had most feared and avoided.

Weems is an Assistant Professor in Old Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. A former economist, public accountant, and stockbroker, she is both scholar and writer. In addition to her scholarly works in Old Testament Studies, she has also published numerous articles in *Essence*, *Ms.* and *SAGE*. Her teaching and writing continue to expand as she travels across the country, speaking, preaching, and leading seminars. She lives with her husband, Martin Espinosa, and her daughter, Savannah, in Nashville, Tennessee.

## Abuse as Necessity

by Kathleen Maltzhan



### Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique

Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds.  
Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1989

“Children, thank you for your present. I’m finished now, it’s yours.”

The speaker was Antonio Sanchez, mayor of Calauan town (about 400km south of Manila); the ‘children’ he was referring to were his nephew, gardener and six body-guards, as well as one local policeman; and the present was Mary Eileen Sarmenta who was abducted by Sanchez’s men in 1993, ‘gifted’ to their boss, raped by him, given back to Mary Eileen’s abductors, raped again by each of them, then executed.

Sanchez and his men would later be meted seven life sentences each. After the sentencing, Sanchez was led out of the court room cursing and shrieking. The Marian devotee transformed into a raving, hysterical psychopath abusing bystanders and spitting out curses.

For months, Sanchez, who claims to be a Marian devotee, was a constant, grotesque presence in the media—he would be praying the rosary next to the Virgin Mary, or he would exhibit his severely calloused knees to prove that he constantly walked on bent knees down church aisles. “The Lord God and Mother Mary know,” he declared, “that I am innocent.”

The fusion of numbing violence and bizarre piety left most people disgusted. His God may think he’s innocent, many felt, but ours does not.

Sanchez’s religiosity was dismissed as either a public relations ploy, or yet another sign of the twistedness of the man, with no real connection to credible Christianity.

The book *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, however, makes it difficult to accept that Sanchez’s blend of religiosity and brutality is just his own personal project, without support from a christian ideology. All but one of the 10 articles contained in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse* look with astonishing honesty at Christianity and abuse, without the coating that often tries to reclaim christianity as inherently nice, with just a few unfortunate distortions that have allowed violence to seep in.

In one of the weakest chapters in the book, Marie F. Fortune attempts to do just that. Fortune says that both ‘self-blame’ and ‘God-blame’ “simply avoid... acknowledging that a particular person is responsible” for abuse. Self-blame is misdirected, and as for blaming God, within a religion pre-

mised on an all-loving, all-powerful God, this often comes from a search for a reason for something that actually happens “for no good reason,” from a blindness to the necessary, highly structured role of violence in a patriarchal system. Fortune remains bound to saving christianity: to cleaning up the mess of patriarchy while desperately trying to deny its presence.

In sharp contrast to this approach is the opening chapter, Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker’s “For God So Loved the World?” The article takes the book’s introductory statement that “saving a tradition based on patriarchy is impossible” seriously, plunging straight into one of the central images of christianity, the cross. Why, the two ask, does a violent and torturous death become the inescapable entry point to life? Christianity has many answers to this question, with every single one of them presuming that suffering is a necessary ingredient for holiness. Even liberation theologies fail to challenge the necessity of suffering, but in a radical twist, Brown and Parkers declare that “to argue that salvation can only come through the cross is to make God a divine sadist and divine child abuser.” When any suffering is glorified, even Jesus Christ’s, all suf-

fering is glorified.

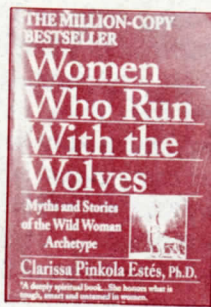
The statement sounds blasphemous, but look again at the crucifixion story. Why would a father send his child to torture for sins not of his own making? Why would a father refuse to save his son, even when he has the power to do so? Why did God need the catastrophe of his son's death to become close to his creation and join in their suffering? *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse* answers these questions, and more.

One of the book's strong points is that it goes beyond critiquing what exists to suggesting new ways forward, both within and outside the christian tradition. Mary Hunt's biting, beautiful "Theological Pornography: From Corporate to Communal Ethics" talks of the dominant theology that objectifies persons, trivializes sexuality and leads to violence. She calls this theological pornography, and suggests in its stead a model for 'theological erotica,' where agency, inclusivity and diversity are honored. Others talk of reclaiming the child as divine, a real image within the gospels, and replacing the glorification of suffering with a commitment to living.

*Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse* is a powerful book, and a necessary one. The christian ideology, replete with "benevolent" (and not-so-benevolent) abuse, as well as the sanctification of suffering, undergirds many cultures. By understanding this, we may also understand much of the injustice in society. Then it may not be surprising that a man like Sanchez can torture and destroy a human sacrifice given by "children" who wish to please him, and remain confident of his own faith. He is imitating the central story of conventional christianity.

## THE ART OF REDISCOVERING ONE'S SOUL

by Seann R. Tan



Women Who Run With the Wolves:  
Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype  
by Clarissa Pinkola Estés  
New York: Ballantine Books, 1992

There is an old woman who lives in a hidden place that everyone knows but few have ever seen. She is called by many names: Bone Woman; The Gatherer; and La Loba, Wolf Woman. The sole work of La Loba is collecting bones of desert creatures in danger of being lost to the world. But her specialty is said to be wolves. When she has assembled an entire skeleton, she sits by the fire, raises her arms over the creature and sings out. That is when the skeleton of the wolf begins to flesh out. La Loba sings some more, and more of the creature comes into being, and the wolf creature begins to breathe. As she continues to sing the wolf opens its eyes, leaps up and runs away down the canyon. Somewhere in its running, the wolf is suddenly transformed into a laughing woman, running free toward the horizon.

Through the story of La Loba, we learn to look for the indestructible life force—the bones. This story promises that if we sing the deep song, if we howl with our soul-voice, we can call up the psychic remains of the Wild Woman soul and sing her into vital shape again.

*Women Who Run With the Wolves* is a treasure trove of powerful healing stories—myths and folk tales and fairy tales from different parts of the world. A *cantadora* (storyteller) and Jungian analyst, Estés unravels the threads of each story, mines its potent images for nuggets of deep knowing for women who longing to return to their instinctual self. Her insightful interpretations inspire, instruct and empower women to be true to their own nature, and to reconnect with their fount of creativity, intuition, laughter, passion and strength.

## BOOK REVIEWS

In the course of spinning the story, she touches her life more on the lives of other women—grandmothers, mothers, daughters, storytellers, analysts they have been hounded, harassed, marginalized, pushed down, entrapped, and how they have been able to survive, and even thrive, getting their strength and wisdom from sources deep in the underground. Thus, with her passionate, mythopoetic language, Estes moves the reader to reflect on her own experience and go deep down to the yearnings of her soul.

The book contains more than a dozen stories which a receptive woman, one whose soul is ready for Wild Woman, can relate with “Bluebeard,” Estes warns us of the “predator” in our psyche that preys on us by destroying our good instincts. She shows us how to recognize this predator to protect ourselves from its devastations and ultimately, to deprive it of its murderous energy so that they can start healing wounds that will not heal.

“Vasalisa the Wise,” an old Russian tale, teaches us to reclaim our lost womanly instincts—to trust our intuition, which serve as lanterns as we search in the darkness of the forest. The Inuit story “Skeleton Woman” introduces readers to the Life/Death/Life cycle integral to love in its various phases. It shows how a shared living together through all endings and beginnings allows us to participate in the dance of life, death and rebirth.

Most of us are familiar with the story of “The Ugly Duckling,” and the sad process that the ugly duckling had to undergo before she discovers her true nature. Women who live true to their wild self may have been treated as “outsiders” within their own family. This story calls out to all such “exile” to hold on and find their own spiritual family—a circle of nurturing friends—and their own way of acceptance of their uniqueness.

“Red Shoes” takes us down the path of the twirling, dancing red shoes that can ensnare women into addiction or excessiveness—drugs, alcohol, poor relationships, abusive situations, negative thinking because they were captured and became overly domesticated, their instincts deadened.

“Sealskin, Soulskin”, an Icelandic story urges us to use our instincts and find our way back home where we can have our soul-healing. Home, as Estes defines it, is a sustained mood

or sense that allows the sublime such as wonder, vision, peace, freedom. The story suggest the way home—through solitude, music, art, forest, mountain, ocean and sunrise.

“La Llorona” is a Mexican tale that weeps over the poisoning of women’s wild soul of women when given no nourishment of their creative life. To create means to produce, to make life that flows—in art, family, friendship, work, and in the environment.

The Japanese story “The Crescent Moon Bear” touches on women’s rage and forgiveness, guiding readers through the cycle of rage and the stages of forgiveness.

The book ends the circle of stories with “The Handless Maiden,” which is about women’s initiation into the underground forest through the rite of endurance. The maiden in the tale masters several descents into the underworld of female knowing and achieves transformation. The descent, loss, finding and strengthening portrays women’s lifelong initiation into the renewal of the wild.

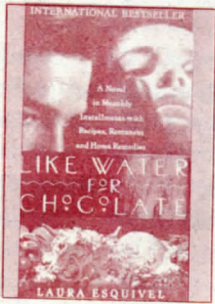
Reading *Women Who Run with Wolves* is akin to a profound journey with the author as a wise old woman gently reminding us of broken glass along the path, prickly bushes on the side, predators lurking somewhere, delicious morsels wrapped in wolf traps. At the same time, Estes leaves the readers space to make their own choices, foolish or wise, because she alone can undertake this journey and go through initiations that will draw her back to her own wild and soulful healing.

Estes has created in *Women Who Run with Wolves* a psychology of women driven at knowing of the soul. Her stories, work as markers along the path, reminding readers of Wild Woman, who will bring them back to the ways of the wild. To be wild, Estes suggests, is to establish territory, to find one’s pack, to be in one’s body with certainty and pride, regardless of this body’s gifts and limitations, to speak and act on one’s behalf, to draw on the innate feminine powers of intuition and sense, to come into one’s cycles, to rise with dignity, to retain as much consciousness as we can.

The book provides a bibliography for “soul nutrition” as well as some general wolf rules for life. Howl often, for she who cannot howl, will not find her own pack.

# Tradition and Power as Woman's Destiny

by Flor C. Caagusan



Like Water for Chocolate  
Laura Esquivel, author  
translated by Carlo Christensen and  
Thomas Christensen  
New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday,  
New York, 1992  
241 pp

During the Mexican revolution in the early 1900s, there lived a simple woman named Tita de la Garza. She was “the last link in a chain of family cooks” over generations in the De la Garza ranch.

Family tradition dictated that, as the youngest of three daughters, 15-year-old Tita had to take care of her Mama Elena until death. Marrying her suitor Pedro Muzquiz was forbidden. Dona Elena de la Garza sealed Tita's fate by getting Pedro to marry her second daughter Rosaura instead. Over the next 24 years, Tita had to learn the recipe to heal the icy chill that blasted her soul that day.

Tita's lifelong struggle is the main ingredient of *Like Water for Chocolate*. As it simmers to boiling point in the novel's plot of forbidden love, we recognize women's “fate” in patriarchal society.

Tita doesn't comprehend the “unknown forces” behind her mother's decision, although she questions

them throughout her life. These forces are concentrated in her family. Most deeply rooted through the generations is obedience to parental authority, which Mama Elena embodies and enforces on Tita by criticism, scoldings and beatings.

Sexual taboos even in marriage are symbolized in Rosaura's blinding—white bridal sheet with its delicately embroidered opening “designed to reveal only the bride's essential parts while allowing marital intimacy”. The codes of monogamy and family/male honor exact a heavy price when violated: Tita's father dies of a heart attack on learning about her sister Gertrudis real paternity. Mama Elena, too pays the price of hardened bitterness over lost love, herself becoming a destructive authority figure.

Tradition is formalized in the customary practices that chain Tita to kitchen labor: engagements, weddings, baptisms, funerals, holiday celebrations. A host of rules for proper behavior on these occasions are dictated by Carreno's etiquette manual, in the same way that Tita must obey Mama Elena's rigid instructions for cooking and her command to behave “like a decent woman”.

But living in the same household with Pedro, Tita experiences the progressive stages of sexual intimacy in their brief erotic encounters. Tita becomes aware of her own sexuality and so saves herself from the total self-alienation that afflicts Mama Elena. Her secret



## BOOK REVIEWS

relationship with Pedro also becomes Tita's lifeline, against the constant inner chill, to other family relationships and roles other than cooking. Though she feels lost and lonely, like "the last chile in the walnut sauce left on the platter after a fancy dinner", Tita becomes the living spirit of women's power to nurture and heal others.

Tita's cooking not only is unsurpassed. It creates situations that change or end other's lives, and in turn alter the course of her fate. Her repressed desires, bitterness and hatred, and her occasional joys mix, unintentionally, into the food she cooks, driving all who eat this into acute symptomatic attacks and unforeseen actions. Only Tita is protected from its toxic effects.

Thanks to Tita's "Quail in Rose Petal Sauce", her sister Gertrud is eventually finds freedom in Pancho Villa's revolutionary army. That recipe is Tita's contribution to the historical forces of change that overturn the status quo in Mexican society. While Gertrudis rises to become a commander, Tita goes through the ordeal of subverting tradition from within the family walls.

Healing and saving lives during crises is the other of Tita's spiritual gifts. Wise women guide her from the unseen otherworld—the old cook Nacha and the Kikapu healer "Morning Light". They symbolize the magical traditions that women have been practicing for ages within the dominant patriarchal order.

Only after Tita exorcises the guilt and fear that silenced her rebellion is she able, willfully and defiantly, to change the fate of new generations of women in her family. She fights for the right of her niece Esperanza, daughter of Pedro and Roasura, to grow into her own future. Esperanza inherits from Tita "the secrets of love and life as revealed by the kitchen", along with the ancient art of cooking.

Like Tita, Esperanza's daughter has trouble with onion, for "once the chopping gets you started and the tears begin to well up, the next thing you know you just can't stop." It is through her voice that we read her great-aunt's life, flowing turbulently through the 12 traditional Mexican recipes that Tita recorded in her diary.

Reading the novel is like slicing through an onion. Its outer layer is the melodrama of undying passion. Beneath are the cycles of women's oppression and rebellion straining against the iron force of History. Tita de la Garza knew none of these big terms. she simply lived them for other women to improvise or make new recipes for their own liberation. Who can say where that process begins and ends?



## Make Your Own Recycled Paper

THE BEST WAY TO LEARN HOW RECYCLED PAPER IS MADE IS... TO MAKE IT YOURSELF!

THE RECIPE COMES FROM *FIRST STEPS IN ECOLOGY*, PRINTED BY THE ECOLOGY CENTER IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 2-1/2 SINGLE PAGES FROM A NEWSPAPER
- A WHOLE SECTION OF A NEWSPAPER
- A BLENDER
- 5 CUPS OF WATER
- A BIG SQUARE PAN AT LEAST 3 INCHES DEEP
- A PIECE OF WIRE MESH THAT FITS INSIDE THE PAN
- A MEASURING CUP
- A FLAT PIECE OF WOOD THE SIZE OF A NEWSPAPER'S FRONT PAGE.

### WHAT TO DO:

1. TEAR THE 2-1/2 PAGES OF NEWSPAPER INTO TINY PIECES.
2. DROP THE PIECES INTO THE BLENDER.
3. POUR 5 CUPS OF WATER INTO THE BLENDER.
4. COVER THE BLENDER. (YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO SCRAPE NEWSPAPER OFF THE WALLS!).
5. SWITCH THE BLENDER ON FOR A FEW SECONDS, OR UNTIL THE PAPER IS TURNED INTO PULP.
6. POUR ABOUT ONE INCH OF WATER INTO THE PAN.
7. POUR THE BLENDED PAPER (PULP) INTO A MEASURING CUP.
8. PUT THE SCREEN INTO THE PAN.
9. POUR ONE CUP OF BLENDED PAPER PULP OVER THE MESH.

10. SPREAD THE PULP EVENLY IN THE WATER WITH YOUR FINGERS.
11. LIFT THE MESH AND LET THE WATER DRAIN.
12. OPEN THE NEWSPAPER SECTION TO THE MIDDLE.
13. PLACE THE MESH WITH THE PULP INTO THE NEWSPAPER.
14. CLOSE THE NEWSPAPER.
15. CAREFULLY FLIP OVER THE NEWSPAPER SECTION SO THE MESH IS ON TOP OF THE PULP. THIS STEP IS VERY IMPORTANT!
16. PLACE THE BOARD ON TOP OF THE NEWSPAPER AND PRESS TO SQUEEZE OUT EXCESS WATER.
17. OPEN THE NEWSPAPER AND TAKE OUT THE MESH.
18. LEAVE THE NEWSPAPER OPEN AND LET THE PULP DRY FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS.
19. THE NEXT DAY, CHECK TO MAKE SURE THE PULP PAPER IS DRY.
20. IF IT IS, CAREFULLY PEEL IT OFF THE NEWSPAPER.
21. NOW YOU CAN USE IT TO WRITE ON!

SEE HOW EASY IT IS TO MAKE RECYCLED PAPER? NOW THAT YOU KNOW HOW EASY IT IS, YOU CAN HELP SAVE TREES AND FIGHT THE GARBAGE PROBLEM BY RECYCLING YOUR PAPER... AND BUYING RECYCLED PAPER.

from *50 Simple Things Kids Can Do To Save The Earth*,  
as cited in *Utusan Konsumer*, mid-September 1994

# Rebus Stop

You can rebus this poem of Marjorie Agosin (translation: Cola Franzen) while waiting for your ride, the green light, during coffee, tea, juice breaks or boring dates. Complete the poem by supplying the words represented by the drawings. Write the letters of the words in the blank spaces.

Remember: 1 drawing = 1 word  
1 letter = blank space  
Now, rebus it!

## A Woman Sleeps on an Island

A woman sleeps in the



-----

from her



----- calm and tipsy

are born the dwelling places of memories and

wild



----- S

her



----- is a figurehead

and in the sleeping gaze,

RECIPES, CLICKS, IDEAS, PUNS

folded



\_\_\_\_\_ S that threaten and beckon

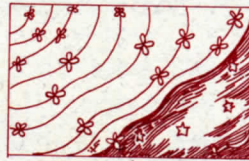
they say that since she fell asleep on the island  
she seems to have been touched

by the



\_\_\_\_\_ S of madness

that her hair blossoms at



next to the music of the sea and its sargasso

others say: her eyelids trace



\_\_\_\_\_ S

of strange geographies

savage



\_\_\_\_\_ S kept only by her

in dream's tenuous roundness

A



\_\_\_\_\_ sleeps on the islands,

RECIPES, CLICKS, IDEAS, PUNS

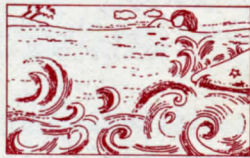
and now stops being herself

because she is not on the



she only sails and drinks

the vastness of the



the



is herself another island

surrounded by



ANSWERS: island; hair; birds; body; wings; rains; evening;  
maps; tattoos; woman; land; sea; seeds; stars

concept: Mylene Soto Sol Cruz  
illustration: Sandra Torrijos

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## THE WOMAN IN BLACK

by Tess Raposas

Holding on to the piercing railings  
of this interminable gateway,  
dragging your flagging footsteps  
to some unknown destination  
under the sun's scorching heat,

slowly, crystal line particles  
drop from your eyes catching up on each other  
to the ground. Could these be pebbles  
which will mark your way to the monster?

You murmur angry, cursing words  
only the wind understands.  
And I am just a passerby;  
How was I to know your beginning?  
(or end)

A sullen but dignified looking face,  
unmindful of curious gazes,  
could my hunch be true?  
No, you're not out of your wits.  
Not now, not yet.

That long black dress casts a shadowy figure  
and your limp body oozes of blue(s)  
from the heart. The monster gripped  
not your body but internal crevices  
of your heart.  
Wrung, entangled, knotted and still unsatisfied,  
sprinkled with salt. Yes, salt.  
(who says only vampires are salt-treated?)

Is a philandering husband?  
A man with no face who's struck  
your soul, clenched your heart  
and emblazoned wounds and scars  
around its vessels?

Holding on to the piercing railings,  
you are holding on for life.

No, you're not out of your wits.  
Not now, not yet.  
The way you stand up against the wall  
not ever.

28 March 1995

# unaccounted costs:

*of nannies, maids and domestic help*

*Last March 17, 1995, Flor Contemplacion, 42, a Filipina domestic worker in Singapore, was hanged on charges of murder. Despite the last-minute pitch by Filipino and international organizations around the*

world, the death penalty was meted out on a woman who may have been an innocent victim, not only of a murder cover up, but also of the Philippine government's inability to protect its overseas workers; not only of Singapore's death penalty, but also of the poverty pervasive worldwide that forces thousands of women to leave their homes in search of better jobs. Flor, too, may have been a victim of what was an unhappy marriage seeking a way out.

Flor, a mother of four, was charged with the murders of another Filipina domestic worker, Delia Maga, and of Nicolas Huang, the 4-year-old child Delia took care of. According to Singapore, Flor strangled Maga and drowned Nicholas in a robbery attempt.

After Flor's arrest, she was advised by her court-appointed counsel to plead guilty and insane in order to receive a lighter sentence. But the same system that recommended this plea refused to recognize the insanity plea and sentenced her to die instead.

After lingering in prison for four years, witnesses came forward, the latest one only last March 9, suggesting that Flor may not have been the person who killed Delia and Delia's ward, and that Flor was several times drugged by the prison guards. There



"Babae" (Woman), ©Nes Bugayong, 1988

## Violence Against Women

was reason to believe that Nicolas' father may have been the one who killed Delia by strangulation after she failed to prevent the epilepsy-stricken child, who suffered an attack while bathing, from drowning in the bathtub.

Women's and migrant support groups began campaigning for a reopening of Flor's case. The effort caught momentum and the appeals for a stay of her execution spread not just in the Philippines but around the world. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights expressed grave concern for the fate of Flor.

Flor's children, whom she had not seen for six years, were flown to Singapore two weeks before her execution. They were allowed to visit but could communicate with their mother only through a glass panel. Two days before Flor's scheduled execution, the Singapore government announced that it had considered the new evidence but found no reason to stay the execution to allow time for a retrial. The Singapore government proceeded with the hanging.

The extent of anger and sadness that gripped the Philippines was unexpected. The clamor for justice in the face of injustice was a howling cry. And the questions and call for the responsible parties who allowed this woman to die continue to dominate the media, the politicians, the critics, the intellectuals, the street vendors and all who shed tears for this killing.

Was Flor guilty? And if she did she deserve to die, who is responsible for her death? The Philippine government? the Singapore government? the poverty she was fleeing from?

Flor Contemplacion's case reveals the Philippine government's condemnable

## The larger picture

Women's status and issues were brought to sharper focus during the preparatory meetings of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) last March in New York by the news of the sentencing of Flor Contemplacion.

The CSW was meeting in New York to finalize the draft Platform of Action for the UN World on Women in Beijing this September at the time that Flor was scheduled to be hanged and the campaign for a stay of her execution had taken full momentum. Acting on a request by the Commission, its chair, Patricia Licuanan, and Gertrude Mongella, secretary general for the World Conference on Women, asked the UN Secretary General to intervene as "urgent action was needed since the execution was to take place shortly."

Flor's case was raised at the CSW by the Chilean and Ecuador representatives. "A human life—the life of a woman—is at stake. She is probably not guilty, that is at stake," they pointed out.

Singapore representative Crispian T.S. Tan argued that the matter was a bilateral issue. Dr. Licuanan then reiterated from the floor the Commission's concern regarding the scheduled execution, which was met with a standing ovation. As Rina Jimenez-David (member of the Philippine Commission on the Role of Filipino Women) wrote, "Everyone in the assembly hall rose to applaud the statement, with the sole exception of the Singapore delegate."

The conditions of migrant workers—many of them women—are

only one of the critical areas of concern identified as "obstacles of women in the world". The Platform of Action being formulated in Beijing will propose steps to be taken by governments, the international community,



*One-third of all families worldwide are headed by women, the majority of them poor and with dependents young and old.*



NGOs, the private sector and individuals for women's full and active participation in the development in all spheres of life.

This will include "actions to eradicate poverty; eliminate inequality in education; ensure access to relevant health care, employment and active participation; ensure further protection and preservation of the environment; eliminate inequality in sharing of power and decision-making; improve images of women in mass media; promote women's rights; and eliminate violence against women."

Although women have gone far since the first UN conference on women 20 years ago (in Mexico City in 1975), they have a long way to go. The CSW points out that today, although women already make a tremendous impact on society, statistics tell the true tale:

Only six of the 184 ambassadors to the UN are women. In 1993 only six countries had women as heads of Government, while the average proportion of women in the world's parliaments had dropped to 10 percent from 12 percent in 1989.

- Three-fourths of women over 25 in much of Africa and Asia are illiterate, a much higher rate than for men. Women account for two-thirds of illiterate people in the world.
- On the average, women receive between 30 and 40 percent less pay than men for the same work. Much of women's daily duty is unremunerated, and the value of household labor unrecorded.
- Half a million women, nearly all of them in developing countries, die each year from pregnancy related causes. Thirty percent of them are teenagers.
- One-third of all families worldwide are headed by women, the majority of them poor and with dependents young and old. They lack education, health and other support services, and frequently have no access to economic resources and legal protection.
- Discrimination may affect women throughout their lives, for in many cultures, disparities start at the earliest stages of life.
- In many parts of Asia and the Pacific, inferior health care and nutrition for girl children, coupled with maternal mortality and other factors, have caused men to outnumber women by five in every 100. In the rest of the world, as a rule, women outnumber men.
- Violence against women is pervasive across cultures and regions. The issue of sexual harassment has been placed on the global agenda.

neglect of its overseas contract workers, victims of all forms of abuse in other nations as a result of official impotence to place their welfare above that of diplomatic interests, but—and this is what matters most to those revenue-crazed, thieving Philippine officials—their top foreign exchange earner. Flor's case once again betrays Singapore's robotic, even flawed, legal system which, as with other authoritarian governments, rests on instilling in its citizens, not the essence of justice, but the instinct of fear. Flor's case highlights the most cogent argument against the death penalty—that of sentencing the innocent, by tragic mistake or vile design, to a fate beyond any sort of rehabilitation, which is an important, valid premise of a penal system, or repair.

In addition, Flor Contemplacion's case calls attention to the failure not only of one, but of nearly all governments worldwide, to protect the basic rights of migrant workers, specially those of the women. The deaths of Flor Contemplacion and Delia Maga call attention to the plight of all other Filipinas, as well as Sri Lankans, Pakistanis and countless other women—they who, desperate to escape the clutches of poverty, must risk their dignity and their safety, to work as domestic help in other countries. The standard rate of domestic helper in Singapore hovers at nearly \$200 monthly. Let the outpour of indignation over Flor Contemplacion's tragedy serve as a reminder that difficult this may be for either the Philippine or the Singaporean government, and governments everywhere else, to comprehend, the value of human life, including that of migrant women workers, is much, much more.

*Women in Action*

# One more Filipina in prison

*My name is Maria Teresa, presently incarcerated at the Bedford Hills Correction Facility in New York. I have been in prison since 1985.*

It has not been easy. Support from the Philippine community or the consulate was just not available until last year, when finally, I was given a chance to be heard. I even had an interview with a local Philippine newspaper. With that ended the long abuse and unfair treatment I have been receiving from this prison. There are still times that they attempt [to be abusive], but with more caution now, because they know that they are being watched. All these developments made me happy that I did not give up the fight to be heard.

In the past, the consulate mostly looked after the men, although the people now assigned to me are more sensitive to the needs of a Filipina in trouble. I got a bit of support from the Philippine community—from basically good, sensitive human beings, but also got the scorn of embarrassed and humiliated *kababayans* (compatriots) who, if it was left to them, would personally reinstate the death penalty just for me, people of your own kind who act like they know every detail of what had really happened, just too judgmental and very vicious. I am not proud of what happened, but neither can I say everything was my

fault. During my days in court, I was alone, no one was there to see what was being done to me... It was a horrible experience that I would not wish on anybody, much less a Filipina.

I am glad that now there is more support from others. There is this Pinay (*local slang for Filipina—Editor*) they are trying to railroad for killing her abusive boyfriend, and people from the consulate go and sit in the courtroom... But, as for as our Filipino community, well... especially here in New York, there are a number of very successful people that could really help—I've read about how much they spend on parties. Yet, they can't donate a decent amount for this poor girl's defense. We are talking about a clear self-defense case here... Lorena Bobbit cut off her husband's organ, yet received warm support from the Ecuadorian Community, besides getting psychiatric treatment instead of time in jail.

I thank God I received support from my adopted family, a Hispanic lady who, ironically, used to work in this jail. She lost her job because she showed compassion toward female inmates. This

lady has been a correction officer for 15 years but was all the time assigned to male facilities, until recently when she was promoted to sergeant rank. The treatment of female inmates here, whether by the family or administration, is so much more inferior to what the men receive, and all these just overwhelmed her. She came in at a time so painful for me that I was suicidal. We became good friends and I was able to have somebody I felt I could trust. To make a long story short, she lost her job, and to make things more painful, they accused her of being my lover and not performing her job. Her case is lingering at the Division of Human Rights, but she is a woman and a non-white—more than enough reason to make it okay for officials to take their time.

I wrote this letter because I wish to be given a chance to connect with Pinays, to be able to share my ideas, experiences, ideas of what I think I can do for the Philippines in the future. I am glad that Filipinas are more outspoken and active now in our men-dominated society.

I'm looking at the possibility of being deported back, and I'm excited that I will see my children face to face. I've been denied and turned away by my so-called family, and the painful thing is that

they can afford to. I took advantage a couple of years ago to tell my children where I really am over the phone. I was told that I have to play the wife when I get back. I really don't see that as right since he has been sleeping with everybody and anybody... I am not the same person he used to know; in fact, the whole family will be very surprised. I am not going to allow anyone to walk all over me and think that I am not going to do or say anything...


I appreciate the time you took away from your busy schedule to read this letter. I hope to hear from someone soon. Please keep in mind that there are more Pinays somewhere, sequestered in a cold, lonely cell, embarrassed and afraid. Maybe this letter could make a difference...

Thank you very much.

In sisterhood,  
Maria Talag  
17 February 1995

P.S. Please remember to write on the envelope my ID#86g 177 next to my name when corresponding.

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## What can I call this time?

by Ma. Teresa Amberti Talag

What can I call this time...????  
Away from the world of  
freedom  
Sequestered in a cell... a cold  
box  
human storage place  
like unwanted furniture  
unfit, different and awaiting  
remodelling  
awaiting a space that would  
accept such altered beings

What can I call this time...????  
is it time of penance  
is it time to grow-up  
or is it just time to kill the old  
self and be reborn to a new  
life...  
is there an answer to my  
question...?  
I guess for now only time can  
tell  
thereafter I would know what  
to call this time.



# VIOLENCE at Japan's immigration detention centers

Despite its economic slowdown, the decline in the number of undocumented foreigners working in Japan, previously estimated at 300,000, has been marginal. Many of them continue to perform the so-called '3D jobs' (dirty, dangerous and difficult) that the Japanese reject—jobs in the sex industry, small factories and construction projects. The Japanese Ministry of Labor recognizes the value that these workers contribute to maintaining the country's business infrastructure and applies the Labor Standard Law and Labor Law also to those without 'residential status'. At the same time, however, the Japanese government considers these migrants 'illegal employees'.

In prosecuting and detaining so-called illegal workers, immigration officials must first obtain a detention warrants issued by the police. But in the 1993 mass arrests in the Ueno Park, Yoyogi and Harajuku Park areas, no such warrants were produced, and such illegal arrests continue. The migrants live and work in perpetual fear of prosecution.

## Testimonies

Between 1993 and 1994, Japanese newspapers reported on 11 cases of violence against detained foreigners, three involving the police; two, police detention officials and six, immigration officials.

- Tao (31, from China)

On November 1 last year, immigration officials raided the club where Tao worked as a hostess. Tao was taken to the immigration agency. A picture taken at the time Tao was under investigation showed her badly swollen face, proof that the migrant was assaulted during investigation. The existence of such material evidence as the photo made Tao's the only case so far where immigration officials admitted to using violence. Just before the first public hearing on the charges leveled against her, however, Tao was repatriated Tao "at



the expense of the state." Critics decried the government's move as an attempt to 'hush evidence.'

*I was punched an incredible number of times while my hands were handcuffed behind me. . . . They disregarded my answers, and they grabbed my hair, pushed down my face, then hit me over and over again in succession. I lost my strength and became nauseous. Suddenly, I vomited blood. When the man saw this, he started hitting me again. . . . Did I commit a crime to deserve this treatment? If I committed a crime, I should be punished by the law. I simply overstayed my visa.*

from Tao's transcript

### ● Insider's exposé

Both the immigration bureau and the Ministry of Justice deny that violence is inflicted on detained migrants. "We investigated thoroughly and found no [occurrence of] violence. Our conduct is legitimate." The following month, however, a former immigration official admitted during a press conference that foreigners under detention are subjected to violence daily and systematically. "For the first time in my life, I heard the sound made when someone is hitting someone else," he said.

Detailed as security official at the Tokyo immigration office straight after high school graduation in 1993, the said ex-immigration officer resigned only four months after. He admitted he could no longer endure the conditions in the detention center and gave additional testimony on the abuse suffered by foreigners at the hands of immigration officials:

*Security officers refer to the practice of Settoku (convincing) or Shimeru (silencing) when a detainee fails to comply with the conditions of solitary confinement. When the detainees are locked up, they are first commanded to sit on their legs. If the detainees obeys, more instructions are given. Otherwise, they are confronted by the officers, then hit in the chest. A detainee starts screaming "I did not do anything bad" at the start. But after being hit and kicked around, he or she starts screaming, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I did bad things." The beating usually stops at this point. Thus, the less apologetic the detainee, the more severe his or her injuries. In most cases, three or more officers attack one detainee as part of instilling disciplinary in one under solitary confinement.*

*In one incident, five to six detainees who began protesting were put in solitary confinement for a long time. Among them, some were bleeding in the forehead while some were bruised and had swollen noses. I saw one Iranian whose leg was hung from the steel grating by handcuffs. As far as I recall, the prisoner was left in this position for at least one hour.*

### Pre-war ghost of immigration policies

The violence done by the immigration security officers on detained foreigners did not arise just recently. The report "Twenty Years History of Ohmura Detention Center" (1970), edited by the detention center itself, talks of numerous protests against violence used security officers on Korean prisoners and riots waged by the detainees for better treatment, as well as several cases of suicide among detainees--events that occurred almost immediately after the creation of the immigration bureau in the '50s.

The bureau was initially a department under the administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At that time, its officials came from the infamous 'special political police', widely known for torturing detained 'political criminals' during Japan's colonial wars. The group was officially dissolved after the war, although in fact, it was merely transformed into the immigration bureau under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice. The office handled few cases of illegal (smuggled) foreigners in Japan, and because of the light work load, the justice ministry paid little attention to it. Some people familiar with internal affairs admit that "not many good personnel" were hired at the time.

The bureau now handles foreigners under solitary confinement no differently from then.

### Sexual assault

Maria, from the Philippines, recounted her experience:

*In the Osaka Immigration [office], my roommate told me she was ordered during her interrogation to take off her underwear and sit on the table. She followed what she was told to do. . . . The next day, a Taiwanese woman told me she received the same kind of treatment during her interrogation in a small, closed room. At the detention center in Shinagawa of Tokyo Immigration [bureau], an officer ordered*

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## Violence Against Women

*me to follow him so he could take my finger prints. While he did so, he whispered something, then held both of my hands as though he was hugging me from behind. I felt his penis harden, then he hugged me harder.*

from the Japayuki-san Joho Center  
Shuppan-Kyoku, 1985

There is more evidence of sexual harassment and rape by officials against foreign women detained in the Center of Immigration: "In 1982, a Columbian told me about a case of rape committed by an official of the detention center"; "Sometime in 1992, I heard a woman from Ecuador was raped in the detention center"; "A four- or five-year-old girl was harassed"; "My roommate was raped, and then she committed suicide." Such evidence, however, has not been proven at this point.

### Support groups

Some lawyers, scholars, media practitioners and support groups have organized a coalition to investigate the immigration problem. The group conducted a closed-door investigation and found that the rights of detainees are violated at any time, from during arrest up to before repatriation. The evidence gathered by the group remains limited, however, because many of the victims have been deported to their countries immediately after their release and cannot appeal their cases.

The Association in Kotbuki for Solidarity with Foreign Migrant Workers, also known as Kalabaw-no-kai, gives assistance to migrants with problems of unpaid wages and illegal dismissal, and those related to intermarriages. It is also gathering evidence of human rights violations in immigration detention centers and seeks assistance from NGOs in other countries for this effort.

by Toru Takahashi, translated by Masumi Azu and Elson Boles  
source: Solidarity with Foreign Workers

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## Center for women in crisis in Pakistan

Rape, sexual assault and other crimes against women detained in police stations, torture cells and prisons are on the rise in Pakistan. Finding the need for a separate section to deal with the problems of women torture survivors and their families, the group Voice Against Torture established the ROSHNI-Centre for Women in Crisis.

ROSHNI's work includes identifying different crisis situations that women face and developing strategies for crisis intervention. The project extends social, psychological, clinical and legal support to women whose rights have been violated. It gives special attention to tortured, humiliated, cruelly punished, battered and sexually assaulted women. With the help of the health professionals from the Rehabilitation and Health Aid Centre for Torture Victims (RAHAT), ROSHNI is able to provide facilities for rehabilitation, psycho-social support and health aid to survivors of different forms of violence against women.

The group conducts psychotherapy, physiotherapy and other different stress-reduction techniques to help rehabilitate the victims. Counselors also tackle other issues related to women's mental and physical health including gender discrimination, child-parent relationships, marital harmony and family planning.

source: RAS Newsletter, Vol. 9, October 1994; House 340, Street 97, G-9/4, Islamabad, Pakistan

# Expert on sexual torture takes on State violence

*An interview with Dr. Yahika Yuksel by Luz Maria Martinez*

In casual summer clothes, Dr. Sahika Yuksel looks a college student on holiday break, not the battle-tested, eminent psychiatrist in Turkey that she is. A socialist-feminist, human rights activist and member of the University of Istanbul medical faculty in Turkey, Dr. Yuksel not only endeavors to challenge the male patriarchy in her country. She is also often engaged in confrontation with the State for its system of organized violence against political prisoners.

Dr. Yuksel was presenter at the IV International Conference of Centers, Institutions and Individuals Concerned with the Care of Victims of Organized Violence, which was held in the Philippines in December 1994. She was invited to share her expertise in the issue of sexual torture. In her paper entitled "Impact of Sexual Torture," the psychiatrist defined sexual abuse not as a sexual act per se but as a form of violence that uses power and humiliation in a variety of ways against women and men.

"With sexual abuse, sexuality is used as a power tool. Sexual torture in detention is usually practiced for political and ideological reasons," she said. "Various methods are used to destroy the person's political

power and break his or her personality. A person's integrity is directly attacked."

Dr. Yuksel elaborates on how sexual abuse destroys the person: "If somebody meets a major accident, say an earthquake, the consequences may be serious, but the people can point to the earthquake as the reason for the damage and it's easier for them to recover from the trauma."

The effect of sexual abuse on the victim is comparable to the psychological ruin a sexually abused child undergoes, according to the doctor. "The impact attacks the very development of the person," she stressed.

Sometime in 1990 to 1991, a number of people from human rights and medical associations set up the Human Rights Foundation, a special human rights rehabilitation center for torture survivors. Dr. Yuksel's long-term involvement in human rights issues and credentials ensured her an invitation to the group. She notes, however, that her involvement stems primarily from her concern in women's issues. "Sexual abuse is a women's issue," she stressed. "Although sexual torture is used in breaking men, the victims are more often women and children."

She laments the Human Rights Foundation's failure to recognize the problem as one against women. "Torture survivors are referred to me as just requiring simple psychological assistance. The Foundation would say, [this woman] needs help because she is having nightmares."

Dr. Yuksel is personally intimate with the gamut of problems associated with political detention, having been detained for a month herself, following the 1988 coup in Turkey.

## Boundaries of Sexual Torture

On voluntary basis, Dr. Yuksel took on the women referred to her, giving them both individual and group therapy. Of the 39 patients she sees regularly, 28 have been sexually abused.

"Most of the women were arrested for political reasons, but not all of them. For example, the State arrested one woman working with the teachers union. She was on a committee working for the teachers' rights. But after the coup, anybody who organized, who helped others or something—anybody in advocacy—was taken into detention, including students, workers."

Sexual abuse of women prisoners is not confined to rape alone, she clarified. As a weapon wielded

## Violence Against Women

by the State, sexual abuse includes other, seemingly "insidious" forms of torture such as applying electricity to the sexual organs or a threat of rape, whether of the prisoner herself or members of her family.

"Let me give you examples." Dr. Yuksel flips paper on the table and points to a statement of a young woman: *They never undressed me. This is an advantage, but they often threatened to.* The second statement, that of another woman: *They told me that my mother was in the other room and that they were going to rape her because of me.*

"It takes the victims about six months from the time we begin treatment before they can bring themselves to talk about their experience of sexual torture," the psychiatrist noted.

Does she report the abuses inflicted on her patients? Does she take the torturers to trial?

"[That] is all up to the victim," she said. Some patients have asked for a medical report indicating that they have been in treatment and that their psychological problems were a consequence of the torture they experienced. "I write an official medical report on behalf of the Human Rights Foundation Medical Association if the patient asks, although not a very official-sounding one. That's because the victim came to see me personally to ask for this—she was not sent to me by a Judge." In such a case, the report is seldom used to try the abusers.

### Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse, State Torture: Total Effect

What is the total effect of sexual abuse on one who was sexually molested when she was a child,



Dr. Sahika Yikse (center) during the 4th International Conference of Centers, Institutions and Individuals Concerned with the Care of Victims of Organized Violence in Tagaytay City, Philippines

then later on sexually tortured by the State during her detention? Dr. Yuksel narrates her experience with a woman who was sexually abused by her father when she was 5 years old.

"I had her for treatment for two years, both for individual and for group therapy. In the group therapy, she was together with other women not politically involved—they were mainly battered wives who were teachers in high schools, employees at the post office—middle-class women. I expected this particular patient, who had recently married and had a good relationship with her husband, to talk about the sexual torture she experienced."

Once, during group therapy, she began to cry. "You all look like my mother, who was also beaten up by my father. I was the one who helped solve their problem," the victim said. As the eldest daughter, During those nights that her parents fought, this particular patient apparently saw it her duty to do something to lighten, if not settle,

the conflict. "In the middle of the night, she would sometimes get out of bed to go see if her father was all right, sometimes her father would wake up and take her to the bed. She felt it as an obligation to protect her other sisters," the doctor related.

"So, in my treatment of someone who experienced sexual torture from the State and was also abused when she was a child, I can not give priority to either one. I can only take the cumulative effect of the abuse this person has been subjected to. Perhaps if she had not had been previously abused, she might have coped with sexual torture in some other way," Dr. Yuksel said.

Some of her patients prefer only one to two months of treatment; others see her continuously for as long as two years. "When the treatment ends, I always give them a follow-up appointment. It's best for both of us. For her, she has a day when she can come to me and discuss her problems. As for me, it's



important that I know whether the treatment really helped or not. I try to see each of my patients once every three or six months, for two years straight. That gives me chance to evaluate what is happening," she said.

### Purple Roof

Dr. Yuksel was part of the group of feminist activists who established Purple Roof, the first shelter for abused women in Turkey. "Since we opened Purple Roof five years ago, we have provided counseling, legal assistance, and advocacy and psychological services for 2,000-plus women. We had a little money and bought a house big enough to shelter 20 women. We redecorated this. But we've run out of money and can not operate this as a shelter just yet. We've just finished the restoration."

The center has one paid staff; all the other workers are volunteers.

Most of the women who come to Purple Roof are battered wives. "All of them are from the lower economical class with no other place to go." Dr. Yuksel added that the women come from "all over Turkey," not just Istanbul.

"The women usually look for somebody to take responsibility for them. If they leave their husband, they want someone else to be responsible for them. This was a big issue," she recalled.

Apart from living quarters, the center tries to arrange jobs for them, which put Dr. Yuksel and her colleagues in a tough position since most of the women have no professional skills or training. "All we can find them are simple, low-paying jobs, which they don't want. These

women used to be 'respectable housewives,' they don't want to work as waitresses. They want jobs as secretaries, which they're not equipped to do," the psychiatrist said.

The center once tried to go around the problem of lack of accommodations by putting up a couple of women in rented flats. "We hit a bigger snag. [These women] usually want to do as they please. Many of them have had dominating husbands and mothers-in-law; they've had to do all the chores at home. This time, they want to have time for themselves, which is understandable," she said. But for the people who accommodate the women, their willingness to lend support turns out a disaster.

"I may have graduated from medical school, but I received little education in working together with other women who come from different backgrounds and view issues in a different way," Dr. Yuksel admitted.

Grappling with the expectations and struggles of women from different social backgrounds is not easy. The differences do not always make for smooth interaction.

But the activist is not finished. "As long as we understand this as a process, we continue to work together." Such wisdom, after all, is Dr. Yuksel's source of energy.

"Although the feeling of helplessness in both situations—domestic abuse and abuse at the hands of the State—is very similar, in some instances, I have seen some women who cope much better with organized violence. They do not take the issue as a personal problem, their politics give some purpose to their

experience," she said.

Dr. Yuksel distinguishes between the two situations: With women victims of State torture, while acknowledging the damage they suffered, they are able to find strength in the knowledge that the issue is not personal, that the State has victimized many others like them. When a detainee is able to overcome her trauma, she feels a sense of power and victory. In the case of a battered wife, when she encounters a neighbor or someone whom she suspects may know of her domestic problems, she can not help feel shame.

### High Stakes

Dr. Yuksel has been unrelentless in all her struggles, specially those against state-sponsored patriarchy. She defied government officials by exposing the State's abusive treatment of homosexuals and was one of the few heterosexuals in a press conference held to denounce the government's homophobic practices. She has organized demonstrations, one of them being the largest women's rally in Turkey's history, a mass mobilization held to protest a judge's denial of divorce to a pregnant woman who had been severely beaten by her husband. The judge had ruled that men have the right to beat their wives. And recently, she was charged of being a "separatist" because she and 39 other women showed solidarity with the Kurdish people by initiating a campaign called "Don't Touch My Friend." All 40 stood trial but were acquitted.

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## Breaking silence

In some countries, lesbians and gay men in police custody have been subjected to forced 'medical' treatment to change their sexual orientation. The state employs several 'persuasion techniques' including electric shock, psychotropic drugs and various forms of 'aversion therapy'.

Amnesty International condemned in 1982 the 'medical' treatment carried out on people in detention, against their will, to alter the victims' sexual orientation. The group has received numerous reports of such abuse of people's basic rights from the former Soviet Union as well as China.

Many governments empower the police to imprison gay men and lesbians who actively advocate for homosexual equality and/or for consensual sexual acts in private between adults. For the conservatives, such laws give society added protection from 'immoral' or 'unnatural' acts. In some nations, homosexuality is an illegal sexual orientation.

source: *Breaking the Silence: Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation*, Amnesty International, USA, February 1984

# The solution to rape

*an editorial from Fiji*

**R**ape—it is the one crime no woman is safe from. More than any other crime, rape has its wellspring in a patriarchal culture like ours. One that views women as the undisputed property of the male, to do with as he wills.

Six years of our serious campaign to change society's attitude has had little effect. Traumatized, often destroyed by the act itself, a woman has to further bear the pressures from a society that blames her in some way for a crime where she is the victim.

The seeds of rape are deeply planted in our society... in attitudes toward sex and toward female/male roles. As Justice Lewis stressed in a rape case hearing lately, "There is a need to reassess [men's] whole attitude to women in general and female sexuality in particular."

The biggest deterrent to bringing rapists to justice is public attitude. Unfortunately, these attitudes extend into the court room where even today, it often seems the victims are the ones on trial. A magistrate's recent comment is clear indication of this: "She was the author of her own vulnerability." The magistrate failed to consider that the survivor was asleep among people she knew and later raped her. Or is this what the magistrate meant by her 'vulnerability'?

The crime should be seen as an abuse of trust bestowed on people we

know that makes us so vulnerable to this horrendous crime.

Similar comments also made in court: "There was no evidence that the girl will suffer any adverse effects from the experience," and "The victim had known different men sexually before the incident." With these comments from our law enforcers, it's hardly surprising that rapists have been more successful than any other felon in getting away with their crimes.

Why are many people still unconcerned about rape? Why does society seem indifferent to the suffering of rape survivors? Rape is identified as a women's issue, not a universal one. The danger is that as long as rape is considered a 'women's issue,' it will continue to be seen as only a sexual problem.

How, ultimately then, can we get men to understand the ordeal of rape? This is also a difficult question to answer because a man does not reflect on the issue until it happens to his own wife, mother or daughter.

Rape does not affect women solely—it affects the whole family. Perhaps only when men realize this will they be able to see rape as the crime that it is. Only then, perhaps, will they understand that since it is men who commit rape, it is true to say that only men can stop rape!

*Vani Dulaki*

source: *Balance*, December 1994; Fiji Women's Rights Movement; P.O. Box 14114, Suva, Fiji

# The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

by The Women's Crisis Collective

Early in 1983 in Suva, Fiji, two men broke into the house of a woman government worker while she was alone one night and raped her. A police spokesman told the press after the incident that a number of rape cases had been reported that year. In some of the cases, he noted, the women "tempted men by undressing in a room where they could be seen from the street"; in others, by "going out alone at night". The officer also admitted that the police could do little about the rising incidence of rape.

"We appeal to women to take more care," he said.

The incident served as catalyst to a group of women concerned by the frequency of sexual attacks on women in and around the city, and the total lack of support services for the victims. They met and resolved to work toward providing such a service. Initially, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre aimed to service rape victims only. However, the more the women looked into the issues involved in rape in Fiji, the more they realized the magnitude of the problem of violence against women in general, and domestic violence in particular. The

center broadened its charter and now offers support to all women and chil-

dren victims of violence.

Fiji has practically no legal protection for women. Non-molestation orders exist but these are wholly inutile. In rape cases, for example, the survivors' previous sexual experience remains admissible evidence in court. Also, marital rape is not considered a crime.

## Services and support

The Centre provides crisis counseling, and legal, medical and other practical support services for women and children survivors of violence com-

mitted against them by men. It is also involved in public advocacy and community education on gender violence. The group's strategies stem from its members' conviction that violence against women is a fundamental human rights and development issue. The Centre addresses all forms of violence against women including rape, beating and sexual harassment, as well as abuse of girl children.

The group's membership has changed over the years, too, with the majority no longer composed of expatriates. Most of the organization's 21 active members are locals. The Centre used to be run by volunteers but the increase in the number of women seeking its support made full-time staff absolutely necessary. It operates as a collective, adhering to democratic policy- and decision-making. Members hold regular workshops to review their work and discuss issues concerning the Centre.

The women at the Centre bring to the group not only a rich variety of cultures and races, but different backgrounds, philosophies and motivations. Their reasons for involvement in the



Fiji Women's Crisis Centre staff

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## Violence Against Women

Centre's activities vary, from religious commitment or feminism, to personal/close experience of violence; from simple abhorrence of violence against women, to an aversion to all forms of injustice. Some women are propelled by a combination of all these factors. The Centre functions with remarkably little disharmony among members. Their philosophical differences pale in importance compared with the problems they seek to combat.

Funding has always been a problem since work dealing with violence against women does not fit into the women-and/in-development projects that donors prefer. In addition, the Centre has to contend with a resistance to financing administrative operations common among funding agencies. But the group persevered and in 1990, was granted a four-year grant by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB).

### Activities

Over the past four years, the group has done pioneering work to document, analyze and support the development of practical programs and services that will deal with the problem of violence in contemporary Pacific society. It organized and conducted the first ever Pacific Regional Workshop on Violence against Women in 1992. This meeting resulted in the formation of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence against Women, with the Centre acting as the coordinating body. It offers two types of training for government and NGO personnel, one covering the establishment and management of crisis counseling services and organizations, and another touching on the basics such

as the cultural, social, political and economic factors related to violence against women; violence against women as a human rights issue and development issue; and public advocacy and campaigns.

Every opportunity is used to lend a gender perspective to social issues, including events such as International Women's Day, Mother's Day, International Day of Action for Women's Health and the Sixteen Days of Activism. Workshops are conducted in the rural areas in the vernacular to encourage women's participation and leadership in the struggle to eliminate violence against women.

### Community response

Acceptance in the community has been slow—many see the group's members as radical anti-family feminists. Initially, the group's approach was confrontational, but it has learned to strategize and work from within certain influential groups more than from the outside. In Fiji, religion (mainly Christian) and culture play a significant part in people's lives, so the Centre also took to work from a the perspective of human rights and adapted the various religious teachings (Christianity, Hinduism, Islam) to its principles of non-violence, equality and justice.

Criticism comes not only from men and other institutions but also from the feminists in the academe who find the Centre lacking in the 'proper' feminist analysis. As well as, long-established conservative women's groups see the group as a threat to their power base.

"We at the Centre say that in a country where bureaucratic processes are particularly cumbersome and life moves

at a pace called 'Fiji Time'; where sexism is blatant, education standards are low, and consciousness of personal rights and expectations of justice even lower; we have survived," the organization declares.

The Centre is now recognized, although sometimes grudgingly, as a respectable professional organization. It has succeeded in influencing public opinion in Fiji such that many sectors of society now support the need for emergency services and sustained support for women subjected to any form of violence. As a result of its strong lobby work and cooperation from other groups, the Fiji Court of Appeal recently recommended a more appropriate minimum sentence for rape; the Police Force has established a Sexual Assault unit with specially trained personnel; and the plans for a government-run Child Protection unit are under way.

Because of a racist constitution and recent political upheavals, Fiji's women activists, particularly the grassroots workers and academe-based feminists, are divided on the ethics of working with the government. The Centre approaches the issue from a practical point of view: "We could wait for the constitution to be reviewed, but who knows when this will happen? Meanwhile, women continue to be killed or maimed everyday; their basic rights are violated everyday, regardless of their race." The women cannot wait.

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# Support work for prostituted women

by Kathleen Maltzhan

Prostitution, in the Philippines, is a constant. The most accessible curse in the national language is *Putang ina mo*, for "Your mother's a whore." The tabloids joke about the Brunei Beauties—young actresses prostituting themselves in the island, while Manila's mayor makes international news supposedly for closing the city's red light district and 'cleaning up' the streets. Everyone knows how a whore looks, so when a camera crew zooms in on seven pretty girls in little skirts, eyelashes sculptured, in one of the bars along Metro Manila's most notorious 'strips', Quezon Avenue, everyone knows what the film being shot will be about.

In that same crowd, some of the real Quezon Avenue 'girls' watch the location shoot, inconspicuous in jeans, running shoes, long-sleeved shirts and basketball caps. On the way home, the same camera crew will pass by middle-aged women carrying frayed handbags and chubby mothers in crumpled shorts, and assume that they are vendors. They are not. They are

the invisible face of prostitution, women forgotten until such time as their services are needed.

Within the women's movement, more and more advocates are beginning to tackle the issue of prostitution and the marginalization of prostituted women. This development can be attributed to groups such as Buklod Women's Center and Women's Education, Development and Productivity Organization (WEDPRO), which initiated grassroots work and advocacy with prostituted women long before doing so became a 'politically correct' undertaking.

## Buklod Women's Center

When the foundations for Buklod were being laid in Olongapo City in the mid-'80s, the city was the R&R center for US servicemen docking at their Subic Naval Base, and its sex industry, the tonic for sailors' fatigue. Buklod founder Brenda Stolfutz started her advocacy work with long nights in the bars, getting to know the women. She was eventually conducting education semi-

nars, helped along by colleagues. These women next considered organizing a union of bar workers so that the dancers and waitresses would receive decent wages and not be forced into prostitution. The idea metamorphosed into the drop-in center Buklod, now almost 10 years old.

Throughout decades of political education that was integral to the nationalist movement's struggle for the withdrawal of US military facilities from the Philippines, the question of economic alternatives surfaced again and again. With the insights that such education inspired, the women more and more keenly felt and detested the oppression of their lives in prostitution. Individually, however, they had no more options than when they started. Buklod in response developed a course on high-speed sewing. It is now thinking of establishing a small-scale garments factory.

## WEDPRO

WEDPRO was formed in December 1989 when the anti-bases sentiment had fully developed. Contracted by the

## Violence Against Women

Aquino government to develop a conversion plan for the benefit of the women to be affected by the eventual pull-out of the US bases, WEDPRO later found its meticulously prepared proposals shelved. The group decided to implement some of the conversion proposals that the government ignored. The devastating eruption of Mt. Pinatubo hastened the Americans' departure from Clark Air Base in Angeles City, and when WEDPRO entered the area, its 'entertainment' industry was dead. Building on the Buklod experience, and in the face of the double catastrophe of the volcano's destruction and the bar workers' loss of livelihood, WEDPRO immediately combined its organizing efforts with a socio-economic program. The women were offered small food-vending stalls, with two to three women staffing each. In the next three years, the program had expanded to softdrinks vending as well as rice trading. Meanwhile, the difficulties the group encountered to initiate and operate these ventures highlighted the need to intensify education strategies. Hence, simultaneous with WEDPRO'S efforts to continue developing economic alternatives for the women are its education seminars on such issues as violence against women, sexuality and women's health.

### Sinag Kababaihan

By late 1993 to early 1994 when the United Church of Christ in the Philippines conceived of its special project on prostitution, the SINAG Kababaihan, prostitution and prostituted women had clearly become an issue in itself, and not just a problem tied to the US bases or tourism. In Quezon City alone, hundreds of bars-cum-brothels had flourished, and 'street walkers' were regularly rounded up by the police when they became too

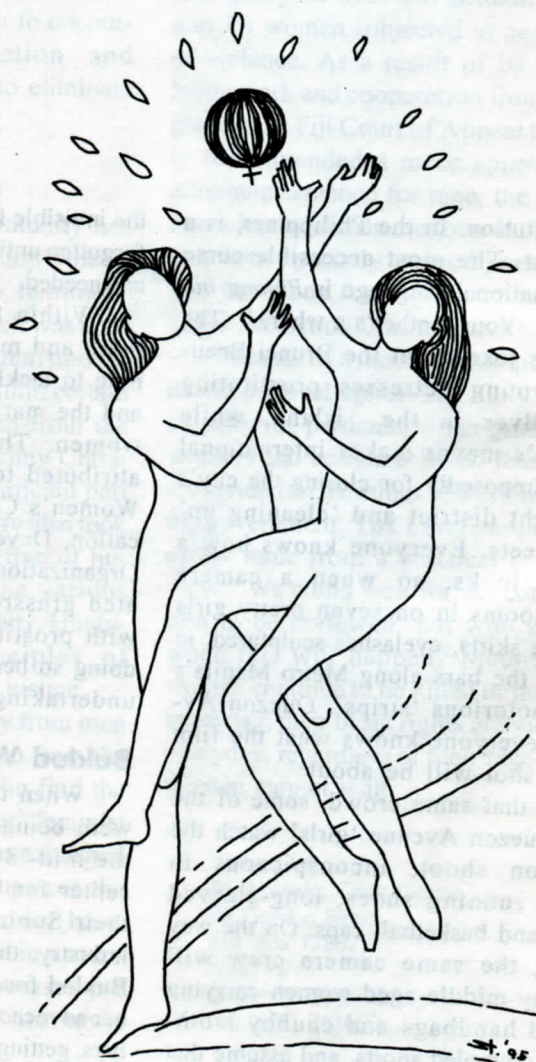
visible. SINAG opted to work with these street walkers. In September 1994, it initiated contact-building in the streets and jails where the women were detained. The unpredictable, highly mobile work environment prostituted women move in necessitated a similarly mobile center. The center serves as venue for women to attend education sessions or health trainings, to secure condoms, to catch up on sleep or simply to trade gossip. SINAG hopes to provide a space where women can define themselves, tell their own stories, generate and give support to process the violence they have encountered and form their own organization.

### Pitfalls of advocacy work

Each of the three projects—Buklod, WEDPRO and SINAG—receives a steady stream of inquiries on its work. Still, the volume of sustained feminist responses to the issue of prostitution remains limited. Apart from the problem of scarce resources, which is common to the NGO movement as a whole, the response to advocacy work regarding prostituted women may be slack also because of the working conditions and slowness of "progress" that women's groups are experiencing.

Although by no means as difficult as the problems women in pros-

titution must wrestle with, NGO work is also taxing. The strain of late nights spent squatting on the sidewalks or watching strip shows is inescapable, the risk—and reality—of harassment and violence loom every time a police van passes by, and the plain depression of seeing women bought, sold, thumped and dumped is fatal to job satisfaction. Andrea Dworkins recounts that after writing her book on pornogra-



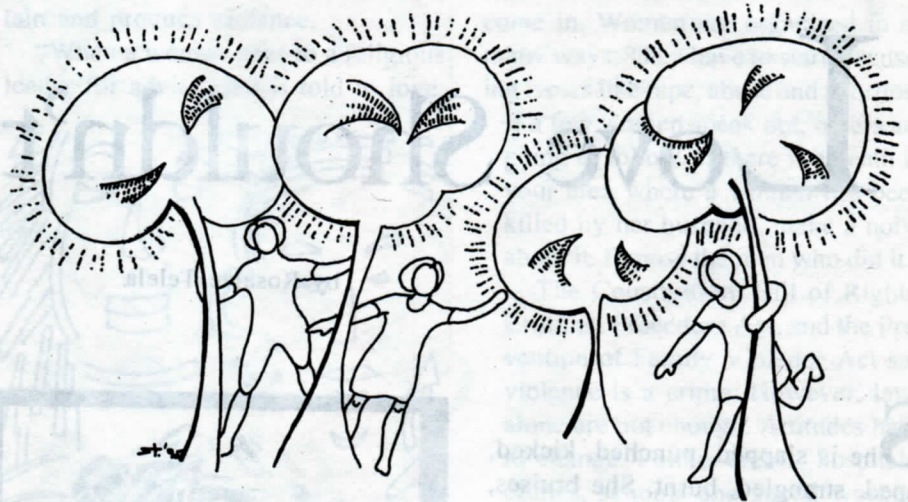
phy, her world was destroyed—she learned to look at life with the eyes of the pornography maker and reader. The result: everything, whether mundane or essential, became instruments of women's torture. Gaining entry to this new world poisoned the one she had come from because she learned how this new world shaped hers.

Working on prostitution is similar. When night after night, an NGO worker encounters men who try to arrest, abuse or buy other women, she is yanked to a realization that for them, all women are whores, and all whores, dirt. Exposed to the full range of men who treat women as commodities—from men in cars with government-issued plates to those in slippers so worn only their callouses keep their soles off the ground, she realizes that most men participate in this ritual of destruction. Her work strips away layer upon layer of her world and leaves her naked, betrayed by society's promise that men and women can live with each other honorably. It touches both the 'external' structures and the contours of the mind, her vision of society, her faith

*"Prostitution work . . . has the tendency, if you're married, to push you to think, what if my husband is... or my brother, or father, or son? It has a very direct impact, it gives you some sleepless nights."*

in ideologies and the space around her body.

Aida Santos of WEDPRO has had to continually grapple with the politics and psychology of prostitution. "Prostitution work is difficult because of the issues and because it entails achieving a level of honesty within yourself," she says. "It is an



area that tends to push you back to ask questions about sexuality. It has the tendency, if you're married, to push you to think, what if my husband is... or my brother, or father, or son? It has a very direct impact, it gives you some sleepless nights."

At the same time, Santos continues, work on prostitution launches one into direct confrontation with the dominant structures of society. "I always say [prostitution work] is a

classical example of where you see the conglomeration of the issues of racism, classism, gender, imperialism—especially within the context of... prostitution abroad, where southern women are predominantly bartered in the trade".

These are the realities that at times make advocacy and organizing in pros-

titution shattering and exhausting. Yet, these realities present the very reason why such work is crucial. In prostitution, the dominant structures of destruction are magnified and melded and we—all women—are burned, right through to the core. Prostitution sustains and strengthens immeasurably all that the women's movement is struggling to replace.

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# Love Shouldn't Hurt

by Rosalee Telela

**S**he is slapped, punched, kicked, raped, strangled, burnt. She bruises, loses an eye, a kidney, an unborn baby, her confidence. Maybe even her life. Brutality against women in our society is real. Frighteningly real, very common and mostly ignored.

Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (Adapt) deals with this brutality every day. The program was set up to run workshops on how to identify abuse and offer counselling and support to abused women. One will find Adapt inside the brightly colored walls of Alexandra Clinic, Alexandra Township. There, Mmatshilo Motsei, the project's founder deals with the painful reality of violence against women.

Mmatshilo Motsei, outspoken, confident, courageous, herself a survivor of violent abuse is organizer for change. How did it all begin?

When the beatings began, Motsei was depressed and confused. She even thought of committing suicide. "The pain becomes so much that you can't go on. I understand when women in violent relationships are confused. One day they decide to leave the abuser, the next day they don't. But we don't have to be hard on ourselves. There are too



**we do have men who are our allies, men who condemn gender violence as strongly as we do. Those men can be role models for others to say to men it's okay not to be violent—that it does not make you less of a man**

**-Mmatshilo Motsei**



many people battering us. We need to be gentle with ourselves and support each other, as women," she said.

Motsei believes that although women can nurture and love each other, they do not always support one another.

"When I decided to leave, my mother supported my decision. Unfortunately for most women in our community, their mothers tell them to go back, even if their husbands beat them up daily. They say we received lobola from these people, and, that as a wife, one should withstand all the problems that come with being married," she said. Unfortunately, she added, the traditional ways of dealing with marital problems such as wife abuse ignore what the woman thinks or feels.

"After your family and his family have sat down and talked about the problems, most of the time you're just told to go back to your partner. He continues to abuse you, knowing that even if you go home, another 'indaba' will be called, and you will be sent back to him."

Motsei traces men's violent behavior to South Africa's history and, the breakdown of respect and pride. "The violence that comes with racism and poverty has pushed people to do things which they wouldn't normally do."

Still, Motsei notes, poverty is not the main cause of violence against women. "Men learn from an early age to see and treat women as objects. They have been raised to believe that a real man is one able to control women by being aggressive and violent."

South African structures, institutions, cultures and practices, which are mostly male dominated, justify, main-

tain and produce violence.

"When a woman goes to a religious leader for advice, she is told to love,



honor, and obey, and to suffer in silence. Sometimes we are even told it is our fault men abuse us. "I know of a priest in Soweto who tells the women who go to see him, 'If your husband beats you, it's a cross you should carry, like Jesus Christ'."

She adds: "Long ago, in most African cultures, when you got married, one of the things said to the man was, 'If you don't want her anymore, you must bring her back. Don't hurt her.'"

Women need to make their voices heard. Some have to stop taking the blame and feeling ashamed.

"This is where women's groups, associations, stokvels and prayer meetings

come in. Women are organized in so many ways. They have to start discussing issues like rape, abuse and abortion.

If a few women speak out, others are going to follow. If there is a death in your area where a woman has been killed by her husband, make a noise about it. Expose the man who did it."

The Constitution, Bill of Rights, Criminal Procedure Act, and the Prevention of Family Violence Act say violence is a crime. However, laws alone are not enough. Attitudes have to change. Police, courts, hospitals, clinics, schools and social workers also have to start seeing women abuse as a crime.

"Men have to take responsibility for their violence. They need to challenge all the lies they have been told about women. "They have to look closely at how they were raised, because these things are learned early in life. "I think we do have men who are our allies, men who condemn gender violence as strongly as we do. Those men could be trained as counselors for abusive men. They can be role models for others to say to men it's okay not to be violent—that it does not make you less of a man."

At the same time, Motsei recommends the maximum possible sentence on men convicted of violent crimes against women. "At the moment men do it because they know they can get away with it. There is no message coming from society saying it's wrong.

The program officer is calling for a national lobby that will elevate the problem of violence against women to a national issue.

source: *Speak*, November 1994; P.O. Box 556, Johannesburg 2000; South Africa

## Men Carving Out Solutions

**A** good father is one who grows with his children, shoulder to shoulder, so that they can survive well and with confidence amid the stress and turbulence of modern times.

This, for Kim Byoung-geon, 40, is the essence of the goal of The Group of Wish-to-Be-Good Fathers, where he serves as chair of the Steering Committee.

Founded in May 1992 by fathers in their 30s and 40s, the group now has more than a thousand members in Seoul, Damyang, Uijongbu, Ulsan and Kumi in Korea, as well as in Los Angeles, USA. It has carried out various activities, such as Train Trip with Father, initiated in 1992. The fathers took their children to Sungduk Rehabilitation Institute with the goal of encouraging the children's interest in other members of the community and in community affairs. On the third Day of Good Fathers, observed every May 1, the group held a flea market organized around the theme of environment consciousness to encourage children to conserve and recycle resources.

The group's Los Angeles chapter was formed a year ago and tackles particularly problems relating to domestic violence and youth. It carries out studies on psychological therapies and counseling. "Children should be given opportunities to have intimate communication with their father even on the subject of sex," said group member Ahn Kwang-soo, 36.

### Value of Communication

Another organization seeking to foster closer relationships between fathers and their children is The Group of Fathers Practicing a Family Meeting, established in June 1993. The group actually holds meetings with each member's family to discuss family affairs and problems in an atmosphere of warmth and democracy.

The Seoul YMCA maintains a program called Youth Train Trip with



*Some men have joined the effort to transform existing social relationships that lead to and sustain the abuse of women, although the search for such individuals and groups remain a tough task to this day, amid the prevalence of abusive relationships between men and women or men and their children. Women in Action is heartened by these groups' efforts and cheers them on.*

## IN PROGRESS

Fathers, which has been successful in facilitating communication between fathers and their children. Some fathers have published books where they share their own experiences, insights, life philosophies and feelings.

The Korean Research Institute for Psychology and Counseling, the Communication for Youth, and the Korean Association for Community Education provide training on parents' roles with special emphasis on communication skills. These organizations have tried to impart the message that the best heritage a father can give his child is a model of a good father—one who remains open to the next generation, and to new knowledge and

attitudes, however painful the adjustment process is.

### Growth, Not Grades

Against a backdrop of recent social changes, such as the reduced size of the family and the increasing number of homes where both parents are working, several studies indicate the father's absence as a contributing factor behind problem children. Some fathers have taken steps to create a more democratic family culture in response, moving away from the role of being solely a breadwinner to that of participating in their children's education. More important, these fathers are developing a more ho-

listic perspective of education as one that emphasizes personality development, rather than examination scores.

The Fathers of Students Preparing for the Entrance Exam was formed in April 1994. Initially composed of 30 fathers, mostly in their 50s, with children in the third grade of high school, it now has 150 members including fathers of middle- and

high-school students. The group is led by professor Chun Jong-deuk, 56, of the Department of Mathematics of Kyounghee University.

According to Chun, the main agenda of The Fathers of Students Preparing for the Entrance Exam is to initiate changes in the educational system so that a child undergoes education not only to pass the

entrance examination but also to develop the student's whole personality. The group envisions each student's being able to master a skill through the close linkage of school and society, as done in Germany.

source: *Korean Women Today*, No. 43, Summer 1994; The Korean Women's Development Institute, C.P.O. Box 2267, Seoul, Korea

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# MEN FOR GENDER AWARENESS

In Australia, men have formed groups such as Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) and Men Against Patriarchy (MAP) as fora for an exchange of ideas among gender-sensitive men. These groups function as mechanisms to educate the public—especially men—and to lobby decision-makers, besides supporting one another. Something similar has taken place in Thailand over the past few years. There are some men who have already begun to take action in support of the women's cause for gender equality. These men come from nearly all walks of life—government officials, teachers, academics, monks and priests, lawyers, journalists, artists, writers and NGO workers, to mention a few. With the increased awareness of human rights issues in Thai society and the current debates on gender-related issues such as prostitution, a number of these men believe that the time is ripe for Thailand's first men's group.

Calling itself Men for Gender Awareness (MEGA), the group intends to promote gender awareness among men and to work toward their achieving an understanding of themselves, of other men, and of relationships between men and women.

MEGA came about for the same reason that men's groups have been formed in other countries—the men find it easier and therefore more effective to accept suggestions and criticism from other men, and for them to take action on gender issues as a group. MEGA shares the belief that patriarchy is the root cause of many problems in Thai society.

MEGA has also decided to remain small for a few years and work toward developing a grassroots network, rather than aim for an organizational structure immediately, much like how women's groups developed into permanent organizations. And although the group remains loosely structured, it has already received mental and physical support from other organizations.

As for the work to be done, members have already been discussing a campaign against prostitution. Sharing the view that a patriarchal culture causes oppression and exploitation of women in many forms, the group believes it is in a good position to grapple with this key issue. The issue may have been repeatedly tackled for years, but this was mostly by women's groups and from a woman's point of view. A campaign against prostitution by a men's group will add to the legitimacy of the issue as a social problem. MEGA aims to educate men that contrary to what they think, buying sex from a prostitute does not indicate manliness. Rather, it is treating women as sex objects and destroying their families, mentally and physically. A MEGA campaign to fight against prostitution will contribute to changing men's values and attitudes, which consequently should reduce the spread of AIDS.

To know more about MEGA or join its activities, contact Phiphop or Chris at Men for Gender Awareness, 124 Wat Thong Nopphakhun, Somdej Cheophraya Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand; tel: 437-9445; fax: 437-9450.

source: *Friends of Women Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 1, June 1994

# Men Changing Men

by Robert L. Allen and Paul Kivel

*Batterers need to be penalized for their actions, but the future safety of women and children depends on stopping the violence before it starts. Robert Allen and Paul Kivel discuss the work they do with boys and men in the Oakland Men's Project (OMP). Formed in 1979, this California-based group is a nonprofit, multiracial organization of men and women devoted to community education and eradicating male violence, racism and homophobia.*

**W**hy do men batter women? We have to discard the easy answers. Portraying batterers as ogres only serves to separate 'them' from 'us.' But men who batter and men who don't are not all that different. Male violence is normal in our society and vast numbers of men participate. Men batter because we have been trained to; because there are few social sanctions against it; because we live in a society where the exploitation of people with less social and personal power is acceptable. In a patriarchal society, boys are taught to accept violence as a manly response to real or imagined threats, but they get little training in negotiating intimate relationships. And all too many men believe that they have the right to control or expect certain behavior from 'their' women and children; many view difficulties in family relationships as a threat to their manhood, and they respond with violence.

Young people's definitions of femininity and masculinity often reflect rigid expectations of what they must live up to in order to be a 'real' woman or a 'real' man. Time and again we hear boys say that they are supposed to be tough, aggressive, in control, that they are not to express any feelings except anger, not to cry, and never to ask for

help. And many boys expect girls to acquiesce to men and be dependent on them.

How do boys get these ideas about male identity and manhood? Often from parents, but our whole society contributes to the process. One of every six boys is sexually assaulted, and many, many more are hit, yelled at, teased and goaded into fighting to prove they're tough. At the project, we believe that many boys become convinced that they will be violated until they learn to use force to protect themselves. Then they move to take their pain and anger out on others the way older males have done to them.

In our work we often use role play as a way of getting at some of these issues. One particularly effective exercise involves a 10-year-old and his father: The father arrives home from work and demands that the boy turn off the TV, then berates him for the messiness of his room. The boy tries to explain; the father tells him to shut up, to stop making excuses. Fueling the father's anger is the disappointment over the boy's school report card. The father shoves the report card in his son's face and demands to know why he got a 'D' in math. The boy says he did his best. The father tells him that he is stupid. The boy protests and begins to

stand up. The father shoves him down, saying "Don't you dare get up in my face!" The boy is visibly upset and begins to cry. The father explodes: "Now what? You little mama's boy! You sissy! You make me sick. When are you going to grow up and start acting like a man?"

When we do this exercise in schools, it gets the boys' undivided attention because most have experienced being humiliated by an older male. Indeed, the power of this exercise is that it is so familiar. When asked what they learned from such encounters, the boys often say things like: A man is tough. A man is in control. A man doesn't cry. A man doesn't take crap.

We write the boys' comments on a blackboard, draw a box around them. We label the box "Act Like a Man". We talk about how males in this culture are socialized to stay in the box. Eventually we ask: What happens if you step out of it, if you stop acting tough enough or man enough? Invariably we hear that you get called names like "fag," "queer," "mama's boy," "punk," "girl." Homophobia and fear of being identified with women are powerful messages boys get from an early age, and they are expected to fight to prove that they're tough and not gay—that they're in the box.

Exercises like the father/son interchange help us examine how the male sex role often sets men up to be dominating, controlling and abusive. We ask: How safe is it to stay in the "Act Like a Man" box? Usually, most admit that it isn't safe, because boys and men continually challenge each other to prove that they're in the box. When a boy or man is challenged, he can prove he's a man either by fighting the challenger or by finding someone

'weaker'—a female or a more vulnerable male—to dominate. Hurting girls relieves any anxiety that we may not be tough enough and establishes our heterosexual credentials. It's both a sign of our interest (we're paying attention to them) and a symbol of our difference (we're in control).

Because we are taught that women are primarily sexual objects, this behavior seems perfectly natural. And many men come to believe that a woman is just another material possession. We initiate dates, pay for our time together, protect them on the streets and often marry them. We are trained to think that in return, girls should show their appreciation by taking care of us emotionally, putting their own concerns and interests aside, and putting out sexually.

This unspoken contract is one that many heterosexual men operate by, and it often leads to the assumption that women are our dumping grounds. If we've had a hard day at work, were embarrassed or humiliated by a boss—challenged in the box—the contract leads us to believe that we can take those feelings out on 'our' women, thus regaining our power. If we end up hitting her, then we have to blame her in order to deny our aggression and keep our self-esteem intact. So we say things like: She asked for it. She pushed my buttons. She deserved it.

Invariably it comes as a surprise to us that women don't meekly accept our violence. So we respond by minimizing and justifying our actions: I didn't mean it. You're too sensitive. That's the way guys are. It was just the heat of the moment.

In order to convince men to take responsibility for their own actions, we have to get them to talk about what they

did, what they said, what they felt. Making the connection between how they have been trained and hurt and how they have learned to pass that pain on by hurting women or young people is essential.

We also use exercises we call 'stand-ups' so that men can reflect on their experiences and behavior. We ask everyone to be silent, then pose a series of questions or statements and ask them to stand every time a question applies to them. For example, we may ask, Have you ever:

- wondered you were not tough enough?
- been called a wimp, queer, or fag?
- been told to 'act like a man'?
- been hit by an older man?
- been forced to fight?
- been physically injured and hid the pain?
- been sexually abused, or touched in a way you didn't like?
- used alcohol or drugs to hide your pain?
- felt like blowing yourself away?

Later in the workshops we ask, Have you ever:

- interrupted a woman by talking louder?
- made a comment in public about a woman's body?
- discussed a woman's body with another man?
- been told by a woman that she wanted more affection and less sex from you?
- used your voice or body to intimidate a woman?
- hit, slapped, shoved or pushed a woman?
- had sex with a woman when you knew she didn't want to?

Each participant is asked to look

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## Men Carving Out Solutions

around and see other men standing, which helps break down their sense of isolation and feelings of shame. Since we are not a therapy group, no one is questioned or confronted about his own experiences. All of our work involves challenging the notion that males are naturally abusive and that females are natural targets of male abuse. We give boys and men a way of analyzing social roles by drawing insights from their own experiences, and help them to recognize that social interactions involve making choices, that we can break free of old roles by supporting each other in choos-

ing alternatives to violence.

An important part of our work is persuading men and boys to look at how power, inequality and the ability to do violence to others are structured into social relationships in this country. We discuss how these inequalities are maintained and how violence against one targeted group encourages violence against others. This is not to excuse men's behavior; it is done in the belief that in order to make better choices, men must understand the framework of power and violence that constantly pressures us to be in control and on top.

There are growing numbers of men critical of sexism. All too often they are isolated and fearful of raising their concerns with other men because they worry about being targeted for violence. We try to help them break through the fear and reach out to other men. But we also want the men to understand how they are damaged by sexism and how male violence against women keeps us from the collective action needed to confront racial, gender-based and economic injustice.

For us, this is powerful, life-changing work. We were each drawn to it because of troubling issues in our own lives: issues around our relationships with our fathers (one emotionally abusive, the other emotionally distant); relationships with women partners where we found ourselves re-

peating controlling, sexist behaviors that made us feel guilty, ashamed, defensive; and the fear that we might do to our children what had been done to us as children. Through our work, we have discovered that many men share these concerns, but they are hesitant to talk about this with other men. Sadly, we have all learned that 'real' men don't admit vulnerability. But despite their initial hesitation, many men are eager to talk about their lives, and to change the controlling and abusive behavior they've been trained to pass on. Doing this work is healing for us and for those we work with.

Men are responsible for battery and for stopping male violence. If we are to counter the myth that men's abuse of women is natural, men must challenge each other to stop the violence. We must defy notions of manhood that lead us to injure or kill those we say we love. We must confront male friends when we see them heading down the destructive path of domestic violence and urge them to get help. While it is critical that domestic violence cases be taken more seriously by the police and criminal justice system, it is equally important to examine and to change underlying social attitudes and practices that promote and excuse domestic violence. This is truly men's work.

*(Robert L. Allen is a member of the board of directors of the Oakland Men's Project and senior editor of the journal The Black Scholar. Paul Kivel is a cofounder of the project and author of Men's Work: How To Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart.)*

source: Ms., September-October 1994

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*Men are responsible for battery and for stopping male violence. If we are to counter the myth that men's abuse of women is natural, men must challenge each other to stop the violence.*

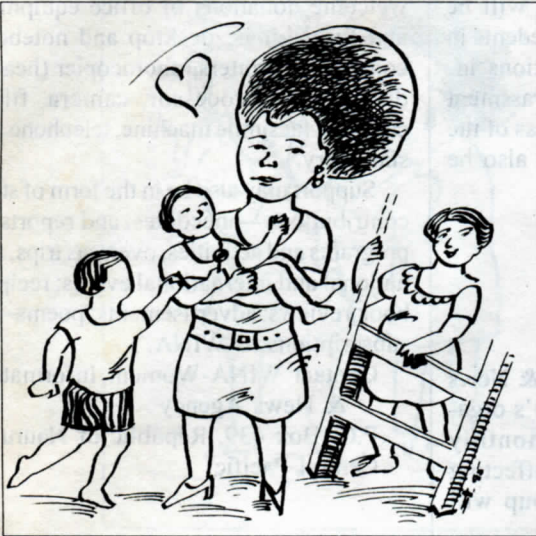
## The Disadvantaged Sex

The World Health Organization (WHO) report *Adolescent Health and Development: the Key to the Future* states that millions of adolescent girls worldwide are discriminated against in schools and workplaces, leaving them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and AIDS. WHO calls for equity between the sexes, mainly through education and better health services.

The lack of adequate education and training for girls, in particular, damages their capacity to develop and expose them to great risks of illness and injury. Girls are often kept at home to help with household chores and look after younger siblings. Their schooling is given less priority than that of boys. They often marry young and are unable to continue with formal education.

Adolescents of both sexes are at great risk especially in tourist areas where young people are sought as sex partners on the assumption they are less likely to be HIV positive. In many countries, 60 percent of all new HIV infections are among 15- to 24-year-olds, with a female to male ratio of two to one.

source: *Consumer Currents*, November-December 1994;  
P.O. Box 1045, 10830 Penang, Malaysia



## NORPLANT COMPANY SUED FOR REMOVAL DAMAGES IN THE US

Since 1991, when Norplant entered the US market, nearly one million women have used the contraceptive. Some 400 of them are now seeking to join a class-action lawsuit against Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories, the company that sells Norplant in the US. Their major complaint is that they suffered severe pain and scarring during removal of Norplant from their arms.

"This is a method that went on the market only in 1991 and is supposed to last five years, so this is just the beginning," said Jewel Klein, the lawyer who filed the suit in Chicago in September 1993 on behalf of an unidentified plaintiff. A Cook County judge certified this as a class action in June 1994 so that any woman who had suffered injury from removal of Norplant was eligible to join in the lawsuit.

The lawsuit seeks damages and an injunction to prevent Wyeth-Ayerst from selling the contraceptive to doctors who have not been trained to insert and remove it. Klein estimated that between US\$20,000 and US\$50,000 in damages would be sought for most of the women.

Wyeth-Ayerst said in a prepared statement that the incidence of difficulties with Norplant removal was below the 6 percent rate predicted by the company based on early studies. The statement also said the company believed the class-action litigation was "inappropriate" because the removal of Norplant is an individual procedure affected by many variables, including the way the capsules were originally inserted, the procedure used for removal and the particular patient's circumstances.

source: *Women's Global Network for Reproductive Health Newsletter*, No. 47, July-September 1994

## ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CONFERENCE

A World Conference on Alternative and Biological Medicines will be held in Guatemala, Central America from July 31 to August 4.

The conference will be the first meeting of this kind. It aims to share information on the latest scientific findings and achievements that alternative healing practices have contributed.

All areas of focus will be presented by scientific experts of national and international recognition, including homeopathy, homotoxicology, music therapy, bioenergetic nutrition, magnetic therapy, electro acupuncture to name a few.

Contact:  
C.E.S.N.A.T. HUNAB-KU AV,  
Cementerio Las Flores 17-33  
Zonz Colonia San Ignacio  
Mixco, Guatemala, C.A. Apdo  
Postal 010-57  
Mixco, Guatemala  
phone/fax: (502-2) 945-489

## Bulletin Board

### New Internet Page on Women's Rights

Essex University Human Rights Centre holds one of the largest, by far the best organized, human rights archives on the Internet. To mark International Women's Day, a new page containing information relating to the abuse of the human rights of women and the role of women in refugee and war situations was launched. Submissions may be submitted to:

The Human Rights Centre  
University of Essex  
Colchester CO4 3SQ, U.K.  
phone: (44-206) 872558  
fax: (44-206) 873428  
e-mail: human-rights@essex.ac.uk

### Appeal for Documentation Help

The Delhi-based women's group Sakshi will appreciate any help in gathering information on legal cases, precedents, existing laws, etc. on the issue of sexual harassment in Third World or Commonwealth countries.

The request stems from a sexual harassment case pending before the Supreme Court of India. Sakshi filed the case following the gang-rape of a rural woman working for the Rajasthan State Women's Development Programme. While actively campaigning against child marriage (on the state's insistence), she was repeatedly harassed and then gang-raped. State officials were aware of her situation but ignored this. Such negligence on the part of the authorities makes her situation even more appalling.

Sakshi has prepared guidelines on the prevention and prosecution of sexual harassment cases and is asking the Supreme Court to implement these. The case is up for the final hearing soon.

Sakshi needs input from Commonwealth and Third World countries on legal decisions and other documentation that will support its stand on sexual harass-

ment. Any assistance rendered will be crucial as there are no legal precedents in India. Information on organizations involved in agitating for sexual harassment laws or in raising public awareness of the issue of sexual harassment will also be helpful.

Contact Naina Kapur,  
e-mail: sakshi@unv.ernet.in.

### Nauru Group Needs Support

WINA-Women, Information & News Agency, a newly formed women's organization in Nauru, has a monthly publication that covers issues affecting women in the Pacific. The group will

welcome donations of office equipment and furnishings: desktop and notebook computers, printers, photocopier (heavy-duty), word processor, camera, filing cabinets, facsimile machine, telephone and stationery.

Support may also be in the form of story contributions— anecdotes, and reports on programs and activities, overseas trips, and national and international events; recipes; book reviews; advertisements; poems—or subscriptions to WINA.

Contact WINA-Women, Information & News Agency  
P.O. Box 439, Republic of Nauru  
Central Pacific

## Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

The United Nations is now in a position to name those countries that are abusing women's rights, focus the world's attention on them and implement protective measure. In response to a Canadian-led initiative, the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) has named the first Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

At its 50th session, the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted a Canadian-sponsored resolution appointing Radhika Coomaraswamy as special rapporteur on violence against women, including its causes and consequences. Ms. Coomaraswamy will report to the commission annually over a three-year period. As Special Rapporteur, she is tasked with:

- gathering information on violence against women, its causes and its consequences;
- naming countries where women's rights abuses are a part of life; and
- recommending ways to eliminate violence against women and attempt to make the UN take action.

The UNCHR also invites the special rapporteur "to work closely with other special rapporteurs, special representatives, working groups and independent experts... and the Commission on the Status of Women." (E/CN.4/1944/L.8/Rev.1)

To contact Ms. Coomaraswamy, write or call:

The Research Director  
International Centre for Ethnic Studies  
8 Kynsey Terrace, Colombo, Sri Lanka  
phone: (94-1) 698048; fax: (94-1) 696618





**D**r. Nguyen Kim Cuc, a pediatrician by training, has been active for more than 10 years now in the Vietnam Women's Union, where she serves as head of the International Re-lations Department. The only women's organization in Vietnam, the Union has representatives in the country's 12,000 communes. Dr.Cuc's position in the group brought her to Manila last October for a lobbying training course organized specifically for the World Summit for Social Summit in Copenhagen this March.

Dr. Cuc studied at the Medical University in Hanoi, then took post-graduate studies in East Germany. She specializes in the rehabilitation of children and has been a practicing physician for 24 years.

**Q:** Dr. Cuc, what are the goals of the Vietnam Women's Union, and in particular, your goals as Chief of International Relations?

**Dr. Cuc:** Every five years the Vietnam Women's Union sets up a Congress meeting to review the activities of the past five years and to plan for the next five years. During the Congress of 1992, I was elected as a member of the presiding committee, a position I hold until 1997. My job is to build friendships with women's organizations around the world, to exchange information on and share experiences about women's concerns and to foster better understanding with other women's groups.

The Vietnam Women's Union seeks to protect women's and children's rights and promote equality to the 11 million who are part of the organization.

**Q:** Eleven million women? How do you convince so many women to be part of your organization?

**Dr. Cuc:** Unlike other countries, Vietnam has only one women's organization. Our voice is therefore strong. Our network starts from the central down to the commune level. At the central level, we have 200 members and several departments that address the different issues.

# In a different way

*a doctor ministers to other women*

An interview by Luz Maria Martinez

## Conversations

**Q: What are the Union's main programs?**

**Dr. Cuc:** At the last Congress, we set five priority tasks: 1) to expand women's knowledge and understanding, specifically women in the mountainous areas; 2) to eradicate illiteracy in remote areas; 3) to share and transfer technology with farmers, such as advice in how to improve rice production; the use of new seeds and technologies; 4) to focus on gender issues; and 5) to acquaint women with their rights and discuss issues relating to equality with them.

**Q: How do you reach the women to discuss their rights and equality issues?**

**Dr. Cuc:** We hold workshops and train our staff in the two training schools we have. The staff then go out to teach at the commune level.

**Q: Is your group part of the government structure?**

**Dr. Cuc:** No, no, not government. Ours is a mass organization with a strong network. We have branches in the 53 provinces and 500 districts. We have members in each of the 12,000 communes—even those in the mountainous areas.

All decision-making is done at the grassroots level. These decisions are implemented and monitored by the 200 staff committee. In addition, we have advisors providing assistance in family planning, fund-raising, and AIDS prevention and other health-related projects.

**Q: What are the main issues affecting women in your country at this time?**

**Dr. Cuc:** The major one is that of the impact of economic growth on women. While in some areas the growth has

helped improve the quality of life for women, in rural areas, this is not so apparent. These are women usually with low skills levels and unable to find jobs, yet have heavy responsibilities. [Such a situation] has led many women into prostitution. With the influx of foreigners investing in our country, there is more demand for women for sex. The Vietnam Women's Union has asked the government to invest in training and financial support for women engaged in entrepreneur projects. The focus should be in training the very low-skilled in areas such as

typing, computer technology, cooking, photography and in the rural areas, handicrafts making. These are skills that will give women some livelihood.

We also focus on educating the family, particularly the mothers who are the carriers of tradition and do not allow their daughters to receive the necessary education. This education is part of the ongoing meetings we have with the women in each village.

**Q: Do you have issues of domestic violence?**

**Dr. Cuc:** In Vietnam, especially among the younger generation, the men are encouraged to share in the family chores. The Women's Union encourages couples to share in the responsibility of family planning and to participate in all the activities of the family. With regard to domestic violence, the women of the local branches serve as mediators in family problems. In cases where violence is happening in a household, the women in the commune intervene to stop the man from beating his wife.

The Women's Union has been fighting for women's equality since 1930. Now we are seeing the fruits of our struggle. All forms of discrimination against women are not allowed. Viet-



Dr. Nguyen Kim Cuc

nam has laws to protect women and children, and the Women's Union interprets these laws to women so that they know their rights. We train women on how they can make maximum use of the laws designed to protect them.

**Q: What are the projects that you are personally involved in?**

**Dr. Cuc:** As Chief of the International Relations Department, I am asked for assistance by many international organizations; my department then distributes these requests to the appropriate departments.

I have a position as advisor to other projects such as family planning and other health projects. I also participate in other activities including fundraising, I am also a member of environmental protection group.

**Q: After your term, will you go back to your job as physician?**

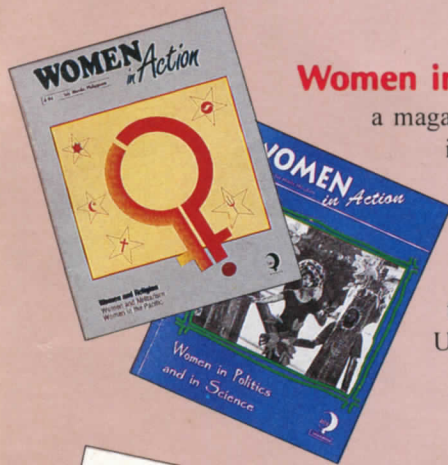
**Dr. Cuc:** No, if elected for the Committee in 1997, I will stay. I want to stay with the Union.

To contact Dr. Cuc, write:  
Vietnam Women's Union  
39 Hang Chuoi Street  
Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

## Isis International Publications

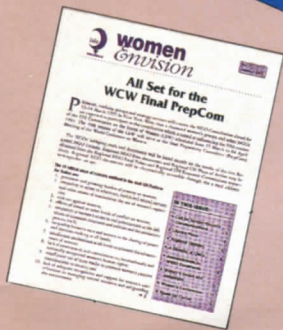
### Women in Action

a magazine about women's issues, ideas, experiences, organizing activities and resources published three times a year  
US\$20.00 a year



### Women Envision

a monthly newsletter disseminating information and updates on the 1995 World Conference and NGO Forum on Women  
US\$25.00 a year



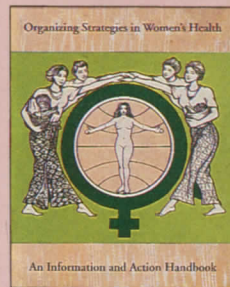
### Health Beyond Borders

a fully illustrated compilation of reports on the Asia-Pacific Women's Health Network  
42 pages, paperback  
US\$10.00



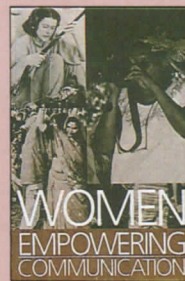
### Organizing Strategies in Women's Health

an information and action handbook on different strategies undertaken by women's groups to promote women's health  
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US\$12.00



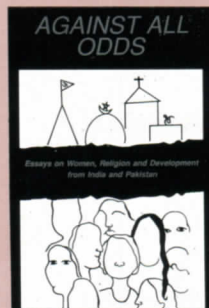
### Women Empowering Communication

a resource book on Women and the Globalization of Media (published with the World Association for Christian Communication-London and International Women's Tribune Centre-New York)  
209 pages, paperback  
US\$12.00



### Against All Odds

essays by women from India and Pakistan that confront "this hydra-headed phenomenon called 'Religion' to understand how it affects women's lives, their status and prospects for self-realization and development"  
211 pages, paperback  
US\$12.00



### Women's Perspectives on Population Issues

a compilation of views of different women's groups on the issue of population  
US\$10.00

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US\$10.00

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