

WOMEN *in Action*

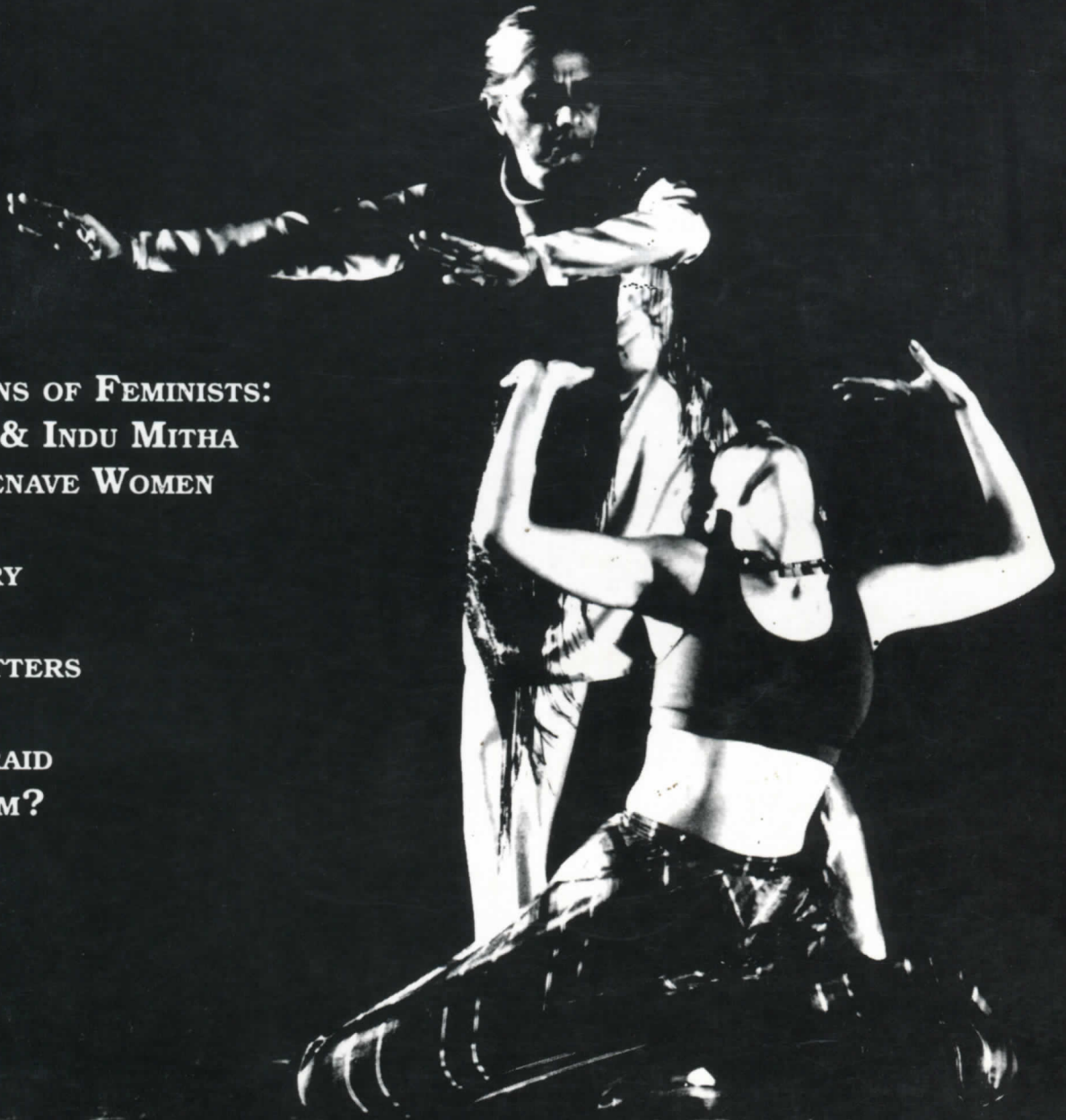
3/95

**GENERATIONS OF FEMINISTS:
TEHREEMA & INDU MITHA
THE BORDENAVE WOMEN**

ISIS'S STORY

MEDIA MATTERS

**WHO'S AFRAID
OF FEMINISM?**



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T rick

Q uestion

During the three months that Alex, my four-year-old daughter, hung around the office to wait for her ride home, she got to know all the women on the staff and memorized where each one sat. Everyday, after coming in from school, she would march around the office to count heads. Last week, she was going through her routine when she found one missing.

"Ma, where's Tita Pi?"

"At home," I said, "Baby's sick." I hoped that the brevity of my answer would communicate to her that I was in no mood to talk. But like most four-year-olds, Alex is dense.

"Why doesn't her husband stay home to take care of the baby instead?"

Whoa. My hand froze in the air above the keyboard and my back straightened from being bent forward at the computer monitor. "Heeey," I patted myself on the back, "you must be doing something right here." I was swelling with pride. Imagine, four years old and already a feminist. And then, me and my big mouth, we made a mistake.

I swung my swivel chair around to face my daughter. I was eager to converse now. "You see, Alex," I started, "it is a mother's instinct to care for her sick child." I paused to put some drama when Alex jabbed with her punchline: "How come you don't?"

For days, I mulled over what my daughter had said. On the one hand, I am glad that Alex possesses none of the stereotype images of women. But, on the other, I was pained by my daughter's indictment.

Thinking about that afternoon in the

office brought to mind the dilemmas that feminists face in real life, especially those that tear women between passion for work and passion for family. The concept of parenting changes because circumstances force a redefinition.

This process of redefinition make women, and sometimes even their children, odd if not totally bad in the eyes of conservatives who have made it their life's mission to uphold and protect "traditional family values." My problem with these values is that they shut out the possibility of restructuring hierarchical patterns into consensual arrangements. Traditional family values obligate members to become artificially close instead of making closeness spontaneous.

The guardians of morality accuse women who choose to redefine their roles of irresponsibility and of being parents of convenience. These guardians can never imagine how the process is at once a huge responsibility, totally scary and absolutely exhausting. Made more so by the prevailing culture which does not reinforce the new values and ethics that women now want to pass on to their children. Women have made headway in redefining motherhood but the backlash of conservatism keeps their goals difficult.

Yet women continue to take on the challenge of changing the structures because, yes, women have finally learned to be "selfish." But this act of "selfishness" causes no little distress in women. After all, they have been reared to serve others and conditioned to have a higher capacity for self-sacrifice.

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Women in Action is published by Isis International-Manila, an international non-governmental woman's organization, founded in 1974 to promote the empowerment of women through information sharing, communication and networking. Its network reaches over 50,000 individuals and organizations in 150 countries.

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MARKETING
Rosario Sabado

I enjoy your magazine. Just wanted to let you know about my recent collection: Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart, eds., *Feminism/Postmodernism/Development* (London: Rowledge, 1995). I would love to see it reviewed in one Isis **Women in Action**. Many thanks.

*Jane Parpart
International Development
Studies
Dalhousie University
Halifax, N.S.
Canada*

Issue 2/95 was very well done and presented. Just a suggestion. Carry analytical items of how "globalization" and its various associated trends are violently affecting women in all areas of daily life while simultaneously affecting other marginalized sections of society.

Name withheld

Editor: Yes, we will.

There is an old adage that borrowed facility is short-lived and have little or no effect. The same dependence, resource crunch and follower tendency persist. Getting outside assistance frees us of risks, makes us dull and irresponsible about sustainability. And donor agencies have slowed down on funding projects and show indifference to many already existing and pressing problems.

For groups to be strong, self-reliant and erect, they must go through the processes of self-experience

feedback

and management of tactical situations. The Indonesian women's attempt to raise their own resources through income generating alternatives is, in fact, the cry of the hour. However limited the [group's] initial investment might be, if it is nurtured, it grows with care and concern, and it belongs to the group.

The Alternative for Rural Movement (ARM) Baliapal, as a committed NGO, fully shares the desire of Indonesian women groups to stand on its own through self help.

*Sumati
Alternative for Rural Movement
At/PO Baliapal
Dist. Balasore
State Orissa, Pin 756026
India*

Most of us NGOs talk about development in terms of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, independence, sustainability. If that is true, then financial self-sufficiency is one of the necessary conditions for development. But most of our organizations are dependent on external funds. Because of that, most of the time, we have to compromise our idea of development to the donor's priorities and the availability of funds. Unless we become financially self-sufficient and self-reliant, it is impossible to promote self-reliance at the community level. The paradox is, under present conditions, we need the help of outside donors even to become self-reliant.

Problems are inter-related and global. So we can not isolate ourselves from the

global development processes. What we need is a real partnership: Help to help ourselves. To achieve that, donors have to change their funding patterns. They have to change from funding "projects" to funding organizations, to help organizations become development enterprises. Project funding is actually a tool used by donors to control the funds. Donors should [build] genuine partnerships with field level NGOs and help them become self-reliant.

We know many donors are willing to fund recurring expenses for which they may increase the funds every year, making us more dependent, and then leave us after some time in a vulnerable position. We wish donors to change their out-of-date funding methods and explore new ways to promote self-reliance. We also have to make attempts to become self-reliant both financially and ideologically. Otherwise there is no point in preaching self-reliance to people.

*Renuka & Balakrishnan
Centre for Women's Development
and Research
4A, C.G.E. Colony, Old Beach
Road
Thiruvanniyur, Madras 600 041,
India*

Women's groups should definitely not just rely solely on donor funding but should develop their own income generating alternatives. The idea behind women's groups is to do something that will give us a measure of independence, so it is only natural that if we want to be independent, we can help raise funds as well.

Women have a lot of resources at their disposal. Day-care centres and creches for working mothers could be set up at low cost to generate funds by women's groups. Vocational training centres could be set up where young girls who cannot continue their education for one reason or another are taught skills of trade by more experienced women in order to make a living: basket making, tailoring, cloth weaving and many other such skills.

Women's groups could also set up business centres that provide typing pools, photocopying services and, if affordable, computer services, telephone and fax services for a fee. In Nigeria, such business centres are good sources of funds, especially in university campuses and tertiary institutions. If individuals cannot sponsor these ventures, women's groups themselves can start something. Even summer programmes can help. For example, the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW), Ibadan chapter, organized a four-week summer program to teach adolescents how to make *adire*, a native tie-and-dye done on cloth, that yielded funds. So, women's groups should get up and go. The sky is the limit!

*Adetoun Oyelude
Wordoc Library
Institute of African Studies,
University of Ibadan,
Ibadan, Nigeria*

We should not rely solely on donor-based funding. Self-respecting women do not have

↳ Editorial, from p.1

These values of self-sacrifice and service to others are pounded hard into women. In turn, they pound these values into their daughters. It is about time, however, for women to pound as hard on the values of individuality and self-actualization. And no pounding can be as good as self-example.

All the blood and sweat that went into the struggle for women's rights has reaped rewards. Women and their daughters can now be better educated, can now have better health and social services, can now have more economic power. Of course, accessing these opportunities is another story. And of course, the thing to do now is to translate these opportunities into political power, which means women making the choices available for themselves—whether in the spheres of politics, economics or parenting.

That afternoon in the office, when my daughter asked why I was not always around to nurse her wound or break her fall, she did not mean to say that it was a problem or that she suddenly saw me as a failure. Alex and I, we are both proud of what she can do by herself as a four-year-old. Having gained this measure of independence, I do not think that she will want to or that it is good for her to backslide.

But I did. I backslid. When I told my daughter that mothers are caring and nurturing, I forgot to also tell her that mothers should be allowed to choose how they wish to care and nurture, because usually they care and nurture best when they have that freedom. ♪

Jan Mercado Camero

the begging mentality. As a matter of fact, we should encourage women to be self-sufficient and self-reliant.

It would be a better world if beggars of any kind disappeared from the face of the earth.

*Leonarda N. Camacho
President,
National Federation of Women's
Clubs of the Philippines
Chairperson,
Metro Manila Council of Women
Balikatan Movement, Inc.*

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Can men be feminists? Yes? No? Why?

Let's talk. Speak your thoughts. Write to Feedback.

If you have questions you wish to raise, send them to us also and let's ask our readers:

"What do you think?"

MEDICAL HELP FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS

Every 45 seconds, a woman is sexually assaulted in America. The number of victims would total about 700,000 victims a year. Most victims are under age 18. The assailant is most often a lover, a friend, an acquaintance or a relative.

Women opt to keep silent about sexual assaults because, too often, they are made to feel more like the criminal rather than the victim. Fewer than half of all sexual assaults are reported, and many victims fail to seek help promptly.

But these women are also desperate for someone to whom they can speak with confidentiality, and many would like to speak with their personal physicians. Doctors, however, are often too clumsy or insensitive to counsel victims of sexual violence. While doctors are in a good position to identify and treat victims, they do not routinely talk to patients about sexual violence and patients do not routinely turn to them.

New guidelines just issued by the American Medical Association (AMA) should help improve doctors' skills. AMA's new guidelines remind doctors to be alert for physical signs of abuse and for evidence of psychological trauma, as when a woman or child panics or withdraws from the doctor's touch during a routine exam. The guidelines, which are being distributed to healthcare professionals, are part of a broader AMA effort to address the physical and mental scars of sexual abuse. The more doctors are aware of sexual violence and its consequences, the more effectively they can treat or help prevent it. AMA

C I P S



president Lonnie Bristow says that sexual assault is a "silent violent epidemic" that is "traumatizing women and children."

*Source: Today
17 November 1995*

THE BIBLE OF DEBT

World Bank-IMF
Commandments

1. Thou shalt worship us thy money gods.
2. Thou shalt not seek any other means of raising foreign exchange.
3. Thou shalt devalue, first, thy currency and then thy self respect.
4. Thou shalt open up thy economy and allow us to seal your fate forever.
5. Thou shalt not deny our multi-national "angels" the right to sell toothpaste and potato chips to thy people (and also gas them to death occasionally if required).
6. Thou shalt allow us to purchase thy real estate now and thy state later.
7. Thou shalt never commit "default" and shalt continue to serve the debt till thou droppeth dead.
8. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours low debt service ratio or self-reliant growth.
9. Thou shalt appoint our men as thy policy growth.
10. As a general principle, thou shalt crawl when thou art asked to bend.

*Reprinted from Aikyathatha
February 1994*

BRIDE PRICE

by the Women's Feature Service

Why should immigration authorities in Sri Lanka worry

about marriage? Because more and more foreigners are marrying local women for a brief fling with the exotic.

Some are interested solely in extending their visas. These mainly western tourists usually target uneducated women from rural areas.

After a brief marriage, they abandon their wives and move on, leaving behind families devastated by the shame of a deserted daughter.

Determined to crack down, the government has designed new rules to combat the practice. Foreigners who want to marry local women must now deposit a non-refundable sum of US\$ 25,000.

*Reprinted from Sister Namibia
Vol. 7, No. 3, July & August
1995*

IMPRISONED BURMESE IN POOR HEALTH

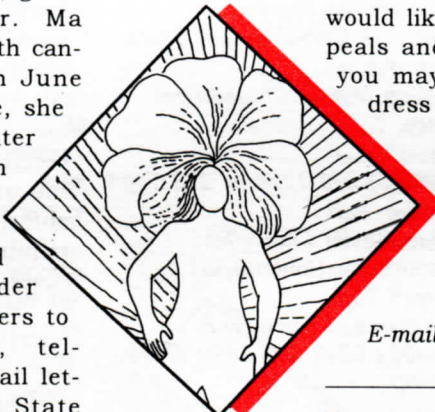
Dr. Ma Thida, a Burmese political prisoner is suffering from tuberculosis and small ovarian tumors.

According to the American Association for the Advancement of Science Human Rights Action Network (AAASHRAN), Dr. Ma Thida, a surgeon, writer and previous assistant to Aung San Suu Kyi, has not been receiving the necessary medical care and has been placed in solitary confinement since 1993.

Dr. Ma Thida was arrested for providing medical treatment to people injured during the pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988. The demonstrations were often violently broken up by the military, resulting in hundreds of people getting hurt. Citing the 1908 Burmese law, the Unlawful Association Act, the Burmese military authority sentenced Dr. Ma Thida to 20 years imprisonment.

According to reports, gathered by AAASHRAN, Dr. Ma Thida was diagnosed with cancer and tuberculosis in June 1995. For a short time, she was hospitalized but later returned to her prison cell where conditions are reported to be poor.

The AAASHRAN and the Women Living Under Muslim Laws urge readers to please send telexes, telegrams, faxes or air mail letters to officials of the State Law and Order Restoration Council in Burma to express concern about Dr. Ma Thida, request information about her hospital stay in mid-June and the treatment she received, seek information regarding her current state of health, and urge her immediate and unconditional release from prison. Please address your letters to:



In addition, the AAASHRAN would like copies of your appeals and any responses that you may receive. Please address them to:

*Elisa Munoz, AAAS
Science and Human
Rights Program
1333 H. St. NW
Washington DC 20005
Tel: (202) 326-6797
Fax: (202) 289-4950
E-mail: EMUNOZ@AAAS.ORG
(Internet system)*

closely involved in the project. Information is being collected according to state, type of media organisation and employer.

A small group of women journalists assumed to have an understanding and interest in the issues involved in the research have been approached to form a focus group and to assist in offering an insider's perspective on the issues to be surveyed.

*Source: The Alliance
September 1995*

FOCUS ON WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has initiated a major project aimed at researching and documenting issues confronting women working in the media industry in Asia. One of these issues is equal opportunity in promotion.

The project also aims to investigate and report on the portrayal of women in the media. The project, Women in the Media in Asia, focuses on five countries: Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia.

The research will gauge the extent of discrimination, both direct and indirect, still being suffered by women. Information on job access, recruitment, pay, and women's promotional chances will be collated. The survey aims to elicit responses on the extent of job segregation, type of training and development, prevalence of sexual harassment and the nature of working conditions, including childcare provisions, at the workplace. Positive changes at workplaces and in women's employment conditions will be identified and credited to the organisation concerned.

The research will be conducted in journalists' workplaces. This will facilitate the prompt completion of the project and allow journalists to be

MEXICAN MILITARY USE GANG RAPE TO INTIMIDATE PROTESTERS

Alarming reports from Mexico say that women are being gang raped by the military in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. The area is in the grips of a low intensity war being waged by Mexican military against Zapatista peasants protesting the deplorable conditions of the region. The military is using gang rape as a tool of violence and intimidation.

On 25 October 1993, Cecilia Rodriguez, Coordinator of the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico was brutally raped and sodomized by three heavily armed men in Chiapas. She has also received death threats.

On 4 June 1994, three indigenous women were gang raped by 30 soldiers at an army checkpoint. Their mothers were forced to hear the screams of the women as they were raped. Charges have been brought against the soldiers but the case lies inactive at the National Defense Secretariat (SEDENA). Women are demanding that the case be turned over to a civil court so that it may be reopened and investigated.

On 4 October 1995, five

*General Than Shwe
Chairman, State Law and Order
Restoration Council
Yangon, Union of Myanmar*

*Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt
Secretary 1, State Law and Order
Restoration Council
Yangon, Union of Myanmar*

*Lieutenant General Tin U
Secretary 2, State Law and Order
Restoration Council*

Also, please send copies of your letters to:

*Vice Admiral Than Nyunt
Minister of Health,
Ministers Office
Yangon, Union of Myanmar*

*Ambassador U Thang
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
2300 S Street, NW, Washington,
DC 20008*

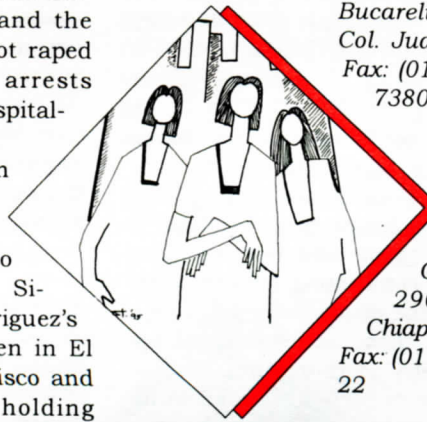
nurses who were part of a vaccination brigade were ambushed and raped by 25 heavily armed men as they were returning to San Cristobal. Rocks blocking the road forced the nurses to stop and get out of their vehicle to remove the barriers. They were ambushed by 25 heavily armed men who raped them. One woman suffered a broken pelvis and the lone woman who was not raped suffered nine cardiac arrests and continues to be hospitalized.

After the assault on her, Cecilia Rodriguez held a press conference in Mexico City to denounce the violence. Simultaneous with Rodriguez's press conference, women in El Paso, Texas, San Francisco and Chicago were also holding press conferences to denounce the violence.

But the media in Mexico and in the U.S. have not given it much coverage and even the *L.A. Times* which covered a press conference given by Rodriguez in Los Angeles decided not to print the story.

The Mexican government is not pursuing these cases actively and the media for the most part is silent on the violence that is being perpetuated against the women. The U.S. media who extensively covered Mexico's presumed economic growth prior to the economic bust is not printing the stories of the violence in Chiapas, and in particular the violence against women by the Mexican military.

Letters to Mexican officials to support the women and denounce these cases of violence against the women of Chiapas are being requested from readers. Send letters or faxes to:



C. Lic. Ernesto Zedillo
Presidente de Mexico
Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos
Puerta #1
Col. San Miguel Chapultepec
Mexico, D.F.
 Fax:
 (011-52-5) 271-1774 or 271-1764

C. Lic. Emilio Chauyffet
Secretario de Gobernacion
Bucareli #99
Col. Juarez, Mexico, D.F.
 Fax: (011-52-5) 546-5350 or 546-7380

Julio Cesar Ferro
Gubernador Interino
de Chiapas
1a Avenida Norte
Oriente #456
29000 Tuxtla Gutierrez,
Chiapas
 Fax: (011-52-967) 2-09-17 or 3-50-22

Ambassador
Embassy of the United States
Paseo de la Reforma #305
Col. Anzures C.P. 06550
 Fax: (011-52-5) 208-3373

Fax copies of your letters to 011-52-967 so the women who have been raped will know that they are not lacking in support.

[Editor's Note: On February 1, 1996, Isis received a response from the Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Commission on Human Rights) to our letters of inquiry. The Commission reports that they have been made aware of Cecilia Rodriguez and are waiting for responses from officials investigating the rape in the state of Chiapas.]

HAIR-CUTTING ZEALOTS PREY ON MUSLIM GIRLS

by Allan Nawal

COTABATO CITY - Muslim women here oppose the recent

order of religious scholars, known as *ulama*, for them to wear veils as part of the Islamic tradition.

Since December, numerous complaints have been received by the media here on the *ulama's* alleged strict enforcement of the rule requiring the wearing of head cover called *hijab*.

Suspected religious fanatics, armed with scissors, have enforced the *hijab* rule and forcibly cut the hair of unveiled Muslim women.

Shameera, a university student, had her hair fixed at a beauty parlor and was walking with friends on Don Rufino Alonzo Street here when an unidentified man approached her and stepped on her toes.

The suspect, about 30 years old, immediately pulled out a pair of scissors and cut her hair so badly that she cried.

She said the suspect warned her to wear a *hijab* or her hair would be clipped again by force. Shameera now wears a *hijab*.

Maimona, another victim, said a man cut her hair while she was standing outside a department store here.

She now carries a knife to protect herself from the hair cutters.

"Just let them try that again," she said.

Ustadz Jaafar Ali, spokesman for the *ulama*, did not confirm or deny the hair cutting.

But he said that under Muslim laws, women are compelled to wear veils.

"It is in the Koran and the Hadith (saying of Prophet Mohammad, S.A.W). Women

should avoid exposing their hair because this could tempt the opposite sex," he said.

Source: Today
1 February 1996

INDONESIAN WOMEN ACTIVISTS: TARGETS OF RAPE AND TORTURE - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

The human rights group Amnesty International said Indonesian women, particularly activists, were targets of arbitrary rape, torture, execution and other rights violations by security forces.

In a report entitled "Women in Indonesia and East Timor, Standing Against Repression," Amnesty International said torture has become institutionalized within the security forces."

Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ghaffar Fadyl said the report was "biased" and the allegations were not new. "Amnesty International has always been engaged in the distortion of facts on human rights in Indonesia," Fadyl said.

But Amnesty International spokeswoman Nalyni Mohamed said, in releasing the report, that "those who challenge Indonesian authorities frequently suffer human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, rape, torture and extrajudicial executions," Mohamed said.

Amnesty International's report said women most at risk were those involved in land disputes, Islamic or other religious activities or those criticizing the central rule in the provinces of Aceh, Irian Jaya and East Timor. The report lists a number of allegations of imprisonment, rape, torture and executions of women in Indonesia in the 1990s.

Amnesty International said

it had received 40 testimonies from women describing torture since 1993. Torture methods included electric shock, cigarette burns, sleep and food deprivation, and bashing with iron bars, wood and bottles. "Torture is frequently used to obtain information, to intimidate detainees and to obtain confessions," Amnesty International said. "In many cases, the attitude of government and security officials appears to condone the human rights violations," it added.

The human rights group added that since the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975, independence supporters had been routinely tortured and maltreated by Indonesian military personnel.

FILIPINO WOMEN TARGETED BY MOONIES

Philippine immigration authorities stopped 984 Filipinas from leaving Manila for South Korea as brides. The agency alleged that the women, who were married to mostly South Korean men in mass wedding rites of the Unification Church, are victims of a mail order bride scheme by the church.

Rodolfo Dumapias, an embassy counsellor in Seoul, said that, "To the Korean Unification men, marrying a Filipina or any foreign woman is like a business transaction [because] he pays more than \$2,000 to get a housemaid, who can also be a sex partner."

Reports have come to the Philippine embassy in Seoul that Filipina women were being brought to Seoul by the Unification Church and deployed as domestic workers and prostitutes. Reports also included the testimony of a

woman who was married to a member of the Unification Church. She said that her husband kept her at home as a prisoner and passed her around to other men.

The Unification Church, founded by Reverend Moon and whose members are called Moonies, has been a controversial religious sect in many countries. It is known internationally for its mass weddings. The mass weddings that were held in the Philippines have been found by authorities to be nothing more than "mass blessings" for the hundreds of couples that were matched by Reverend Moon in the Philippines.

Believers of the Unification Church claim that the church is a blend of many religions and that it is a peace-loving organization. They believe that their Church is being attacked for not being part of established religions.

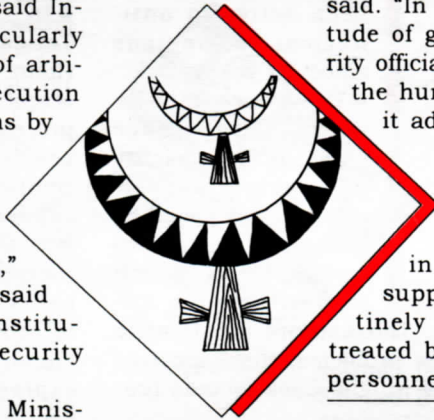
Women who support the match-making of the Unification Church claim that they are under no coercion to leave their countries and to settle elsewhere. They added that the match-making process is with their participation.

Authorities counter that it is no coincidence that Filipinas are being targeted as brides. The Korean government has announced the need for 40,000 more workers to help small companies. Women also question why the Unification Church is targeting only Filipina women to become brides to mostly South Korean men. Why not Filipino men as grooms to foreign women?

Source: The Philippine Daily Inquirer and Today
25 January 1996

AFRICAN LEADER AWARDED

The 1995 Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable



End of Hunger went to Joyce F. Munghera, Vice-President of the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the National Executive Director of the YWCA of Uganda.

Ms. Munghera has led the Uganda branch of the YWCA for 30 years. In the '70s, she went underground after she was directly threatened with execution by then Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. But Ms. Munghera continued to work even after going underground.

Ms. Munghera is credited as a key person in the establishment of one of the world's strongest networks for women's literacy. She is the manager of the country's first successful revolving credit scheme for rural women. Now, Ms. Munghera is also establishing a rural women's bank in Uganda.

Ms. Munghera joins the distinguished list of awardees of the Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger. The 1994 prize went to H.E. Nelson Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa. The prize is a project of the Hunger Project Organization.

Source: World Young Women's Christian Association

SOUTH PACIFIC WOMEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF ANTI-NUCLEAR PROTESTS

Women from throughout the Pacific Islands demonstrated their solidarity with one another as France carried out its nuclear tests at Moruroa Atoll

sis International-Manila joins human rights groups around the world in denouncing the Nigerian military dictatorship that executed Nobel Peace Prize nominee Saro-Wiwa and eight other human rights activists.

Saro-Wiwa, a noted writer, had led a campaign for self-determination for the Ogoni people who have suffered under the Nigerian military regime. Saro-wiwa fought to protect the environment which has been exploited by foreign oil companies.

Finau Tabakaucoro led. Despite engine problems, the Kaunitoni joined in the Cook Islands protest.

The Cook Islands, which is geographically closest to the Atoll, sent a *vaka*, a traditional canoe, for which one quarter of the population gathered for a national farewell. The *vaka* is an important symbol to the French Polynesians because a thousand years ago, populations moved from Polynesia through the Cooks to New Zealand on it.

● In Western Samoa, women's organizations visited the Prime Minister. Subsequently, the government decided to boycott the South Pacific Games in Tahiti.

Individual athletes also boycotted the South Pacific Games, including Fijian young female swimmer Angela Birch.

● Women led "a very hostile" demonstration at the Cook Islands airport when the leader of French Polynesia arrived to "explain" the French testing. This was considered an unusual

in August and October 1995.

● In Fiji, 5,000, including a woman member of Parliament and the woman Minister of Education, marched in protest of the French nuclear testing. The two government women have been active in anti-nuclear campaigns since 30 years back.

● The Peace Flotilla where Greenpeace ships, private yachts and vessels participated in was joined by the MV Kaunitoni from Fiji which woman Senator Adi

event as the Cook Islands have, in the past, tended to defend French Polynesia.

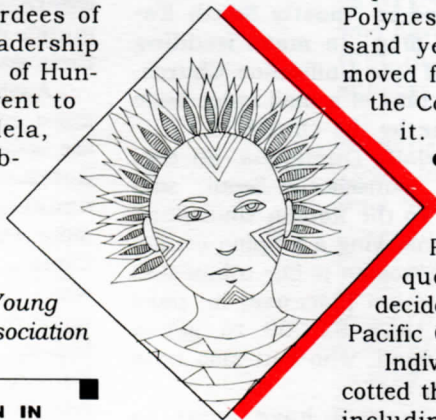
● "Peace Women" from New Zealand and Cook Islands on board a chartered plane were refused landing in Papeete. Not giving up, the women went back on a commercial plane just to establish ties with their Maori sisters.

● In politically conservative Tonga, 500 people, most of them women, marched in the streets in an unusual show of protest. Most of the time, the people of Tonga will not speak contrary to the King who did not condemn the nuclear testings.

● In the Women and the Environment meeting in Fiji, participants resolved to lobby France to stop nuclear testing in the Pacific. Women at the meeting expressed concern for the impact nuclear testing would have on tuna fishing in the region, for possible climate changes, and for the stability of the atoll.

● In Suva, Fiji, Katerina Teaiwa, a young Fijian designer, staged the first ever anti-nuclear fashion show. Teresita Teaiwa, sister of Katerina, said the concept was inspired by the launching in 1946 of the bikini, the two-piece bathing suit named after the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands where the U.S. held nuclear testings. While the bikini became immortal, history has tended to ignore the suffering, displacement and degradation of Bikini Atoll's Islanders, Teresita Teaiwa said.

French President Chirac went ahead with the testing despite global protests. However, the people and the governments of the Pacific are not letting things end there. At the Annual South Pacific Forum of Prime Ministers, France was suspended from the observer list. Other governments, with



support from the NGOs of the region, have taken action. Australia, New Zealand and Fiji have taken France to the World Court and Fiji sponsored a motion that was passed by the UN General Assembly condemning the testing.

*Source: Report by Ruth E. Lechte, Director of Energy and Environment for the World Young Women's Christian Association
20 November 1995
the Western Samoa Observer June 1995
and Fiji Times, July 1995*

SHELTER COALITION FORMED

Three international women's networks joined forces to form what is now known as the super coalition. HIC Women and Shelter Network, Grassroots Organizations Operating To-gether for Sisterhood (GROOTS) based in the USA and the International Council of Women (ICW) based in The Netherlands, as well as the United Nations Council on Human Settlements' (Habitat) Women in Human Settlements Development Programme (WHSDP) have been collaborating to voice the concerns and priorities of women regarding their access to housing, land and services.

The members of this coalition have been working together to have a women's perspective on housing through major United Nations conferences such as the World Summit for Social Development and Commission on the Status of Women (PrepCom II), and the second PrepCom for Habitat II. Over 30 members of the newly formed super coalition met during the NGO Consultation held in New York in March 1995. The coalition was able to get some

clauses on women's land and housing rights into the Draft Platform of Action. One of the clauses that is still bracketed reads: "Governments must guarantee women's human right to equal access to and control of land, property and credit, regardless of customary laws, traditions and practices related to inheritance and marriage. Non-governmental organizations and women's organizations should mobilize to protect the traditional land and property rights of all women, including pastoralists, fishery workers and nomadic groups, indigenous peoples, refugees and migrant workers."

For more information, contact HIC Women and Shelter Network Secretariat, Mazingira Institute, PO Box 14550, Nairobi, Kenya. Phone 254 2 443219/26/29, Fax 254 2 444643/443214, E-mail: Mazingira@elci.gn.apc.org
Source: Women and Shelter No. 9, July 1995

YOU'VE GOT TO BE IN IT TO WIN IT

Just as South Africa was once banned from the Olympics, any country that bars women from its delegation should be sidelined, says Atlanta Plus, an international coalition of activists and athletes.

After 32 countries sent all-male teams in 1992, the group came together to urge the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to improve its record in time for the 1996 games in Atlanta. According to Atlanta Plus, Iran is the only country known to explicitly ban women, but women are conspicuously absent from

the sizeable delegations of other Islamic countries like Kuwait and Pakistan.

The group is urging the IOC to investigate countries that could be running afoul of the Olympic charter, which prohibits gender discrimination. But the IOC has called the campaign an attack on religion—a claim Moroccan gold medalist Nawal El Moutawakel, who is a Muslim rejects. "There isn't a religion on earth that says women can't practice sports."

Source: Ms., Vol. VI, No. 2.



The Dream Lives On



Marilee Karl: Still at it after all these years.

Isis International began TWENTY-ONE years ago in the KITCHENS OF THREE DEDICATED and enterprising FEMINISTS. Marilee Karl, one of the THREE founders, talks about the GROUP'S EARLY YEARS.

by Marilee Karl

It was 21 years ago, in 1974, that the idea for Isis was born as part of a worldwide reawakening of the activist women's movement. The dream of Isis was to contribute to and be part of this new wave of the global women's movement by providing information and communication

channels for women and women's groups to network and link up in our struggle to empower ourselves.

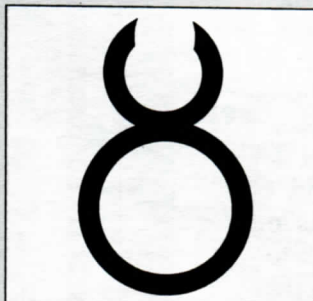
At that time, the First World Conference on Women and its parallel NGO meeting were being planned for Mexico City in 1975. Unlike the Beijing NGO Forum where thousands of activist women came together from the world over, few activist women from grassroots groups in the South were able to attend the Mexico NGO Forum. Fewer still participated in the Conference which was limited to NGOs that enjoyed consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). There was little information available on how others could influence the United Nations Conference. And although the NGO meeting was open to all, women from newly formed women's groups found it difficult to obtain information on how to participate.

Because of this, a small group of us—Judy Siddens, Jane Cottingham and myself—dreamt of setting up an information and communication

channel to form of the women's movement. Women were developing new analyses and strategies but at that time, it was not easy to learn how other women elsewhere were thinking and organizing. The mass media largely ignored the women's movement in the South and distorted or ridiculed feminism in the North. The non-government organizations to which we belonged, although progressive, considered women and women's issues to be secondary in importance to what they considered as the "main" political, economic, social and cultural struggles.

So, after talking about the media with other women in various parts of the world, the three of us decided to create an organization whose mission would be to participate in and promote women's self-empowerment. We wanted to provide women and women's groups worldwide with spaces and opportunities through which they could communicate, share information, experiences, ideas and analysis, and to network and forge links. We named the organization after the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis, whose attributes include creativity, wisdom and knowledge.

Isis International began very slowly and in a very small way. We worked with a group of other volunteers from our homes in Rome and Geneva during our free time on weekends and evenings. The first thing we did was contact as many women and women's



Sign of Isis.

Isis is a major Egyptian goddess. In Egyptian scriptures, she is the Creatress. "In the beginning there was Isis, Oldest of the Old. She is the Goddess from whom all becoming arose." Aside from being the source of life, Isis is also revered as the goddess of re-birth.

The cycle of the Nile river is the backdrop for the belief in and reverence for Isis. Every year, the Nile goes into a cycle of wet and dry. Death is associated with the dry season, when hardly any water flows in the river and the land becomes arid and plants wither and die. Then comes flood. The waters of the Nile inundate the land, making it fertile. It is said that the waters of the Nile is Isis's blood or milk that feed both mortals and gods. Osiris, husband of Isis, takes care of the Nile and all that grow from the land.

The dry period of the Nile is believed to be the death of Osiris while the floods are Isis's tears as she grieves the death of her husband. Seth, Osiris's brother, hacked Osiris to 14 parts and then scattered the pieces all over Egypt.

Isis searched the land for Osiris' remains. Helping her was her twin sister Nephthys. While Isis belonged to the light, to the new and full moon, Nephthys loved the waning and dark moon. As Isis was to the morning star, Nephthys was to the evening star. As Isis was to the living, Nephthys was to the dead.

The two goddesses searched for Osiris' body parts and found all except for his penis. Isis then took some clay and fashioned a penis for Osiris.

The combined powers of the sisters Nephthys and Isis guarantee the immortality of pharaohs who will be resurrected after their death like Osiris. Their combined powers assure humankind of the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Isis is usually represented by the sun disc lying between the horns of the Moon-cow, which is the enclosed and protected male spirit soon to be reborn.

Isis is worshipped in the entire Greco-Roman world, "from Alexandria to Arles, from the outskirts of the Sahara to the isle of Britain, from the mountains of Asturias to the mouths of the Danube." When Christianity flourished, adoration of Mary, the mother of Christ prevailed over the veneration of Isis. But even early Roman Christians called themselves Pastophori meaning "servants of Isis." Few people know that the popular image of the Madonna and Child was derived from the Egyptian image of Isis breastfeeding her son Horus the Sun under the sacred tree of Hathor. ☽

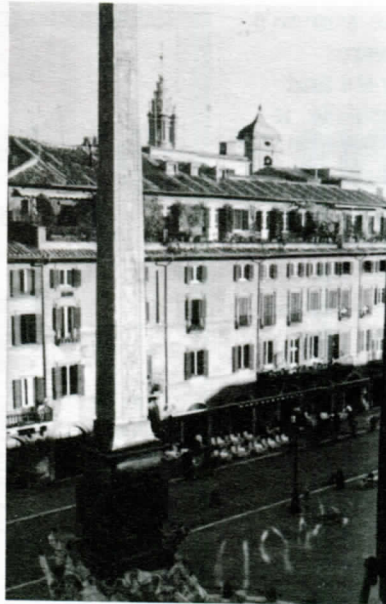
groups around the world as we could. The information that we gathered we shared with other women.

We also sat down to the practicality of developing plans and project proposals to raise money so that we could set up a resource and documentation center and an office with a full time staff. Our enthusiasm was so great that we were sure we could raise funds from donor agencies. Were we surprised! After a year of fund-raising in the United States, Judy Siddens gave up in exhaustion. She had raised less than US\$3,000 despite great efforts. The only ones that showed any interest or support for our idea were church women's organizations.

Jane and I were faced with the decision of whether to go on. We nearly gave it all up, but in the end, we decided to begin working with the small amount of money we had to see what we could do.

We began by organizing a resource center with the materials we had collected from women's groups. We also started publishing a bulletin that reported on and reproduced documents from the Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, which was held in Brussels in 1976. Modest and simple though it was, our work generated responses from women around the world who began writing to us, sending us copies of their publications and asking for information.

Over the past two decades, the materials in the information and resource center have grown tremendously, reflecting the extent of the growth of the women's movement. This collection also indicates the wide range of issues being taken up by



An Isis International poster is pasted on the window of the first office in Rome

women and the variety of media being used and produced by women's groups. Women were producing magazines, books, pamphlets, films, video, radio programs, drama, dance, songs, posters, photographs, woven cloth and many other kinds of visual arts and crafts.

Over the years, Isis International's publications also expanded, multiplied and covered nearly all the different issues that women all over the world are concerned with.

Indeed, Isis International has grown and evolved along with the women's movement. While our basic mission has remained the same over the years, the ways we have sought to achieve this have been varied.

Highlights and Milestones

1976: Isis participates in the first Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, held in Brussels, Belgium. Isis's first International Bulletin reports on the Tribunal and reproduced some of the testimonies. The

Tribunal proposes the creation of the International Feminist Network and asks Isis to coordinate and mobilize international protests against specific cases of crimes against women as well as raise support for women victims of crimes.

1978: Isis opens its first offices in Geneva and Rome.

1979: Isis begins producing publications in Spanish as well as in English. Exiled Chilean women who joined Isis International's Rome office took responsibility for putting out the Spanish edition.

Isis helps organize and participates in the NGO parallel meeting to the world Conference on Agriculture and Rural Development, held in Rome. Together with other women, Isis tries to ensure that women's voices were heard and that the NGO meeting took account of the fact that women are the world's major food producers and keepers of indigenous knowledge.

1980: Together with the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Isis produces the *International Women and Health Guide*, the first book to cover women's health issues and organizing in all parts of the world.

Isis participates in the NGO forum in Copenhagen at the Mid-Decade World Conference on Women. At this meeting, Isis did its best to provide space for women's groups who were unable to secure their own workshop space at the Forum.

1982: Isis organizes and hosts the Third International Women and Health Meeting in Geneva. This was the first in a series of Health Meetings. It

raised sufficient funds to ensure the participation of women from all continents, making the gathering a truly international meeting.

1983: The Isis book *Women and Development: A Resource Guide for Organization and Action* is published after several years of work. Breaking ground as the first feminist critique of "integrating women in development," the book questioned the model of development being promoted by international organizations, showed women's already crucial contribution to development and discussed the women's perspective of development issues.

Isis's office in Geneva organizes an international women's cross-cultural exchange program.

In the same year, the two Isis offices in Rome and Geneva decide to become separate organizations. At that time, Isis was still trying to work as one collective in two different cities, but this was becoming increasingly difficult as staff and work expanded. The Geneva office decides to concentrate its efforts on the exchange



A sampling of Isis International's early publications.

program and became Isis-Wicce (Women's Cross-Cultural Exchange).

Meanwhile, the Rome office adds International to its name and continued developing information and communication activities. It starts producing new publications that included books and the magazine *Women in Action*. The two organizations maintain friendly relations and continue to cooperate.

1984: Isis International decides to open an office in Santiago, Chile to take responsibility for its work in Latin America and the Caribbean. Two of Isis International's Chilean staff members return to Chile from exile to start Isis International-Santiago.

A meeting of Latin American and Caribbean women decides to create the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network. Isis International-Santiago is asked to coordinate it and publish the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Journal. In the past 10 years, this network grew and expanded. In 1995, it was time for the Network to become a separate organization. Isis International-Santiago continues to provide the Network documentation support.

Still in 1984, Isis International-Rome organizes a meeting to prepare for the Nairobi World Conference on Women and NGO Forum. Thirty women's networks and organizations from all the regions of the world attend. On the first day of the meeting, Italian air traffic controllers went on strike, stranding many participants half-way around the world! But this did not stop the intrepid women who rerouted their flights to other countries and continued on by train, or staged sit-ins in airline offices to get on the next flight.

1985: This year, Isis International-Rome publishes the audiovisual resource guide *Powerful Images*, which brings together women's experiences in the use of

audiovisual resources. The book also has an annotated resource listing of films, videos and other audio-visuals produced by women.

This year's other landmark is *Women and Media*, a book that was the product of the collaboration among Isis International-Rome, the Pacific and Asian Women's Network and Kali for Women in India.

From 1985 onwards, Isis International pioneers in the computerization of womens' information and resource centers. By entering its documentation collections into computerized bibliographic databases, Isis is able to provide quicker and far more complete information services. Isis is also able to help and train other women's information and resource centers in building and maintaining both manual and computerized documentation collections while promoting networking among these centers.

1988: Isis makes a major decision to transfer its operations from the North (Rome) to the South. The idea had been maturing for several years as Isis longed to be closer to women's groups in the South, which comprise the majority of groups Isis was working with. The move is symbolically important since it reverses the traditional pattern common among international organizations to locate offices and resource collections in the North.

1991: After years of working towards the move, Isis International-Rome finally transfers to Asia. It puts down new roots in Manila and is nurtured with the energy and enthusiasm of a new team and Board of Trustees.

1992: Isis International-Manila





The women of Isis. From left, foreground: Elvira Garcia-Colobong, Maria Victoria Cabrera-Balleza, Teresita Camacho, Lilian Mercado Carreon. Next row: Florian Taldo, Gemma Moraga, Rosalie Mendoza, Rhona Bautista, Marianita Villariba, Mylene Soto Sol-Cruz, Irene Chia. Not in photo: Luz Martinez, Concepcion Garcia-Ramillo, Florence Reyes, Nancy Arcellana, Benily Valerio, and Chari Sabado.

1992: Isis International-Manila assists Isis-Wicce Geneva in planning and doing a feasibility study for the latter's move to Africa.

1993: The work of the new office in Manila blossoms and expands with many new activities, including the publication of *Women Envision*. *Women Envision* provided information and promoted participation in the Beijing World Conference on Women as well as other international meetings and campaigns.

Isis International-Manila plays a significant role at the regional and international levels of the preparations for the Beijing Conference and NGO Forum .

1994: Isis International- Manila, the

World Association for Christian Communication and the International Women's Tribune Centre organize the Women Empowering Communication Conference in Bangkok.

Isis International-Manila, in order to better meet the demands of its growing work, decides to focus on Asia and the Pacific.

An International Advisory Committee is formed, composed mainly of women from Asia and the Pacific in order to increase the input and commitment of more women to the work of Isis International-Manila.

1996: Isis International-Manila is given consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.)

Three Generations

FEMINISM is the one bridge that spans the GENERATION GAPS between THREE Argentinian WOMEN.

by Mavic Cabrera Balleza



Cool. The young woman in a denim mini-skirt and white T-shirt walked into the room where Isis's Breathing Feminism in Media Workshop at the 1995 NGO Forum on Women was taking place. She was with two other women but it was she who immediately caught my attention because in such meetings, one rarely sees or meets women under 30. Lest I be charged of ageism, let it be clear that I don't have anything against middle-aged women who often dominate feminist gatherings. But it is also interesting, apart from refreshing, to listen to young women and examine their perspective.

As I was already curious who she was, I immediately approached her after the workshop to introduce myself and tell her about our work in Isis. Needless to say, I also drew out the same information from her. Networking, as we call it in our jargon-laden NGO world, really means nothing more than plain and simple introductions and getting-to-know-yous.

Cool was Erika Bordenave. Erika came to Beijing to take part in the World Conference on Women and its parallel NGO Forum with her mother Marcela and grandmother Elena. They are the three generations of Bordenave women in whose blood feminism seems to run naturally.

Attending women's conferences is a common activity for the Bordenave women—particularly in their native country Argentina. However, the magnitude of the World Conference on Women, let alone the fact that it took place in Beijing, a setting that is equally exciting as the processes that led to it, made the Women's Conference a historic gathering for the three. Just like any of the more than 30,000 women and a few brave men, Erika, Marcela and Elena have looked forward to this mammoth gathering since the first official publicity came out more than three years ago.

Elena, who does not quite look her 71 years, was a teacher who rose from the ranks to become a supervisor and, later, director in the Argentinean Education Department. One who can be called a woman ahead of her time, Elena was already a feminist long before the so-called bra burners made it in the news. Elena defines her feminism as the struggle for women's liberation both at the workplace and in a relationship. She grows pensive as she recalls the time when they organized the first trade union of women teachers in the 1950s. At that time, Argentinean women did not have much choice. If one was a wife, she just had to conform and do her wifely duties. That was all that was

"While Argentina is repairing the damages of the past 20 years, it is not doing anything about the human rights situation today. I'm against the government but I'm working there because I'm a human rights advocate."
- Erika



expected of an Argentinian woman: get married, take care of a husband, and raise a family. "I think I have been exceptionally lucky because I was able to concentrate on my career without pressures from my husband," Elena stresses appreciatively.

Twenty-two-year-old Erika is a secretary at the Human Rights Department in Argentina. Part of her work is documenting the victims of human rights violations during the military government's rule. The families of those who disappeared and those who were imprisoned during the military regime are being indemnified by the present government. "I'm not so glad about this because while we are repairing the damages of the past 20 years, we are not doing anything about the human rights situation today. I'm against the government but I'm working there because I'm a human rights advocate. I want to draw attention to the police repression against young people that is happening today since these are the same things that happened 20 years ago.

"My work in the Human Rights Department complements my involvement in the women's movement. They are interconnected. Women's rights are also human rights," Erika adds.

The most publicly visible of the three, Marcela, is an incumbent member of the Argentinian Parliament where she represents the province of Buenos Aires. A former English teacher, Marcela is also a seasoned trade unionist. At present, she coordinates the women's committee of *Congreso de los Trabajadores Argentinos* (Argentinian Workers' Congress).

Issues of the Past and the Present

Looking back at what she calls their highly traditional era, Elena believes education or the lack of it was the main issue of women during their time. Limited access to education gave women very limited choices. When women reached a certain age, they were expected to get married and soon after raise a family without even considering if that is really what they want to do with their lives. Neither

did they give any thought to the consequences of their decisions.

In contrast, many Argentinian women nowadays prefer not to get married because of the strong patriarchal nature of this Latino society. Even as women head 33 percent of Argentinian households, equality remains the issue since it is still the men who have the final say.

Elena says she lived in interesting times. In those days, the issue for them who belonged to the middle class was whether to accept Peronism. The only initiative to involve women in the public sphere came from Evita, President Peron's wife, who did nothing more than rally Argentinian women to support the President. Even in the anti-Peron movement where Elena belonged, women's rights and issues were not articulated.

Young Erika, on the other hand, considers the issues of racism and reproductive rights as the main issues that the women's movement should focus on. She says: "Argentina is a very racist society. If you're not blond or blue-eyed, you have a problem. Abortion is illegal in my country. But I think that women should be allowed to decide on their own. And of course, we want to be a part of the society and we want to be treated like human beings.

"While there seems to be more equality now," Erika continues, "in reality, Argentinian society still is very macho. Latino guys are still very macho because that is the way they were brought up—they have their macho fathers as role models. I think the issues confronted by my grandmother's as well as my mother's generations are still the same issues that we are confronting now. This is why young people should keep struggling to set their own people free. This is why we should continue to struggle to eliminate racial and gender discrimination."

Marcela agrees with Erika's view that abortion must be legalized. She says the fact that Argentina is a predominantly Catholic country and groups like the Opus Dei are very influential poses some problems for women fighting for reproductive freedom. But apart from reproductive rights, Marcela believes that there should be greater participation of women

Marcela, Erika, and Elena—feminists all.

in politics. Political participation, according to Marcela, will enable women to attain equality.

"It is not enough just to have women's committees in every chapter of the union especially because there is also a lot of discrimination in trade unions. So plans for a program to train women union members to assert and speak for their rights are on the drawing board," says Marcela. She hopes that more women will take an active part in the Argentinian Workers' Congress, which is composed of different trade unions. She sees Congress as a venue for democratic processes that the Argentinian government has failed to provide.

The other crucial issue, Marcela believes, is violence against women. Like anywhere else in the world, domestic violence is a major issue in Argentina especially now that the unemployment rate is continually rising. Marcela underscores the gravity of the problem: "Unemployed men become terribly insecure. A simple misunderstanding often leads to violence in the home. There is a correlation between economic problems and violence."

Because of this, Marcela is part of a group that seeks to amend a law on domestic violence. "The law is very convoluted. It is not clear how a guilty man is penalized or if he is penalized at all. I believe the punishment should be rationalized. When someone kills a person, he is punished, right? I think if a man kills his wife, he should get a heavier punishment," Marcela explains.

Gains and Milestones

Erika's eyes glow with pride when she talks of the 30 percent reserved seat for women in the parliament. As her mother and grandmother nod approvingly, she says women's groups worked hard for the quota to be implemented.

Marcela thinks that it is already a big achievement that women are now accomplishing things on their own and speaking out for themselves. As an example, she talks about peasant and middle-class women who protested the eviction of peasant families from their homes after the creation of agroregions by the government.

Argentinian women also initiated a successful immunization campaign against meningitis, which, in Argentina, says Marcela, is widespread. "The vaccine for this disease is very expensive and the state has been remiss in providing such basic health needs. In some areas, it is the women's groups that provided children with free immunization."

Feminist Development

Elena credits her exposure in the academe as instrumental in her development as a feminist. She did a lot of work to make young women and men understand that relationships should not be male-dominated and that women caught in such situations have the option to leave the relationship.

The feminist motto that the personal is political could not be more apt for Marcela. She singles out her experience as a battered wife as the key to her feminist awakening. In the '70s, Marcela and her husband were active in the *Militantes* party. Much of their work was campaigning against General Alejandro Lanusse's military government that ousted Peron. Marcela remembers thinking that their marriage was working quite well and that there was trust and there seemed to be equality. She did not feel discriminated against until her husband started beating her, a nightmare that lasted 12 years. "I couldn't leave him, it was a difficult time in Argentina. Well, I actually left him many times but I would always come back because of the children. I thought I could let it pass. His being a militant party member seemed more important to me."

In 1976, with her two little children in tow, Marcela and her husband fled to Mexico to escape prosecution by the military regime. They lived in exile until 1982. "I was not battered during our exile and I trusted that someday he will stop beating me. When we returned to Argentina after the dictatorship fell, he went back to his old ways. I decided that it was over."

Like her mother, Erika confesses to being a survivor of domestic violence. "There was a time when my husband almost killed me. However, it took me only four years instead of 12 to decide to leave him. But even without the



Despite differences in personal politics, Elena, above, and Marcela, below, are positive influences on each other.

"I want to help women run away from an abusive relationship as quickly as possible, find a safe shelter where they can analyze their situation and then decide for themselves without pressure from anyone."
- Marcela

difficult experiences like we had, I guess every woman should be a feminist." Erika attributes her feminist development to her mother and grandmother.

Directions

With the Beijing Conference and with governments forging a new agreement to advance the status of women, Marcela believes that women all over the world are facing a crucial moment. "Although we understand that the women's movement is so diverse, we should be as organized as we can. Conservatism is on the rise and there is a lot of pressure from fundamentalist groups. Taking the issue of reproductive rights as an example, we should be able to impress upon the Vatican that our rights are non-negotiable. Moreover, we should be able to show them that women can make a difference for the better. The United Nations for instance has been in existence for the last 50 years; yet, it hasn't been able to put a stop to even one single war. We should do better than that. Let us show the governments, the international bodies, women and men, that while we are meeting and talking, we are also accomplishing something."

Last 10 December, Marcela's political



Doing things together.

party, the *Frente para un País Solidario* (Coalition for Mutual Solidarity) presented a package of bills on women's issues, on the drug problem and on labor issues. As a member of the Congressional Committee on Family, Women and Minority, she proposed a shelter program for victims of domestic violence.

"I want to help women run away from an abusive relationship as quickly as possible, find a safe shelter where they can analyze their situation and then decide for themselves without pressure from anyone."

Intergenerational Dialogue

As I listened to the three Bordenave women tell their stories, I was awed by how each one influenced the other, despite personal politics and despite generation gaps.

From being a staunch anti-Peron activist, Elena made a 180-degree turn to become a Peronist, perhaps partly because of Marcela's involvement in anti-Lanusse campaigns. Marcela, meanwhile, reflects: "I was active in the trade unions and I witnessed how Peron's policies provided greater economic and social benefits for the working class. Whereas in my mother's time, only the so-called excesses of Evita were magnified. The repression that we experienced under the military regime of General Alejandro Lanusse made my mother realize that things were a lot better under Peron. But I've always respected my mom even at that time when she took a political stance that was completely opposite mine."

"Through them [Marcela and Erika], I clearly see all the social changes that are taking place. It makes it easier for me to accept changes which I thought would never happen," Elena points out.

Erika, the youngest Bordenave, gratefully acknowledges the elder women's influence in her life. "We discuss a lot, we travel together, we do things together. My grandmother gives me books and other reading materials. My mother, on the other hand, brings me to places and takes me along to conferences and lobby work. She gives me the courage to speak and decide for myself. I would say that my grandmother provides me the theories while my mother provides me the opportunity to put the theories into practice." ?

Perfect Pair

by Luz Maria Martinez

Her eyes gaze at you and you can not help but gaze back. You follow her every move, every flick of her finger, every sway of her arm, every turn of her graceful neck. She dances and you cannot help but watch, riveted, hypnotized by her movements as much as by the music.

Then there is another dancer—as graceful and as confident but with a wisdom far beyond the first dancer's age. She moves and you feel her pride. She moves and you feel her dignity. She moves and you sense her spirit.

Two women, two generations, dancing life on stage. Tehreema and Indu Mitha.

Tehreema and Indu Mitha are not just dancing peers, although as partners they complement each other perfectly. They are a mother-and-daughter team and their personal knowledge of each other is perhaps one of the factors that gives their performance its distinct character.

In the beginning, it was Indu who was teaching daughter Tehreema the basics. Today, it is Tehreema who is making mother Indu dance.

An army officer's wife, Indu moved from one military post to another while her children were growing. Wherever they were, Indu would always start dancing classes for girls who flocked to her as soon as they learned that she was a dance teacher. "I would have about eight little girls. Tehreema would be among girls whose ages ranged from seven to 15 at that time. When I examined them at the end of the year, I would always have trouble cutting marks from Tehreema, both in the theoretical and the practical. It was really then that I realized how very talented she was. I thought Tehreema was only having fun."

"Everywhere we went, because it was a new place, my mother would start from ABC," remembers Tehreema. "Because I had to go through it again and again, my

Sharing center stage.



In Pakistan, dance is a major social issue. Tehreema says "it is not dancing per se that is frowned upon, but dancing by women."

basics became very strong." As she grew older, Tehreema continued to learn how to dance and Indu never stopped her. When Tehreema went on a visit to India, Indu encouraged her to learn dance there also. Later, Tehreema also learned classical singing which gave her a background to the music that goes with the dance. Indu is glad that Tehreema had taken up music in addition to dance. "I think that her music education helps her, gives her some confidence in dealing with musicians."

But while Tehreema continued to learn to dance, she did not think of becoming a professional dancer until 1990. In Pakistani tradition, one is not considered a serious dancer until she has given a solo performance, which Tehreema gave in 1986. In 1990, Tehreema felt she wanted to just dance and see if it could support her financially. "I've always been interested in so many things," says Tehreema. "I've done drama, I've done music, I've

done painting and I love to teach, whether it's with children or adults. But it came to a point when I said to myself that I can't be a jack of all trades. If I'm to excel in something, I would have to choose one field where perhaps I can incorporate everything else. But that decision didn't come consciously. It just started happening. I became more and more involved in dancing because I'm happiest when I'm dancing and I'm content to let everything else take second place."

But Tehreema's passion for dance did not easily find expression in Pakistan. Even Indu, who had been very supportive, was also apprehensive at first. "When she wanted to take up dance professionally, her father and I were anxious. Tehreema was unmarried then and she would have to provide for herself because we would not be able to provide for her. We were afraid that she would not be able to live on it. But I think she did prove to herself that she can."

Apart from the financial uncertainty, dance in Pakistan it is equated with prostitution. Like in many Asian countries, Pakistani women are taught to sit with their knees together, to keep their heads down and to be polite. Tehreema says "there's no physical activity for girls. They are not encouraged to do anything physical to express their inner selves."

In Pakistan, dance is a major social issue. Tehreema says "it is not dancing per se that is frowned upon, but **dancing by women**. That is why all these years, I really have not been able to perform on our own stages under the title 'Dance.' My performances have been mainly at foreign halls owned by foreign embassies like the International School in Islamabad, which is considered foreign ground. This is why for me, just to exist in Pakistan as a woman dancer is a cause, and to have a group of dance 'students who who will stick to it will be a major miracle."

But Pakistani girls have not always been prevented from dancing, at least not during Indu's childhood. "During my childhood one could learn and there was encouragement for learning to dance. Girls of the educated class were expected to have some cultural interests: singing, or playing an instrument, or dancing."

Still, Indu concedes that dancing for girls was only tolerated as a hobby. "My own family would have been perfectly happy for me to keep it as a hobby, to dance as an amateur in public performances, which I did when I was still in my parents' home. I think perhaps my decision to dance was a little peculiar for my own family. Because

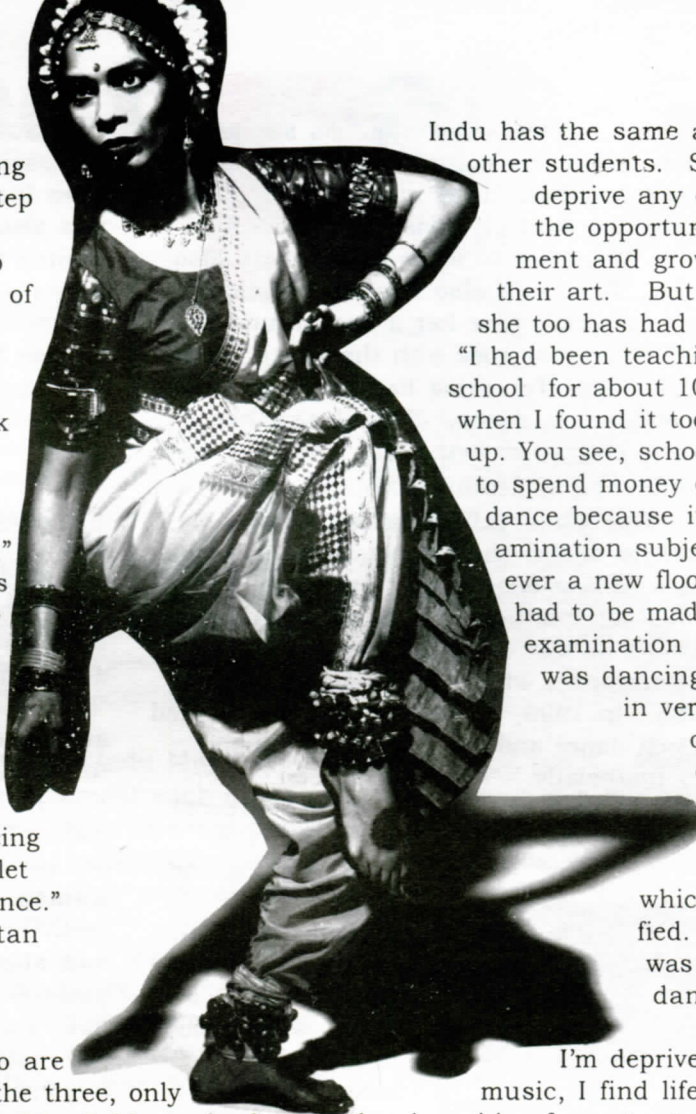


they are educators, they thought anything less than that is a step down. It took a long time for my father to realize that so many of his children were deeply interested in the arts.

“So I don’t think that this negative view of dancing is something that’s happened over time,” continues Indu. “It’s always been there—this negative view—in certain people’s mentality, in certain strata of society. Even now, they’ll go and watch what they call dancing girls but they won’t let anybody at home dance.”

Because Pakistan suppressed dance, there are only two other dancers apart from Tehreema who are in the country. Of the three, only Tehreema was trained in Pakistan by her mother Indu.

Indeed, Tehreema regards Indu as her guru. But as a teacher, Indu did not interfere when Tehreema began experimenting with dance styles and techniques that radically departed from her own teaching. Tehreema says that Indu was instead “very encouraging. When I did my first modern dance in my style and not hers, she didn’t say what the musician then said to me: ‘this is ridiculous.’ Instead, she said, ‘Well, if you want to do it, why not?’ and ‘Why don’t you work on this a little more?’ or ‘Try it this way.’ She never discouraged me and that has been great. She is a very open-minded person, always keen to communicate and learn from other artists.”



Indu has the same attitude towards other students. She did not deprive any one of them the opportunity to experiment and grow and mature in their art. But as a teacher, she too has had her low points. “I had been teaching dance in a school for about 10 years and when I found it too tiring, I gave it up. You see, schools can’t afford to spend money on facilities for dance because it’s not an examination subject. So whenever a new floor or a new room had to be made, it went to examination subjects and I was dancing with children in very small rooms or on floors made of bricks. So I went back to teaching in the classroom for which I’m also qualified. I thought that was the end of my dancing.

“But whenever I’m deprived of dancing and music, I find life is like the earth that is waiting for water to come. So I went back to teaching a few talented children after school hours. That was quite pleasant. But I still didn’t think I would dance again.”

Tehreema in Indu’s Eyes

Had it not been for Tehreema, Indu would perhaps never really dance again.

Tehreema was on a tour one day, accompanying her husband who, incidentally, also happens to be in charge of lighting, sound and other technical aspects of Tehreema’s dances. The couple passed a place where Tehreema felt something was terribly wrong. “It took me a long time to figure out that my memory of that place was different. I realized that it will never ever again look the way I remembered it

as a child because of the quarrying that is going on there now. My child will never see that place's beauty that I saw it when I was a child. By the time he grows up, there will probably be no hills left."

Tehreema had been so moved by the destruction of the place that she did a dance story about it. "I went to my mother and said: 'I want to make this dance and I think that we should do it.' I don't want to do the dance without it being meaningful." The dance Tehreema composed, *Ata Hai Yad* (As I Recall), which she and her mother performed, was a classical dance portraying the destruction of the environment and its impact on women. "To this day," Tehreema says, "when my mother dances, I still find her so graceful."

Yet, coming back to the stage to dance was unsettling for Indu. "I was very nervous about coming back to dancing on stage." In addition to readjusting to the stage, Indu is also nervous about performing with Tehreema who had become a very impressive dancer. At the NGO Forum during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, Indu and Tehreema performed a series of dances. Indu says, "the day before our performance in Huairou, we rehearsed in our hotel room and as I watched Tehreema do the first dance, I said to her, 'I'm frightened to go on the stage after you.' I also didn't watch her dance the first day because it would have taken the confidence out of me."

"But I do appreciate what Tehreema does. She works very hard and there is a perfection in her work that I know I never would have achieved. She has trained her body much more strongly and strictly than I ever did."

"You see, in my youth, professional masters did not take us seriously. Because they thought we were only going to dance in drawing rooms, they did not teach us like they taught their professional students! I had to work things out in my head because they did not teach us theory. I read as much as I could although there's really not very much to read, especially in

Pakistan. Books were mostly from India. I used my little grounding in western music to try to understand music that is much more complicated and a rhythm style that is very, very difficult and sophisticated. But I do feel that the grounding in western music—which I studied when I was a child of eight—helped me to understand the more complicated things precisely because it was so simple. Also, I am not afraid to ask help from professionals who are one-third my age and I find that they respond."

"Tehreema's body movements are new. They are not wholly alien to us but they are not part of the dance style that we learned. She's teaching her group to crawl and do waves and turns on the floor. At first I found this very strange, because only 'singing girls' sit on the floor and wiggle in our vulgar films. But I realized that what she's doing is wholly different."

"My daughter even got me to do a role in a contemporary dance. Initially, I felt that the role did not fit me. But I got used to it and after having more time with it, I now feel more comfortable doing it."

"I find that I could easily accept and adopt different dance styles because my dance education had not been rigid. Watching my famous choreographer friend dance on her toes used to put me off. It seemed to me western and Anglicized. Then, when I worked with her, she made me do it and it was very much against the grain. But I have learned that some things need to be done in new ways. I had to push at the walls of stylization that were put into my head."

"I think it's very important to have more than one kind of dance training. I found that among my students, those who, for various reasons, are limited to one classic style find it very hard to adapt to even folk dances. People who've had too rigid an education in anything, I think, lose their creativity. It's very hard to find dancers who are both creative and rigid in their training. So sometimes I think I did well in not learning too much!"

Tehreema's Themes

Some of Tehreema's dances are classic while others are modern. But regardless of the style, the dances' themes are all very radical and controversial for Pakistan. One such dance is about a woman who decides to have an illegitimate child, which is an extremely sensitive issue in Pakistan. "I am actually very pro-choice," says Tehreema, "but in my country, it is very traumatizing for a woman to have a child out of wedlock and bring it up. The dance shows how the girl is suddenly forced into maturity when she discovers that she is pregnant and her beloved deserts her. That dance, although a solo, addresses mothers and asks for understanding and support for their daughters. We used a traditional *raag*, the words of which speak to the mother about the woman's pain and abandonment.

Another dance focused on a woman who attempted to free herself from societal bonds but who ultimately chose death rather than continue to be chained.

"All these stories, all these themes are from inside me," says Tehreema, "and I object and feel offended when, sometimes, women's groups come up to me and say, 'Why don't you make a dance on women's liberation?' I make dances about women because I am a woman. Because I feel and see what's around me, I naturally make dances about what matters to me.

"Dance is a vehicle for saying a lot of things you want to say, for projecting a lot of what's happening around you. You don't have to put up a banner and say, 'I'm doing a dance for women.' That's being very superficial. We make dances about women because it is our concern. Dance is about the universe."

Indu thinks the same way. "I don't think Tehreema takes these themes up in the sense that they are women's issues. I think to her it's a personal story. You know, our culture, our country, before independence, went through a strong phase of motivated dancing—to use a wide term. Before independence, Indian dance was greatly modernized and it generated a

fashion of taking up what were then the political themes: anti-imperialist, anti-British themes. So meaningful dance themes are not new to us.

"The great Bengali and Nobel Laureate winner Rabindranath Tagore wrote a dance drama about a woman with whom a young man fell in love. But the woman thought of herself as a man. Not that she dresses as a man but that she's interested in things that people would think are masculine—such as martial arts or science or mathematics or a career. But the man was a friend whom she felt she could not turn down. So she begged the gods to give her grace and femininity. They married but after a few years, he was bored with her and he left.

"It is obviously a theme for a modern woman to take up and I've been thinking of doing it in a much more modern context. I'd like to show that if you are going to give all these up for femininity, you're a fool. You must develop both. So in that sense, I don't find feminist themes strange. It's something that comes from what you live in, from the times that you live in."

The Dangers of Dance

Tehreema's dream now, after proving herself as a dancer, is to have a company of five to six dancers. "I have so many ideas in my head but some of them cannot be done by two or three people. I need several dancers to do them. The problem is you cannot simply draw people into dance in a place like Pakistan."

Right now, a group of nine students—all of whom except for two are women—perform with Tehreema. But none of them is really attached to Tehreema's group and none of them have studied long enough to perform solo. Tehreema has been teaching them for only three years. In the Pakistani tradition, one cannot be called a dancer until one has danced solo. Until then, one is only a student.

As for Indu, she finds joy in getting other people involved in the different aspects of the dance performance. "I've enjoyed drawing other people into the group

very much. I like getting mothers who have learned music but have given it up because of their children or people who learned to sing or to dance a long time ago to come back, join us and do a character role.

"I remember walking down a road some years ago. In a little congested market, somebody jumped out of a small shop: 'Auntie! Auntie! Don't you recognize me?' She remembered she had come to spend the holidays in a small army post where they expected to have a very dull time but she said 'it was the loveliest holidays we had because you taught us a dance and you directed us in a play.' It was a wonderful compliment! To think I have spread the joy of dancing to so many people! That has been a great pleasure."

Tehreema however thinks that it will be a miracle to get women to come and stick to dance because "the minute girls hit the age of 15, parents pull them out. Or when they get married, their husbands forbid them to dance. All the years of training go to waste."

Still, Tehreema continues to hope to attract girls to dance. How will she do it?

"Well, basically, by performing. After the performance, somebody will come up

and say, 'Do you give classes because I'd like to learn.'

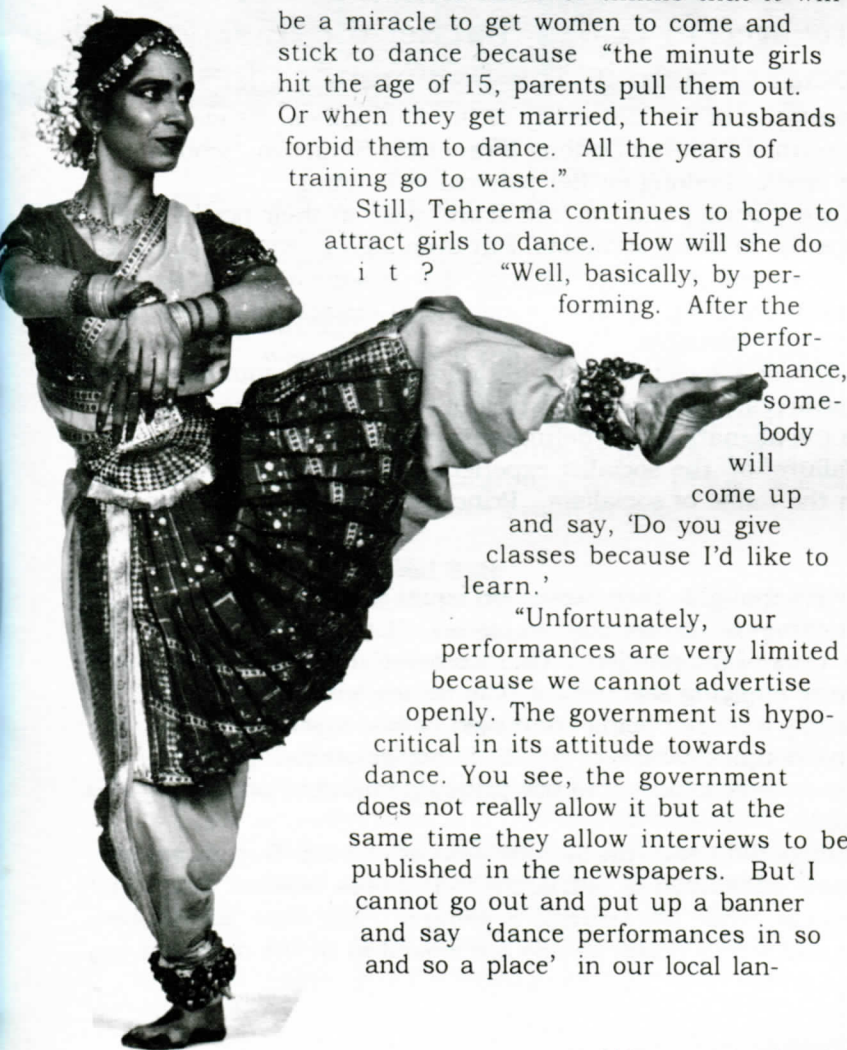
"Unfortunately, our performances are very limited because we cannot advertise openly. The government is hypocritical in its attitude towards dance. You see, the government does not really allow it but at the same time they allow interviews to be published in the newspapers. But I cannot go out and put up a banner and say 'dance performances in so and so a place' in our local lan-

guage. We have militant extremist groups— male Muslim groups—which are very organized and which might walk in and break my limbs and break the whole place down. They are a minority but whether you like it or not, they are very organized and they are funded and very dangerous. I have to be very careful about putting up a poster or letting people know where I live."

The future for dance, according to Tehreema, is not very optimistic. "The economic and social situations are becoming worse. We are going backwards. In my teens during the late '60s and early '70s, we were much more progressive in Pakistan. I wouldn't say that women had much power then but, generally, the atmosphere was more progressive at that time. Right now, we find ourselves fighting for the freedoms that we already had then. I think that the economic situation, being as it is, squeezes our middle class and if there is no strong, educated middle class, it will be hard for a society to be liberal."

Indu however believes otherwise. "I think we are starting to come out of fundamentalism. When foreigners tell me 'Oh, it's dreadful. Pakistan is going through this stage of fundamentalism and puritanism,' I say to them 'Which culture has not? The Americans started off with puritanism. The British had the theater closed down for 64 years during Cromwell's time even if they have had such a long theater history.' So what is there to be worried about? I've never been worried about it because I feel that, at least, we can keep it going, even privately, and we do."

But whatever the country's situation might turn out to be, Tehreema is determined to stay in Pakistan and to stay there as a dancer. "I know that if I leave Pakistan, I would have more of a chance to create all the things I want to create and to form that company I want to set up. But I know I will continue dancing in Pakistan. The country is unappreciative of dance in general, but if I leave, I know that life would also be very, very difficult for me. Pakistan is where I belong. Pakistan is where my dancing is meaningful." ❧



Changing RA All the Rules

WORKING for the REVOLUTION ALONE will not assure women of their PLACE in the new society. WOMEN must work to specifically ENSURE THEIR RIGHTS.

by Hayat Imam

It is in Princess' nature to be an activist. As a student, she had already been involved in issues that set the directions of the political and social climate in the Philippines. In the late '50s, she became a representative of the University of the Philippines' Student Council. There, she met fellow council member Dodong (Francisco) Nemenzo, who later became her husband. She credits Dodong for her political awakening.

At that time, the McCarthy period and the "red scare" were at their height and very few people admitted openly to being socialists. But even as a university student, Dodong espoused socialist views and promoted readings, discussions and sharing of information about the socialist analysis. Despite some initial resistance, Princess felt challenged and provoked by these thoughts.

Socialism offered a vision of a society that would minimize the inequalities in the access to and control of resources. It embodied a spirit of collective sharing and mutual aid that would reduce the alienation and dehumanization in society.

Despite the recent "failure" of the socialist experience in many countries and all the mistakes committed in the name of socialism, Princess feels that this vision is still inspiring.

In the '60s, women activists thought they were on equal footing with their male comrades when it came to involvement in issues. It took some time before they realized the crux of the problem: That women did not identify or choose the issues to which they were applying themselves. The issues which concerned women and moved them deeply were not being addressed or taken seriously.

Even among progressive couples, when it came to family relationships, old stereotypes slipped in. Women were expected to put primary emphasis on looking after the family and the household.

Theoretically, the socialists did deal with the question of women. But, in reality, the socialists' systems became subsumed to patriarchy. Princess believes that social movements are progressive only while the struggle is going on. But once established, states become conservative and family relationships are looked at in the same old way.

According to Princess, the women's struggle is indeed the "longest revolution."



Princess Nemenzo: government persecution forced her underground and separated her from her children.

The cycle will continue to repeat itself unless women themselves define and make sure of their own roles within the system. The women's struggle, Princess agrees, is indeed "the longest revolution."

To sustain herself, Princess gets strength and inspiration from her mother who was a great influence on her. Princess' mother was a professional, an academic who earned a doctorate degree and organized women during her time as president of various women's groups. In the 1930s, she worked for women's right to vote.

The Personal Side

Princess found out early enough that a woman who wants to apportion her time between her family and a profession by which she can contribute to the larger society will always find herself in a dilemma. Whatever decision a woman makes, she has to grapple with feelings of guilt.

Princess and Dodong were married when she was 20 and had just graduated from college. Both of them then went to the University of Manchester in England to study. Soon after, Princess had her first child. She managed to look after the baby,

breastfeed for six months and write her thesis all at the same time. Dodong helped care for the child and supported her academic work as well. But when she became pregnant again, Princess, together with her eldest child, came home to the Philippines to have her baby. After eight months, she left the children with her parents and went back to England.

Three years later, when Princess and Dodong returned to the Philippines, Princess was shocked to find that her two boys did not know her at all. Pained, she vowed that she would win them back. She eventually did but so many years later, her second son would still remind her that "she left him."

When they came back, Princess and Dodong tried to live normal lives even as they continued their political work. Princess started teaching at the Philippine Science High School when her third and last child was about a year old.

But life was never normal. People were always coming in Princess and Dodong's home that it was a veritable "headquarters." Their children grew up in this environment.

When martial law was declared in 1972, Princess and Dodong's only choice was to leave their children with their family again and go underground. During this period of hiding, they could only see their children infrequently and, usually, only one at a time. After three months, the military caught up with Princess and Dodong and they were both jailed, Princess for six months and Dodong for over a year.

In prison and even among torturers, poverty and class also made a difference. Students, workers and peasants were the most brutally tortured. As an academic, Dodong was treated with some deference. Still, he was beaten, threatened, grilled and put in solitary confinement for long periods.

The women's detention center was located in the bachelor officers' quarters. As a result, Princess and the other women detainees were subjected to constant sexual harassment. One officer in charge of operations came up frequently with phony reasons to bring Princess to his office for so

called interrogations. When he began to summon her at night, Princess put her foot down and categorically refused to go. Princess was released earlier than Dodong so she made it a point to visit him every Sunday with her children.

It was a most strenuous time, especially for the children for whom it was impossible to be like normal children. Instead of having fun or socializing, the children spent their weekends visiting their father in jail. But when they heard that their parents had been arrested, the children were glad. "At least we know where to find you now."

In the meantime, Princess was struggling to make ends meet. She took a job as editor with the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) at the Ateneo University of Manila where she later became a researcher. At the IPC, Princess started working on land reform issues and population policies.

Meanwhile, Dodong had been trying for a long time to get a visa for a research post at the Australian National University in Canberra. Then, in 1982, Dodong was finally allowed to go and Princess felt no hesitation in packing her whole family off to Australia. The move turned out to be a very positive experience for the whole family. Finally, they found the time for enjoying the simple pleasures of picnics, travelling and being close to one another.

Because Princess's children grew in an activist family, it is not surprising to see that they are all politicized in varying degrees. They became so even when Princess and Dodong refrained from putting any pressure on them to join activist groups. After only a year in Canberra, Princess's two sons returned to the Philippines and became increasingly involved in political work and political demonstrations.

At one of the key political rallies against Marcos in 1984, police shot Princess's oldest son in the back. The bullet punctured his lung, the liver and the diaphragm and missed his spine by only an inch. Princess rushed home and found her son lying in a hospital's Intensive Care Unit. Doctors said that the boy was saved by the fact that, being a runner and an athlete, his

lungs were in great shape. Princess still remembers the outpouring of support from both friends and strangers from Australia and the Philippines. People created a fund and sent in contributions large and small.

Role in the Women's Movement

While it was difficult to find work in Australia, Princess was nevertheless extremely active. She was part of solidarity groups against oppression and tyranny in the Philippines and Asia. She also worked closely with the peace movement and the Women and Development Networks of Australia. She collaborated with feminists and developed her international networks. Princess also contributed to the discussions on the impact of development on Third World women and expanded her own feminist awareness.

By this time, the *Katipunan ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan* (League of Women for Freedom) or KALAYAAN was being set up in the Philippines. Even though she was not in the Philippines at the time of its organization, Princess was very much a part of KALAYAAN and contributed from afar by fundraising for the group in Australia. Upon her return to the Philippines in 1985, Princess formally joined KALAYAAN.

Previous to Princess's return, in 1983 three months after the assassination of Filipino political leader Benigno Aquino, Filipino women organized huge anti-dictatorship demonstrations. Women went on to create a whole range of women's groups, all organized around the anti-Marcos struggle. On the occasion of the International Women's Day in 1984, Filipino women held a national conference and decided to form GABRIELA, a coalition named after a Filipina revolutionary who fought against the country's Spanish colonizers. The individual letters also stand for General Assembly Binding Women for Reform, Integrity, Leadership and Action. As a coalition, GABRIELA served as an umbrella for organizations of various political persuasions.

The 1986 presidential elections changed the nature of GABRIELA. There was

internal dissension between groups who wanted to support Corazon Aquino in the elections and those who wanted to boycott. The latter prevailed in the internal GABRIELA debates, causing a number of organizations to resign. Those who remained formed a smaller coalition that was more clearly identified with the national democratic movement. Princess was elected Secretary General of GABRIELA's Manila chapter. She later became its chairperson.

The Fight for Reproductive Rights

Coming back to the Philippines, Princess found women organizing around important issues like prostitution, trafficking, equal pay for equal work and violence against women. But glaringly absent were discussions on reproductive rights and abortion. The issue of reproductive health was coming up among some health care groups but the issue did not figure in the field of human rights.

In 1985, for the first time, a KALAYAAN forum on International Human Rights Day declared women's rights as human rights. A speaker added reproductive rights as a new dimension to the women's struggle. Many human rights activists, including prominent people, had difficulty with this concept because, until that time, human rights had only been discussed in the context of political and military repression.

For a long time, the concept of reproductive rights remained theoretical. It became real only in the context of the writing of the new Constitution of the Philippines in 1986.

The discussions on the Constitution moved Princess into action. She began to organize around the issue of reproductive rights and, with other women, developed a counter-strategy to the "pro life" groups that were organizing heavily to have the rights of the fetus included in the Constitution. Women's groups sent a petition with hundreds of signatures to the Constitutional Commission asking it to deny the "pro life" demands because they would seriously limit women's lives.

As a concession to their lobbying efforts, the Constitutional Commission reformulated the provision in question to provide "equal protection to the mother." But it also clearly included "equal protection to the unborn." This process, though disappointing, deepened the consciousness of many women. Princess was convinced that it was now imperative to continue organizing on the issues of reproductive health and women's rights to control their own bodies. By this time too, Princess had already committed herself to women's reproductive rights and self-determination as well as to democratizing the rural financial system through people's and women's participation.

But an organization was needed in order for initial efforts to continue. So, in 1987, Princess and her colleagues set up Woman Health, whose mission is to promote, defend and advance women's reproductive rights and self-determination. Today, Woman Health's work is conducted with an awareness of and attention to the particular period and cultural setting of the Philippines.

The organization deals with the issues of reproductive rights within the context of a comprehensive women's health program and within the framework of a third world country affected by international economic forces. Princess says it is important to understand how all these forces affect our health and our lives and also how they affect our ability to defend these rights for ourselves.

While Princess's primary involvement may be in the specific field of reproductive rights, her feminist analysis of society is so much more comprehensive. Princess's vision goes beyond greater women's involvement in the system. She is not satisfied that there are more places for women in the system; she wants the entire system changed. Only in this way, Princess says, will women truly participate in shaping the world. "We don't just want a piece of the pie. We want to change the recipe.")

Hayat Imam is the marketing director for In Touch Foundation.

The **D**iplomat

She SPURNED a career in diplomacy to give HERSELF to the WOMEN'S MOVEMENT and her country's struggle for FREEDOM. But fate put her BACK ON TRACK.

by Hayat Imam

For four years, Aurora Javate De Dios, or Oyie to friends, studied to be a diplomat. But after college, she just could not see herself joining the Marcos dictatorship. So she gave up all thoughts of a diplomatic career and, instead, became part of the political mass movement. In 1972, when Marcos declared martial law, shut down Congress and shackled the media, Oyie went underground. There, she wrote and distributed anti-Marcos newsletters. After a while, she went back to the academe and obtained a master's degree in Asian Studies. Then she began teaching.

But in 1977, the Marcos regime caught up with her and she was thrown in prison for "illegal and subversive activities." Oyie considers it fortunate that her arrest happened in the late '70s, when human rights abuses were not as bad as they were during martial law's early years.

By 1977, Amnesty International was already active and Marcos was under international pressure to observe some basic human rights. But in actual fact, Oyie says the only insurance against torture was if there were witnesses to the



Oyie Javate De Dios: mainstreaming feminist theories.

arrest and if enough publicity and support was generated for the political prisoner. Oyie used her network to let people know of her arrest. Oyie was also lucky that she was "small fry" to the military because by the time Oyie was arrested, many of the underground's leaders have already been captured.

Oyie spent three months in jail and, to this day, she's glad that she was not made to spill any information that could endanger family or friends.

Oyie recalls that being on the run, laying low and being together in prison were experiences that, in strange ways, brought activists close to each other. This is exactly what happened to Oyie and her husband Lito. Oyie thinks that after enduring all these terrible experiences as a couple, who began their married life at the onset of martial law, there is nothing that she and Lito could not face together. "Overcoming the worst reinforced our positive thinking."

Feminism's Early Days

During the 1960's, a strong movement grew against the U.S. war in Vietnam, particularly since Filipino soldiers were being drafted. This anti-war movement went hand in hand with activist demands to shut down U.S. bases in the Philippines. Socialism was a major influence.

Oyie and other Filipina women activists then thought they were working in equal partnership with their male comrades until, in the early '70s, many of the women realized that often, they were actually just making coffee.

The women reacted by launching their own organization in 1971. They named it MAKIBAKA, a Filipino word urging one to struggle. As an acronym, MAKIBAKA stood for *Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan* (or the Free Movement of New Women). MAKIBAKA is largely the result of the efforts of one woman, Lorena Barros, who was perhaps the first Filipina feminist who publicly challenged male

dominance and promoted feminist discussions in the Philippines.

MAKIBAKA remained a wing of the male-dominated nationalist movement. But even as such, men reacted to it strongly by either trivializing the women's efforts, by criticizing the new group for dissipating the movement's energies and by accusing the women of dividing the movement because of their "anti-men" positions.

The chance for MAKIBAKA's members to confront these reactions never came because very soon after MAKIBAKA was launched, martial law came down and Lorena chose to join the New People's Army, the underground's military arm. Lorena would later die fighting. Meanwhile, MAKIBAKA was declared illegal and many of its women members were jailed.

Reaching Out to the Mainstream

Oyie has always sought ways to institutionalize the ideas that are important to women. It is easy to organize women of like minds. But at some point, it is important to reach out beyond women who were already politically involved or motivated. Oyie believes that "feminist theories need to be incorporated into mainstream institutions in order for these to have a lasting impact on women's lives."

Between 1987 and 1994, Oyie helped organize the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP), whose most critical success has been to legitimize and incorporate women's studies into the classroom as a new form of pedagogy.

WSAP had to convince teachers and administrators, who were often very resistant, of the value of introducing a gender perspective into every subject. Administrators also had to be convinced that this new trend in teaching and learning would be beneficial to the school, enriching to the students and to the curriculum. Between 1990 and 1991, consultations were held with teachers to get their views. School administrators were invited to meetings that aimed to educate them on the ben-

"As women, we have to organize by ourselves, and initiate and defend our own agenda within an autonomous movement."

efits that their curricula can receive from having a gender perspective.

WSAP had to take the whole organizing process step by step, in a logical and rational manner that was acceptable even to those who were fearful of challenges to family relationships and the social order in general.

Oyie organized, developed and conducted regional training. Spanning four days, the training covered both theory and practice: the history of the women's movement; gender sensitivity training; demonstration teaching in literature and history using feminist methods; and reworking the teachers' own syllabi. Teachers appreciated the teachers' training on women's studies since it broadened their perspective of the social construction of knowledge and sharpened their teaching skills.

WSAP is now in the next stage of the process. Experts from different regions are writing training modules for teachers that now include environmental studies and economics. These modules will be presented nationally, refined and used in test runs before they are disseminated. Plans include future changes in the curricula of Law, Medicine and Education.

Oyie notes with interest that teachers themselves are the source of the greatest support. They become quickly convinced of the value of the approach. Students who are also involved in the process get together once a year with teachers to participate in the process. At the World Conference on Women in Beijing, a workshop was conducted to share these experiences.

Now that WSAP has become an institution and now that Oyie is confident of its capability to carry on its work and grow even more, she is disengaging from active involvement to move on to other issues where she feels she can also make a difference. One such issue is the trafficking of women.

As board member of the New York-based Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), an umbrella that coordinates international actions with local and regional organizations worldwide, Oyie

began challenging commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of women. .

While working with CATW, Oyie also became increasingly aware of the tendency to universalize the "white, Western bias" of feminism. Oyie feels it is important to reject this approach because there are, in fact, "many feminisms." While women share a core of issues, women's varying cultural, religious and political contexts necessitate differences in approaches and priorities.

While "equal pay for equal work" is a high priority in the U.S.A., the issues in the Philippines are grinding poverty and the General Agreements on Tarriff and Trade (GATT). "This affects our views of certain issues. For example, prostitution is seen by many Western and some Asian feminists as a choice, as legitimate work. But in the Philippines, where poverty is the major problem, there really is no choice. A study of women's conditions must take into account the diversity of each social milieu. We must be more layered in our analyses."

Back to Diplomacy

In 1993, Oyie was nominated to join the National Commission on Women. For a long time, the Commission was tainted in the eyes of activists because it was a platform for Imelda Marcos. Cory Aquino, during her term as Philippine president revamped it but feminist circles still did not associate themselves with it.

So when Oyie was nominated, she sought advice from a group of feminists who all told her to make a go for it. They feel it is now time for women to try and influence policy. In her new position, Oyie hopes to be able to get government to create favorable policies for women.

At present, the Commission's main objective is to put gender in development planning by sensitizing the key officials of line agencies to gender issues. Towards this end, Oyie has conducted gender sensitivity trainings within the Department of Foreign Affairs and with the training institutes of other government departments.

"Feminist theories need to be incorporated into mainstream institutions for lasting impact on women's lives."

"The women's movement is the last revolution!"

The Commission also plays a critical role in the legislative process. When pro-women laws are being debated, members of the Commission actively try to influence key legislators. Among the Commission's notable achievements are the passing of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill and the Bill to Codify Legal Entitlements for Women. The Commission fought hard for the Anti-Rape Bill but it still failed to pass.

In 1995, Oyie was again nominated by the government to be the Philippine representative to the New York-based committee that monitors the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As a member of the committee, Oyie wants to be regarded not as a government representative but as an independent expert.

Oyie says working with CEDAW has been a meaningful experience for her. Once a year, Oyie attends the Committee meetings with 23 other representatives, most of whom are feminists, to review the progress made by the 139 government signatories to the Convention. As fate would have it, Oyie still ended up doing diplomatic work.

But Oyie is grateful for the opportunity. She feels that it brings to fruition all her years of experience and activism, all the insights that she obtained from hundreds of women with whom she maintains close connections through the network of NGOs. Oyie actively seeks these women's advice and criticism. "Go ahead. Throw tomatoes at me if I do anything outrageously wrong," she says.

Grassroots Connections

Oyie has indeed gone a long way. But she refuses to lose her grassroots connections and is still closely associated with KALAYAAN. Oyie feels that being at KALAYAAN is like being home.

But what really keeps Oyie connected is her family. She says her strong mother and grandmothers and her nurturing and non-sexist father were the influences that shaped her. To them, she says: "I have a mind of my own—and I owe it from you!"

Her children—a young man and two girls—are her inspirations and nurturance. From them she learns honesty and frankness. ☺

DOUBLE-EDGED SWORDS

Good things can be sour and bad things have an upside. Complexities and contradictions underlie trends that have emerged in the last years of this century. Oyie says:

We face a backlash from forces that are threatened, creating a climate of hostility for women. But the issues are now starkly defined.

Science and technology, including genetic engineering and reproductive technology, are benefiting us. But there are serious ethical, moral and environmental issues about how the products of science are going to be utilized, particularly against women.

Easy travel leads to mind expansion. But it also facilitates sex tours.

There is a common women's international movement. But while international connections are important, the real movement must occur within each culture.

The fields of media and cybernetics are full of potential for networking and building solidarity. But it is also a means for exploitation and pornography on a massive scale.

Migration can be liberating. But it can mean low paying, low value jobs and abuses specific to women.

Thoughts on the World Conference on Women

The NGO Forum in HUIROU was an eye-opening EXPERIENCE for many CHINESE WOMEN. But they did NOT SPEAK about their new experience then. Only NOW does a Chinese woman DARE to speak.

by Chuan Renyan

Translated by Sophia Woodman

The vast majority of Chinese women attending the NGO Forum in Huairou saw or heard the slogan "women's rights are human rights" for the first time. But in the duration of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the slogan appeared again and again with remarkable frequency.

In recent years, Chinese women's awareness of their individual rights has started to awaken as the general population's consciousness about human rights grew. Opinions infused with

Women of all colors gathered in Beijing



women's rights thinking appear frequently in newspapers and periodicals.

The Chinese government's nervousness before and during the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) was not just because it was afraid of things like AIDS or lesbians, or even the myth of nude demonstrations it had itself concocted. What the leadership really worried about was the subversive character of heterodoxy contained in differing ideologies and in feminist thinking. Otherwise, why impose such strict precautionary measures? Chinese people were not permitted to visit the hotel rooms of foreign delegates. Journalists were not permitted to interview conference participants in their residences. Every hotel where conference participants were staying as well as every meeting had "coordinators" or "information personnel" assigned to it. Most Chinese newspapers only carried stories about the conference on page two, with only the opening and closing ceremonies making the front page. The arrival of three special trains, the speeches of a number of government delegates and other news were not reported to readers at all.

At Huairou, site of the 1995 NGO Forum, a banner with the words "look at the world through women's eyes" flew high above the road. This was a clear reminder, a resounding call. Prior to this,

many Chinese women who had participated in the preparatory activities in varying degrees had probably never risked such an idea: Women, like men, have their own view, their own vision. Just as the popular rock singer Cui Jian says, they had been looking at the world through the red blindfold that covered their eyes. The Chinese were used to seeing the

world through the lens of class struggle. Now we are getting used to seeing it from the perspective of the commodity economy. Everyone unconsciously uses the perspective of a male-dominated culture, to the point where women even describe their environment and express their thoughts through this culture's language. Women have almost never thought of using their own eyes to see the world.

New Kind of "Special Zone"

For 10 days, Huairou was the only Special Thought Zone in China. At the NGO Forum, which turned out to be an exhibition of feminisms, 5,000 Chinese people—mostly women—were exposed to all kinds of ideas about women and feminism: those of the Vatican, of Islam, of protecting the values of the traditional family, lesbianism.

We protested against the many violations of women's rights such as unwaged work, domestic violence, sexual harassment on the job, women harmed in armed conflict. For the first time, we found out that women's health, particularly their reproductive health, should be considered part of the concept of women's rights. In the past, Chinese women either produced descendants for their husband's family because this was their sacred duty or sacrificed their needs and longings to the state's population control efforts. Now women are beginning to think about their own rights.

Less than a month after the end of the FWCW, a shocking case happened in Beijing. A 15-year old son murdered his own father because he could no longer bear his father's torture of his mother. His father beat his mother when the two were still married and would not stop even after their divorce had been finalized. His mother asked help from the people's police and from the head of the man's workshop but to no avail. Finally, unable to bear it any more, the child took the tragic step of murdering his father.



In China, although the laws do contain a number of articles protecting women's rights, most of them are just on paper and are not actually implemented. In real life, women's rights are generally either ignored or not even recognized. Marital rape is only prosecuted when the woman has filed for divorce. The rights of those who have been sexually harassed, of lesbians, and others are still only to be dreamed of. To date there is only one shelter, in Wuhan, that helps women escape from domestic violence.

Looking around with our newly-acquired "women's eyes," we can no longer feel proud or complacent about the number of women at work or the number of female representatives in the National People's Congress, even if these percentages rank China among the first in the world. We have started to discover the problems hidden below the high employment rate.

The Chinese government's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies stated that 68.22 percent of women aged 16 to 19 were working, a figure seven percent higher than the number for males of a comparable age group. But the vast majority of Chinese working women have only reached junior middle school. This low educational level means a big number of Chinese women workers will be concentrated in the low-paying, low status occupations. In fact, according to the official pay rate figures for non-agricultural work, women get only 77 percent of what men receive.

Seeking a Just Perspective

Of course, "women's eyes" are not the only perspective from which one looks at issues. But they are an indispensable means for seeking fairness, for creating public opinion that supports justice. The idea of a "human-centered, sustainable development," which the international community already accepts and which the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration repeatedly stress, means demanding

that the world stop looking at women's sacrifices as the price of development. "Women's rights are human rights" is therefore a basic principle.

However, China regards feminism as some kind of pollutant. The moment you mention the word, people usually link it with such things as sexual liberation, single motherhood and combative women opposing men. Since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, the mainstream of women's struggle for rights and freedom has always been referred to as "women's liberation" and later as "the women's movement." But feminism has been entered into the register of heterodoxy as the ideology of the bourgeois women's movement.

The Chinese—officials and ordinary people—are afraid of feminism. Officials are afraid of all things related to "rights," especially human rights. As soon as human rights are mentioned in any forum, officials immediately assume a guarded and polemical stance. When one dares speak of feminism, even in the absence of an official, a strong response is bound to come from some ordinary person there.

The Truth Behind the Statistics

Official and unofficial propaganda say that Chinese women enjoy many rights. Even the 1995 Human Resource Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme ranks China as 23rd in the world for women's participation in politics and in the economy.

The truth is today's China is much in need of women's rights. Despite the policy of openness, which has continued apace in recent years, and despite the fact that the





anti-bourgeois liberalization campaign's singling out and labeling of works in women's studies as "influences by Western feminism" has become a thing of the past, the prohibition on feminism remains. Last year, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences held a conference on feminism, but news about the event did not appear in authoritative newspapers, apparently merely be-

cause of the word "feminism."

There are other very worrying factors in the situation of Chinese women. Of the 10 million people who have been laid off and are looking for work, more than 60 percent are women. Several tens of thousands of women are trafficked every year. No one is interested in hiring women over 35 who are on the labor market. And with the spread of commercial culture, practices verging on sexual exploitation that discriminate against women have become common under pleasant-sounding names like "female professions" and "spring-time (youth) occupations."

Despite legislation, such as the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests and the Labor Law, when women workers are in dispute with their employers, they are commonly unable to invoke the protection of these laws.

No Discussion of Problems

During the Beijing World Conference on Women, both at the NGO Forum and the government conference, there was no chance for any of these problems to be mentioned, let alone to be seriously and constructively discussed either by Chinese women or between Chinese and foreign women.

Under these circumstances, the distribution at the conclusion of the meeting by a Chinese woman living in Canada of a "Note from a Chinese Woman" criticiz-

ing the Beijing World Conference on Women for not even addressing the problems faced by Chinese women is completely understandable.

The government wanted to use the opportunity of the World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum for propaganda. China was being exposed to the world during the event and quite a number of Chinese NGOs and individual women, without hesitation, considered "the righteous cause of the nation" and "the image of the state" to be of paramount importance. Consciously or unconsciously, they put themselves into the role of official spokespeople, enthusiastically explaining "the great progress made by women of our country" and arguing with "certain foreigners with ill intentions."

The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), the largest women's NGO, shares the government's ideas in every way and never mentions "feminism." Because of its virtually official status as a "mass organization," it is very difficult for the ACWF to provide effective protection for women when their rights are violated.

China lacks an understanding of human rights; it is even more lacking in its comprehension of feminism. Today, we should not only struggle with the authorities to achieve human rights and women's rights, but also with men and women who are permeated by several thousand years of feudal culture and decades of Party culture.

On the positive side, there are some women in China now who dare to openly call themselves "feminists." Furthermore, in the course of the preparations for the World Conference on Women, a few non-official, grassroots-level women's organizations were able to obtain sufficient space to operate and expound on their ideas. Although the situation was still far from ideal, the space was a lot larger than before. Among these people are some who are sensitive to women's true personal interests and are keen to translate their beliefs into action. Their effectiveness, however, is currently hindered by insufficient resources. ♀

Source: China Rights Forum, Winter 1995

Who's Afraid of Feminism?

Feminism is a very misunderstood word. Many people—men and women alike—are scared of it. The confusion and misunderstanding comes partly from the male-dominated media, which has widely misrepresented feminists as “bra-burning,” “manhating or bed hopping,” “family-destroying” women. These images are reinforced by other forces and groups that see the emancipation and liberation of women as a threat. As a result, feminists are often attacked and dismissed as “middle class,” “westernized,” and “rootless.”

As a result, many, who have not even given feminism any thought at all or who have imbibed the false propaganda against feminism, are too quick to say that they are not, or that somebody isn't a feminist. Or that someone who is should be feared and avoided, or simply shunned and ignored or, at the very least, humoured and patronized.

Women in Action culled these questions and answers from the book *Kali for Women* by Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan to help you know for sure what feminism is. Read and decide: Are you a feminist?

FEM•I•NISM
(fem'ə nizm), an awareness of the oppression and exploitation of women in society, at work, and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change these conditions.

Q: What, really, is feminism?

A: Unlike many other “isms” feminism does not derive its theoretical or conceptual base from any single theoretical formulation. There is therefore no specific abstract definition of feminism applicable to all women at all times. The definition thus can and does change because feminism is based on historically and culturally concrete realities and levels of consciousness, perception and actions.

This means that feminism meant one thing in the 17th century (when the word was first used) and that it means something quite different in the 1980s.

It can also be articulated differently in different parts of the world and, within the country, differently by different women depending on their class, background, level of education, consciousness, and others. Even among similar kinds of women, there are different currents and debates in feminist thinking, particularly with regard to the reasons, that is, the historical roots, for us today.

In a South Asia workshop, women from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka accepted this definition of feminism: “An awareness of the oppression and exploitation of women in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women **and men** to change [these conditions].”

In this definition, anyone who recognizes the existence of sexism (discrimination on the basis of gender), male domination and patriarchy and who takes some action against it is a feminist. Note however that the mere recognition of sexism



Illustrations by Sandra Torrijos.

is not enough. That recognition has to be accompanied by action, by a challenge to male domination.

But this action can take any form. For instance a woman's decision not to be humiliated or to educate herself and pursue a career or her decision not to have children are as feminist as the actions taken in the most recognized struggle. In other words, you do not have to belong to a group to be a feminist although in order to do anything effectively, it is much better to be part of one.

Q: What is the difference between early and present day feminists?

A: The main difference between the two is that earlier, the struggle was for the democratic rights of women. These rights include the right to education and employment, the right to own property, the right to vote, the right to enter parliament, the right to birth control, the right to divorce, etc. In other words, earlier feminists fought for legal reform for a legally equal position in society.

Today, feminists have gone beyond mere legal reforms to end discrimination. They are working towards the emancipa-

tion of women. Feminism, therefore, now includes the struggle against women's subordination to the male within the home; against their exploitation by the family; against their continuing low status at work, in society and in religion and culture of the country; against their double burden in production and reproduction. In addition, feminism challenges the very notions of femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive, biologically determined categories. In its essence, present day feminism is a struggle for the achievement of women's equality, dignity and freedom of choice to control our lives and bodies within and outside the home.

But it must also be made clear that it is not enough to simply ask for women to be equal with men in the community. What good will it do for a peasant woman to become equal to a peasant man who is himself brutalized, exploited and oppressed by society. Feminists, therefore, are not only asking and fighting for the "equality" of women but for a just and equitable society—for both women and men.

Q. But is this struggle relevant today? After all women now have many democratic rights—education, employment, franchise and more. Recent policies have resulted in the liberation of women. They have brought women out of the home and into the workforce and have made them economically independent. What then is the problem, and do we still need feminism?

A. While some women have indeed benefitted from these changes, their number is small and needs to be increased. Feminism is for more women coming out of the home and into the workforce, **if they want** and need to work.

But at the same time we are against policies which allow and perpetuate the exploitation of women's labor: the payment of low wages, the prevalence of unhealthy working conditions, overwork,

arbitrary hiring and firing, denial of freedom of association, sexual exploitation, etc.

But it needs to be added here that economic independence, although very important for women's emancipation is not enough. Even economically independent women are subordinate to their men and families and face discrimination at home. The fight for economic independence is, thus, just one aspect of the women's struggle.

Moreover, the figures with regard to women's participation in government and policy making are, in fact, appalling. No South Asian country has had more than a handful of women members of parliament since independence than India. The presence of a few women in important public positions in no way proves that the overall status of women is satisfactory.

Q. Isn't the real reason for inequality in the workplace the fact that women are less productive than men because they are more concerned with home life?

A. Capitalism uses this argument based on the view that a man, as the head of the household, is paid a "family wage," that is, a wage that covers subsistence for himself, his wife and his children. According to this view, women engaged in productive work are merely supplementing the family income and can therefore be paid less than men, even for work of equal value.

The reality is somewhat different. Studies have revealed that in many countries, as many as 25 to 40 per cent of all families either live primarily on the earnings of women or are single-parent households headed by women. Most of these women live in poverty or hold poor paying jobs, are discriminated against in the workplace by the exact same capitalist patriarchy's assumption referred to above.

It is also true that in addition to work in the factory, field or plantation, women have to spend many hours attending to household chores—cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water and gathering

firewood, child care, and so on. Women therefore experience the double burden of "paid work" as a part of the workforce and "unpaid work" in the home. This double burden also makes it difficult for women to get better jobs, to get trained and to move up the professional ladder.

Q. But surely, if we want to develop, we have to tolerate these forms of exploitation for some time. Once we have developed, the negative features will disappear.

A. There is really no guarantee that the negative features will disappear with development. Past experiences show that in most cases, this does not happen. The model of development followed in developing countries is based on the capitalist development that has reinforced and intensified gender-specific roles as well as the exploitation of women.

For example, in Europe, the home had earlier been the centre of production. Food, clothes, soap, candles, and many more were produced at home and women played an important role in this production as well as in agriculture and animal rearing. With the Industrial Revolution, the role of women changed. On one hand, poor women were forced to work in factories and mines as cheap labour and reproduced the next generation of workers. On the other hand, women of the bourgeoisie were kept at home as housewives and their role was limited to producing heirs. Dissenting independent bourgeois women who refused to conform were ostracized and penalized. With this, the ideology of the exploitation of poor women and the seclusion of rich women was perpetuated. Given the nature of development in Third World countries, these same tendencies already exist here and are likely to continue.

Q. Can you briefly explain the word patriarchy because one hears it so often.

A. The word itself means the rule of the father or the patriarch. It refers to a social system where the father controls all

members of the family, all property and other economic resources, and makes all major decisions. Linked to this social system is the belief or the ideology that men are superior to women; that women are and should be controlled by men and are part of men's property. This thinking forms the basis of many of our religious laws and practices and explains all those social practices which confine women to the home and control their lives. Our double standards of morality and our laws, which give more rights to men than to women, are also based on patriarchy.

Today, when one uses the word patriarchy, one refers to the system that oppresses and subordinates women in both the private and the public sphere.

Q. Would you call a woman who decided to be just a housewife a feminist?

A. First of all, feminists will not say "just" a housewife, knowing what and how much a housewife does. Feminists do not belittle or look down upon housewives or housework. In fact, one of our major struggles is to have housework be recognized and valued so that women who do it are recognized, valued and respected. Once housework gets the recognition and

the value that are due it, men would not only start acknowledging it but might also start doing it.

A woman who chooses to be a housewife and feels that her individuality and talent are fully utilized as such can still be a feminist. Being a feminist does not necessarily mean working outside the home. All it means is having a real choice based on equal opportunities. The element of choice, of a woman's own will, is what is important. Some feminists feel though that if women could really choose not to be fulltime housewives, we would not find so many doing this work.

So the decision to become a housewife must be genuine. The decision should not be made because of conditioning, or because of indirect or direct pressure from others, or because there are no other options available. At the moment however, it is very difficult to determine which is a "conditioned" decision and which is a free one. Because of our upbringing and because of our conditioning, our aspirations have been limited and stultified and this conditioning is sometimes so well internalized that it is difficult to say what a free choice actually is.

Having said this we would like to reiterate that a feminist can choose to be a full time housewife if that is what satisfies her, provided she can retain her independence and her individuality, and provided her partner does not wield power over her because she is not earning. There must be equality and mutual respect within the home. Feminism is not about prescribing what women should or should not do; feminists are fighting for a society where women have the freedom to choose, where they are not forced to be housewives, where they are not pushed into typical "feminine" roles and low paid "feminine" jobs, and where they are treated with respect.

We reject male-female polarity and male-female stereotypes. Every girl should have the freedom and opportunity to do and be what she wants to do and is capable of





doing. Because she is born a girl, dolls and pots and pans should not naturally be her only toys, nor should she be shoved into dresses which do not allow her limbs to move, or be confined to the four walls of a home, or be forced to be subdued and submissive because she has to adjust to her husband's family. The concerns of feminists are as simple and reasonable as these.

However, feminist concerns are not only the few narrow "women's" issues like rape, wife-beating, contraception and equal wages. Feminists believe that everything in the world concerns women because everything affects women. Since feminists seek the removal of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of a just, social and economic order nationally and internationally, all issues are women issues. There is and has to be a women's point of view on all issues and feminists seek to integrate the feminist perspective in all spheres of personal and national life. Women must therefore take a position on everything—whether it is nuclear warfare between two countries, ethnic and communal conflict, political, economic and development policies, human rights and civil liberties, or environmental issues. In fact, despite their limited human and other resources, women's organizations are already involved in many of the above issues.

Q. Don't feminists destroy peaceful homes?

A. Take a closer look at so called "peaceful" homes and see how peace hides women's demolished individualities. A home is peaceful only for so long as women endure the injustice and the inequality.

Is a woman who starts resenting her uneventful life, the drudgery and the mindless repetitiveness of domestic work and the annual childbearing a home breaker? Is a woman breaking a home if she wants to live also for herself, to follow her own dreams and ambitions, if she does not want to be an ideal, submissive, sacri-

ficing, self-effacing wife? Or is it the man who insists that she negates herself in this way, the real destroyer?

While most feminists are not against the home and the family, we do take the position that the only way to save both is to change the nature of female-male relationship within them. Peace and harmony can no longer be maintained at the cost of women. We cannot talk of democracy outside the family and yet allow male dictatorship inside it. In fact, we believe that real democracies and egalitarian societies can only be established if we practice democracy, equality and mutual respect within the family. Real peace in society can only be established if we experience peace at home.

So, yes, many feminists may actually destroy homes. But they do it in the same way as peasants or workers disturb the harmony of a village or factory when they stand against a landlord or an industrialist. After all, one person's peace may be another person's poison.

Q. But are feminists against motherhood?

A. Feminists are not against women having children. But motherhood should not be considered to be every woman's destiny nor should womanhood be equated with motherhood. Feminists believe that every woman should have the choice of whether or not to have children. At present such a choice does not exist in many developing countries—legally, socially or psychologically—and our struggle therefore is for women to obtain it.

But most women see motherhood as their destiny. This is due both to the lack of alternatives and to the glorification of motherhood. Women are admired for their ability and desire to sacrifice for others. This has been a psychological trap for women. Such glorification is like the sugar-coating on bitter quinine and women, for generations, have fallen for this bit of sugar and accepted a role that has immobilized them. Women do not have



special limbs to look after children nor do they have special glands which produce love and care.

Although only a woman can bear a child, anyone can bring it up or mother it. Motherhood means looking after, nurturing and caring for another human being. It means helping another person develop physically, emotionally and mentally. Such mothering can be done by anyone, even by a man. The ability and capacity to mother is not biologically determined.

Besides, if the world really considered motherhood to be the most noble of activities—if that is what you got Nobel prizes for—men would not have allowed women to monopolize it. For all their praise of such an activity, men are averse to practicing it themselves.

Feminists believe that children would grow up better if they get the best from both their parents. Mothering would then—and only then—become truly creative, joyous and fun for everyone concerned.

Q. Are feminists manhaters?

A. Feminists do not hate men but are against patriarchy, male domination and the maleness in men—and in those women who might imbibe similar behavior patterns—which is expressed as domination, aggression, violence, etc. We are against men who do not accept women as their equals, who treat women as their property or otherwise view them only as commodities.

Unfortunately, most men do dominate and do have such qualities in them. This is true even of the most ardent “democratic” and “socialist” men who, while fighting for equality in society, refuse to accept equality within the home and interpersonal male-female relationship.

However, feminists believe that just as women are not naturally more caring and nurturing, men are not naturally aggressive and domineering. They are, in fact, as much as victims of their own consciousness and of society’s conditioning as women are. The problem is that



most men do not appear to recognize this and few want to struggle to liberate themselves into becoming more human and truly democratic. Moreover, any move by women to help them recognize this, they consider antagonistic.

Q. If men’s liberation is so connected to women’s liberation and if they are trapped by the system, why are they so fearful of feminism?

A. Men fear feminism and are against a change that would also help them because basically, the present situation suits them in obvious ways. Since feminism challenges male superiority and domination in society, at work and in the home, and since it questions male authority based not on ability but on gender, it forces men to review their attitudes, their behavior, and their position. This is neither easy nor pleasant. No ruler willingly gives up authority.

There are other fears as well that men have had about independent and competent women. They are afraid women will compete with them for jobs. If you define women’s role essentially as that of housewives, then you can hire them when their labour is required and fire them when convenient and necessary. If the definition of women’s role changes and if their competence and capacity to assert themselves improve, then such discrimination will not be possible. People will get jobs according to their competence and not because they are male or female.

Capitalism is also against feminism because once women become conscious of their rights, they will no longer tolerate the low-paid, least-skilled jobs that they are presently confined to. They will also resist becoming voracious consumers and fight against being seen as sex objects.

In short, men fear the societal change that feminism proposes because it will make them lose present and clear advantages. They do not know that feminism will provide them with other advantages that they are not yet aware of.

Q. If men will also gain from the feminist movement, why do women generally organize themselves into all-women groups?

A. The women's movement is built on the assumption that women share a common interest. While the feminist movement proposes a society that would be beneficial for all, it is necessary that at certain stages of the struggle and while working with other movements, women understand the nature of their oppression and plan strategies to change the situation among themselves. The rationale of this is no different from that used in support of the autonomy of other oppressed classes. We do, for instance, support the autonomy of class, ethnic and national movements and so on. This distinction is even more valid for the women's movement because the problem here is far more complex and long term. It ultimately requires not the triumph of one group over another—in this case, female over male—but a rethinking and restructuring of all aspects of society. Other classes can achieve their aims within patriarchy. They can achieve victory by overcoming or eliminating their antagonists.

But the women's movement can do none of these. It must resolve and overcome class and other differences within itself. If it must change the essence of society, it must convert the antagonist. In this sense, the women's struggle is the most difficult struggle of all and women must identify for themselves the process that it will take. In other words separate women's organizations are a necessary and important stage in the struggle, **but they are only a stage.** Slowly the movement will integrate itself with movements for fundamental changes in society and in the mode of functioning of existing institutions. But even while we have separate women's groups, feminists welcome and value the support of sympathetic men. We join the



struggle of working class and peasant groups, of groups fighting for civil liberties and human rights and the environment, and the struggle of the minority.

In conclusion, feminism is not only necessary for our society but it is also very exciting for all those who participate in the process of defining, articulating, shaping and living it. It is exciting precisely because it challenges us to review, refine and change the most intimate of relationships, the most personal of beliefs, the most inarticulated areas of our minds and hearts. For the first time we have an "ism" that suggests profound changes in society at every level, including the personal. Feminists believe it has the potential to provide us with the direction that other "isms" have failed to provide.

Feminism is exciting also because it is not defined by someone else, somewhere else, for us. All of us can and have to participate in the process of finding its meaning for ourselves. Although people feel feminism, they have not yet been able to collectively articulate it as an ideology in order for it to have the collective power to bring about the kind of change we are looking for.

But the present fluid state of this emerging ideology is not a bad thing because, for the first time, a way of life is being tried out at every level before it is formulated as theory. For us, this is an important process of learning and discovering, a process which is necessarily slow and faltering. That is why there are differences even among feminists. We are all learning and are at different stages of the process. To the opponents of feminism, this uncertain but unfolding status of the ideology may be a negative point. But feminists see it as a positive one because then, the ideology, when it finally and eventually arrives, will have been tried and tested.)

Aboriginal Women: Reclaiming their Memory

When the Pelican Laughed
by A. Nannup, L. Marsh and
S. Kinnane

When the Pelican Laughed is the story of Alice Nannup. Born on a Northern station in 1911 of an aboriginal mother and European father, Alice Nannup was taken South at the age of 12 and trained in domestic service. After a full and eventful life that included many battles with authority and raising the children, Nannup returned 64 years later "to make peace with (my) country."

While very much a personal account of Alice's life story, *When the Pelican Laughed* illuminates many aspects of the experiences of aboriginal people who were taken from their family and community in the 1920s and 1930s. (Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1992. 224p. RN LIT 02210.00B)

For inquiries, contact: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 193 South Terrace (P.O. Box 320), South Fremantle, Western Australia 6162 Australia

My People by Oodgeroo.

Oodgeroo's writing has a unique place in Australian literature. She describes it herself as "pure propaganda" and "not the

isis c o l l e c t i o n s

best but the best selling." But it is more than that. Not only are the poems a provocative and emotional plea for justice that is still to come for Australian Aborigines, but when the poems were first published in the 1960s it began a new phase in the communication between peoples in Australia. For the first time, a black Australian had analyzed and judged white Australians as well as her own people.

Oodgeroo passed away in 1992. This 1990 print of *My People* is the third edition of her poetry collection and the first to bear her aboriginal name. Oodgeroo used and was known by her Christian name, Kath Walker. (Australia: The Jocandra Press, 1990. 120p. RN LIT 02173.00B) For inquiries, contact: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 193 South Terrace (PO Box 320), South Fremantle, Western Australia 6162, Australia

My Place by Sally Morgan

In 1982, Sally Morgan traveled back to her birthplace and what started as a tentative search for information about her family turned into an emotional and spiritual pilgrimage. Confronted

with their own suppressed history and questions about their identity, Sally Morgan and her family struggled together to reclaim their memory and the memory of their forebears.

My Place is Sally Morgan's retelling of her and her family's long journey. In it the voices of her mother and grandmother are finally and vividly heard. (Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1993. 358p. RN LIT 02171.00B) For inquiries, contact: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 193 South Terrace (PO Box 320), South Fremantle, Western Australia 6162, Australia

Korean Combination

Where is My Country? by Keun-Wook Huh

Born and raised in Seoul, Korea, Keun-Wook Huh comes from a politi-



Books by aboriginal women.

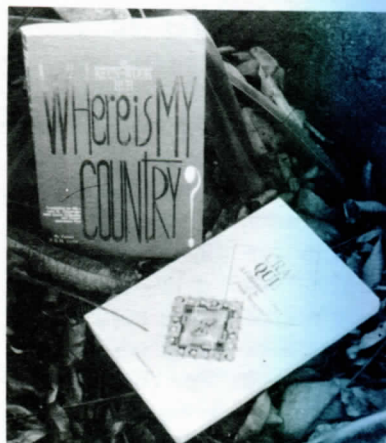
cally progressive family. Her father, Huh Hun was a lawyer who took part in the Korean Independence Movement during the Japanese occupation period (1919-1945), a time of great national suffering for Korea. He also participated in the post-World War II coalition of moderates of the left and right. In 1948, the Huh family went North to participate in the North-South Leaders' Conference in Haeju, Hwanghae Province. They later settled there when Huh Hun got elected in the North Korean legislative body.

During the Korean War, Keun-Wook Huh fled to the South in search of freedom. Fearful of being persecuted, she lived in hiding for nine years. But in 1959, she was arrested on suspicion of being a spy. She was found innocent and acquitted the same year.

Keun-Wook Huh made her debut in the Korean literary world in 1961 with this book, an autobiographical novel. In this revised edition, her prison diary has been included. (Seoul: The P.E.N. Centre, 1984. 452p. RN LIT 022300.B)

For inquiries, contact:
Korean P.E.N. Centre
Sinmoonro B/D, 909
238, 1-ga, Sinmoonro
Jongroku, Seoul, Korea
Tel: (02)720-8897

Crazy Quilt by Chang Young-hee
Written from 1985-1990, the essays in



Two from Korea.

Korea and the author's transition from student to teacher. Most of the essays have already appeared in print in the author's column "Crazy Quilt," in *The Korea Times*, and in college newspapers or English-language magazines. (Seoul: Dongmoon Press, 1990. 283p. RN LIT 02226.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Dongmoon Press
380-22, Mangwon-dong,
Mapo-ku, Seoul, Korea
Tel: (02)336-6615

Feminist Theories

Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression
by Sandra Lee Bartky

In a self-critical and confident voice, Sandra Bartky—one of the founders of the Society of Women in Philosophy—examines women's anxieties, fears and obsessions, locating these in the internalized consciousness of the inferi-

ority of the feminine. She also mines the resources of several European philosophical traditions, critiquing and revising these to shed light on aspects of women's subordination that are often dismissed as merely personal. She debates with the "ghosts" of Aristotle, Marx, Sartre and Foucault among other dead white male philosophers on the links between society, morality and psychology, and attempts to turn the discourse to feminist ends. (London: Routledge, 1990. 139p. RN IDE 02162.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001-2299
U.S.A. or
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE
United Kingdom

Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis, edited by Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney

Differences of power often appears to be natural or given in nature or ordained by God. *Naturalizing Power* shows that these differences are not logical extensions of a natural order, but are an integral part of narratives about the order of things. The essays focus on these domains that are crucial for people's identity—family, kinship, gender, sexuality, race, nation and religion.

This critical collection

also explores ways in which differences of identity and power are embedded in a wide variety of cultural narratives: popular, legal, and medical discourses about American kinship and the “natural” unit of the family; classification schemes about the relation between humans and animals, such as the “birds and the bees”; stories about the origin of nations that draw on ideas about sex, reproduction and the family; and celebrations of the American Dream of moving up the social ladder. (New York: Routledge, 1995. 310p. RN IDE 02185.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001-2299
U.S.A.

or
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE
United Kingdom

**The Anatomy of Freedom:
Feminism in Four Dimensions** by Robin Morgan
In *The Anatomy of Freedom*, Robin Morgan

reviews the changes that have occurred in the political and scientific worlds, in her personal life and in what she calls the “fourth dimension” or the “readiness for freedom.”

What are these dramatic changes? According to *The Anatomy of Freedom*, the political dimension has been the site of a “millennial shift” in which causes of celebration, such as the fall of totalitarian governments, the end of the Cold War and others occurred alongside a proliferation of conflicts on tribal, ethnic, language, religions, cultural, political, and territorial grounds. In the scientific dimension, many of the book’s projections when it first came out in 1982, such as the birth control drug RU486, have already come true. In the personal dimension, Robin Morgan had gone through divorce, mourning and other such major personal and intimate upheavals. Finally, in the fourth dimension, Morgan describes the current juncture as a world acutely ready for more changes and greater freedom. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994. 369p. RN IDE 02178.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
WW Norton & Co.
500 Fifth Avenue,
New York, NY 10110
U.S.A.

Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, edited by CT. Mohanty, A. Russo and L. Torres

This collection is about

the third world women’s engagement with feminism—in the context of decolonization, national liberation, state regularization, multinational capitalism, and discursive practices. The essays here present provocative analyses of the simultaneous oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, as well as the role that imperialism plays in the production of knowledge and of persons. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991. 338 p. RN IDE 02159.00B)
For inquiries, contact:
The Indiana University Press Publicity Department
601 N. Morton Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47404
U.S.A.

Books on the Pacific

The Sacred Remains: Myths, History and Polity in Belau by Richard Parmentier

The Sacred Remains is the product of two years of fieldwork in Belau in Micronesia. In it, Parmentier uses semiotic methods to analyze both linguistic and non-linguistic signs representing and embodying Belauan history, showing that these signs also organize social and political structures. Parmentier contends that the history of Belau cannot be understood without taking into account indigenous categories of space, time and transformation and without recog-

Readings on feminist theories.



nizing the role of Belauan social actions that construct, interpret, and transmit historical knowledge. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. 341p. RN CUL 02149.00B)
For inquiries, contact:
The University of Chicago Press
5801 South Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois
60637, U.S.A.

Never and Always: Micronesian Legends, Fables and Folklore, edited by Gene Ashby

Students of the Community College of Micronesia collected and wrote the materials in *Never and Always*, which contains 86 stories and fables from Micronesia about the origins of islands and peoples; reefs, waters and landmarks; and about customs, skills and values. (Oregon: Rainy Day press, 1989. 124p. RN CUL 02150.00B)
For inquiries, contact:
Rainy Day Press
P.O. Box 574
Kolonias, Pohnpei, F.S.M.
96941
or
1147 East 26th Ave.
Eugene, Oregon 97403
U.S.A.

Some Things of Value: Micronesian Customs and Beliefs, edited by Gene Ashby

Some Things of Value describes a wide range of Micronesian customs and

beliefs, including superstitions that relate to childbirth, land and food, marriage, traditional legends and beliefs, the practice of skills, and funerals. Maps and physical and cultural data as well as interesting illustrations of aspects and objects of Micronesian culture add dimension to the collection. (Oregon: Rainy Day Press, 1993. 246p. RN CUL 02158.00B)
For inquiries, contact:
Rainy Day Press
P.O. Box 574
Kolonias, Pohnpei, F.S.M.
96941
or 1147 East 26th Ave.
Eugene, Oregon 97403
U.S.A.

Pacific Women's Directory, published by the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau
The Pacific Women's Directory lists 500 women's

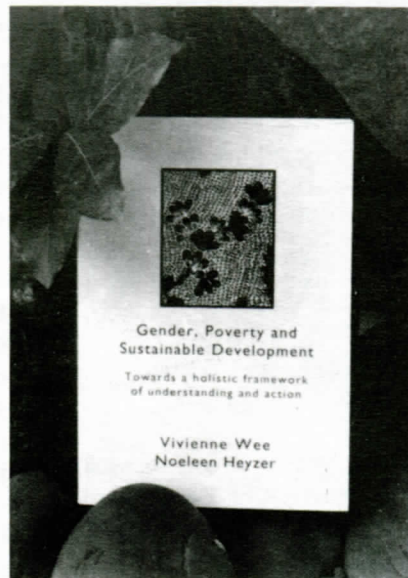
associations, clubs, offices and organizations in 21 of the island-member countries and territories of the South Pacific Commission. The directory has details such as the address, phone and

fax numbers, objectives and activities of these organizations. (New Caledonia: South Pacific Commission, 1993. 199p. RN REF 02203.00B)
For inquiries, contact:
The South Pacific Commission
B.P. D5
Noumea Cedex, New Caledonia
Tel: (687)262-000
Fax: (687)263-818

Beneath Paradise: A Collection of Poems from the Women in the Pacific, edited by Grace and Mera Molisa

Beneath Paradise is a collection of poems by Pacific women, many of whom are first-time writers. Reflecting some aspects of the lives of Pacific women, the poems are grouped according to the following themes: violence against women, women and the environment, status of women, political participation of women, and peace.

(Australia: Women in Pacific NGOs Documentation Project, 1995. 84p. RN LIT 02198.00B)
For inquiries, contact:
International Women's Development Agency
P.O. Box 1680
Collingwood, Victoria 3066, Australia
Tel: (613)941-71388
Fax: (613)941-60519
E-mail: IWDA@peg.apc.org



FORGING IDENTITIES

Gender, Communities
and the State

Edited by
ZOYA HASAN

Chinese Women Across the Centuries

The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women by Lily Xiao Hong Lee

The Virtue of Yin consists of short but substantive profiles of Chinese women—as individuals or as part of a group—who live at various times in history, who come from diverse backgrounds, and who challenged tradition and played a role that was not normally for a woman. Faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, these women had to be better than their male counterpart in order to be recognized. Hence, courage, endurance and perseverance are qualities common to all these women. (Australia: Wild Peony, 1994. 117p. RN SEX 02182.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
University of Hawaii Press
2480 Kolowalu Street,
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
Fax: (1-808)988-6052

The Chinese Femme Fatale: Stories from the Ming Period, translated by Anne Mc Laren

Fears of unbridled female sexuality and female dominance have long played a part in Chinese thinking. A common expression for “femme fatale” is “one who ruins city and state.”

The stories in this selection from the 17th century reflect a particular strain of misogynistic thinking: that women who pursue their own sexual desires have a catastrophic effect on family and society. The stories, translated for the first time in English, are also the earliest examples of realistic fiction in China. Originally intended to reinforce Confucian morality, the stories in *The Chinese Femme Fatale* nevertheless have heroines who are active participants in their own destiny. They take the initiative in seduction, show considerable ingenuity and strength of mind, and often dominate their husbands and lovers. (Australia: Wild Peony, 1994. 102p. RN LIT 02183.00B.)

For inquiries, contact:
University of Hawaii Press
2480 Kolowalu Street,
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
Fax: (1-808)988-6052

Contemporary Chinese Women Writers Part III, edited by Wu Zonghui

Reflected in this collection of eight stories are some of the pressing issues that have preoccupied Chinese women over the past decade. The stories include an affecting tale of stifled aspirations in the countryside (Scatter Brain), an exhausting description of a factory worker's day (Trials and Tribulations), an airing of the frustrations at bringing up a child in the consumer age (Broken Transformers), and a probing of anxieties of a successful Shanghai business woman (Happy Birthday). The stories portray women from all walks of life bound together by a common desire to exert some control over their destinies. (Beijing: Chinese Literature Press, 1993. 322p. RN LIT 02163.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
China International Book Trading Corporation
35 Chegongzhuang Xilu,
Beijing 100044, China
P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Filling Mix

The Comfort Women: Sex Slaves of the Imperial Japanese Forces by George Hicks

In 1938, the Japanese Imperial Forces established a “comfort station” in Shanghai. This was the first of many officially sanctioned brothels set up

across Asia to service the needs of the Japanese forces. It was also the first comfort station where women, many in their early teens, were coaxed, tricked and forcibly recruited to act as prostitutes for the Japanese military.

Using official documents and other original sources never before available, *The Comfort Women* tells how well-established and well-organized the comfort system was across the Japanese empire, and how complete was its cover-up. It also traces the fight by Japanese and Korean feminist and liberal groups to expose the truth and tells of the complicity of the Japanese government in maintaining the lie. *The Comfort Women* is an account of a shameful aspect of Japanese society and psychology as well as an exploration of Japanese racial and gender politics.

But above all, *The Comfort Women* allows the victims of this unacknowledged war crime to tell their own stories and to speak of the full magnitude and brutality of the system that enslaved them. (Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1995. 265p. RN VAW 02181.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Silkworm Books
P.O. Box 76, Chiang Mai
50000 Thailand



Another good read from Shiva.

Gender, Poverty and Sustainable Development: Towards a Holistic Framework of Understanding and Action by Vivienne Wee and Noeleen Heyzer

Global resource depletion is increasing by the day, and the gap between rich and poor is steadily widening. Women have been particularly affected by this crisis; 70 percent of today's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women.

This book shows how economic growth and impoverishment are two sides of the same coin. Money gives the power to buy up the resources of the world. As a result, 20 percent of the world's population consumes 80 percent of the world's resources. This leads not just to environmental degradation, but also to widespread rural poverty as local communities, especially women, lose their livelihood resources. In a world of finite resources, the growth of some leads to the deprivation of

others. A strategy for achieving sustainable development and economic equity is advocated by the book's authors. (Singapore: ENGENDER, 1995. 168 p. RN DEV 02223.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Centre for Environment,
Gender and Development
Pte. Ltd. (ENGENDER)
14c Trengganu Street,
0105 Singapore
Tel: (65)227-1439
Fax: (65)227-7897
E-mail:
engender@technet.sg

Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology by Vandana Shiva

Monocultures of the Mind examines the current threats to the planet's biodiversity and the environmental and human consequences of its erosion and replacement by monocultural production. Shiva shows how the new Biodiversity Convention has been gravely undermined by a mixture of diplomatic dilution during the process of negotiation and the North's hi-tech interests making money out of the new biotechnologies. In conclusion, Shiva calls for a halt—at international and national levels—to aid and market incentives both to the large-scale destruction of habitats where biodiversity thrives and to the introduction of centralized, homogenous systems of cultivation. (Penang: Third World Net-

work, 1993. 183p. RN ENV 02143.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Third World Network
87, Cantonment Road,
10250 Penang, Malaysia

Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State by Zoya Hasan

This volume challenges the assumption that Muslims in India constitute a homogenous community, with specific characteristics deriving from Islam. Instead, it locates the community within the social, economic and political developments that have taken place in the subcontinent, before and after the Independence, in order to examine how exactly the delineation of minority identity takes place.

Through an examination of law, history, politics, work and culture, this book looks at how the formation of community identity has affected Muslim women in India and how the position of gender and community identity intersects with the State's discourse on equality and secularization. (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994. 264p. RN CUL 02109.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
Kali for Women
B 1/8 Hauz Khas
New Delhi 100016, India

Beyond Bonding: A Third World Women's Theological Journey by Virginia Fabella

Fabella, a Filipina Catholic nun, traces the

theological journey of African, Asian and Latin American women within the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). She reveals the progressive growth in the theological consciousness of EATWOT women from a general acceptance of the association's theological direction and methodology to a gradual awareness of the male bias in the emerging theologies of EATWOT members, and from a limited male-defined liberation viewpoint to a more inclusive women's liberation perspective. (Manila: Institute of Women's Studies, 1993. 155p. RN REL 02116.00B.)

For inquiries, contact:
Institute for Women's Studies
St. Scholastica's College
931 Estrada Street
Malate, Manila, Philippines

Women, Health and Environment compiled by Jacqueline Sims

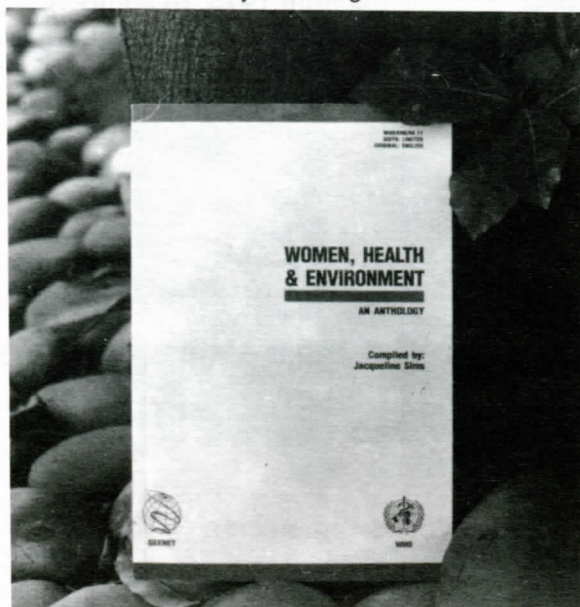
The linkages between women and health and

between women and environment are already widely acknowledged, although there is less understanding of how all three areas interrelate. The slim volume provides basic information on women, health and environment and raises issues and questions on a broad range of areas. However no attempt is made to provide answers. Instead, what *Women, Health and Environment* does is to synthesize the common issues and concerns of women in the areas of health and environment. (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1994. 162p. RN HEA 02092.00B) For inquiries, contact:
Environmental Epidemiology
Office of Global and Integrated Environmental Health
World Health Organization
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland
Tel: (022)791-3760
Fax: (022)791-4123

Silk and Steel: Asian Women Workers Confront Challenges of Industrial Restructuring by the Committee for Asian Women

Silk and Steel binds together the research papers and recommendations discussed and forwarded during the Committee for Asian Women's (CAW) Regional Workshop and Consultation on the Impact of Industrial Restructuring on the Women

Synthesizing common concerns.



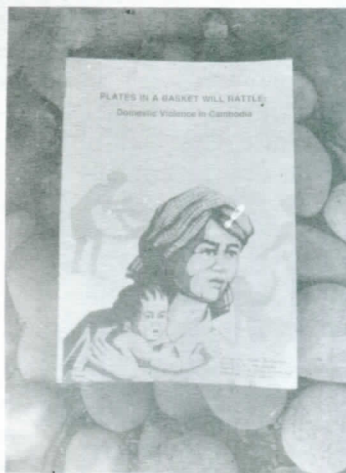
Workers in Asia. Aside from a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of the current industrial restructuring in Asia, there are also six country case reports: Hong Kong, Korea, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. *Silk and Steel* shows women are the first contributors to, as well as the first victims of the ongoing industrial restructuring in Asia. (Hong Kong:

Committee for Asian Women, 1995. 304p. RN ECO 02231.00B)

For inquiries, contact: Committee for Asian Workers Room 4032, 4/F, No.57 Peking Road, Kowloon Hong Kong
Tel: (852)2722-6150
Fax: (852)2369-9895

Plates in a Basket will Rattle: Domestic Violence in Cambodia by Cathy Zimmerman

Plates in a Basket will Rattle is an exploratory study on the nature of domestic violence in Cambodia, and its causes and effects and focuses on the situation of the women victims. However, given the nature of the subject matter, the research also touched on related social, cultural, educational, public policy and medical issues. Much of *Plates in a Basket will Rattle* is based on interviews with 50 victims of domestic violence and a mother of one woman who was killed by her husband.



(Phnom Penh: Zimmerman, 1994. 263p. RN VAW 02232.00B)

For inquiries, contact: The Asia Foundation P.O. Box 536 PTT Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Helping Books

Compendium of Social Development Indicators in the ESCAP Region: Quality of Life in the ESCAP Region

The present *Compendium of Social Development Indicators in the ESCAP Region* consists of 100 tables covering nine major subject areas, namely: demography, health, human settlements and environment, education, transport, communications, employment, output and income, and national social expenditure. The data in most cases are presented in five-year intervals starting from 1975. In addition, demographic projections are included in some population tables. (New York: UNESCAP, 1993. 152p. RN REF 02212.00B)

For inquiries, contact: UNESCAP UN Building Rajadamnern Avenue Bangkok 10200 Thailand
Tel: (662)228-1234
Fax: (662)282-9602

The NGLS Handbook

A consolidated overview of the principal economic and social development institutions of the United Nations system, *The NGLS Handbook* has 24 entries which cover the UN Secretariat; 15 agencies, programs and funds; and seven specialized agencies. (Geneva: UN-NGO Liaison Service, 1994. 254p. RN REF 02214.00B)

For inquiries, contact: United Nations NGO Liaison Service Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland or Room 6015, 866 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 U.S.A.

Economic and Social Development in the United Nations System: A Guide for NGOs

Contains a directory of UN Secretariat offices, agencies, programmes, funds and specialized agencies as well as a directory of UN regional economic and social commissions, information centers and the UNDP's field level and country offices. There is also a directory of UN publications and statistical offices. (Geneva: UN-NGLS, 1995. 160p. RN REF 02215.00B)

For inquiries, contact: United Nations NGO Liaison Service Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; or

Room 6015, 866 UN Plaza,
New York, NY 10017
U.S.A.

National Perspectives on Population and Develop- ment

A total of 168 national reports were prepared for the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, 125 by developing countries and 43 by industrialized countries. This document reflects the collective perspectives of the national reports. It does not attempt to restate or expound on the reports, but rather to highlight their most interesting and salient features. It also attempts to illustrate the variety and complexity of situations and experiences across countries and regions, drawing conclusions as to current priorities wherever possible. (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 1995. 112p. RN DEV 0228.00B)
Available from
UN Population Fund
220 East 42nd St.,
New York, NY 10017
U.S.A.

Women, Science and Technology for Develop- ment: A Preliminary Guide to Who's Doing What

This guide is a survey and directory of organizations, projects and programs in women, science and technology. (Jamaica: The Once and Future Action Network, 1994. 126p. RN REF 02207.00B)

For inquiries, contact:
The Once and Future
Action Network (OFAN)
Secretariat
Business District
40 Duke St., Kingston,
Jamaica
Tel: (1-809)967-2399)
Fax: (1-809)967-2397)

ISIS VIDEO COLLECTION

Khush

A film by Pratibha Parmar
1991, 24 min (SEX 067)

Khush means ecstatic pleasure in Urdu. For South Asian lesbians and gay men in Britain, North America, and India (where homosexuality is still illegal) the term captures the blissful intricacies of being queer and of color. Inspiring testimonies bridge geographical differences to locate shared experiences of isolation and exoticization but also the unremitting joys and solidarity of being *khush*.
Accentuated by beautifully

Khush



lit dream sequences, dance segments and a dazzlingly sensuous soundtrack, this uplifting documentary conveys the exhilaration of a culturally rooted experience of sexuality.

Underexposed: The Temple of the Fetus

A film by Kathy High
1992, 72 min (REP 065)

Combining drama and documentary, *Underexposed: The Temple of the Fetus* is a savvy and creative probe into high-tech baby-making. The fictional framework of a TV journalist who unearths the ethical complications associated with new reproductive technologies allows the video to present complex documentary information about this issue in a clear and insightful way. The film tracks the history of the treatment of women's sexual and reproductive systems as "diseased," requiring the intervention of medical institutions to "save" them from their own bodies as well as the social and political context in which contemporary reproductive technologies exploit women's bodies. An extraordinary new feminist analysis of women and medicine from the director of *I Need Your Full Cooperation*.

Japanese American Women: A Sense of Place

A film by Rosanna
Yamagiwa
1992, 28 min (SEX 069)

The stereotype of the polite, docile, exotic Asian

'woman is shattered in this documentary where a dozen women speak about their experiences as part of the "model minority." *Japanese American Women* explores the ambivalent feelings that the women have—towards Japan and the United States. The underlying theme is the burden of being different, of being brought up as "one of a kind" as opposed to growing up as part of an ethnic community. An uneasy feeling prevails out of being neither Japanese nor American, and the documentary ultimately becomes the story of Japanese American women and their search for a sense of place.

Open Letter: Grasp the Bird's Tail

A film by Brenda Joy Lem
1992, 16 min (VAW 059)

A gracefully composed film by Canadian Chinese artist, writer and filmmaker Brenda Joy Lem, *Open Letter* explores the issue of sexual violence in a racist society in a personal and direct way. Sylvester (played by Lem), writing to her new lover, contemplates her desire for him and the vulnerability she feels because of her experiences of sexual abuse and racial violence. Her metaphor for her fear is that of a contortionist trapped in a box and being lanced by a sword. By exploring and confronting

this fear, she is able to emerge from the box holding the weapon. Poetic yet disturbing, this film is a sophisticated contemplation of race, gender and violence.

Seven Lucky Charms

A film by Lisa Mann
1992, 16 min (VAW 060)

"Husbands kill their wives because of bruised egos; wives generally kill their husbands because of bruised bodies." This stylish and imaginative documentary weaves animated

imagery with statistical information to provide an environment for understanding the reality of battered women, especially those who kill their batterers in self-defense. Violence and retaliation, inadequate police response,



gender inequities in the legal system and prison sentencing are all examined in a clear and inventive way.

Rate It X

Directed by Lucy Winer and Paula de Koenigsberg
1986, 93 min (SEX 065)

What do men really think of women? This provocative, highly acclaimed documentary looks unflinchingly at sexism in America. A series of disturbing though sometimes amusing portraits uncover obvious culprits such as advertising firms and porn shops, as well as often overlooked pockets of sexist imagery which promote gender stereotyping and reinforce negative conceptions of women and sexuality. With great humor and compassion, the film reveals men's deeply imbedded attitudes, showing how sexism becomes rationalized through commerce, religion and social values. Hotly controversial upon its release, *Rate It X* is a challenging, invaluable film that illuminates crucial issues of censorship, advertising, pornography and violence against women.

Like any Other Lovers: A Pacific Lovestory with a Difference... AIDS

Produced by The South Pacific Commission
1993 (HEA 072)

Like Any Other Lovers is the story of Chris and

Linda, a young couple whose relationship is threatened when Chris learns he is infected with HIV—the virus that can lead to AIDS. Together their love overcomes the prejudice and rejection of those around them. This is a story about facing fear with love, courage and hope.

The Impossible Dream

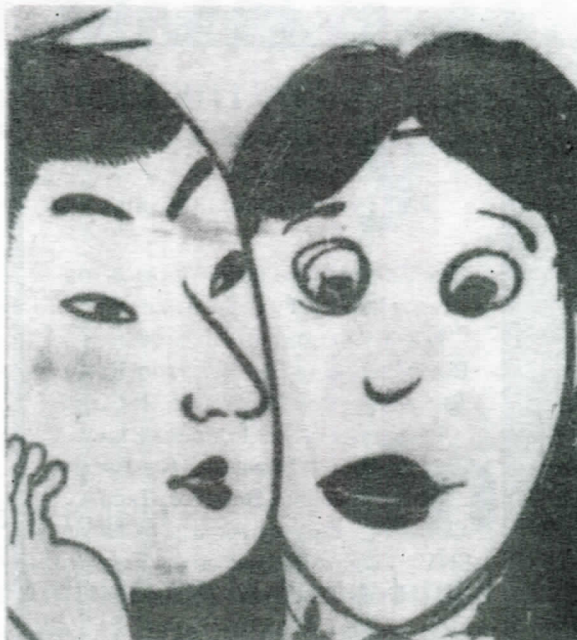
A film by Tina Jorgenson
Produced by the United Nations and Kratky Films Prague. 1983, 10 min (SEX 027) 3 copies

Made by award-winning Kratky Films in Czechoslovakia, Dagmar Boubkova's classic animated film is a wry, humorous look at a universal problem faced by many women—the "double day" which involves coming home from a day's paid employment to undertake unpaid housework in the home. Boubkova's story revolves around an average family, with two working parents, two school-age children and a baby. The wife works the same hours as her husband but for less money. On top of her work, she has all the responsibilities for the children and the housework.

Slaying the Dragon

A film by Deborah Gee
1988, 60 min (SEX 068)

Slaying the Dragon is a comprehensive look at



From a *Sense of Place*.

media stereotypes of Asian and Asian-American women since the silent era. From the racist use of white actors to portray Asians in early Hollywood films, through the success of Anna May Wong's sinister dragon lady, to Suzie Wong and the '50s *geisha* girls, to the Asian-American anchorwoman of today, this fascinating videotape shows how stereotypes of exoticism and docility have affected the perception of Asian-American women.

Surname Viet Given Name Nam

Produced by Jean-Paul Bourdier
Directed by Trinh T. Minha
1989, 108 min (SEX 070)
Of marriage and loyalty: "Daughter, she obeys

her father/ Wife, she obeys her husband/ Widow, she obeys her son."

Vietnamese-born Trinh T. Minh-ha's profoundly personal documentary explores the role of Vietnamese women historically and in contemporary society. Using dance, printed texts, folk poetry and the words and experiences of Vietnamese women—from both North and South Vietnam—and the United States, Trinh's film challenges official culture with the voices of women. A theoretically and formally complex work, *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* explores the difficulty of translation, and themes of dislocation and exile, critiquing both traditional society and life since the war.

Thank God I'm a Lesbian

A film by Laurie Colbert and Dominique Cardona
1992, 55 min (SEX 066)

Thank God I'm a Lesbian is an uplifting and entertaining documentary about the diversity of lesbian identities. Dionne Brand, Nicole Brossard, Lee Pui Ming, Becki Ross, Julia Creet, La Verne Monette, Sarah Schulman, Chris Bearchell, Chris Phibbs, Christine Delphy and Jeannelle Laillou speak frankly and articulately about issues ranging from coming out, racism, bisexuality and SM to the evolution of the feminist and lesbian movements,

*Three women learn to dance.
They learn to
dance in the light.*

*Muey, a former slave
in a Thai brothel.
Uant, a single woman
defying social expectations.
Ceceu, a gifted dancer
forbidden to dance by her father
and husband.
Three women living diverse lives
gathered in a far village
and find healing.*

DANCING IN THE LIGHT

A FILM BY AVIC ILAGAN

PRODUCED BY

ISIS INTERNATIONAL-MANILA

OUR GRATITUDE TO THE SPONSORS OF THE
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OF THE FAR EAST BANK AND TRUST
COMPANY BELINDA ARCILLA OF NOVIB
SNV LEONOR BRIONES OF THE FREEDOM
FROM DEBT COALITION NEXUS TRAVEL
MODE AND SIBAT

outing and compulsory heterosexuality. Inclusive of various and often contradictory points of view, *Thank God I'm a Lesbian* successfully proposes an alternate vision of self and community that is realistic and positive. This fast-paced documentary was edited by Geraldine Peroni who was nominated for an Academy Award for the *The Player*.

Voices of the Morning

A film by Meena Nanji
1992, 15 min (SEX 073)

Inspired by *The Hidden Face of Eve* by Nawal El Saadawi, *Voices of the Morning* is a poetic exploration of Muslim women's lives. It follows the socialization process of a young woman living under Orthodox Islamic law.

Resisting traditional definitions of a woman's role in society as only a dutiful daughter or wife, she struggles to find a space for her existence amidst the web of conditions imposed upon her by restrictive familial and societal conventions. Although *Voices of the Morning* is about the experiences of Muslim women, it resonates for all women who feel the effects of repressive social laws on their bodies and psyches. ♪



Top to bottom: Scenes from *Voices of the Morning*, *Slaying the Dragon*, and *Thank God I'm a Lesbian*.

Books in My Mind

by Kulasang Kulelat

I have been dreaming of books lately: Books that can talk, books that can see. I dream of books that jump with joy and books that weep. I always wake up confused, unable to make sense of the dream. It's like falling half asleep while watching a movie and then waking up as the credits are rolling up the screen. I remember the scenes, but not the whole movie. I remember snippets, but not the full dream.

Our editor has the same weird nocturnal visitations. Only, instead of talking books she dreams of manuscripts, galleys and proofs. She says she's having an overdose of her job. Well, maybe I'm having an overdose of books. You see, I work in a library where the walls are lined with books and journals from different parts of the world. Inside, over, and under my desk are more books and more magazines.

I like books. That's why I don't understand why they have to sneak into my consciousness when I am asleep. It's not like I haven't given them enough thought or care when I am awake. Most people adore pet animals. I get a high from sniffing the pages of a new book. Some people can go on and on about their stamps and old coins or their high tech electronic gadgets. I get ecstatic just feeling the edges of a perfectly bound volume. Others save and scrimp for a rainy day. I, on the other hand, will blow a month's lunch money to get my hands on a hard-to-find book.

But books are not to me a fetish. I don't buy them to prettify my book shelf, or to create a high culture ambience for my house. When I was a child, my father saved dozens of art books, coffeebooks and four sets of encyclopedia from the garbage dump. My father's boss threw them all away because they probably did not fit in his redecorated mansion. Those books did not even look like they've been read. In my book, my father's boss was fetishizing books.

Last week, my workmates and I were lamenting how so many young people now don't seem to value books as much as we, who were born a decade earlier, do. How else can you explain this group of college students who came to the library to research on the history of the feminist movement? We gave them a couple of books but they asked which one directly refers to their topic. We told them to check out Kamla Bhasin's *Some Questions about Feminism* but they wanted us to point out which paragraph defines what feminism is about. They simply said they didn't have time to read the books we were recommending.

Encounters like this make me want to call my parents to tell them how grateful I am that they taught me to read. I was four when I learned my ABCs. I remember sunny afternoons spent looking at pictures of a whale, the earth, a bumble bee, an African mud hut, the goddess Kali, and so many other fantastic creatures, places and objects.

I remember my grubby hands leafing through the pages of glossy magazines my mother brought home. In the summer of '68, I began to string words together and pair these with pictures and then with ideas. And that is how I came to know about the war in a place called Vietnam, that humans rode on a ship called Apollo 11 and that one of them did the moonwalk. These and many other things, I learned from reading.

My first book was a tattered copy of *Pepe and Pilar*, a reader for Grade One pupils in the 1950s and early '60s. There was also a book about legends which opened to me a world inhabited by seafaring Vikings, brave Amazons, Celtic warriors, and Arthurian knights. I visited the courts of kings and queens of many and varied empires, though the British was my favorite. After some time, I became so familiar with British royalty that I even made a chart of its kings and queens. I also rode with warriors and joined them as they championed campaigns.

When I was five, my father took me to my first bookstore in the big city. I forget now what store it was, but I still remember the smell of the books. They smelled of newly minted money. Until now, the crisp peso bills that come out around Christmastime never fail to bring me back to that day when we first bought my books: *Cinderella* and *Three Billygoats Gruff*.

Like any other human activity, the survival and flourishing of reading depends on one generation's ability to pass it on to the next. The ability to read is a basic survival skill, but it is so much more than knowing one's basic alphabet. Reading demands the ability to recognize symbols, emotions and meanings, and to put sense to these.

Books are repositories of humanity's humanity. They teach about human conditions—the highs and the lows, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the evil, the

sublime and the crude. And when it is really good, a book disturbs your peace. It can make you furious.

Last year, while I was on an extended "diaper leave," I picked up Margot Bradley Zimmerman's *Firebrand*, a reworking of the story of the fall of Troy. I could not put it down until I reached the last page. In Zimmerman's novel, it is Cassandra who narrates the Trojan saga. Born to the King Menelaus, Cassandra is sent at a young age to her mother's kinsfolk—the tribe of Amazon women—where she is schooled in its warrior-priestess tradition. Gifted with the ability to see the future, Cassandra is cursed to carry the burden of her knowledge because no one, the jealous gods declared, will ever believe her. Thus, she foresaw the burning of her city and the pride and vainglory of the men which will fuel it. She is spurned by her King-father, feared and hated by her brothers. Even her mother, who has long suppressed the proud legacy of her kinswomen, kept her distance. Cassandra is exiled to the Temple of Apollo, there to spend the rest of her life as a virgin-servant to the deity. Towards the end of the story, after Troy finally falls, Cassandra is raped by Greek soldiers. The little girl she had adopted is also raped and dies from the savagery of the attack. The women who survived, Cassandra included, are taken as war loots by the Greeks.

I emerged furious from reading *Firebrand*. It drew out my anxieties about the world to which I have just brought my second child. There is so much intolerance and ignorance, and so much violence directed at women all throughout history. That week, I was swinging between sadness and anger; it was maddening.

There are books that are a joy to read, even when they are not about happy things. Anne Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, a gift from a friend, I read slowly, savoring the grace of her prose and reveling in her celebration of the richness of life. Dillard's writing is thoroughly riveting, even when it's about nature's horrific side:

"And then the eggs hatched and the bed was full of fish. I was across the room in the doorway, staring at the bed. They hatched before my eyes, on my bed, and a thousand chunky fish swarmed there in viscid slime.

The fish were firm and fat, and white, with triangular bodies and bulging eyes. I watched in horror as they squirmed three feet deep, swimming about in the glistening, transparent slime. Fish in the bed!—and I awoke. My ears still rang with the foreign cry that had been my own voice.”

I learned my alphabet at a young age, but I only truly learned how to read when I was already a young adult. In high school we were made to read classics like J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*, Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, Ignazio Silone’s *Bread and Wine*, Jane Eyre’s *Wuthering Heights*, Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*, Boris Pasternak’s *Dr. Zhivago*, Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. We even had some of Mao Zedong’s poems, back-to-back with Rabindranat Tagore’s in our Asian-African literature class. Unfortunately, my teachers seemed to be interested only in getting us to write our term papers. Uninspired and motivated only by the need to meet academic requirements, I had to drag myself to read literature; I left high school only barely literate.

In college, I became active in the underground movement against the dictatorship. Soon I was lapping up the works of Mao and Lenin for lunch and having indigestion from reading, unprepared, Marx’s *Das Kapital*. During this time, I read because I had to sharpen my “ideological weapon” in order to defeat the class enemy. For what it’s worth now, I actually ended up a fairly literate student of Marxism.

But I was kicked out of the Party for political insubordination. Having practically grown up under the unwavering gaze of the proletarian gods of history, this was like being given the boot by your parents. Politically orphaned, I struggled to get my bearing again. Reading helped a lot.

In Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* and Foucault’s *Pendulum*, I found reverberations of my own philosophical break with the grand narrative tradition of Marxism. I wish I could have written this line from *The Name of the Rose*: “Perhaps the mission of those who love mankind is to make people laugh at the truth, to make truth laugh, because the only

truth is in learning to free ourselves from inane passion for the truth.”

I also reread the classics of my high school days, discovering in the process that some members of the bourgeoisie can and do have a soul. I had a short but exhilarating flight with the Latin American magic realists. My accidental discovery of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* on a bookstore shelf led me to other North American mainstream feminist writers. And while I did not completely retreat from left-wing political writings, the writers I read were no longer in the orthodoxy’s must read list: Gramsci, Althusser, E.P. Thompson, etc. Soon afterwards, I was exploring the bleak writings of the Frankfurt School and the difficult works of writers like Foucault and Habermas.

I was indiscriminate; I read everything that crossed my path. Having been rescued from a life of reading only politically-prescribed materials, I gorged my mind with every book that took my fancy. Unfortunately, behavior like this can cause literary indigestion. I think I’m just coming out from one.

The library where I am now working is a special kind of library. It is part of a resource center founded by and for women. Women run it, and women’s works dominate its collection. A whole new world of books has opened up for me. In fact, I never realized that there are so many books written by women. The first time I browsed through the library, I felt the weight of my sin of omission. All this time, I must admit, I had been reading dead, white men. My intellectual education had been defined by the writings of men and by their worldview.

I have never used the word “feminist” to describe myself. But when pressed to define my sympathies, I resort to the label “organic feminist,” which, in my imagined political thesaurus, means a feminist who has not yet been indoctrinated.

So now I am re-educating myself, carefully plodding through the materials in the library, quietly picking the brains of sisters in the movement, and simply learning from doing things. I wonder, perhaps the dreams I am having about animated books is my mind letting out a full-bodied belch to make room for more knowledge. ☺

Media Matters

by Luz Maria Martinez

Seeing the WAR ON television—live, with on-the-spot coverage—does not a well-INFORMED citizen make.

Mexico and China are believed to share history dating back 40 thousand years ago. Some archaeologists believe that during the Ice Age, nomads from China made their way to the Americas through the Bering Strait and settled throughout the continent, giving rise to the many indigenous peoples in North and South America. The descendants of these nomads established well-developed civilizations, some of which are the Aztecs of Mexico, the Incas of Peru and the Inuit of Alaska.

In 1995, these two countries shared something else: conferences where the issue of media, women and human dignity were discussed. In September, Beijing hosted the Fourth World Conference on Women. The following month, the 1995 Congress of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) was held in Puebla, Mexico's third largest city. In Beijing, many of the discussions were on the issue of media and the impact it has on women and other marginalized societies. In Puebla, the main focus was media and human dignity.

Media has been playing major roles in our daily lives. In its

"Ours is indeed the age of communication. But more access to information has not made us more just, concerned or more creative. In this global village, we are much more selfish, self-centered, brutal and patriarchal than are most villagers."

MAKING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR US

- Be aware of** new technologies' potentials and pitfalls.
- Pressure governments to** treat new communication technologies as a public utility that should be made available and affordable to the general public.
- Infrastructures required by** new communication technologies must be environment-friendly and sustainable.
- Demand software manufacturers** to develop user-friendly programs written in local languages.
- Study the impact and** potential of new communication technologies in particular countries.
- Formulate an Information Charter** that will safeguard individual and national privacy.
- Counteract programs that** depict women in stereotypical roles
- Women's stories need** to be told without sensationalization and with dignity.
- Women's knowledge and** perspectives should be taken seriously in all arenas of debate.

various forms, the media informs us, educates us, seduces us, confuses us and programs everything from what we should think, feel, smell, see, taste and hear.

According to Eduardo Galeano, Latin-American writer, social analyst and keynote speaker at the WACC conference, "the media is imposing a way of life that believes the exemplary citizen to be the docile consumer and the passive spectator."

Mainstream media, controlled by only a handful of white men, more and more Western in its perspective and increasingly merging with corporate interests, presents to the world many contradictions. While graphically depicting the economic sufferings of people, it bombards audiences with pure consumerist ideas and attitudes.

Women and progressive men from around the world are attempting to expose the truth behind what we have been receiving from the mainstream media. They are trying to shake us awake from the dream that we are better informed simply because we can see "the actual shooting—live— with on-the-spot coverage."

Media and Globalization

Globalization, in its positive sense, means that we are all part of one global village where we can share our diversities and see and care for each other as global brothers and sisters. The mass media, because it connects people across continents plays a crucial, if not primary role, in globalization. "Globalization was introduced as a modernization that will enable Third World countries to join the First World and enjoy the offerings of developed nations," says Carlos A. Valle, Secretary General of WACC. But what is actually happening is quite different. "Globalization has brought with it disorder and a paralysis."

A vivid example of this disorder and paralysis is Rwanda. Why were we not in Rwanda to stop one of the worst carnage of this century?

According to Frances D' Souza, director of Article 19, a London-based media

research organization, the media purposefully did not use the word "genocide" in its reporting of the Rwanda killings even when, by all standards of definition, it was genocide that took place. The term was blacked-out because it would have forced powerful signatories to the United Nations Conventions who vowed that the world would not tolerate another ethnic cleansing to intervene.

In fact, says Galeano, the global media networks made no mention of how Germany, Belgium and France played major roles in breeding disharmony between the Hutus and Tutsis. Neither did any media network try to identify who was supplying arms to the Hutus. Media simply explained the war in Rwanda as another "tribal" war.

Kamla Bhasin, coordinator of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organizations's (FAO) NGO South Asian Programme, board member of Isis International-Manila and noted Indian feminist says that "ours is indeed the age of communication. But more access to information has not made us more just, concerned or more creative. In this 'global village,' we are much more selfish, self-centered, brutal and patriarchal than are most villagers." Globalization, she adds, also meant patriarchy becoming more powerful and entrenched.

Media and Patriarchy

"The media is an industry and its serving its corporate interest just fine" says Judy Rebick, a panelist at the plenary session on Media, Culture and Communication in Beijing. "Media companies are no longer businesses in your neighborhood vying with one another for your support. They are major political players in the national and international scene."

Media's natural tendency is therefore to pander to bankers, politicians and men in "gray suits" who are able to represent themselves leisurely on television news and economic and political talk shows. Meanwhile, people from popular move-



Congress participants in Mexico approve resolutions on media and human dignity.

ments are merely photo shots shouting slogans and carrying placards. Anchors call these people “marginalized.”

In Beijing, while television reporters abounded and journalists swarmed the premises, the items of interest that seemed to capture their attention were the celebrities who attended the conference and women’s personal stories. But media disappeared as soon as women began discussing economics and politics—the kind of hard news that media ought to report on. And it does. On television and cable, these are the same issues that take up long hours of airtime. Only here, men are the ones doing the explaining.

Yayori Matsui, a journalist, feminist and director of the Asian Women’s Association, discussed her experience as a woman in a male-dominated media world in Asia. She recounted how, with much resistance from her publishers and editors, she covered issues that affected women.

While a reporter in Vietnam, Yayori witnessed how mainstream media reported only on the deaths of U.S. servicemen but left out on the atrocities that Vietnamese women were suffering at the hands of the U.S. soldiers. It did not see the deformed children being born to so many Vietnamese women because of “agent orange,” a poisonous chemical deployed by the U.S. onto Vietnamese soil.

In Cambodia, media failed to report the stories of widows and their children caught in the middle of war. These stories, Yayori says, were usually ignored particularly by the mainstream and Western media.

Yayori reported on all these but her male editors were disinterested, despite support from women readers. Yayori's other stories brought scorn from her male colleagues, such as her report on Japanese men going to the Philippines and Thailand for sex tours. Western media, that presently dominates the world, has contributed to this objectifying and commodifying of Asian women by stereotyping them as "charming Oriental beauties and sexy girls."

Media and Conservatism

Fundamentalists and extreme right wing conservatives found an excuse in media and globalization to control people's—particularly women's—freedoms.

One of the core arguments in the propaganda used by fundamentalists to gain support underscores media's guilt in the breaking down of tradition. The call for people to oppose the promoters of ideas that erode these long-standing traditions is a logical conclusion. Consequently, feminist are the first targets of such reactionary movements.

Television's concept of a liberated woman is limited to attributing to her sexual freedoms that only benefit male fantasies. Apart from commodifying women, this concept provides fundamentalists with a lot of reasons to strengthen patriarchy in the name of preserving family tradition and God's laws.

The Alternative Media

Yayori emphasizes that women need to fight for access and control of media. Access to media need not necessarily be limited to the mainstream. The alternative media is where the future lies.

But in using and developing alternative media, Kamla Bhasin stresses that it

is important to remember that the alternative should be decentralized, democratic, low-cost and low in technology. Content and form should encourage dialogue and debate and treat women and people as subjects rather than objects or targets of communication. The alternative communication media should project reality from the perspective of people's wisdom and knowledge.

Technology: Alternative or Apartheid?

In Mexico and in Beijing, the importance of new information technologies was a subject for debate.

New information technologies, according to Robin Abarms is an alternative to mainstream media. "We have seen the rapid expansion of the Internet and [how] it is [aiding] worldwide global reporting. This gives women immediate access to communication and avenues of expression while, at the same time, allows them to participate and discuss issues in a manner that will influence policy in a tangible way." Robin challenged conference participants to "leapfrog" by comprehending and using new information technologies. Unless women do that, the proponents of information technology say, they will forever be left behind, retained in a reactive position instead of setting the terms.

The other side of the debate accuses information technologies with widening the gap between those who have access to it and those who do not. Many women argue that in many rural areas in developing countries, telephones—perhaps the most basic modern day communication tool—do not even exist. Contrary to being accessible and creating links between rural places and urban centers, the information highway naturally tends to head straight for richer and larger cities because the tools for navigating it are found only there, serving primarily the interests of businesses and corporations.

The result is what some women call "technology apartheid" where computer

technology has widened the gap among the social classes.

New information technologies, its oppositors say, are also culturally alienating. Most computer softwares are written only in English and in such a user-hostile manner.

Women are also concerned about the way these technologies are being developed and what role women are playing in its evolution. As people already know, men have made use of this technology to disseminate and create pornography and have even developed ways of sexually harassing women on the Internet.

A paper presented at the WACC Congress by Dr. Ubonrat Siriyuvasak, professor of communications at Chulalongakorn University in Thailand, asks: "Those who develop the technology, are they corporate voices with an intent to commercialize our lives? Will these voices create more understanding and caring between individuals and peoples? Or will they further reinforce racial prejudices, gender stereotypes and class biases, authoritarian regimes and consumerism?"

In the face of the continuing debate, women's groups can only continue to raise people's awareness of the potentials and pitfalls of new communication technologies.

Communication and information are women's basic tools. The strength of the women's movements worldwide has always been its ability to disseminate the kind of information that raises women's consciousness about their rights, that stirs in them questions and urges them to demand for what is rightfully theirs. These are information that stimulate and encourage creativity. Because women have been informed, they have learned to protect themselves and each other.

Women use various media to accomplish this: from print to broadcast, to community theater, music, poetry, dance, arts and crafts. The number of women in the field of mass communication is steadily and continuously increasing, a development that is both encouraging and deceiving. The mere increase in the number of women in media is not enough to change the image of women. What is important is for women media workers to have a political, if not feminist, perspective on issues. Women media workers who lack a clear feminist standpoint communicate the role model of a lone woman scrambling to climb the existing structure and not of a woman struggling to change that structure.

And, in this age of the cyberspace, women are learning to wield the power of high technology even as they continue to affirm the effectiveness of low-tech, non-electronic channels. In using these new communication technologies, women realize that these should promote women's access to them and allow women to maximize their potential. New technologies should complement other media and, together, must effectively communicate messages that deconstruct gender stereotypes.

But ultimately, neither new communication technologies nor access to information would be enough to bring about substantive change in the status of women. What needs to happen is for women to take the information and act on it, first of all by using any and all available forms of communication to disseminate the information in ever widening circles. Women need to keep in their minds the vital role that information plays in the movement: To strengthen the links of women all around the world. ♪

A **V**eil **O**ver the **E**ast



Wrapped women.

The rise of an INTENSELY religious class of PROFESSIONALS in Indonesia and Malaysia COINCIDES with both countries' headlong rush towards ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION. A scenario of arresting CONTRASTS AND paradoxes BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY trends and reclaimed or imported traditions HAS RISEN along with it.

About 15 years ago, Santi Soekanto became the first woman in her family to wear a veil. Since then, her mother and four sisters have followed her example. She says: "I have a very democratic

family. I would never pressure my sister or my mom to wear a veil."

Now 33, Soekanto, a devout Muslim from Jakarta, does not shake hands with men, nor does she like to find herself alone with a man who is not her husband or a close family member. She feels it her duty not to watch "revealing" television programs such as *Baywatch*.

None of these stops Soekanto, who works for Indonesia's best-known English language newspaper, *The Jakarta Post*, from specializing in the high-profile, male-dominated field of political journalism. She says she does her best to interview a male in the company of another person, explaining that "there is a clear limitation in Islam about how men and women should communicate."

Although her views on contact between men and women are more extreme than those of other Muslims interviewed for this story, Soekanto represents the

When young people are forced to cover up and people in charge at schools and universities and older students ask them to cover up and at the same time regulate their behavior—that's where control comes in.

face of a new, conspicuously Muslim middle class that is becoming more entrenched in Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim community, about 85 percent of its 190 million people.

The rise of an intensely religious (but not fundamentalist) class of professionals has coincided with both countries' headlong rush towards economic modernization, leading to arresting contrasts and paradoxes between contemporary trends and reclaimed or imported traditions.

In plush shopping malls and department stores in Kuala Lumpur, women in firmly secured scarves and veils hover around the cosmetics and perfume counters, paying Western prices for quintessential Western brands such as Passion and Chanel.

In Jakarta, yuppie women arrive at work in designer suits with their prayer clothes in tow so they can visit the office prayer room up to five times a day.

In 1993, the Indonesian government banned a popular, state-backed lottery after protests by Islamic students and religious elders. Yet, late last year, President Suharto, who is known as a strict Muslim who made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1991, played golf with Sylvester Stallone when the latter opened a Planet Hollywood outlet in Jakarta.

In Malaysia and Indonesia, attendance at mosques are up, and more mosques, Islamic study centers, universities and schools are being built. In Indonesia, several Islamic radio stations have started broadcasting in recent years, and more Muslim-inspired newspapers and magazines are being published. Indonesia established the legal foundations for an Islamic banking system three years ago, and in a recent promotion, the Muslim Bank Pertanian Malaysia offered customers making deposits a free prayer mat or compass which points to Mecca.

Another important indicator of the rise in Muslim consciousness and wealth is that pilgrimages to Mecca by Asians are

increasing dramatically. This year, Garuda Indonesia carried 195,000 pilgrims from Indonesia on 24 aircrafts to the Hajj. In 1991, it used just seven aircrafts to carry 79,346 pilgrims.

An academic from West Java is amazed by the number of her colleagues who were "statistical" or passive Muslims 10 or 15 years ago but who have since made the pilgrimage.

The respected Malaysian newspaper columnist and commentator, Rustam Sani, has noted this trend and other signs of Islamic revivalism in his own country. He believes the Islamic revival filtered through Malaysia and then Indonesia through the influence of students who studied abroad (especially in the Middle East) in the 1970s and '80s, and in the wake of Muslim euphoria at the Iranian Revolution.

"All over the world, Islam is rediscovering itself. I think at first, it rediscovered itself not necessarily at a highly intellectual level. At first, it was trying to reread an identity, it was looking around for what would differentiate it," he says.

He sees Islamic revivalism in his native country as a search for a distinctive identity by ethnic Malays. (They represent the biggest racial group in Malaysia and all are officially defined as Muslims.) However, he believes the Malaysian Muslims' new emphasis on tradition or ritual has not been accompanied by sufficiently rigorous debate. He and many others, for instance, believe the veil was historically specific to the Prophet Muhammed's wives, and is therefore not mandatory for all Muslim women today.

Despite this, Rustam says "there are people who say that you shouldn't ask these questions, that these are accepted procedures and if you raise these questions it amounts to being an apostate."

He adds that his wife, a chief librarian at an Islamic organization in Kuala Lumpur, has come under great official and peer pressure to cover since the spirit of revivalism swept through Malaysia. (The

veiling of women is a practice that was almost unknown in Asia 20 or 30 years ago.)

"You have your house, you have your BMW. You eat in McDonald's send your kids off to plush Islamic schools and you present yourself as a devout Muslim."

Debra Yatim, a short story writer and one of the founders of the Indonesian women's group Kalyana Mitra sees the Muslim resurgence in Indonesia as a new form of nationalism and a direct reflection of the aspirations of a new middle class, many of whom have conservative rural roots and use their religion as a defining attribute. "You have your house, you have your BMW. You eat in McDonald's send your kids off to plush Islamic schools and you present yourself as a devout Muslim," she says.

Among Jakarta's upper-middle classes, Yatim commonly sees contradictions and tensions caused by the coincidence of increasing prosperity and the flight to tradition.

This year alone, she knows of three women who assumed they were in modern marriages but their husbands took second wives without their consent. In every case, she says, these tertiary-educated, careerist women felt their marriages were based on equal rights.

And in every case, Islamic courts sided with the polygamous husbands, despite a 20-year-old secular law requiring that the first wife's explicit consent is needed for a man to take a second wife.

"I find this amazing in this day and age," says Yatim. "Of the three women I know, none of them even dreamed their husbands were seeing people on the side."

Yatim says polygamy is less common now in Indonesia than it was under the Sukarno regime, partly because Indonesia's first president had several wives, while president Suharto and his wife have made clear their preference for monogamous marriage, and are looked upon as role models.

Nevertheless, she believes the "ambiguities" that result from the interplay of

the ultra-modern and the ancient will "fall on our children's shoulders ... I have a feeling we are spawning a very confused generation," she says.

The rise of the new Muslim middle class has a potent political dimension in that both the Malaysian and Indonesian governments have adopted their own agendas of moderate Islam in order to neutralize extremists and their Muslim political rivals.

For instance, many government ministers are members of the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals, which has its own influential newspapers, and pushes for a more Islamic approach to government while stopping well short of advocating religious State.

Even so, in both Malaysia and Indonesia, some pro-Islamic government policies have resulted in a tightening of personal behavioral codes that would be considered extreme by Western standards.

In Indonesia in the late '80s, it was decided registry offices could no longer perform marriages, which meant mixed religious marriages were virtually impossible to procure.

In Malaysia, where economic prosperity and revivalism are both more conspicuous than in Indonesia, Islamic laws governing personal behaviour seem to be more strictly enforced. One man interviewed says he would not dare drink a beer in public now, though he did so during his student days 20 years ago.

In Kuala Lumpur recently, a Singaporean singer was fined for being found in an upmarket hotel room with her boyfriend, under *khalwat* laws which were introduced in the '80s and forbid an unmarried Muslim man and woman to be alone in close proximity.

Norani Othman, an academic and a member of the high-profile Malaysian women's group Sisters in Islam, believes Malaysia's attempts during the past decade to combine official Islamisation policies with more modern lifestyles have thrown



Muslim girls cover their heads or risk the ire of haircutting zealots.

Though support for PAS weakened in the recent federal election, it is still in power in Kelantan, where street signs warn women to cover themselves, and where women have been banned from working night shifts or appearing on stage.

Noran believes it is a "rational enough" approach of the Malaysian Government to seek to neutralize extreme elements by adopting its own Islamic programmes. However, she also believes that because of this strategy, "the present government is constantly driven to adopt policies and strategies that contradict its own agenda... of encouraging a Muslim culture of modernity."

She points out that Malaysian Muslims are routinely cautioned not to question the authority of Islamic judges. (Malaysia has parallel secular and Islamic legal systems and, within the latter, women are not permitted to be judges.) Yet

the Sisters in Islam was formed in 1987 precisely because of complaints about interpretation of Islamic law disadvantaging women in family matters such as divorce and maintenance payments.

Since the '80s, says Norani, official pressure have been added to social pressure to spell out that "if you are Muslim, all your problems must be addressed legally under Sharia [Islamic] law."

A startling example of the mistreatment of women under Islamic law involved the case last year of a leading Malaysian politician who allegedly had an affair with a minor, a 15-year-old schoolgirl, who got pregnant. Eventually the case against the politician (mounted under secular law) was dropped. But because of her pregnancy, the girl, who had helped the police with their inquiries, found herself liable for prosecution for fornication under Islamic law.

up contradictions that "are now at their apex, mainly because the kind of Islamic resurgence that has taken root in most Islamic countries, as well as in Malaysia and Indonesia, since the Iranian Revolution, has been the orthodox, the backward."

In the late 1993, the Sisters in Islam met the Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, to tell him of their concerns about *hudud* laws proposed by the Kelantan Government, the only State government led by the fundamentalist opposition Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS).

Under these laws, those found guilty of crimes such as adultery, armed robbery and apostasy would be subject to punishments including flogging, amputation of limbs, stoning to death and crucifixion. Enactment of this Bill depends on support at federal level — which the Mahathir Government seems unlikely to give.

Girls cover up because of peer pressure. It is not unusual for young men on campus to declare they would only marry a woman who was veiled.

In the Middle East and now in Asia, women put on Muslim garb for spiritual reasons, but also for social and professional gain.

The decision was announced by a deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Department. It provoked a national outcry. In the end, neither the politician, who is now facing separate corruption charges, nor the girl was charged but other men who had sex with her were.

Despite cases like this, Norani passionately believes that because of its multiculturalism (it has large Chinese and Indian populations) and its recent economic prosperity, Malaysia is in a unique position to be a modernist, model State for other Muslim countries.

She believes this will not be easily achieved given that much of the response to rapid economic modernization has been a "flight to something that smells and smacks of radiation."

She also thinks that in many Muslim societies, fear of debate is "endemic" because of possible reprisals from fundamentalists. After being misquoted by a Malaysian language newspaper about her views on polygamy recently, one of the Sisters in Islam was compared to the condemned writer Taslima Nasrin, who went into hiding after fundamentalists issued death threats against her.

The veiling of women, girls and sometimes babies is probably the most emotive and visually striking feature of the rise of Asia's new Muslim bourgeoisie. That this is most common among the better educated, and has coincided with the adoption of some feminist influenced reforms (such as better education for girls), makes it all the more intriguing.

Some Indonesian universities and tertiary colleges tried to ban veils in the '80s. Now, they are permitted in schools and universities, so it is common to see female students in tight jeans and T-shirts sitting in tutorials alongside students in veils, long-sleeved smocks and men's socks.

The Jakarta Post's Santi Soekanto insists there is no peer pressure for women to take the veil; indeed, during the early

'80s, she felt like part of a marginalised minority for wearing it. But now, the student daughter of one of Indonesia's most powerful Muslim leaders—she has long, wavy unrestrained hair—believes some of her friends cover up because of peer pressure. She says it is not unusual for young men on campus to declare they would only marry a woman who was veiled.

Though many people see the new assertion of Islamic values in Asia as a repudiation of western materialism, in a Kuala Lumpur shopping mall I saw one young veiled woman in jeans and a sweatshirt with the letters U.S.A. and the American flag emblazoned on it.

"There are many veils and many levels of veiling. Not every woman in a veil is submissive and not every woman in a veil is progressive," explains a Middle Eastern academic who was recently based in Kuala Lumpur.

She believes it is simplistic to see women covering themselves solely as a manifestation of gender oppression or as a type of Arabic cultural imperialism. In the Middle East and now in Asia, she has seen women put on Muslim garb for spiritual reasons, but also for social and professional gain if they or their husbands want to impress a Muslim hierarchy in business or politics.

She has seen it worn as a result of peer pressure or in the name of being a good (and comfortably kept) wife and mother, or even as a fashion gesture.

Last February, one of the biggest women's magazines in Indonesia, *Femina*, featured a fashion spread on Islamically correct fashions for the fasting month, Ramadan, while one of Jakarta's major department stores, Sarinah, has a section devoted to such fashions called Muslim Corner.

This academic believes predominantly Muslim countries have a preoccupation with controlling women. This is tempered in Indonesia and Malaysia by both govern-

Malaysian Muslim women might work and possess a degree but will always be, primarily, an obedient wife and mother.

ments strongly opposing fundamentalism and urging women to work.

Then again, Norani points out that since Malaysia's Muslim resurgence, state-sponsored family institutes have put renewed emphasis on "moral constructions" of the ideal Muslim woman, who might work and possess a degree but will always define herself primarily as an obedient wife and mother.

At a conference held in Jakarta last year called Islam and the Advancement of Women, Indonesia's State Minister for the Role of Women, Hajjsh Mien Sugandhi, said: "Many Muslim women still live in darkness and backwardness and are restrained by traditional cultural views being put in the name of religion, which are in fact contradictory to the soul and spirit of Islamic teaching."

These views are increasingly endorsed by Islamic modernists in Asia, who are anxious to challenge Western perceptions about Islam oppressing women.

Lily Munir, from the research and development arm of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's biggest Muslim organization, thinks the increasing incidence of veil-wearing is part of a search for identity and a reaction against Western values on the part of the young.

Her daughter, a "socially progressive" engineering student, wears the veil partly because it makes her feel more physically secure when she is out at night.

Still, Munir has advised her daughter to steer clear of some undergraduates who declared they were uncomfortable talking to any woman who was not veiled.

"I think this is the influence of fundamentalist elements ... Islam is a very democratic religion that is respectful of religious differences," says Munir.

Zainah Anwar, another member of the Sisters in Islam, researched the effects of revivalism on university students several years ago. Though she thinks attitudes are becoming more relaxed in Malaysia than they were during the '80s, she found

veiled girls were unlikely to attend a student dance, ride a bicycle, watch television in a room with boys or join a campus drama group.

She thinks the key issue raised by the practice of veiling is whether it circumscribes women's behavior.

Zainah, an analyst with the Institute of Strategic and International studies in Kuala Lumpur, says: "That is where my concern is among young people. At our age (the Sisters are in their 30s and 40s), if we should decide to cover up, nothing would change, except our physical look, because we are confident we know what we stand for.

"But for the young people ... when you're forced to cover up and people in charge at schools and universities and older students are asking you to cover up and at the same time regulate your behavior—that's where the control comes in."

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Breaking the Mould

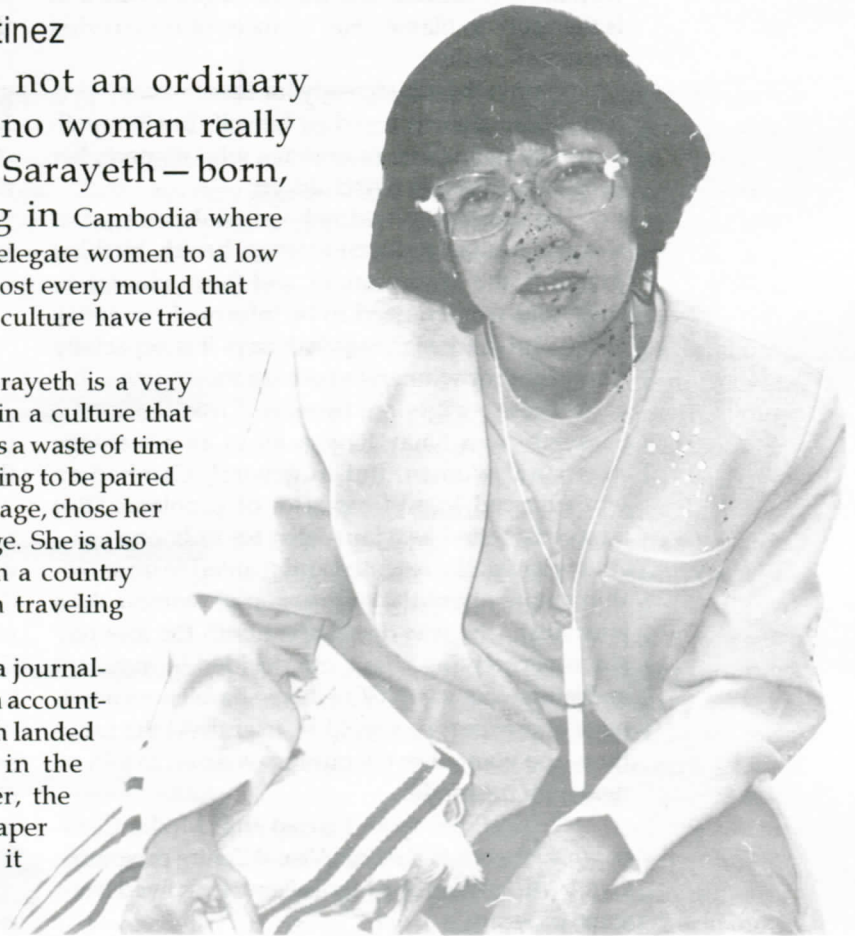
by Luz Maria Martinez

Sarayeth Tive is not an ordinary woman. Well, no woman really is, except that Sarayeth – born, raised and living in Cambodia where custom and tradition relegate women to a low status – has broken almost every mould that Cambodian society and culture have tried to fit her in.

To begin with, Sarayeth is a very well educated woman in a culture that looks at educating girls as a waste of time and money. Then, refusing to be paired off in an arranged marriage, chose her own mate while in college. She is also a journalist working in a country that frowns on women traveling without a man.

Sarayeth became a journalist quite by accident. An accountant by training, Sarayeth landed a job as a journalist in the Kampuchea newspaper, the only non-communist paper in Cambodia, because it needed someone who could write in English. Sarayeth, who studied English in addition to Accounting, fitted the requirement. This change of jobs defined the rest of Sarayeth's life and career.

As a journalist, Sarayeth found that women were highly oppressed. Newspaper stories of women consisted mostly of sex stories that showed women in pornographic pictures. Cultural practices, the lack of information and, in general, the patriarchy that kept women uninformed



An educated woman in a culture that looks at educating girls as a waste of time.

combine to make the situation for Cambodian women difficult.

One of the biggest issues in Cambodia, Sarayeth says, is widowhood. According to Sarayeth, in Cambodia, there is the "bad widow" and the "good widow." The "good widow" is the woman whose husband died either of natural causes or because of an accident. The husband's death is not seen as the woman's fault and her chances for remarrying are better.

But the "bad widow" is a woman whose husband has abandoned her. When a man leaves a woman, it is because she was not a good wife and is therefore to blame. Her chances of remarrying are therefore slim.

Sarayeth feels strongly for these women perhaps because she is a widow herself. But Sarayeth has since remarried an organist who respects her decisions. She has two children.

In addition to widowhood, violence against women, human rights of women, health, birthing practices, the environment and the media are issues that women need to be informed on, speak about and address. Sarayeth says it is especially important for women to take up these issues because these are ignored by men. "Urban women," Sarayeth says, "may have a bit of an advantage over rural women. But in general, Cambodian women need to address a lot of problems." But Sarayeth lasted as a journalist for only one year. As a woman, she resented and wanted to do something more about the oppression of women. As a journalist, she was dissatisfied with the low pay she was receiving. Sarayeth decided to move on and join a women's NGO where she felt her knowledge and expertise would be useful. At the same time, she wanted to encourage women to join or deal with the media.

In 1994, Sarayeth started the Media Campaign, Network and Audio Visual Centre programs. Cambodia's Women's Media Centre evolved from these programs.

The Women's Media Centre aims to establish itself as a public interest media center offering media services to non-government organizations. The Media Centre has four programs: Media Campaigns, Television and Radio Programming, Network Program, which is directly under Sarayeth, and the Audio and Visual Program. The Centre has been allowed by the government TV chan-

nel airtime for a program with a magazine format where women will be speaking, acting out and using whatever medium to bring out the issues. NGO experts will also be in the program.

Staffed by professional media experts, the Centre's main goal is to produce media materials on women and social issues and to improve the situation of women in media.

Sarayeth says there are few women journalists because women are required to stay at home and tend to their families. In contrast, journalists need to travel around a lot to cover stories. A woman journalist will find it very difficult to be able to do that.

But the basic problem is that education for girls and women is not a priority. Many families feel that educating a daughter will lessen her chances of finding a husband because the fear is she will then be smarter than the man. This is one of the reasons why the Women's Media Centre is focusing on the plight of the girl-child.

Apart from being the Centre's Executive Director, Sarayeth is also actively involved in a media watch group that monitors the media's portrayal of women and designs follow-up campaigns to improve these images as well as the working conditions of women in media.

In addition, Sarayeth helps produce educational videos and, along with the Centre's staff, trains women on audio-visual technology. The Centre has produced "Are we the Enemy?", a documentary that looks at the casualties of land mines in Cambodian fields through a woman's eyes. Sarayeth is the screenwriter and one of the producers. "Are we the Enemy?", a well-done documentary in English, is available at the Women's Media Centre and is also available for viewing at Isis International-Manila.

Though very well on its way to becoming a successful NGO, Sarayeth still appeals for a lot of support in terms of funding and broadcast equipment. The Centre also needs volunteers and an ongoing training on radio presentation and programming. Those who would like to help or know more about the Women's Media Centre of Cambodia can write to P.O. Box 497, Phnom Penh, Cambodia or call (855) 18 810 243 or fax (855) 23 362 344. ☺

Making (Radio) in the P Waves Pacific

Doreen Sam is the principal information officer of the Solomon Islands Women's Information Communication Network or SIWNET. She visited the Philippines last year to participate in a workshop on women's resource and information center organized by Isis International-Manila. Speaking with her, **Irene Chia** discovered how women are making good use of radio in the Solomons, a country composed of six main islands and a hundred smaller ones. Women make up a third of the Solomons' 300,000 population. Only 17 percent of women are literate.



Doreen Sam: Steering SIWNET's wheel.

Irene Chia: In the Solomon Islands, the Women's Information Communication Network is doing great work for the communication and information needs of women. But, tell us, how did SIWNET start?

Doreen Sam: The demand for information for women in the Pacific has always been high but the idea for setting up a resource center did not come until after a seminar on the management of a women's information center. After this workshop, we saw that was important to have more women's information centers. There is so much information received from women's groups but they are not passed on to other women's organizations who are left unaware of the developments that are going on in the national, regional and international spheres. That was how SIWNET started in 1990.

The organization is governed by women representatives of women's organizations in the Solomon Islands and they give us, the staff, a lot of encouragement.

In the main, SIWNET produces programs for women, one of which is radio.



Starting them young: Doreen's children, left and middle, and niece spend weekends at SIWNET.



Josephine Teakeni, left, is SIWNET's latest addition. She joins SIWNET as reaserch officer.

Through the radio program, we cover a lot of issues which are affecting women in the Solomon Islands. We interview women on the progress of their work in their respective organizations.

Q: How active is the women's movement in the Solomons?

A: We have one government women's organization which is the organizing arm of the Women's Development Division. We have church-based women's groups, the Young Women's Christian Association, the National Council of Women, and other small NGOs.

I've been working with women for 10 years now and I know most of them. That's why when I became the principal information officer of SIWNET, I easily developed my contacts in the other national information offices.

Q: How does SIWNET use radio to reach out and organize women?

A: The women's radio programs, to me, are very effective in reaching out to women. However, some women may not have a transistor radio and batteries are costly.

But SIWNET has a Women's Radio Development Spot. It is a 60-second jingle broadcast on radio. They're really not songs but messages. We would like to create awareness on issues in very short messages through jingles or "development spots" broadcast during peak time over the national radio.

The jingles are often about issues like domestic violence and other critical areas in the Global Platform of Action. We take up just one issue at a time, say for example education. There are so many girls dropping out from school. What are we going to do to eliminate this problem? In the future, we shall also be covering health and population.

We also have a half-hour, once-a-week radio program and for that I do the interviews. My background is broadcasting and I interview women about nearly all issues that affect them. I also write the scripts, and produce the program.

When I do interviews, I ask questions on behalf of women. For instance, if I do not know so much about the law I will ask

my interviewee questions that other women in the rural areas might like to ask also.

The radio program covers a lot of issues that we think women need to be aware of, issues that range from health and nutrition, population, domestic violence, the environment, wife-beating, alcoholism, education and many more.

But one important issue is agriculture. We did a program on it and it made me see that most women in the rural areas are subsistence farmers and it is important for them to gain some knowledge and skills on the techniques and methodologies of growing and maintaining their plots.

Another important concern is education. In the Solomons, girls are outnumbered in secondary school. The Ministry of Education says one of the problems is the lack of dormitories or facilities that would enable them to enrol more secondary level school girls. There are so many girls who are school drop-outs in the primary level and who therefore lose the chance to get a good education. Although there are churches and some NGOs that have established vocational training schools, they can only accommodate a small number. The rest would be left at home.

At the moment, we are also trying to update women on the Beijing conference. Most of the women in the Solomons were not even aware of this United Nations Conference on Women and we use the radio program to provide them with information.

We also attended the PeaceSat conference of women in the Pacific and broadcast the preparatory activities for women.

PeaceSat is a kind of network. On the satellite link, we will be in Honiara,

the Solomons' capital and there will be someone in Fiji, and so on. All the other participating countries will be sitting in their own respective countries and we will link through this PeaceSat or peace satellite.

So, as you can see, the radio program is a vital service to the women of the Solomons. It costs a lot of money but it is the only radio program for women in the country and it provides women the opportunity to express opinions and views on issues or problems that they face.

That is why it is really a good thing that the program is broadcast over the national radio station. And this year, we are very fortunate that the government is funding it.

Apart from government, SIWNET also receives support from other NGOs and foreign donors. I tried and succeeded in getting funds to continue the program. That's a great success for us.

Q: Can you tell us more about the other programs of SIWNET?

A: SIWNET'S other program is the Women's Resource Center. As I said, at the moment, I am the only one working for SIWNET but we're thinking of getting another person when I come home to specifically work at the resource center.



Salei Rukasi, participant in the SIWNET workshop on resource center, sharing a laugh with Rhona Bautista, Isis International-Manila's librarian and workshop trainer.

We're trying to establish this resource center and one of my intentions in coming to the Philippines is to see how the Isis resource center is set up.

But we have very limited materials at the moment. Still, consultants and students have been using our center to collect information on women.

We are also thinking of publishing a women's photojournal for which we have already sought funds. The photo-journal will be used for educating women who live in the islands far from Honiara.

You see, only a third of our population are women and most of them live in the provinces and are engaged in subsistence farming. These women have missed out on a lot of activities that have been carried out at the national level. Based on reports, only 17 percent of women in the Solomon Islands are literate. That's why we thought of publishing a journal full of photos with captions to explain the pictures.

Q: Is SIWNET affiliated with any larger organization?

A: SIWNET has affiliations with other regional organizations like the Pacific News Association (PNA). Our affiliation with PNA will help us not only train the staff but also develop the radio program, and produce a better newsletter. We will have access to training which is beneficial to us. Through the PNA, we have set up the Black Women Network which links other women journalists in other Pacific countries. Hopefully, we will benefit from the training that they have.

We are also affiliated with the Pacific Broadcasting Association (PBA) and a member of the Media Association of the Solomon Islands (MASI), the local media association.

SIWNET also runs Communications Training Workshops for women to help them acquire the basic skills of news writing. These training will greatly assist rural women to compile or write news stories which may be written in their own dialect and then translated into English

which will then help us get to know what's going on in the provinces.

Actually, most women can write, but they fear people might laugh at their grammar. That's a big problem we have in the Solomons and we don't want that kind of thinking to flourish, especially among women. As long as we can understand what they are trying to say, that's it. We've conducted the workshops with our local church women's groups and the response was really good.

Also, given the geographical set-up of the Solomons, to be able to reach out, we need to tour the provinces. These touring programs help us reach out to women who live in very isolated and very far islands. I interview women when I go on tour. I ask them what their daily life is like, what their problems are, what their activities are and how they are surviving.

Q: What about theater? Have you tried theater?

A: Yes, we've tried drama when we went on tour on the issue of domestic violence. The women were really emotional because domestic violence is not openly discussed. It's a very sensitive



The Women's Development Division of the Solomon Island's Ministry of Youth, Sports, Women and Recreation were active participants of SIWNET's resource center workshop.



Hands-on. There's no better way to learn.

issue and our country is culturally diverse. The problems that contribute to domestic violence differ from island to island. We have so many cultures so we have to be very careful because what may be all right in some islands may be offending in others.

I find that drama is one of the more effective ways to get messages across to women. Dramatizing domestic violence has a strong effect on the women and men listening. Soap operas, drama, and role playing have similar effects.

We have also tried songs during our communications training workshop. The participants were able to choose a topic like nutrition and they came up with some songs. One was about the taro or cassava, which is good food. If you eat it with rice or fish or some kind of vegetable, it is nutritious. Songs really had an effect on the women listening. These are the alternative forms that are very effective.

Q: What do you think is the impact of your work for the last five years on women?

A: I think we have progressed very well in the last five years. At the beginning of the project, we didn't have consist-

ent funding. I didn't get paid from September 1992 to June 1993. But I see the importance of having this women's program.

The women's radio program, it is me, it is in me. Just because we don't have funding doesn't mean we have to stop a very effective program for women. I don't want it to fall apart and I believe we can do it.

I have met challenges in my job but I worked my way through. We are very happy that we received funding from local and overseas organizations and that the government is now showing interest in funding our radio program. That is a great achievement for us. We also have an additional staff coming and additional equipment.

Over the years, we received feedback that were both encouraging and discouraging. But the negative ones only make me more determined to work. Sometimes it's all "oh, your project will only last for this year." That makes me work all the more and I get the result that I want.

I am glad to say that women like our radio program very much. The day after an airing, some women will usually ring me up and say that they liked the program. Sometimes, I meet them on the road and they say "oh, that was a very good program last night. I liked it."

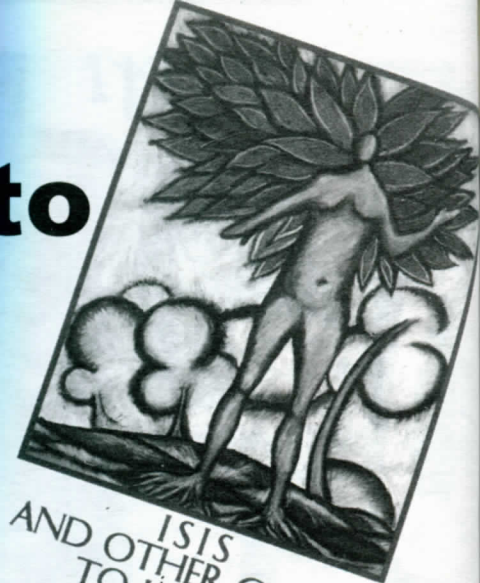
Q: So this is what keeps you going?

A: Yes. You see, before SIWNET, I was a broadcaster, an announcer and a disk jockey. I did women's programs mainly. But I left the broadcasting station and I joined the seminars of the National Council of Women. I was the communications officer at that time, responsible for the women's radio program. Then I continued with SIWNET.

In the 10 years that I've worked with women, I've had easy times and hard times. Sometimes women are our own enemies but that won't stop me from my work. When you continue to work despite pressures, in the end, you fulfill a goal.)

Hints on the Road to Well-being

by Pennie Azarcon-dela Cruz



Remember that old wives' tale about rubbing garlic in your armpits to combat a fever? How about the

distressing sponge baths of vinegar that we had to endure when we were sick during childhood? Young boys probably had to chew on guava leaves and spit out the mush on fresh wounds under sharp orders from the village *herbolario*. How quickly we dumped such quackery for the sterilized comfort and convention of prescription pills and labelled medication.

Well, good news and bad: those old wives' tale may be right after all and may have been drawing on hundreds of years of experience in medical lore. That means we're bound to encounter messy treatments once more as alternative medicine becomes acceptable again. The good news is that most indigenous therapies cost much less than bottled cures and cause less harm to the body. The bad news is that all those so-called New Age, age-old, traditional or medieval treatments have been collected in an attractive book that features interviews with wellness experts, first-hand accounts by initially skeptical patients, dosages and preparations, expected results and counter indications or what to look out for, and an overview of health as part of one's natural state.

Isis and other Guides to Health: Helpful Hints on the Road to Well-Being draws inspiration from Isis, the Egyptian goddess of justice, wisdom and fertility. It also lends its name to Isis International-Manila, an information- and resource-sharing center that helps create a feminist perspective on various concerns. Isis International-Manila published the book and launched it recently.

Topics discussed include traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, shiatsu, reflexology, aromatherapy, the use of herbs, macrobiotics, homeopathy, the cleansing diet, and so on. A listing of women's health groups in the country is also included, as are an essay on Mayan spirits and Philippine healers and a healing prayer.

The book focuses mainly on illnesses experienced by women because, as contributor Fe C. Arriola notes in her introduction, the medical profession could be more sympathetic to women's complaints instead of dismissing them outright as "psychological or nervous disorders." Research, Arriola adds, also shows that women are more likely to be over-prescribed or given inappropriate drugs that weaken their immune system and make them more prone to lingering or recurring ailments. Unfortunately, women have also been taught never to question the "experts," and wind up entrusting their health —and often their lives — to the medical establishment.

The alternative cures discussed in the book, on the other hand, have the characteristics of women: nurturant, intuitive, natural and participative. Above all, the therapies are "wholistic" and consider how a host of factors — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual — influence one's health and well-being.)

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